

Byways



**Central Texas College
Journal of Art & Letters
Spring 2006**

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COVER ART

Andres Silva
"Sunset Tree"
Acrylic on Canvas

BYWAYS ARTIST PRIZE WINNER -- \$100

Marcus Kimble

BYWAYS LITERARY PRIZE WINNER -- \$100

Keith Burton

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*Meet the artists and writers
at the 5th annual
Byways Literary Reading and Art Show
April 25, 6-8 p.m.
Oveta Culp Hobby Memorial Library
Central Texas College*

Autumn
Chelsea Fielder



Sterling Silver and Gemstone

Byways Artist Prize Winner

Birds

Marcel Kimble



Oil on Canvas

Full Bloom
Starla Doss



Photograph

A New Voice

Mark Winans

Over the last five or six years I have made a practice of taking a college course once or twice a year for reasons of personal growth and to learn something new. I have done reasonably well at avoiding topics relating to my profession of teaching computer and networking classes, although a fair portion of my time is spent staying abreast of changes in technology. But that is a matter of professional development and my intent here is to discuss my foray into non-technology courses, actually one in particular that has had a significant personal impact.

Just over a year ago I was contemplating taking a course that would address my need for a creative outlet. My two choices were an art class or a creative writing class—I chose the creative writing. That’s not to say that I have completely ruled out the possibility of picking up a paintbrush at some later date. I can picture myself creating magnificent watercolors of the apple blossoms of early May in Door County, Wisconsin or . . . but again that will have to wait.

Anyway back to the writing. Despite having read the course description, I started the class not quite sure of what to expect. As it turned out I gained more from the class than I could have ever imagined. I have a journal full of bits and pieces (starters) I can use for future short stories or perhaps the “Great American Novel.” I also have a collection of finished work (my own). One of my poems is published as a result of the class. I know that I enjoy writing and believe I have talent, a little rough perhaps but . . . I have also found myself reading more and not just the technical books and trade journals; I have been reading classic literature. And lastly, perhaps most importantly I’m gaining additional insight into myself and my life.

My journal, not to be confused with a simple daily chronicle of important things such as “. . . decided to live

dangerously today—no cream in my coffee!” (How’s that for taking life by the throat?), contains a growing collection of experiments in the craft of writing. It is a sampling of my thoughts, recollection of things that were, and my many attempts to put words on paper in a way in which it works—not always an easy task. Many such attempts should probably never escape from between the front and back cover of that journal and for others, I believe there is hope.

Some of my journal entries were the inspiration behind creating several “finished” pieces for that portfolio of original work. In it I have an example of my writing in each of the genres: fiction, poetry, essay, and drama. I am particularly pleased with my poetry—the poems I deemed worthy of inclusion in my portfolio that is and my drama. As a poet (of little notoriety) I am drawn to precise compact structure and word choice to impart my message; I suppose that would make me a poetic minimalist, but I’ve never been accused of being minimally dramatic. Conversely, my drama a one act play is a piece full of tension-riddled dialogue and characters each with an agenda; quite cleverly written (an opinion not yet universally accepted). Although it really isn’t a monumental revelation, realizing the technique(s) I used in writing poetry didn’t necessarily work in writing a drama reinforced for me the fact that there is no one way in which to accomplish tasks, work with people, or maintain personal relationships.

Sometimes I wonder if some of my relationships suffered as I worked on a poem I chose to submit for publication. It was a near obsession—no wait it was an obsession. Not a day went by for six or seven weeks that I wasn’t rewriting the poem, adding or taking away material—mostly taking away, poetic lipo [sic] I called it. I hadn’t even considered submitting the piece while working on it and with no clear goal in mind it was merely a matter of perfecting it for the sake of doing so, hence the obsession. Then came the scary part of being published, the invitation to read my poem before and to discuss it with an audience. There’s nothing quite like sharing what you’ve created, baring your thoughts, standing naked (figuratively speaking)

before an audience to humble you; I survived it.

I've been revisiting the classics lately. I suppose I should say with much of what I've been reading is a first time visit really. Between high school and college literature classes I read some Poe, Hemmingway, Shakespeare, and Twain to name a few. At that time I wasn't reading any of that material because I wanted to. It was forced fun, minus the fun. Doing so was a relatively painful, no actually it was an incredibly painful process. I saw no point in wading through the works of men and women long gone and attempting to discern what they meant. As far as I was concerned the words that the authors put on paper could and should be read without looking for further meaning—mere entertainment.

Now, many years later I've changed my outlook on classic literature. It all started I believe with my writing. In an attempt to improve my writing I started to read a variety of classic titles. The first classic in my quite lengthy list was Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. What a book, it had it all: the haves, the have-nots, greed, drunkenness, debauchery, betrayal, infidelity, death, suicide, politics, and agricultural innovations. I would be remiss in suggesting the aforementioned list is all inclusive; I left some things out for brevity's sake. I no longer resist reading and learning from the many great writers of past. I am however reserving judgment of contemporary writers for a later date.

My writing and reading have given me additional perspective into what makes me, well, me. I'm not suggesting that I'm terribly deep or complex; or that I am a tormented artist type, what ever that is, and its not that I necessarily want to be tormented artist type—writer to be more precise. Of course being tormented and a writer could be an excuse, not a good excuse perhaps but an excuse never the less, to develop some sort of writerlyish [sic] eccentricity—like making up words.

Sorry for the digression. I have, as part of the writing process begun to reflect on past events in my life. I was pleasantly surprised at the torrent of pleasant memories and also disheartened at the tragedies. On the plus side is my marriage of 25 years to a wonderful woman, the births of

my children, and my grandchildren. The minus side of the score card, I guess minus is really a misnomer, how about the tragic less joyous side? That list would include the death of my best friend. He was hit by a car at the age of 12 and died after two years in a coma. Even after a little more than three decades have past, it, the accident and his death stays with me, but generally, neatly tucked away in my memory. On occasion, more often than I would imagine considering the amount of time that has elapsed I think about him and what might have been. I believe it's because I was with him when it happened. I wasn't able to help him. I also know it could have just as easily been me, but it wasn't. I do realize that all of the events, big and small, happy and sad affect me and how I look at life and live it and write about it. Just as a fabric woven of different colored thread is more vibrant and exciting, so too do the different threads of my life make me more exciting and alive. But then it may just be my active imagination.

So what of all this reading and writing? I know I've heard it all before, "With all the starving writers in the world, do we really need one more?" Well yeah, how else am I going to get to meet Oprah if I don't get a book on her book club list? And no, sitting in the audience doesn't count. But I know I'm not ready to give up my steady income and lock myself away in a tiny room pounding incessantly at the keyboard and consuming staggering quantities of the beverage of my choice—coffee, I do love dark rich coffee. Since my writing doesn't produce enough income to support my coffee habit, well to be perfectly honest it produces no income so I had better keep my day job, at least for a while anyway.

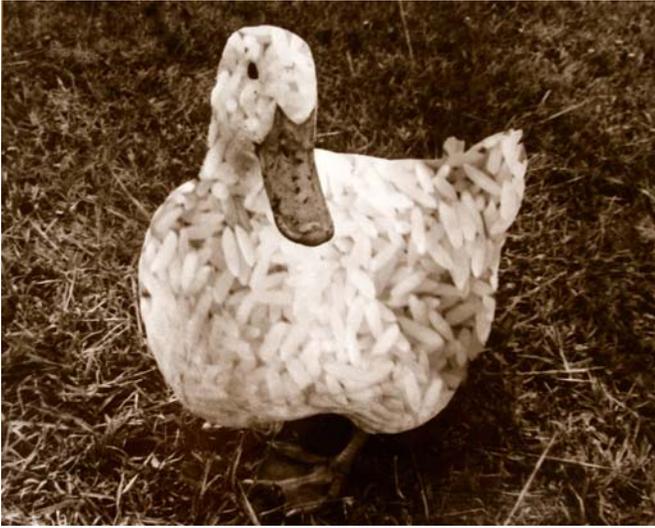
Why bother then? To become a published author of notoriety receiving six-figure advances on books yet written would be gratifying to my ego. That and to torture some high school kid sitting in a literature class several decades or centuries in the future sounds good too. Since that's not the case, my writing is exploratory in nature and primarily for me which on rare occasions I share with others and on rarer occasions I submit for publication. Perhaps my writing will inspire others to read great literature and even write some of

their own and suffer for their art.

Speaking of suffering, as I was about to order a latte at my favorite coffee shop and upon inquiry by a young “artsy type” into what I was working on (he saw my journal), a discussion on writing ensued. I was reminded by my new found artsy friend of the required suffering one must endure for his or her craft. And in a moment of clarity, an epiphany if you will regarding my recent inability to write anything of consequence I had my answer—I haven’t been suffering (lately?). It was then I decided. “I’ll have a decaf soy latte”, I told the barista.

Talk about suffering

Rice Belly
Rachel Rodriguez



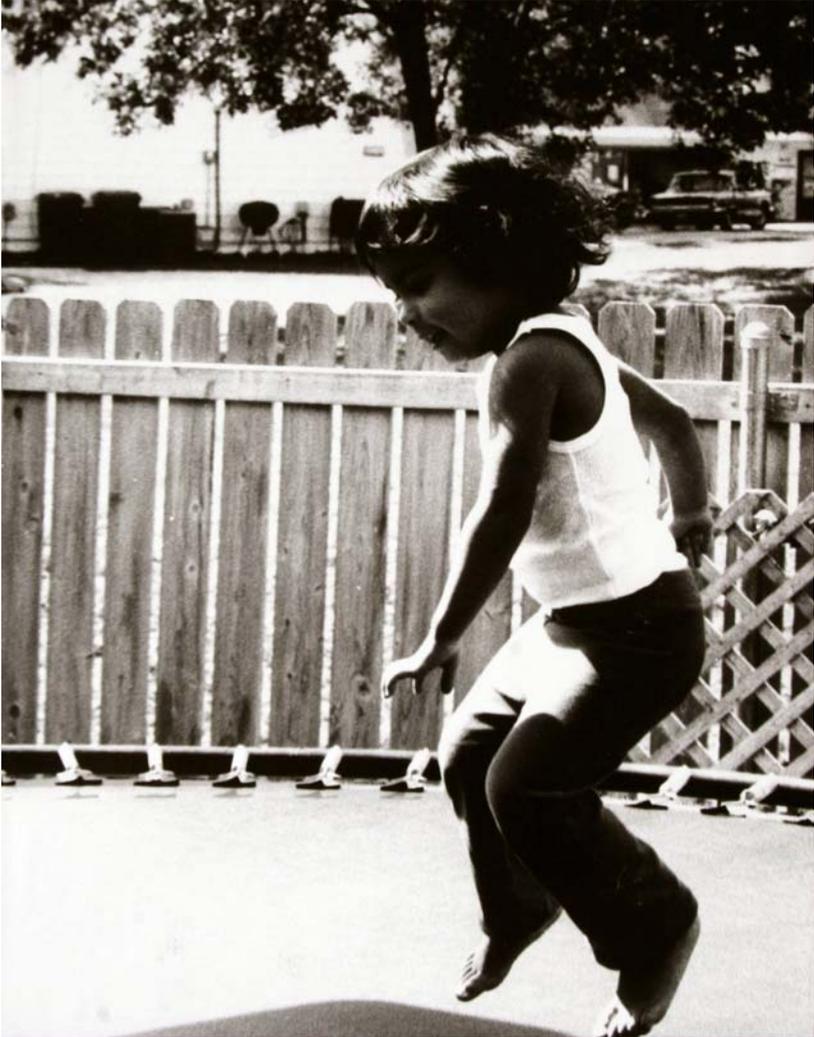
Photograph

Untitled
Dianne Schlekewvy



Photograph

Jumping Girl
Miriam Coronado



Photograph

Springtime Buzz

Frederica Roberson

Blue blue skies a sight for my sore eyes
Birds chirping singing cheery news

Sunshine cuddling my face with its rays
Bugs buzzing and whizzing through
fragrant flower-filled air

I inhale so deep what a treat to my nose
Slowly exhaling out my woes
Tickled by mesquite smoke
Bar-B-Q pits huffing and groaning as steaks sizzle

Springtime sure feels good

Family reunions
Folk wiping glistening foreheads
Puckered lips grip
The rims of tall glasses of ice-cold lemonade for a much-
needed sip
Mmmmm
What a delight in spite of all life's troubles

Splashing in soothing aqua liquid pool
Starry nights sitting on a big wide porch in blissful mood

Springtime sure feels good

So Shine if You Want to
Frederica Roberson

So, shine if you want to
It's o.k. to want more than mediocrity
Who wouldn't want more than what *it* is
Especially if *it* is at the bottom, where the stench is
 smothering
Words ooze off gums like slime fuming from minds
 deteriorating
Drown out the hypocrites
While you knock down a couple of life's quick fixes
So, shine if you want to
But remember when you are in your haze
That time waits for no one
Use your power wisely
Exercise the knowledge stored in your brain
And with sweat and toil wipe the sheepish grin off poverty's
 face
So, shine if you want to
Don't forget that the trail you blaze
Will allow for someone else's footsteps
So, be clear as to your destination
Where it leads
Accountability outlives greed
So, shine if you want to
Just remember the glimmer of where you came

Phoenix
Vivian Dennison

fast like razors
gold-dipped, dripping with
every
right
thing
to say

old like music
in round, blunt-edged tongues
like rolled, eroded stones

broad like sunrise
sneaky, slick little
pink hands slipping up,
then arms of flame,
prism nimbus,
and then the white-blind raptured smile

Catalogue of Self

Vivian Dennison

sharp-curved tools: tendons under skin like
silver wires, spaded palms, nails naturally half-mooned and
ringed
and sometimes made up with rouge, tripoli

freckle on right forefinger

long-angled limbs: thin wrists, bird-boned, with
blonde threads below the cursive swerve of elbow, inner
joint
jotted with green, red-violet-black under uninked blank

mock-suicide catscratch scar

neck-to-crown: shining fold lines on throat, odd-set jaw,
well-rope
on shoulder, chin apologizing for smirk, bold labia, the
gapped, serrated teeth, words
and eyes that don't agree on blue or green, but almost

brown streak near left pupil

socket-joint-frame: archer's line meeting in a divot, and
down
to a cage, locked somewhat securely, blanketed pale, rising
twice, guts stuffed
compactly under that slip, and that set, pink-peaked

dark birthmark on side

shallow mother-scar: slim trail dropping from there, soft,
subtly furred
and further, darker, thicker, a resting, sex-smelling thing,
folded languidly in

its own shadow, strong enough to shed blood for unchosen
chances

petals edged with dark purple

bone-bladed cradle: wandering lightning over milk flesh,
silver against its
sloping width, to rest on or strain, and wing-arched feet for
escape, or travel, and
more gold stitching on the usual two in a cross-legged X

mismatched but still effective

Gazes Lifted
Vivian Dennison

When you wind the eyes of a thousand faces around
A pulpit of sound and with light refract
The discourse of need, you get
A hero

A humming archetype of dreams,
An open palm against a pane of frosted sunrise
And in the eyes, a burn of time
An era compacted into flesh, and formed fragile

A slim-shouldered grin that wraps arms around
The weak and endures too much blood on too little ground
An angel, a dragon, a winner, a killer, a knight's page
Faltering smile, faultless sword
That turns as flames dance
Dodging the mar of sin

Unfurling courage, to be the banner
Of a hundred times ninety nine minds, the strap
Which binds the fortitude and forges rods of
Aether in the spine

A lone silhouette on the tapestry of an empty sky

One Leaf Bracelet
Cyril Garcia



Sterling Silver

Ohmmmm
Lisa Schmaltz



Clay

Wandering Mind
Kim Byrd



Photograph

Fragile Butterflies

Cara Miles

The feelings run so deep
The thoughts flow through your veins
The sorrow that you've given
To the ones who know your name

Bring it back
To the beginning of the game
When you learned your first words
Of agony and pain

Take your time
With fragile butterflies
With wounds that scar the mind
Your moods that run and hide

Take this heart
And keep it locked inside
Never play with fire
With your fate, with your life

The feelings run so deep
The tempers flare so fast
So lonely in a crowded room
Can you ever make love last?

Near the end
Can you let it go?
Or will you let the beast inside
Consume your human soul

Take your time
With fragile butterflies
With wounds that scar the mind
Your moods that run and hide

Take this heart
And keep it locked inside
Never play with fire
With your fate, with your life

Take it off
The blinders of this play
Your cheapened masquerade is
An aftertaste that still remains

Don't look back
Attention makes it grow
The void living inside
Is the only friend you know

The Road of Life

John Robert Stephenson IV

The lessons that I've learned,
A teacher couldn't teach,
The faith that I've gained,
A preacher didn't preach,
This life that I've lived,
Has only been mine,
And what my future holds,
Will only be revealed in time,
I refuse to go down,
As another could or would be,
So instead I only focus,
On what I can and should be,
The weight of the world,
Seems to lie solely on me,
But Atlas I'm not,
And never will be,
On this journey of life,
At least one thing I've learned,
Just give it all to the Lord,
And don't be concerned,
Although the trials of this life,
One may find unbearable,
But with each bump on the path,
Despite any trouble,
Lies a hidden message,
With unmeasured peril,
But with each person,
The message is different,
So despite any setbacks,
On your own personal road,
Just take it as it comes,
And with each lesson grow.

The Blackness of Night

William Bighouse

The blackness of night had fallen fast;
the crisp winter air had arrived at last!
The old rocking chair on the porch where I was sitting;
the creaking of the wood as I rocked back and forth.
The only sound I could hear in the distance
the hooves of the deer
lightly treading on the cold, moist ground!
A quiet time for me to sit and reflect on the paths of my life!
Being thankful for my family, my fast growing children
and my loving faithful wife!
My life thus far, not one moment I believe,
I had taken in vain!
Staying positive when the odds were against me
through love through happiness through pain!
Tilting my head upward, I began to focus
on the bright stars shining from heaven above!
A small prayer I said, in the silence of my head
for the gift of life, experience and love!
It is the small things in life that matter the most,
a wise word my father had once spoken to me!
That also the best gifts in life are the ones that are earned
and not the ones given and abused that are free!
The cold night air sent a chill in my spine,
as a westward wind had begun to silently blow!
Filling my lungs with the clean fresh air,
I drew in a breath nice and slow!
Silence was broken in the still of this night
with a shrieking cry that filled my soul with fright!
Time had flown so fast without warning;
night had actually past,
and it was now the wee hours of the morning!
I arose to investigate the cry I had heard;
across the yard I started, on my face a scowl!
Soon to discover the noise I had heard

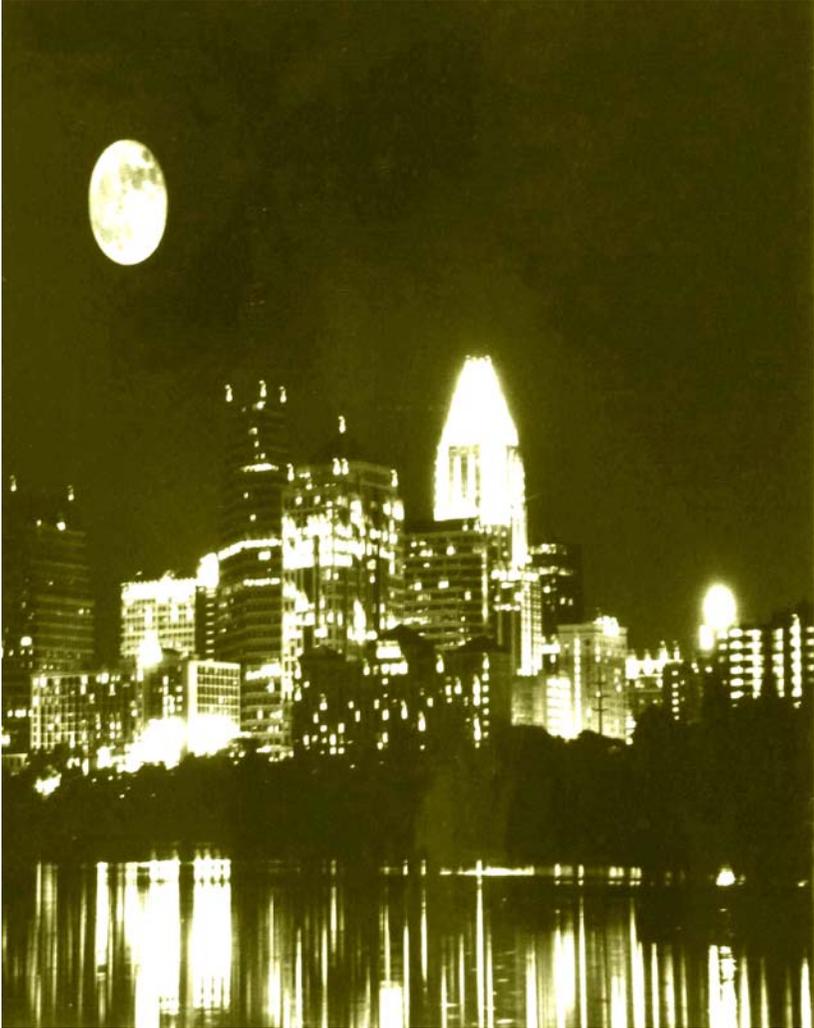
was from high on a branch, in our old elm tree.
It was the screeching sound of an old brown owl!
My lips curled up in an evil grin,
as I reached up with my hand and stroked my chin.
My silent time to sit and ponder had now
drawn to an end at last!
My eyes now heavy with much needed rest,
I slowly walked back to the place I loved the best!
I approached the red front door
to enter into the warmth of my home!
The brass knob reminded me of just how cold it was outside,
and it was better I sat on the porch
instead of adventuring out to roam!
In the comfort of my room, but the light of the fire,
I saw my beautiful wife lying in our bed!
Quietly I bent over and brushed a kiss
on the softness of her forehead!
With a smile on my face, I looked around,
and a feeling of total peace in my heart!
My home was held together with love
and for this would never fall apart!

Reflections
Kim Byrd



Photograph

Tree Lighting
Yolanda Perez



Photograph

Byways Literary Prize Winner

Azimuth

Keith Burton

The courtyard square
is hosting a lustrous sunset

red. Bathing flamingoes
crane o'er shadowed

fountainhead. A lone Spanish
guitar, licks at the darkening

sky. And, pillowed patrons
casually inspect

the passerby. Rivers of pink
briefly burn against the fissured

rock. Augean children, amidst
their play, eye the tower

clock. Earthtone angels
titter tirelessly from their regal

perch; Whilst their grandfathers
whittle away upon their driftwood birch.

Fairchild
Keith Burton

“Women’s liberation
in the Twentieth Century” reclines
atop a heap of literature he neglects
to read. It poses on a desk cluttered
with his boyish debris; next to a bed
where he frequently fucks
a friendly fiancé—routinely, freely,
irresponsibly—who is promised
to a man in Germany. Discharged
Durex condom packages
litter the floor, like so many
omitted children. A thick
fragrance—lingering beneath
the sudor and seed—presses
into the nostrils. Origins lie in dirty
clothes, and trash swept
under. The Word observes,
entombed in peanut cans
and pearl-snap shirts. They think
they’re living, and worse
still, they know who
they’re living for.

Barren is thy Way

Keith Burton

A smattering of summers
have passed, masked as many myriad

winters. Copious crosses
have I seen, and upon them, weary

sinner. Moving amidst
my wandering seasons, I have dwelled

on many a lofty cliff. My landscape
is ever-wild and rolling,

and through many climates,
do I shift. Planted fruits

remain unripe, and the worn
have lost their hue. Vines seldom

break the surface, and buds
are far and few. Inspiration

is a fleeting mistress, who tempts
and draws away. And, for those

who are not quick to drink,
barren is thy way.

Vujo
Keith Burton

Road tar, ablaze, seeps into my
divine nucleus – in your image. An effigy

lies wilted, marred by innumerable
searing strokes. Your spine, arched

prim and proper, causes your breasts
to stare and stare. Auburn tresses sway

like the blood-red Pennybag that dangles
from my rearview mirror. Are all of the

fortunes in all of the galaxies captured in
the blue orchid of your dress? Caffeine is

an unwelcome squatter, and he owes his
rent to you. Without your vigilant shielding,

I may never have suffered to melt a red M&M
on my tongue. Our memories dance around
a Styrofoam cup, and your smile sweetens oblivion.

Nature in Art
Alejandrina Adams



Photograph

Reassembled

Lyle Jenks



Clay

Aquarena and County Road 4

Brad Herridge

Dave Matthews picks away in the background of Aaron's
apartment
as we sit and rest our bones after a sun-baked day
tubing on the San Marcos river.

A Dr. Pepper is passed to me.
I glance across the room to see Aaron's eyes rolling
back in his head and preparing for a mid-day nap.
I-35 barrels by outside
My bare feet welcome the air of the cooled room.
The July concrete of the San Marcos sidewalk will do that.
I stretch out on the futon mattress,
lazily flopped on the floor for me as a bed/guest refuge,
A strange tourist in a city of
Native orange juice stains,
take-out boxes and
over-flowing ash trays
I feel the beauty of the air conditioning soak
through my skin
and into my brain.

I dream.
I sink into that special place
in my subconscious where life is always this
sweet.
This is a place of green grasses and blue skies
so bright that they appear...
almost white.
I sit in a chair, on a porch,
on a hill. Feet propped back with nothing to do but
smell the air,
hear the sun
and be lazy.
Dave Matthews has slipped into Willie Nelson.
Clouds wisp across the sky like heavenly cotton strands

I can hear Grandpa's tractor,
thumping away,
plowing the field.
I can feel my three day old-vacation beard still soft and close
to the chin.
The yielding white paint on the porch rail under my
fingertip
I can see Priscilla,
the tan cow with the hormone imbalance,
cropping at the green grass in front of the house.
My lemon sweetened iced tea
splashes into the pit of my stomach
in a sort of oozing chill

And Aaron's voice echoes in the backdrop
and I am rushed away from a world of Willie
and back to one of Dave.
A world where people step the beat of the interstate
Rather than the soul
And you hide under a table and dream on a July day
Searching for a compromise of worlds
where it's okay to be crazy

Bandera Hills

Brad Herridge

In the waning light,
Smoky clouds above the old Bandera Hills
My chigger bites itch beneath my cotton sock
Deep in my skin
Camping in a freshly mowed horse pasture
Accompanied by freshly made friends
Whose voices echo against the green summer hills
Slap of a leather football and
Giggle of a lone girls amongst a
Troop of young men
Laughing without fear or boundaries.

As I write this on the grey worn picnic table,
meant for happy times like these,
I too lack fear.
The outside world fails to encroach on
the Bandera Hills
Protected by the echoing laughter of my friends
new and old.
Darkness takes more of the light,
but only to be hurriedly replaced by the morning sun, and
now
the ink becomes hard to see.
My writing must soon end,
and I must retain all further memories in my brain instead of
my page.

But before I go,
I know, I am not afraid of what tomorrow brings.
In pen and memory I have my version of
the echoing Bandera Hills.
I have the vibrations in my soul and
the sky in my nose,
The dirt in my nails.

Toasted
Charles Elkins



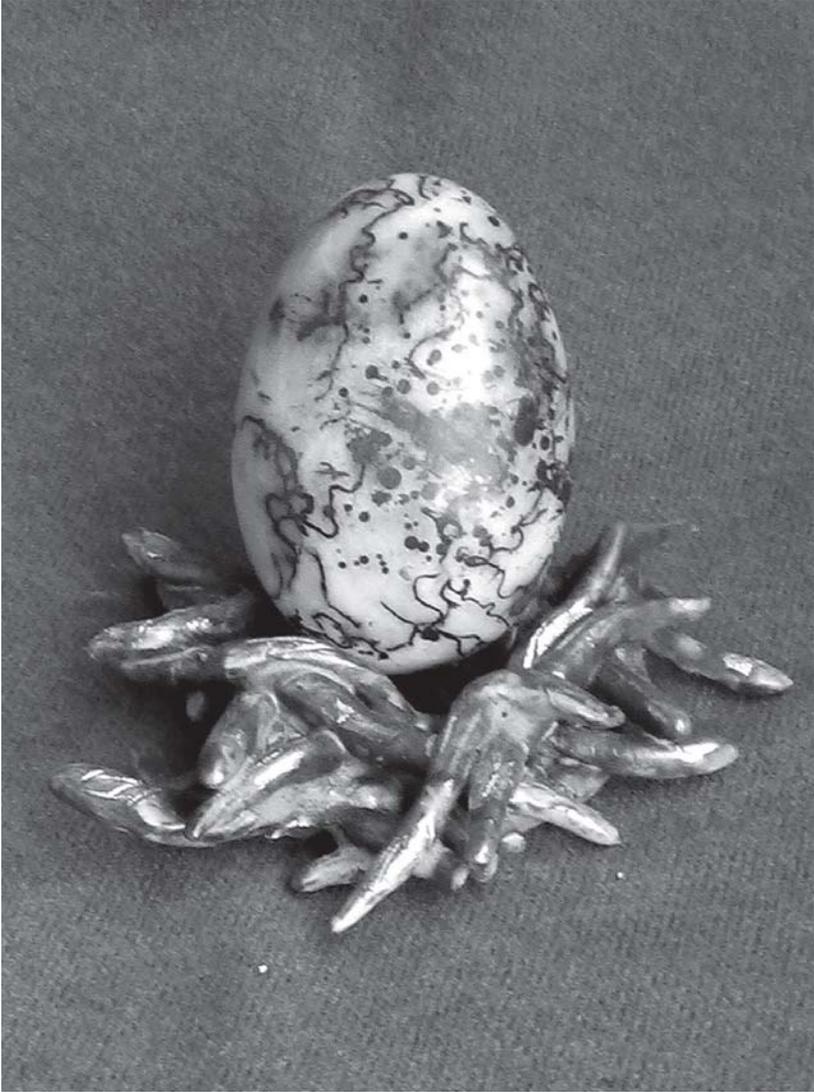
Copper, Enamel, and Wood

The Crack and the Rock
Shnoa Yi



Photograph

The Last One
Theresa Bell



Clay

Singular Two

Kim Olsen

You say I'm too smart
You say I'm too good
You say I'm too perfect to be around you
But what do you know?
You see my clothes
 My hair
 My body
 My words dripping with lies
You don't know me
You don't know anyone
Don't step in my shoes
I wear my shoes and don't wear yours
Stand behind me and then take a step forward, a step into
 me, in my direction and my truths you never knew
You see shun
You see poor
You see shelter
You see more beyond the whites of my eyes and the glasses
on my face
You think my thoughts
You breathe my air
Don't choke—it's clean, but small
You taste my words
You feel my blood
You hear my heart
Wait—yours or mine?
You decide
Reach out the hands you see and touch
Touch anything
Breathe in deep
It hurts, doesn't it?
Mentally
Emotionally
Physically

Every alley in my brain leads to another fork in the road, a
curve, a bump

A dip

I was speeding

That dip hurt

Slow down and place the hand over the heart

You feel it, now beating slower

But can you listen?

What do you hear?

Loneliness reverberating in the echoes of darkness, nothing
to absorb the sound, nothing to stop it

Stop it

Stop it

Get out!

Get out of me, step back and into you and out of me and to
your past

Remember my screams?

Remember my fights?

Remember my lonely nights?

My tears, never of joy

My smiles, never of truth

Nothing is as it seems

Just like me

Look at my eyes: what do you see?

Mother Nature, Step-Mother Earth

Kim Olsen

I walk away from the campfire.
The night is too quiet: it brings back from the dead my desire
to explore.
Stepping harshly on color-drained autumn leaves, I welcome
the darkness before me.
Jack Frost shivers up my spine.
I knew my blue jeans, white shirt, and knitted black sweater
wouldn't be enough.
My forehead reads rebel.
My eyes read explorer.
My heart reads seeker.
Before my next step, I recall the words of a song I once
heard long ago:
 "The past can be forgiven, the future be rewritten..."
Fine.
Consider the past forgiven.
Future rewritten as of now.
My foot steps lightly on the first patch of snow beneath the
inviting, mystery-filled pine trees.
Pushing back the bough in front of me, I behold a valley of
mountains, a sea of trees, a forest of waterfalls and
frozen lakes.
Behind me, not even the smoke of my campfire can be seen
behind my memory's wall of pines.
The fire is miles away.
I quickly find myself sliding down my invisible hill I was
standing on.
Slowly the ride halts at the edge of a small frozen pond.
A nearby rock that I pick up makes a nice hole in the ice: a
perfect circle.
I gently slip my right hand into the pond's lukewarm water.
I feel for it.
I lift it out.

It's not even wet.
Beautiful pink petals surround a yellow-green center.
I have to smell this fantasy.
I close my eyes when my nose is tickled by the soft, green
leaves.
The sunflowers in my eyes broaden to the warmth of the
sun's radiation, a harmless 2-D shape in the sky-blue
sky.
Beyond the dark vale of the North Pole, the light breeze that
cools me is the oxymoron to the hot flares of light I
feel upon my cheeks,
Such mediocrity can only be praised for so long.
Then the expectedness of the weather is no gypsy's
prediction.
Look out the window at 7 in the morning: you can't get
more accurate than that, until awakening to a day of
no clouds and no winds from Mother Nature.
The days of sweating in your sheets so the fans in all rooms
run all day long.
The days of cold lemonade glasses, like the one in my hand,
condensation slipping off the glass, dripping onto my
bare skin.
A fan in my hand that I barely use has the design of red,
yellow, and orange leaves drifting from far from the
apple tree.
I drop all in my hands, run to the lake and jump in.
I bring my head above, back into my atmosphere, leaves and
sticks clinging to my hair and jacket.
Shaking them off, the smell of burning logs draws me to a
small blue tent, the zipper unzipped, the flap lying
still,
I climb in after taking off my shoes, and drift off to sleep.
In the midst of my slumber, the moon awakens me.
I take a sip of my lemonade in its glass beside my sleeping
bag.
I open the flap of my tent and stick my hand out: a light rain
of snowflakes and autumn-flavored leaves fall from a
cloudless, starry heaven.
I pluck the pink flower from the ground in the middle of this
clearing in the forest.
I pinch myself, just to make sure.....

Pessimist, but the Lid is Missing

Kim Olsen

electricity, but the outlet is missing
radio, but the signal is lost
love, but the heart was kidnapped
pen, but the ink is dried
book, but the words are white as the page
nail, but the finger isn't there
music, but the melody is inaudible
eye, but the iris has vanished
shiver, but the spine is broken
ring, but the diamond hasn't been found
paper, but the trees are all burnt down
smile, but the happiness is fake
love, but the heart was kidnapped
thought, but the brain took a vacation
tradition, but the world is a hypocrite
friend, but the support is for others
food, but the nourishment isn't healthy
worry, but the stress is comforting
star, but the tail is tucked between its legs
work, but the game of solitaire is king
beauty, but the ugly truth is visible
love, but the heart was kidnapped
energy, but the concrete dams it
hole, but the darkness escapes it
pain, but the safety isn't helpful
love, but the heart was kidnapped
full, but the emptiness engulfs me
love, but the heart was kidnapped
love, but the heart was kidnapped
love, but the heart was kidnapped
I don't pay ransom

My Mother

Tim Sarla

Who thought that I could do no wrong,
No matter what might come along,
When others were weak, that I was strong?

MY MOTHER

Who thought no matter how things went,
In whose eyes surely I was meant,
To some day be, President?

MY MOTHER

From diapers to long pants, from kindergarten to college,
Who helped me get my chance, with her wisdom and
knowledge?

When sometimes I get off track,
Who reaches out to pick up the slack,
With a smile, a loving pat on the back?

MY MOTHER

A Mother's Hands
Dominique Grant



Clay

Canoe Row
Cheryl Caldwell



Photograph

Growth

Cherylynn

I was once a child.
Full of innocence.
A mind of simple logic.

Growth.
Innocence stolen.
Abandoned, molested, mal-nutritioned, neglected.
A mind of complications.

Growth.
Innocence lost, forever gone.
Manipulation, prostitution, thievery, drug addiction.
A mind of anger, sorrow and regret.

Growth.
I find myself looking in the mirror.
I do not like what I see.
Change or die.
A mind of strength.

Growth.
Independence, success, compassion.
I see who I am today.
I am that child I never was.

Growth.
I am who I am because of what I have been.
A mind of patience.

Come walk with me.
Be my friend.
Together, we can grow.

Nothing at All

Mindy K. Bickal

Nothing to say, nowhere to go;
Who it is in me, I do not know.
I am lost in a world that isn't for me;
Built around others fantasies.
They think I am them, for that is what I show;
I want them to love me, but do they... no.

I look around to see, but there is no light;
Shattering pain is felt, the everlasting midnight.
Everything is gone, lost in the dark;
This invisible line, left here as my mark.
I, so cold and lonely, bleak with empty hate;
Set me free someone, unlock the rusty gate.

Listen to my whimpers, feel my salty tears;
Please don't stare gaping, laughing at my fears.
I shake from tortured words, living as a joke;
Silent with weak love, hallow without hope.
My life now has ended, I've taken my final fall;
What have I to remember, nothing... nothing at all.

You're Leaving Today

Mindy K. Bickal

As you pack your things I watch quietly.
Today is the day you're leaving me.
We don't speak so no tears will fall,
I'm waiting for you to leave then I'll cry it all.

You've loved me the way I've wanted all my life.
When you walk away please pull out this knife.
I will not hate you for this pain that has been caused,
But remember you as the love that has been lost.

I want to say, "I love you please stay,
I want to be with you for all my days,
It took all my life to find you,
It will take me the rest to get over you."

These words echo with sadness in my head,
I don't say them aloud, I watch you leave instead.
These words echo with sadness in my heart,
As you walk out the door, the tears from my eyes start.

A Glimpse into a Loving Soldier

Karen Downham

It's amazing
You walk into the gym
First you see some other soldiers but they're in green so that
 means they're staying here.
Then you see other family members.
But you think to yourself "Wait they don't look like I feel!"
Like their heart is slowly breaking.
Then the soldiers in tan start coming in.
They are our soldiers, our husbands, our wives and so much
 more to so many more people.
They are the ones that are leaving.
They are the ones that are protecting us and our freedom.
Then after some time goes by,
You don't know how long it has been because unless then
 weren't going it wouldn't be enough.
So you just enjoy the time that you have without looking at
 your watch.
Then you hear someone on the microphone say "FIVE
MORE MINTUES!"
All of a sudden it's as if you hear this very large crash.
Even though you didn't think that every ones' hearts were
 slowly breaking you do now.
For the sound was everyones' hearts breaking at the same
 time.
The time they said "FIVE MORE MINTUES!"
You give your soldier more kiss,
One more hug,
One more "I love you, be safe!"
Then they walk away.
As you keep your tear filled eyes on your soldier they start
 blending in with their new brothers and sisters.
And as you watch your soldier turn into a great sea of tan,
You know in your heart that as they're leaving they're
 thinking "I love you and I'll be home soon!"

You don't know why but you just can't leave until every
soldier is on a bus.
You're wishing, thinking to yourself, "Just let me see your
face one more time."
Then after all the soldiers are loaded up you start going
through the crowd of broken hearts.
You cry until you just possible can't shed another tear.
But when you can finally think clearly you think to yourself,
"Well if my soldier just took a piece of me with them, then
I'm sure they left a piece of them self here with me."
And that's what gets you through having your soldier gone.
Yeah sure, you'll shed a tear from time to time,
But when there hasn't been a breeze all day
And all of a sudden a breeze comes up and wipes your tear
away,
You remember that not only did your soldier take a piece of
you with them,
But they also left a piece of themselves with you.

Huntsville Trees
Lillian Kolorouth



Photograph

Winter Wood
Milika Frank



Nickel, Silver and Mixed Media

Going Home
Victoria Thornton

in this endless darkness
the silence enveloping
what is left of
the sound you once knew
your identity washed away
as your soul took flight
holding my breath
trying to grasp a
translucent hand
and so
if the void takes you
then I hope it takes me too

Carry Us, Icarus

Victoria Thornton

There once was a girl who had been granted a wish. A single wish that embodied endless freedom and surreal solitude. A wish that, for 12 hours, wings would sprout from her back and she would be able to soar and scale the skies, the clouds, the heavens.

For years the vial that contained her winged flight sat neglected and somber on a shelf, collecting dust and dirt that hung to the crystal surface of the bottle. The blue liquid never moved, never shifted, never spoiled nor grew old. As the girl did not, the bottle never changed. The wish, always in her thought, was deemed worth saving for a day that abounded and meant more than any other day in her lifetime. And she swore that she would know that day. After all, the wings did not last forever, just as happiness and sorrow are ever fleeting.

And so, the more time passed, the less her 12 hour gift was noticed. Days, weeks, months went by, and still nothing. Eventually, the bottle was shoved behind other ornamental objects, such as tacky knick-knacks and kitschy candle holders from trips to the coast. For a while, the vial and the dream it contained were long forgotten and long lost.

Then tragedy struck. The girl, who had endeared a bond with her family that was utterly irrevocable, was abandoned. In just a day, in just perhaps a second or a minute, everything that she had known and loved was torn away from her like an angry storm. And she mourned. And she grieved. Enough tears were shed to fill an ocean. Sadness, defeat, sorrow, and loss were all she carried with her now. She knew nothing more and she would never know anything else.

Until that day. This day. The only day. Whilst

cleaning out her house of the mementos that so often afflicted her with the agony of her loss, the girl stumbled across something that she could not immediately recognize. This vial, she wondered, what was it? Ah, and then she remembered. The winged flight. The feathered paradise. There was no better time to do it, and she felt it and she knew it, just like she had anticipated she would.

She popped off the top, and with an excitement and fervor she had never known, swallowed the contents in a single drag. Her heart was racing, her blood was flowing, and soon wings ripped out of her shoulder blades, clad in gorgeous white feathers that were pure and perfect. She was an angel.

She stepped out of her house in the first time in weeks, still having been in mourning. The sun, beautiful and high, smiled upon her today. Tears of pain and tears of joy welled themselves along her eyelashes, and soon were chasing one another down her rosy cheeks.

And then she had taken flight. It was so easy! Everything was strange and fantastic and perfect and utterly overwhelming, while still being calming and free. Her independence was amplified ten fold, and she never wanted to turn back. Her joy was unbridled and never had it been felt this profoundly by anyone in the entire universe, for she had a gift, for she was an angel.

But where would she go? Ah, she knew. Her wings, those extraordinary appendages, would take her to them! They would lift her above the grime and frowning faces of the people below her and they would carry her to her parents. They would take her to the heavens, and she would see them again, those smiling faces and nurturing hearts. She would see them again and they would be hers to have once again, welcoming her home with open arms.

And through the clouds she climbed, her wings beating fiercely and lifting her ever higher, towards her ultimate destiny. The graces of God would take her even higher, and soon, oh so soon, she would see them again. The girl would finally be whole after having been half for so long.

But soon the morning sun steadily retreated, and the girl was sure that she could now get burnt by a star, she was so high. The moon's waxy face hung lazily in front of her, tracking her progress as much as a moon possibly could.

But the gift did not last forever, and her flight was soon ascending it's final hour. The girl did not pay attention. Her body was not tired, and her wings still beat with as much determination as they had when she first left ground. Nothing could stop her now.

Back on earth, her luminescent plumage glittered and glided to the ground. One by one they left a trail across the globe, these feathers that were now not at all a part of the wings they should have been.

And back in the air, the wings' beating grew slower and they would take her no higher. The wings, which were once plush and full of soft feathers, were revealing bald spots where feathers had fallen gently away.

No, she thought. She would reach them. There's no going back now. She would be with them once again.

Descent. Her flight was no longer a flight, but a fall. She was falling and catching feathers on the way down. A shooting star. Two shooting stars. Falling ever faster, there was no stopping. And now she was just a girl, no longer a winged creature who could soar above all. She was no longer an entity of angeldom, or anything beyond human and natural.

And as her lithe body broke and crashed onto the hard surface of the earth, as blood ebbed its way from her skull and onto the fallen feathers around her, as her body contorted and convulsed through sadness and death, she did go higher. Her angeldom did ascend to the heavens, with finally perfect and lasting wings. And it is true. She did reach them, she did see them, once again.

Playing in the Sky

Yolanda Perez



Photograph

Leave a Light On
Britney Linville



Photograph

Untitled
Dianne Schlekewvy



Photo
