

Parnassus

THE

Literary Arts Magazine of
Northern Essex Community College

2012

with:
Special
GUEST
POET

TOM
SEXTON

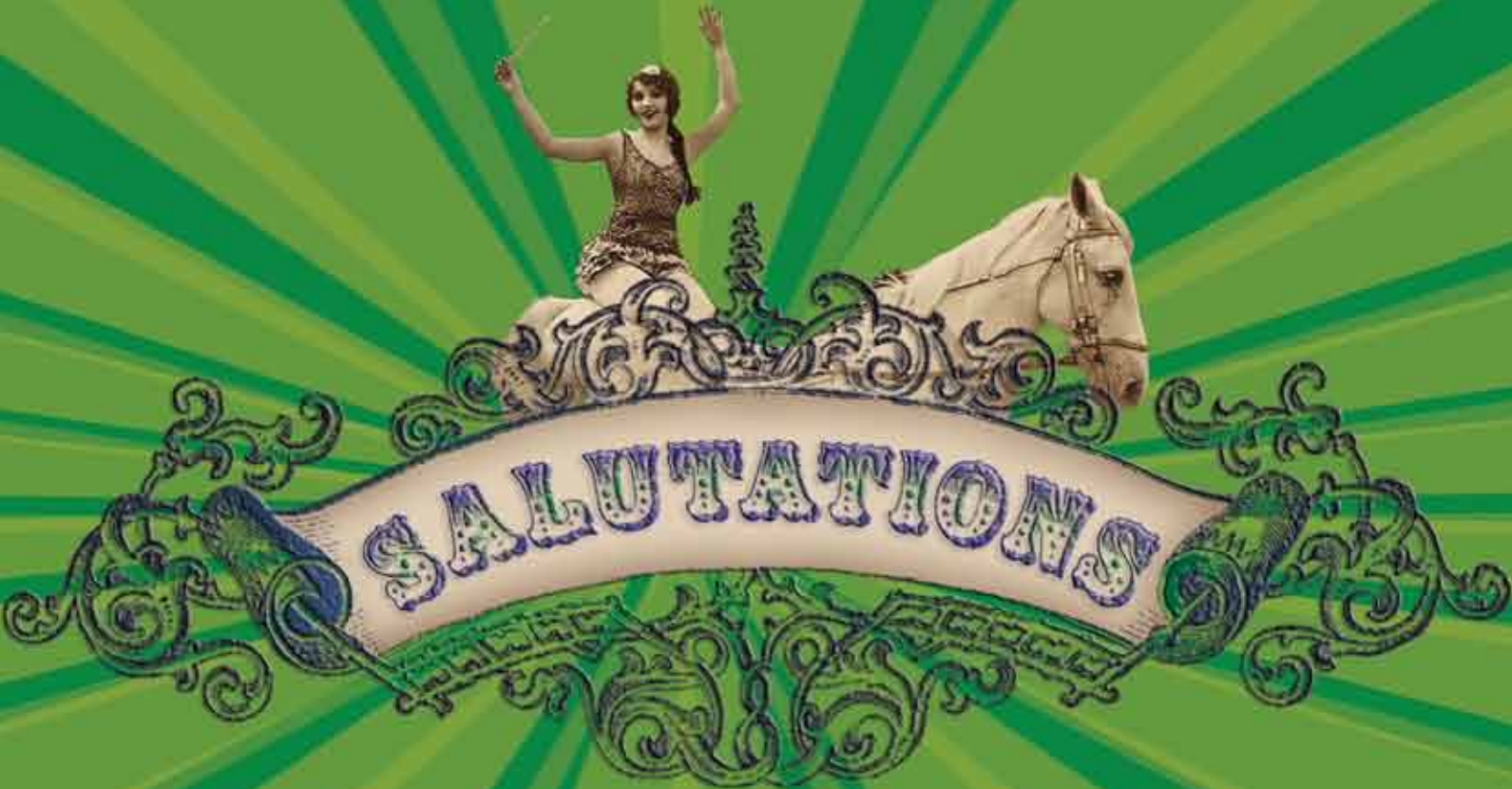
POET
LAUREATE
of
ALASKA

and:
Special
GUEST
AUTHOR

GREGORY
MAGUIRE

AUTHOR
of
WICKED





DEAR: EVERYONE

Re: 2011-2012

It seems like we always start off this way, speaking in large, eye-shattering volumes about our previous year and the towering triumphs we've had, pulling out from our infinite trunks an entire horn section to blare out our accomplishments to the world. (It probably seems that way because we usually, in fact, do just that.)

We concede; this is a fair point. But this year, we simply can't help but feel extra accomplished, and if our horns are a bit louder than usual, we hope you'll excuse the enthusiasm. Indeed, last year was an amazing one for *Parnassus*, arguably the best yet. We also cannot help but feel a bit on the downhill slope after so much great honor we received, but we promise it will not deter us from once again providing to you, our always faithful reader, the best that we can offer to you of Northern Essex Community College's best and brightest, brashest and boldest, biggest and ... well, you know. The pages ahead of you promise all of the above and more.

It's with further great enthusiasm that we present to you our guest author for this issue, Gregory Maguire, the author of several amazingly creative novels, including the massively popular *Wicked* series, which has been adapted into a very successful Broadway musical, which is still touring the globe today. Mr. Maguire very generously has given us a brand new, never before published short story, which we are sure you'll adore. In addition, to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of NECC, we have asked the famed poet Tom Sexton to return to his roots, with a special section of his poetry. Mr. Sexton was one of the founding editors of the first edition of *Parnassus*, back in 1965, and we're very happy to welcome him back in our pages once again.

Let not even a sliver of delay keep you from the succulent stories, plump poems, and awe-inspiring art ahead; we look forward to your reactions!

Parnassus

RECENT AWARDS

2011

BEST IN NATION, Two Year College, Associated Collegiate Press Pacemaker Awards
GOLD CROWN, Columbia Scholastic Press Association Crown Awards
FIRST PLACE, Community College Humanities Association Awards, Eastern Division
GOLD MEDAL, National Council for Marketing & Public Relations Paragon Award
FIRST PLACE, American Scholastic Press Association Awards

2010

SILVER CROWN, Columbia Scholastic Press Association
FIRST PLACE, Eastern Division, Community College Humanities Association
FIRST PLACE, American Scholastic Press Association
BEST PAGE DESIGN, American Scholastic Press Association

2009

FINALIST, Associated Collegiate Press Pacemaker Awards
FIRST PLACE, Eastern Division, Community College Humanities Association
FIRST PLACE WITH MERIT, American Scholastic Press Association

table of contents

Guest Author

Gregory Maguire In That Country 6

Guest Poet

Tom Sexton In a Pine Grove by the River 13
 Star Marrow 14
 The Red Sox 14
 Forsythia 15

Poetry

Ann Goodwin Narcissus and Echo 16
 Cathy Morrow Reflection 17
 Aja Metcalf I am... 18
 Everson Taveras Dreams That Free Us From the Fear 19
 The Incurrible 20
 Edge of Life 22
 The Last Straw 23
 The Gas Stop 24
 Mary Ellen D'Angelo-Lombardi On My Street 26
 Friendship 27
 I Never Had That 28
 Nothin' Doin' 29
 Eddie Brophy Midnight Kiss Under a Doomsday Clock 30
 Charles Darwin's Deathbed 32
 Michele Simon Beach at Winter's End 33
 Words 32
 No Goodbye 35
 Tony Rossetti Where Have All the Poets Gone? 36
 Wallace E. Clark IV Morning 36
 Sirius 37
 Nephila 37
 Arcane 38
 Untitled #1 39

Gallery

Nyashantty Arujo 42
 Noemi Cruz 43
 Nikki Olson 44
 Nancy Walker 45
 Martha Squiers 46
 Kelly Goodwin 47
 Haley Norris 47
 Elizabeth Laskiewicz 50
 Christina Silva 50
 David Sheeley 51
 Chantelle Montgomery 52
 Cathy Colbert 52
 Anne Lafond 53
 Amy Titus 53
 Walter Margerison 54
 Alex Kyzer 55
 Ivan Perez 55
 Megan Cheney 57
 Vaughn Abbott 57
 Michele Simon 58
 Rebecca McBrien 60

Fiction

Michele Simon The Princess' Horse 64
 Haley Norris Lemons 65
 Lisa A. Mahoney The Front Page 66

Creative Non-Fiction

Michele Simon The Other Side of the Beach 70
 Kassie Rubico Fertility Goddess 72
 Brandon Lavoie 31, 30 N, 34, 45 E 76

Contributors Staff

78



GUEST AUTHOR
GREGORY
MAGUIRE

Gregory Maguire is the author of books for children and adults, including *Wicked*, inspiration for the Broadway musical of the same name. His most recent books are *Out of Oz* and *Tales Told in Oz*.

We are more than pleased to present a brand new story by Mr. Maguire, never before published anywhere else.

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IN
THAT COUNTRY

In that country, when a woman lost her husband at sea, she cut her hair right down to rough nub. She didn't allow herself a shawl, nor covering of any sort: if she was caught outside in her first months as a widow, the rain ran down into her eyes. Not even the ancient bald men in the quay-side cafes went without a woolen cap in the spring rains, but widows did. Only when her hair had grown so it might brush her shoulders again could she swath it in a veil and meet another man's eyes and learn if she had also regenerated a capacity for romance.

If a woman in that country lost her hair due to disease or to its cure, she was deemed effectively widowed, and her husband was allowed to remarry as if it were she who had been carried off to sea. What happened to their children was less governed by convention and often messy; still, it must be said despite a fear of sentimentality that many a husband chose to see his wife through her de facto widowhood. They slept in separate rooms and didn't speak until the wife's hair grew the requisite length. It sounds improbable, but after all, surviving your wife's widowhood to welcome her back into your bed, in the normal course of events, is a privilege not given to most men.

It is a country of several deep but tightly clenched harbors, so the fleets can never grow beyond a few dozen vessels. Because the land is not hospitable for farming, except on the western edge where the rain falls more generously, the villagers live on the daily catch, and so boats for fishing are held to be more valuable than boats reserved for a navy. Luckily the land is far from other islands and threat from foreigners is infrequent. In fact, threat from drought is more persistent than from invasion. The lemons grow small and gnarled one year, the basil is chewed by pests the next. If the air smells of heavenly oregano in the early summer, one can bet that by late summer the tomatoes have failed and the odor of oregano will waft to taunt the betrayed stomach. Next season the goats will all go dry in a wordless pact of obeisance to sisterly reserve. Harvests fail with an almost giddy regularity.

In that country the patriarchs declare that ghosts of men who die at sea cannot return to their home. Being without mass, ghosts of drowned sailors can master currents no more effectively than any other weathered flotsam. This understanding perhaps preserves the survivors of any shipwreck or sailing disaster the bother of worrying when the haunting will start.

Once a man from the leeward coast was out fishing with his brothers and a fit caught him by the throat. He fell overboard and was never seen again, though the boat dropped anchor and the brothers all dove to search for his body. When they went to tell his widow what had happened, they learned that she had died at roughly the same hour as her husband, her foot slipping on a slant of mossy rock, her body dashed into seagull pickings upon the bouldery tumble below. The priest could not determine who had died first and therefore whether the infants should rightly go to the homes of the sailor's brothers or the wife's sisters. So the infants were set out in an old boat and told to drift away.

In that country, if a man happened to live to a greater age than had his father (or a woman her mother), he was expected to bleed himself into a bucket and use the blood for dyeing a scarf to wear around his neck for the rest of his life. This brick-brown scarf was a sign of the life he had inherited from his parents and invested more wisely than they, though the transaction was never clearly explained by medical nurse or minister. The bandanna was a badge of shame and honor both.

The only time the descendant could take it off was if he happened to live to be twice as old as his father had been (or she her mother). In this case the old man boiled the scarf he had been wearing for precisely half his life and drained the soup into the parental grave. If his father had died at sea or her mother from tumbling off a cliff, the aged child threw the water in the sea or off the cliff, respectively. A very belated afterbirth, perhaps.

The cliffs were magnificent, the highest marine cliffs anyone knew about. Also the lowest. No one traveled to other places. Still, a sense of pride suffused the natives. On certain days almost everyone packed up bread and fruit and dried root vegetables and gathered for singing and the propitiation of local deities, just in case the deities were paying attention. They didn't seem often to pay heed, but you never knew. These days were chosen for sun and slow wind, which was safest; still, winds could come across the sea like sudden bulls at a contest, and more than one child lost its footing and then its life. A pair of twins wearing ceremonial skirts actually blew away and never came down; the wretched relatives watched the twins, arms entwined about each other, billowing away, until the babes bobbed out of sight. After that children were allowed to picnic without garb or garment, up to a certain age.

While everyone did a few jobs for themselves, and there was collaboration at times of hurricane or holiday, in general one could say there were nine distinct occupations for adults in that country. They were:

Sailors.

Traders.

Herders.

Priests.

Wives. (Women who did not marry could become one of the following three occupations.)

Medical nurses.

Teachers.

Farmers.

That is eight occupations. The ninth was:

Harbormasters.

There was only ever one harbormaster at a time, but as harbormaster also served more or less as a one-man warrior class and diplomatic corps, he got his own category. If need be he could second a rowboat to serve as his navy.

Children were not a category. Children were an insult, an invading clan sent from the future to grow up among today's natives and overwhelm them in time. Children were degraded, neglected, abused, and barely tolerated. But this is not as harsh as it might sound, as in time children grew up to degrade, neglect, abuse, and scarcely tolerate their toothless elders, those who had survived the trade winds of both sea and cliff.

In that country, when a girl began her first menses, she was required to spend a night in the home of a spinster. It was that good woman's job to warn the bleeding child of the danger of sexual abstinence. Not all spinsters were virgins, of course; indeed, it is possible

that there is no such thing as a virgin spinster. But the spinster held a privileged position in that society. She shared with her sisters half of the annual tithing; the priests got the other half for themselves. She husbanded her independence, privacy, and security by insuring that as few young girls as possible chose the same path, thus threatening her share of the pelican pie. Inevitably, of course, some girls did, which paupered the sisterhood of spinsters to some degree. Still, most girls followed the advice of the good women, indulging in sexual relations as often as opportunity presented itself, and dealing with inconvenient pregnancies in the usual way.

Boys followed a slightly more harrowing initiation into adulthood. When a boy could prove to his father's satisfaction that he could milk himself at will, he was sent out into the olive groves that thrived in a declivity in the center of a ring of hills, far from ocean breezes, where the only truly wild animals of that district, other randy boys, gathered to welcome him to their number. Of that experience grown men rarely talked, even when sloped against the warm wall of the alehouse attached to the apse of the chapel. Women never asked. If some man deep in his cups grew sentimental or resentful and began to spout nonsense, he was taken for a walk and given a good beating by his mates, lest he frighten the boys, lingering by the inglenook, out of their intentions to be made men one day.

The oldest citizen in that country, man or female, was accorded the privilege of naming the newborn children. It always complicated matters if the elder had suffered a stroke and lost the trick of language, as that resulted in a generation without names, or, at best, names that sounded like grunts without consonants, vowels unmoored. The marriage vows in these generations tended to be weaker than usual, as it was evidently hard to commit to a spouse if one had no real name to call out in the throes of sexual tension or release.

Birds flew over the country and many did not land, but flew on.

Ships sometimes posted themselves as a marker on this horizon or the other, a shifting needle against the light, sliding ineffably to the left or the right toward its private history, but few vessels bothered to come near. Perhaps a certain stink that natives could not detect among themselves communicated itself across the seas. Or maybe business elsewhere was always more engaging than life in a small embittered country could ever hope to match. Old wives said that the ghosts of drowned sailors who could not return to their homeland were able to sing wordless warnings into the dreams of sea captains, and maybe those ghosts protected their home from invasion, from correction. Dubious whether ship captains ever listened to the ghosts of sailors, but it can be said without contradiction that no one heeded old wives.

In that country everyone is mutilated. Everyone is savaged. People survive their tribulations, or they don't, but they lumber through their trials together. I do not know where that country is, but I should like to go there.



Poetry

GUEST POET
TOM
SEXTON



Tom Sexton served as Alaska's poet laureate from 1994 until 2000 and was a founding editor of the *Alaska Quarterly Review*. He is the author of thirteen collections of poetry including *For The Sake of the Light: New and Selected Poems*, University of Alaska Press, 2009. His latest collection is *Bridge Street at Dusk*, Loom Press, 2012. He was born in Lowell and attended NECC from 1964 to 1966. Mr. Sexton is a founding editor of *Parnassus*, helping to create the original edition in 1965, and we're pleased to feature his work once again in honor of the 50th anniversary of NECC.

IN A PINE GROVE BY THE RIVER

Turning off the road in a rented car,
I soon come to the place where my father
came to wash and wax our old Cadillac,
wondering once again why I come back.
The Cadillac was as black as Pollard's
hearse and as tall as my father was tall.
When we were finished, we sat side by side
on a rusting running board in silence
while he drank a beer cooled in the river.
One quick sip always made me shiver.
If, as Longley wrote, home is a hollow
between the waves, this was his only home.
For all our longing and for all our art,
what do we ever know of the human heart?

STAR MARROW

Yesterday I read that everything contains
traces of ancient stars, snails climbing
a moss covered rock as if it were a mountain,
the rock, light flaring on a window at dusk,
the sudden luminescence of an opened shell,
the cloak the ocean's waves wear on a clear
night. I imagine Dante's neighbors must
have sensed a nimbus around the poet's head.
We have star marrow in our bones, star marrow.

THE RED SOX TREE

It seemed to take all morning to walk around
the massive trunk of that ancient beech.
Almost nine, I kept one eye on the ground
as I climbed to the highest branch I could reach.
A vet who'd fought on Iwo Jima had carved
the Red Sox line-up where the branches thinned
far above the last lovers' initials in their heart
up where I'd heard the air was cool on your skin.
Reaching the line-up was my goal that summer,
and on the Fourth of July I was almost there
when I was forced back down by thunder
and lightning so close it seemed to singe my hair.
Safe at home behind my bedroom door,
I chanted Williams, Pesky, and Bobby Doerr.

FORSYTHIA

For Carleton Campbell

Ever since your surprised heart gave out
far too soon on that dark January afternoon,
I've been trying to get you down on paper:
your deep love of all that was well made,
how you could hold a rusty piece of metal
to the light and touch the hand that forged it.
You, a nurse beyond the uniform you wore,
knew the moon could pull us from our orbit
or cause the glacial earth to shudder underfoot.

A little homesick and a continent removed,
our dropped r's still clinging to us like burrs,
we shared only the Concord River when we met.
You knew its meadows, and I knew its final fall.
Carl, the forsythia you grew from a cutting
to replace our stunted one will flower this year.
Standing by it, I see you drifting on our river,
water dripping slowly from your resting oars,
as the current takes you to a golden shore.



Narcissus and Echo

Ann Goodwin

A pool of water
Reflects a flower

Narcissus bends
To see his reflection

Echo calls
Her words repeat

Two would be lovers
Cursed and alone

Only nature
Witnesses their sorrow

reflection

Cathy Morrow

If I were a book, what kind would I be?

A book on self-hypnosis or advanced psychology?

Perhaps a book of fairy tales with happily ever after?

I know, a book of poetry, but not the mushy kind,

One that makes you think a bit, but gives you peace of mind.

On the outside I am slightly worn from modest wear and tear,

On the inside, I am almost new, my pages hardly worn,

As if I'm used, but not too much, with far too little care.



I am...

Aja Metcalf

I am the power of zero and the heart of a thousand.
I wonder if these tears can cut through my skin.
I hear my pulse, for my heart won't stop pounding.
I see the shadowed grin of a boy through rows of never ending windows.
I want only to graze my soul against his.
I am the power of zero and the heart of a thousand.

I pretend to coast through life like a breeze.
I feel comfortable stifled.
I touch the weary footsteps of yester in hopes for remembrance.
I worry that I'll let it all get to me.
I cry, I cry for her.
I am the power of zero and the heart of a thousand.

I understand that I won't always be accepted.
I say too many times that I'm sorry.
I dream to scream silently.
I try to try, but I'm tired of trying.
I hope for each day to come together as one.
I am the power of zero and the heart of a thousand.



dreams that free us from the fears

Everson Taveras

Look at you
With all your imperfection,
Complexity and fears
That shrink your hopes and dreams
To stars crushed into broken glass
Taunting you at night,
Demons dancing
To the sound of your fear;
Music to their ears
Nightmares slicing through your subconscious
Like heavy blades against a pound of flesh
Pry open your head
Look into your soul
And dig deep
Examine yourself, Identify,
Extract the genius that you are;
Always have been
Burn the forest and light the sky
Unleash your imagination,
Set them free from the cages
Without relent or hesitation

Do not follow your dreams;
Chase them, hunt them down
Wrestle your fears in the pits of hell,
Cast them into obliteration
To burn in the light of your triumph
Never let go, never surrender
Hold your head way up high
And let your existence be known
Break the rules, leave nothing behind
Until the gods come crashing down
Praising your legend,
Your valor to dream without fear,
And to live as if the world is yours
Yours for the taking



the incorrigible


Everson Taveras

I mock everything and everyone
And I love to boast about who I am
They all look at me as if I were joke
Nothing more than a slice of dull ham

Ignorance would be an upgrade for me
I would simply take it as a compliment
The endeavor to mount onto something more would be
A burden I would later regret

Everyone is dying to embrace thee
For I am your forever ungrateful fool
Love me for who I am you see
You find pleasure in laughing at such a tool

Unconscious of how clueless I've become
I can never tell wrong from right
They take advantage of this to beat me up
Until I can't tell the difference between day and night



At times my body aches
With an unbearable pain I can't describe
It feels like someone burned me to a stake
And pulled out the intestines I had inside

So I decided it was time to replace
The person I once claimed to be
And to change the look on people's faces
To accept that I was not thee

That was I was no longer oblivious
Of how negligent and heedless I was
And that I would no longer be thoughtless
Of the careless mistakes I had done

They all died of laughter and said
"You can never change who you are"
Unmindful of how wrong they were
I continued to play my part

I can never change who I am
Nor who I'm meant to be
The indifferent imbecile, the bastard man
Who could not grasp the endeavor of humility





edge of life

Everson Taveras

I'm not gay;
I just dabble with
Dolls that I trash
Afterwards
"Look at the mess you've made"
Father enters the room
Belt wrapped around
His hand, tightening
In fury at the audacity
He closes the door behind
Muffled screams, thuds of struggle
The echoes of *tradition* in practice

I'm not straight either;
Though I wrestle demons
At day, and they return at night
In the form of nightmares
So mother comes to hush me up
I tell her I don't believe in God
Having the final say about gender
She unplugs the night light
And uses the cord
In the name of the Lord,
To have me delivered in *pain*

But I am free;
To decide my fate
Whether it is the pink satin
Or the blue ribbon
Or both, I say, open-minded
Paternal figures loom over me
In the darkness,
While I play with Barbie
And Max Steel
Something tinkling hits the floor
Tears of mercy burn the carpet,
The doors slowly closes
Nothing but *tough love*
Filling the silence



the last straw

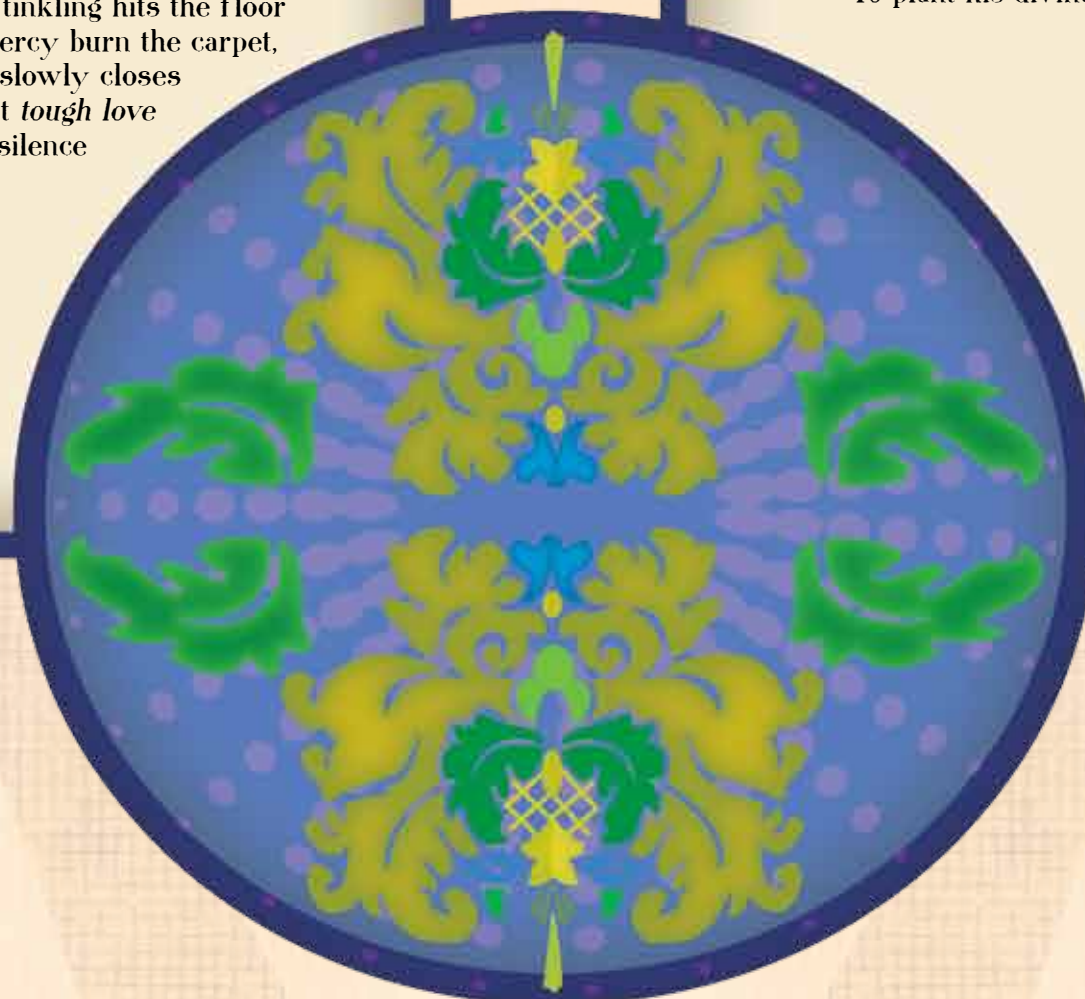
Everson Taveras

Over the green, slush meadow
A cornfield rises like the flaming sun
Its corn is sweet, and its contents mellow
The perfect dose of heaven's plum

The world has taken its kind fruit
And has poisoned it with steaming rum
God has delivered us the perfect root
To plant his divine words onto our tongues

But like all forsaken things in life
Such things bleed, rot, and die
Nothing is more becoming
Than to find a fruit's heart dried
And its soul being deprived

Love is also like all fruits
Filled with plumped bliss,
And almost without flaw
But as the screaming crops burn and spew
Nothing can ever last, not even love
Because love has pulled its last straw





the gas stop

Slurred words, dirty thoughts
Start to sing,
Until the actions speak louder
Than one more drink
Or one more song
Shouting in ecstasy
For power of dominance
Everything goes dead except the conversation
The TV blurs out;
Chatter and glass tinkling cease
Alcohol at its finest hour
Advises you to leave

"Let's get out of here"

Everson Taveras

Drunken legs below the spinning sky
Find their way to the hotel
What hotel? When?
The stench of fading perfume,
Freshly wet soap and beer to carpet
Overruled by cheap cigarettes venting by
the window sill
Time sways to a slow jazz
Neither of you understand
The lyrics to
Only the rhythm of sex
Makes sense; suddenly clothes no longer
fit you

"Do you have a condom?"

Kidnapped by darkness
Which screams in pain
Raining the sheets;
Of pleasure and guilt
But the pain is too good
To stop,
Stop!
You roll over
Love,
And your 15 minutes of fame
Over

The lights of reality
Burn your eyes
Reminding you of the dread:
Of a morning face, a stranger in bed
a terrible headache that screams
With guilt felt because of pleasure
Of something left familiar
But nothing remembered

You wash your hands
And walk way
Without out looking at the sheets
Stained of the putrid act
Without the awkward goodbye
Only the thanks

"Don't forget to close the door behind you"



on my street

Mary Ellen D'Angelo-Lombari

On my street
sprinkler heads
give life to green
lawns, mowers buzz
March to November

On my street
Handymen fashion
homemade drip faucets
flowers cascade into
tumultuous flowing beauty
May to October

On my street
retirement yes,
Florida no, wife won't
go, cure for that?
brand new heated cab
t-shirt with an eight foot plow
December to April

On my street
old wooden fences
older still, faded, rotting,
falling, new white fences
square the neighborhood
nicks and dents are the
new old, rust the new older-still
Spring to spring

On my street
a porch here a bigger porch
there, a pool there a bigger
pool here, Dwarf Spruce divide
this property line, Blue Spruce
divide that property line, that shed
is painted over there, this shed is
sided over here
Summer to summer

On my street
Hours spent hobbies
defined crumbling mortar
Pressure washed to reveal
New England rocks pulled from
The earth to build a wall stake
a claim new mortar placed to
renew the vows the stake
the wall
This land is your land that
land is your land
Year to year



friendship

Mary Ellen D'Angelo-Lombari

Like a comfortable corner
to hang your hat
and put your feet up
friendship is a space
designed to kick back 'n relax

Like a long leisurely meal
with five full courses
not including dessert
friendship fills you up
leaving contentment, satisfaction

Like a good book
whose hero and heroine
live on past their story
friendship gives desire, longing
for the next chapter to never end

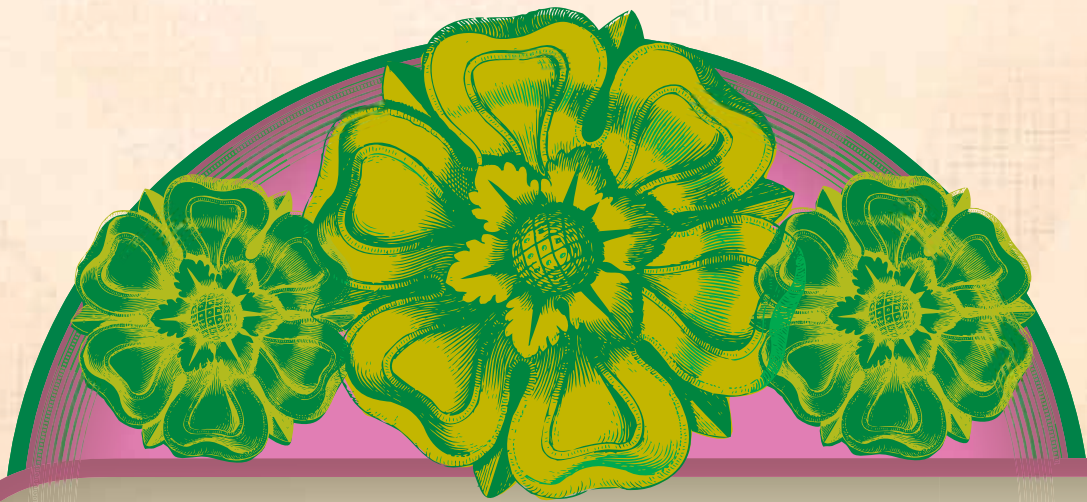
Like a sliding window, a padded
stool to put your knees on
a priest to hear your burdens
friendship captures your woes
under the cloak of forgiveness

Like the white knight
you knew was waiting there
to gallop in and save the day
friendship gives you opportunity
to be the one who says, I'll help

Like a newborn baby
young love, and seventy degrees
on the first day of spring
friendship gives you hope
of old dreams, renewed

Like the question or the prayer
being answered after a wait
designed to inspire trust
friendship comes when least expected
lightening, waiting for the thunder

Like the surprise party
that was truly kept a secret
or the gift you didn't expect
friendship makes you thankful
for all the blessings in your life



I never had that

Mary Ellen D'Angelo-Lombari

I never had that
hair wispy and curly
starting out straight at 8am
coming over the finish line,
5pm curls
unruly frame for your ears

I never had that
a favorite child
one to favor and uphold
one to set to schemes
of shame, perverse either way

I never had that
time when I was yours
a princess in the making
maybe that's why, Daddy
I'm not like you

I never had that
blood sugar on the down low
hands convulse to misdirect
orange juice away from your mouth
life so near and so unreachable

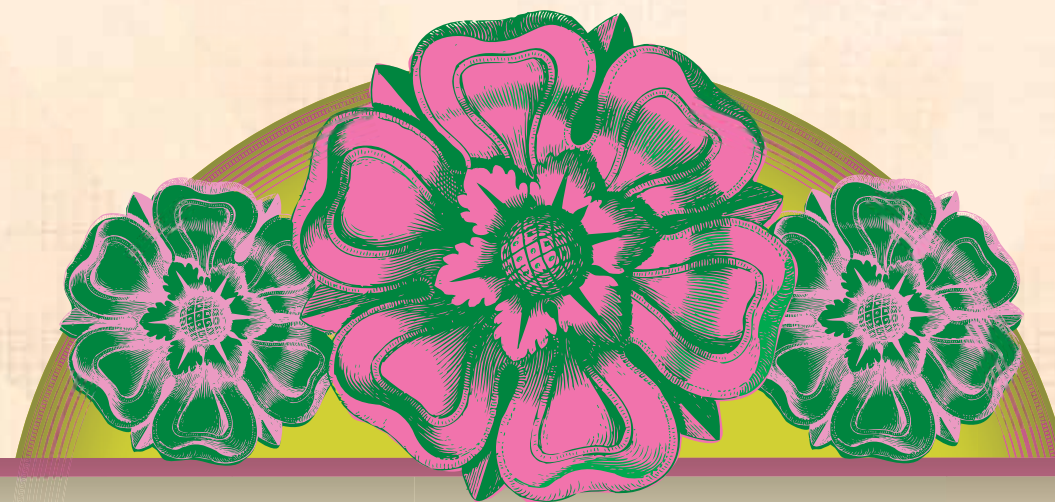
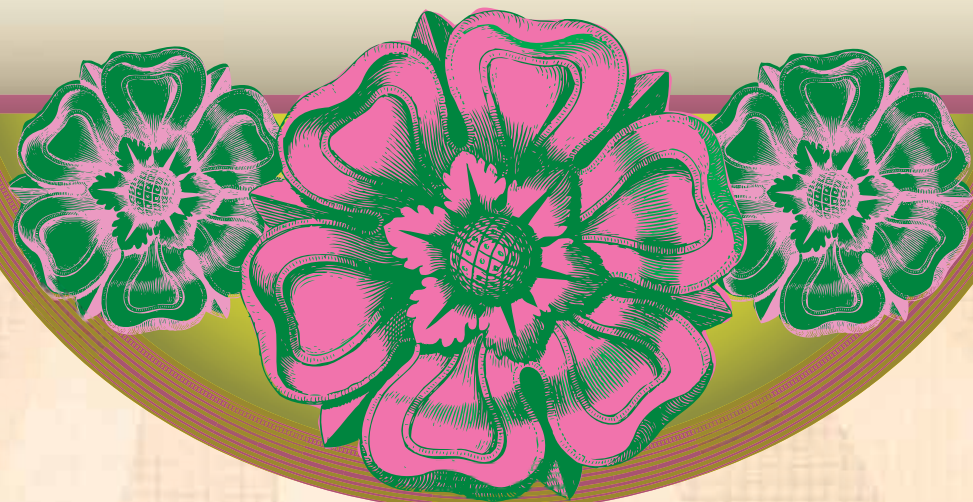
I never had that
secret that must not
be told secrets ordered confined
within these four walls
that structure the next generation

I never had that
given all the familiarity
at your hand I wonder
are you in hell now
bathing in the lake of fire?

I never had that
sense of humor
that finds inspiration to chuckle
at the sorrow of another
tears flowing down cheeks
your mouth and teeth set to drama

I never had that
compulsion to enjoy
the degradation of another
all the more fulfilling
with your personal touch

I never had that
I cried for you
your death taught me
I can't wish a dog to hell
Did you ever cry for me?



nothin' doin'

Mary Ellen D'Angelo-Lombari

nothin' doin'
controllers shake
handheld light shows
shoot rifles shoot pistols
chips never see a bowl
battles won, battles lost
epic win saves the free world

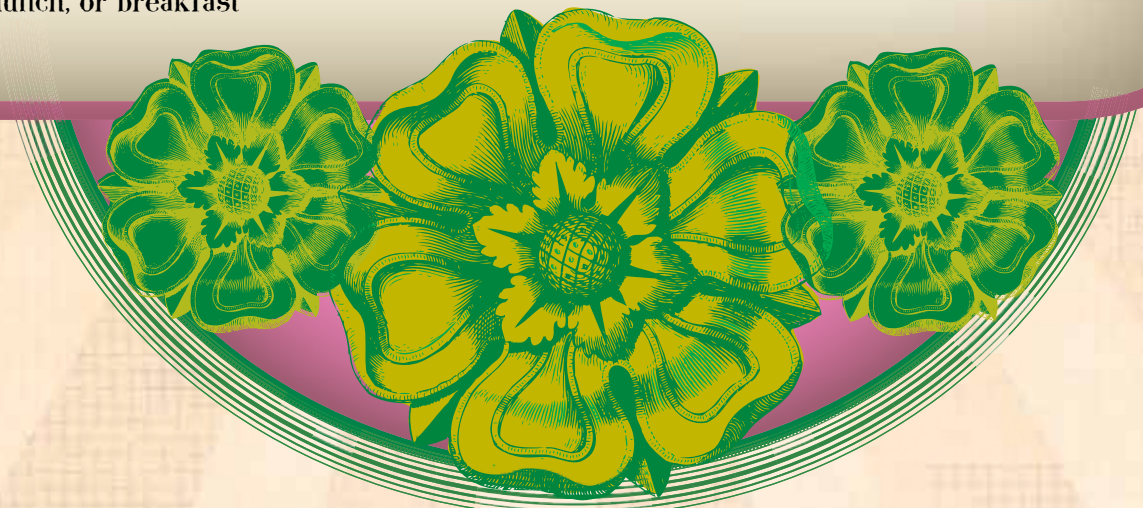
nothin' doin'
zombies wreak havoc
Sprite by the two liter
World's Dumbest Criminals
crash, fall, punch, swear
dance with the world's worst
childhood by-gones

nothin' doin'
pan
pan, water
pan, water, seasoning packet
pan, water, seasoning packet, noodles
pan, water, seasoning packet, noodles, three minutes
dinner, or lunch, or breakfast

nothin' doin'
bzzzt bzzzt bzzzt
dude, is that you?
ha, what?
dude, quit texting me, I'm right here
don't tell me what to do
bzzzt bzzzt bzzzt

nothin' doin'
one thirty seven
two forty five
three twelve
four twenty one
eleven fifteen, enough
time for a candy run
dinner, or lunch, or breakfast

nothin' doin'
sneakers tied
slung over one shoulder
bag, box, games, controllers,
slung over the other shoulder
front door squeaks open
sunlight reaches for squinted eyelids
going on home, nothing to do here





*midnight kiss under
a doomsday clock*

Eddie Brophy

Talking heads with Chelsea grins,
Keep telling me that I'm servile to my endorphins
But I know a look when I feel a glance
So it's imperative that for once I take a chance
If we met a hailstorm of comets I'd know for sure
Some atrocities are inevitable, and most epidemics have no cure
And I've handled about as much as I can endure

I want to see the world fall apart from a different point of view
Because if we're all doomed to incinerate on cue
I'd rather spend my last day here with you,
Vulnerable under your intense scrutiny in a sacred milieu
Where I would make you my last kiss here on earth

But if we survived, only to perish to the dearth that follows
I'd meander emaciated for days, sustained only by the love I swallow
And if we were held like prisoners of war by over zealous preachers
Evangelical tyrants who berated us like repugnant creatures
I'd still know that they're as godless as me
Proletariats in the spiritual hierarchy
Who believe they'll be lulled into a splendiferous deep six
But it's just consecrated fertilizer under a neon crucifix

Because the truest religion that I can see
Is worshipped in a temple of contorted bodies
Their Elysium is a glorified Times Square
Mine is a faith renewed through the intimacy of your touch
Their bibles are full of manifestos they arrogantly declare
Mine makes me realize their messiah isn't worth very much



Charles Darwin's deathbed

Eddie Brophy

I repent-
All pontificated blasphemies
And complacent godlessness, I now resent
A contrite sinner, a seeker of impunity, I must admit
That death made even Charles Darwin a poltroon hypocrite
Not unlike the radical myopia, who branded congress enemy of state
Marching behind a musical guru who told them to imagine no heaven
Even John Lennon shook Reagan's hand at the pearly gates
While articulating a genuine distaste for his brethren
Perhaps that's why we need martyrs and assassins
Because we can't have our heroes contradicting who we want them to be
They're just soulless vessels who we've invested all of our passions
How dare they think they can succumb to a shameful mediocrity?
And despite all the Hail Marys you can say
Jesus Christ was simply the glorified pop star of his day



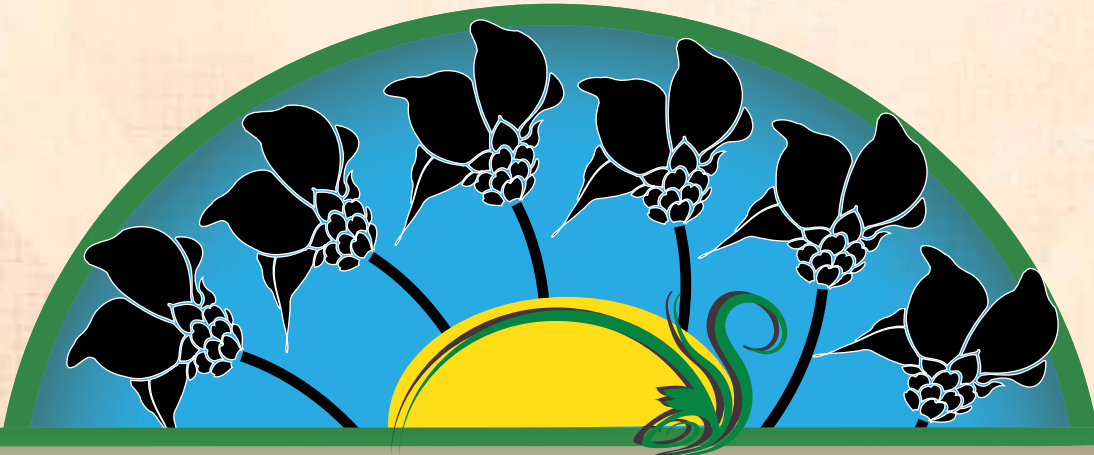
the beach at winter's end

Michele Simon

Vacant cottages veiled in mist
with empty swings that creak and twist
sheltered by sand dunes piled up high
reaching to a solid steel sky
that overshadows a new moon
while ice cold rain softly croons

to hungry seagulls that feast
on a frozen seaweed fleece,
surrendered from tossing swells,
amidst treasures of sea shells
awaiting on snow covered
sands for winter's end to land.





words

Michele Simon

Into flame the words rose
sizzling and crackling,
dissipating into smoke.
Coughing halted her laughter.
Tears welled in her eyes.
She pulled up the sash
of the blackened window,
capturing a warm breeze
and a glimmer of a rising sun.
Pink and white flowers
growing on a giant cactus
radiated in the glow
from the red-orange sky.
She gazed into the man-like
shadow the cactus cast,

wondering if her son
cried when he transposed
those words to paper.
A dry breeze rushed by
carrying away the last
wisps of the letter.
She watched the cinders
blur into the drifting
sand and burnt grass,
disappearing into the silent
shadow of the cactus, and
she ached for the words, the
simple sound of the words
that would give her peace.

no goodbye

Michele Simon

I sat in the swing,
holding him in my arms,
gently gliding back and forth.
Under a stormy evening sky
I sang him his last lullaby.

Time became eternity,
rocking and singing
until my throat hurt
as much as my heart,
not quite able to say goodbye
not wanting to cry.

A damp wind wailed
Echoing with deafening silence
Through the winter barren trees.
His still warm body cradled in
my lap, the swing creaking in the breeze.

Nestled in a loved blanket,
wrapped up in a garbage bag,
I placed my heart in a hole
in the icy muddy earth.
Did he ever know his worth?



*where have
all the
poets gone?*

Tony Rossetti

Where are the poets?
The night resounds their absence.
When will they return?

morning

Wallace E. Clark IV

In the early dark morning
I am a rock in the field,
You are the wind that runs wild through
the long grass
Like lovers' fingers through hair.

When the early bird of Dawn's first
chirp is heard
I am an apple on a branch,
You are the chilled beads of dew that
roll over my skin
& the hot orb that rises, and chases them away.

At morningtide, when the delicate tenebrous
shades begin to fade
I am strewn shards of smoothed glass on
the Sea's edge,
You are the shaking and shivering
spectacle of light
That makes mirrors of, & reveals me.

sirius

Wallace E. Clark IV

Sapphire speck, the brightest in the sky
Divine pendant hanging on the collar bone of Night
Beryl beams, that stretch & reach my naked eyes
Vivid shine, vaccine for Darkness' plight
Oh cluster, your tiny torch & cerulean spines
Oh dog star, my chin & the Nile rising, your evident sign

nephila

Net of sacred silk, oh you ochroid arachnid
Weaving gold like Rumpelstiltskin
Maps of sticky spirals
Fashioned with holy amber strands
Writing spider, your threads
Shine like sunlight
To ensnare the bee & finch



the arcane

Wallace E. Clark IV

Frank was a man who was always smug to his barkeep
But always tipped him twenty bucks
That's what made him feel like it was his joint,
That's what kept him coming in.
At night he curled up wordless
Like the smoke from the cigarette he barely dragged

Jane was a slim lady who always wore her favorite color
She smiled at strangers & dreamt of getting away
That's what made the rose stay in her cheeks,
That's what kept her going.
At night she curled up wordless
Like the fiddle of a fernhead before the frond

The fire that they carried was phosphorus
A faint glow when they breathed
A couple of nighthawks trying to get lost off the highway
Dying for coffee &...
The sound of rain on the roof of the weigh station diner like glass bells
Two booths apart they drank & half prayed,
Frank laid hands on the table, Jane bent her head & sang



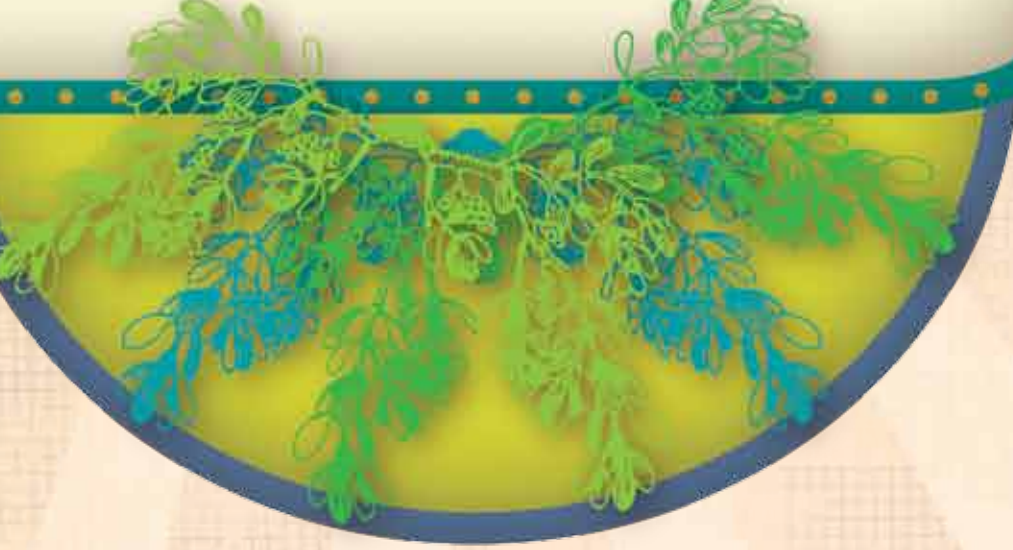
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Wallace E. Clark IV

Heard long ago
That we reap what we sow
& I know,
But the weight stacks like trash on a popular road
Night warbles her gorgeous somber odes
& I quote...

Dreamt of a horse running from the forest to the coast
It raised its eyes to the Moon like a man raises a toast
I felt every - single - thing I've ever owed
Put my hand to my heart, so to remove the stone
The black birds those bards, crowed
& I made note...

Where can we go with our yokes
Us broke, & lonely folk,
When the rain-belts pelt & soak?
When the train trumpets blow, & the toads croak?
The ghosts slowly spoke
& I wrote...



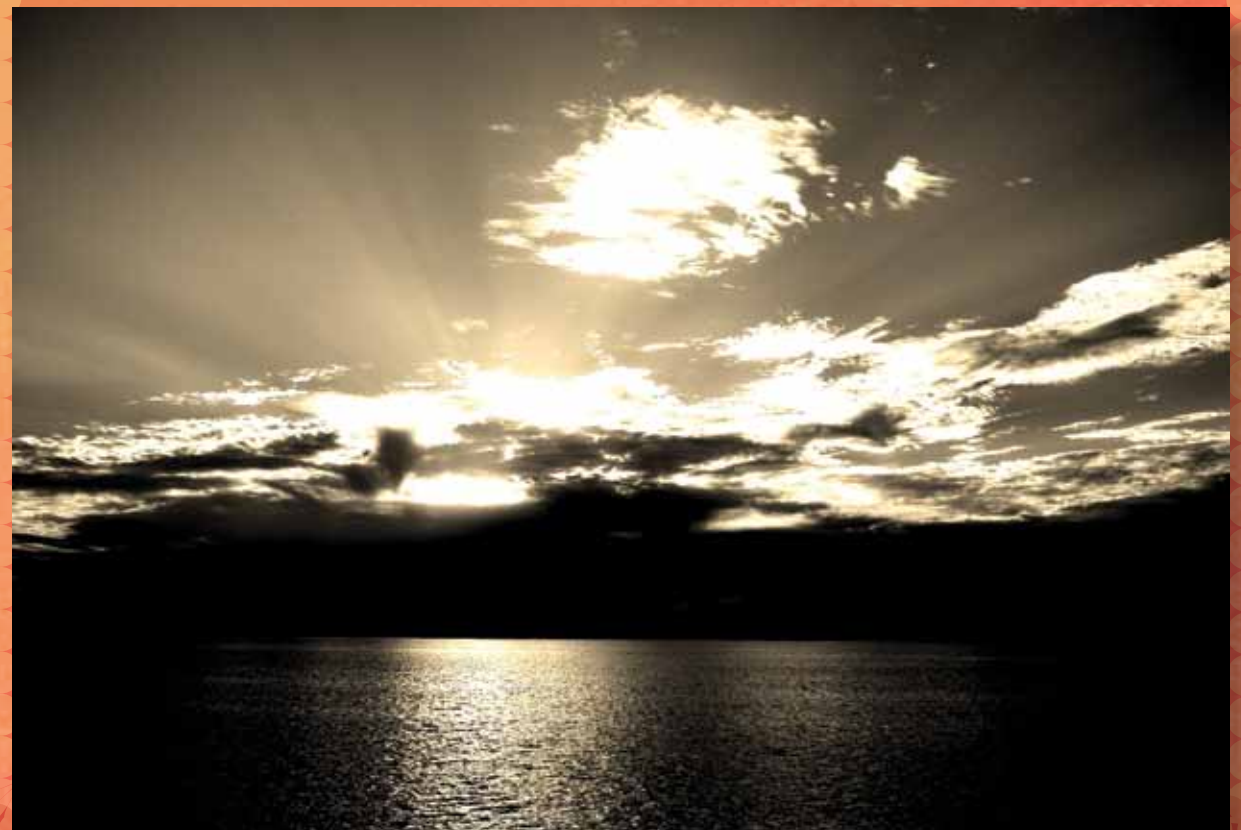
Gallery

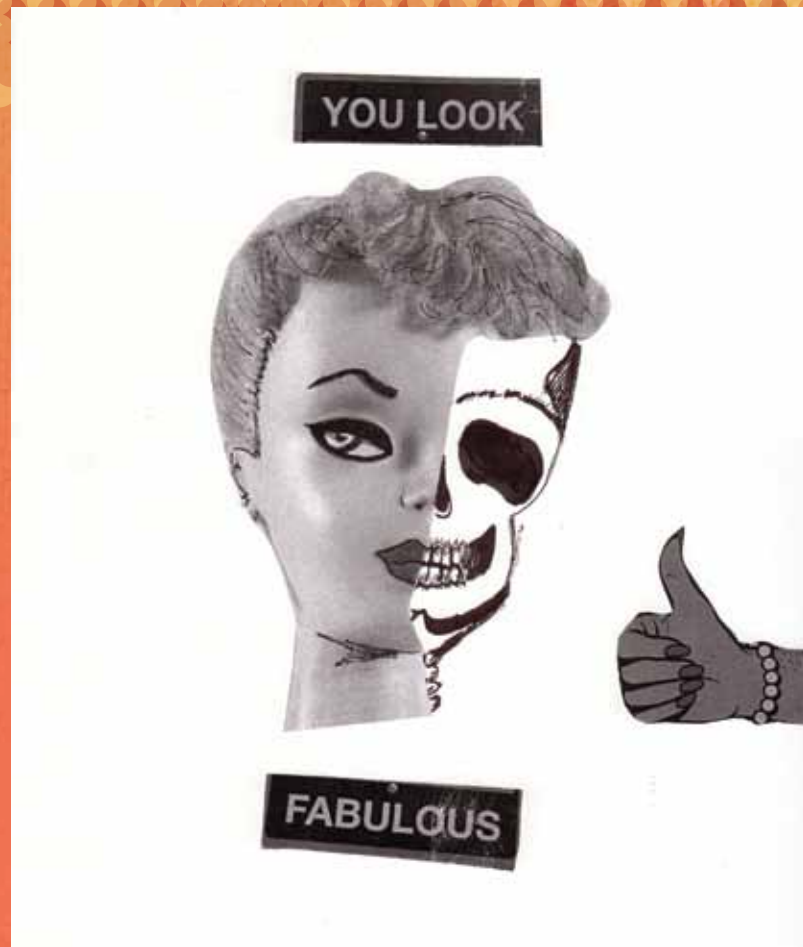


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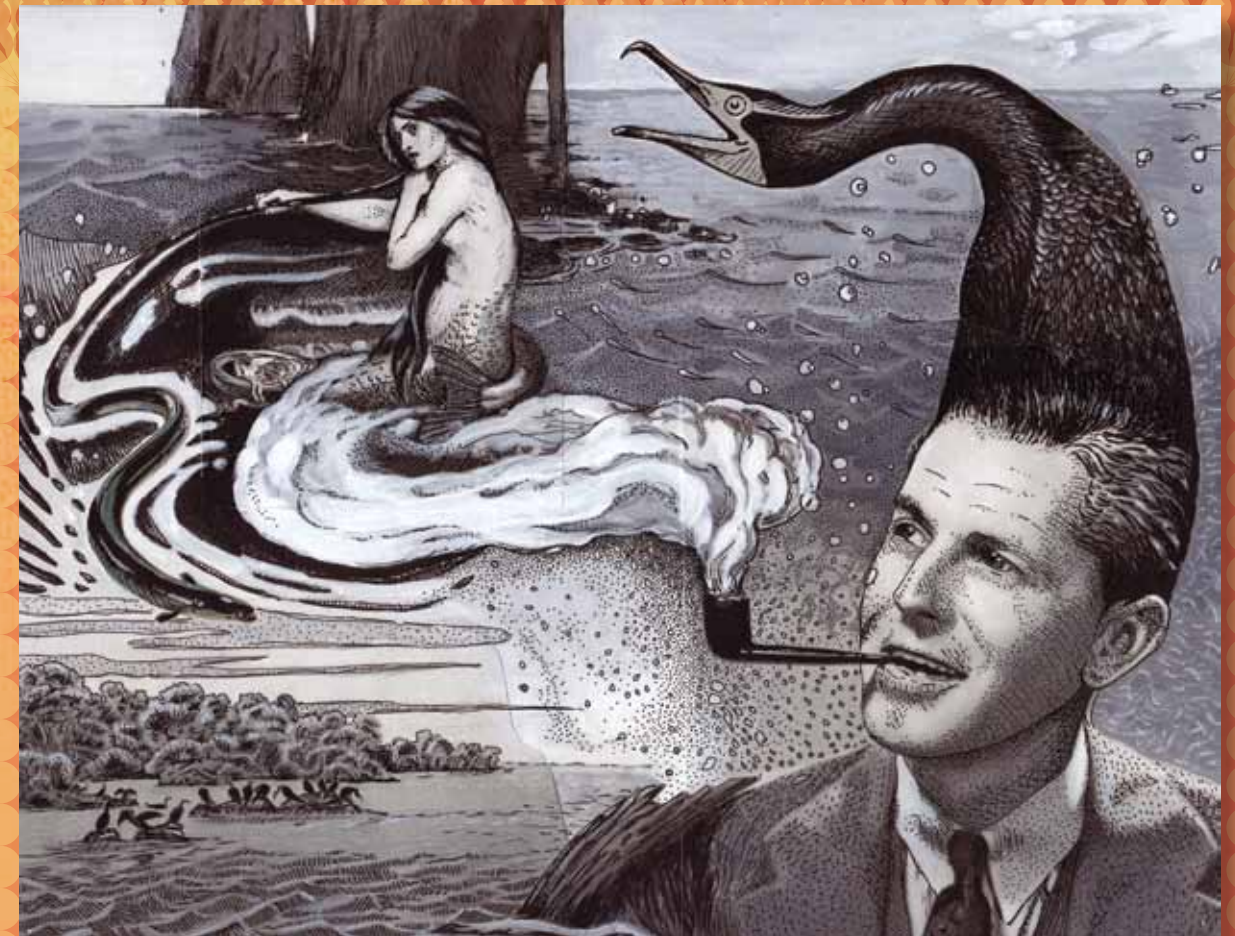


Noemi Cruz

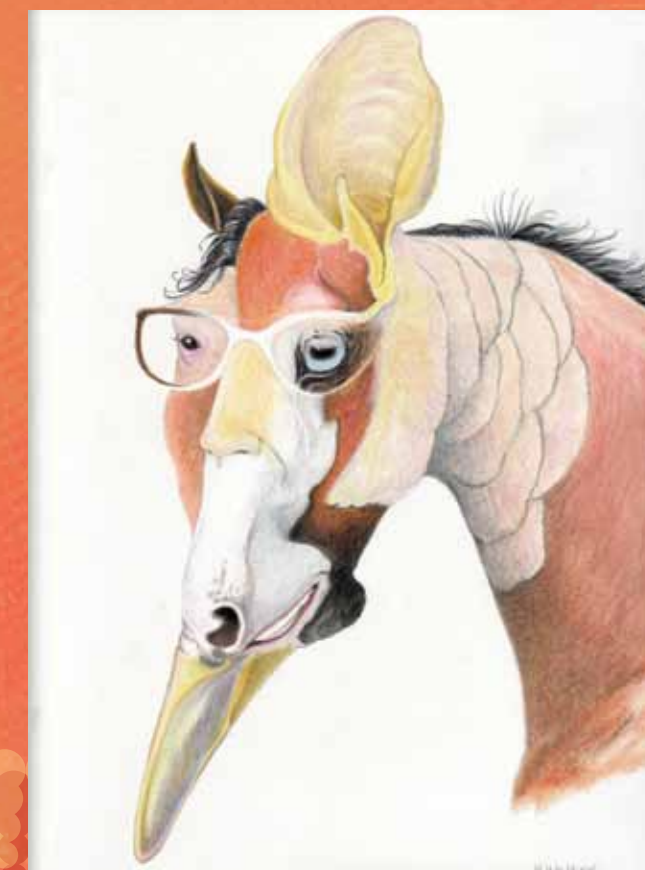




Nikki Olson



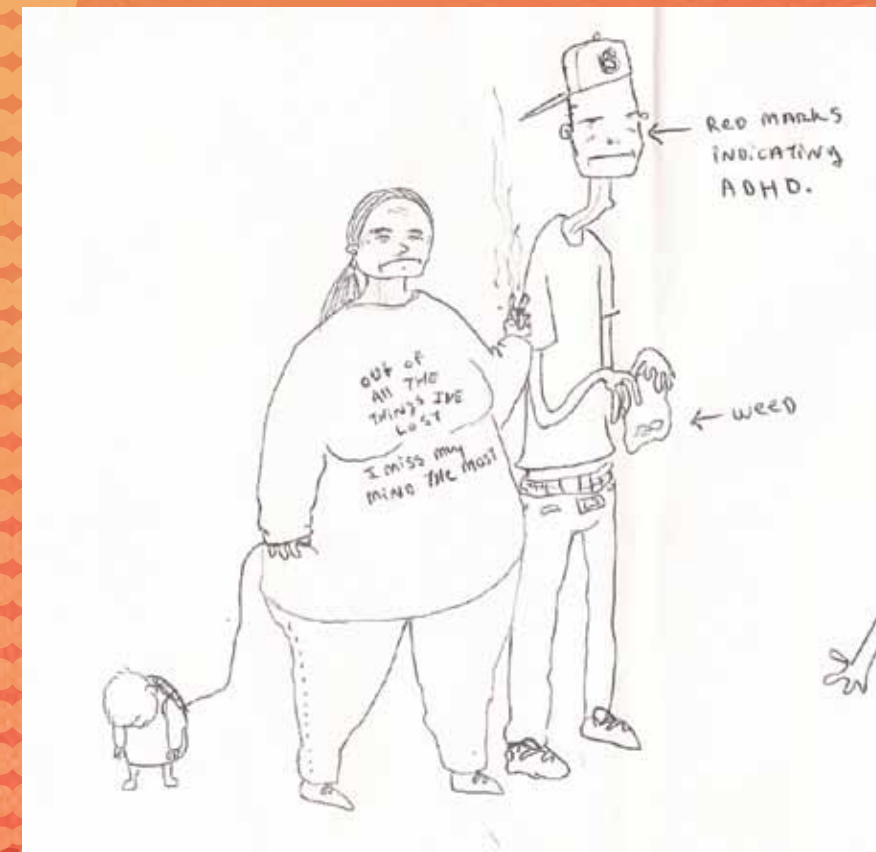
Nancy Walker



Martha Squiers



Kelly Goodwin

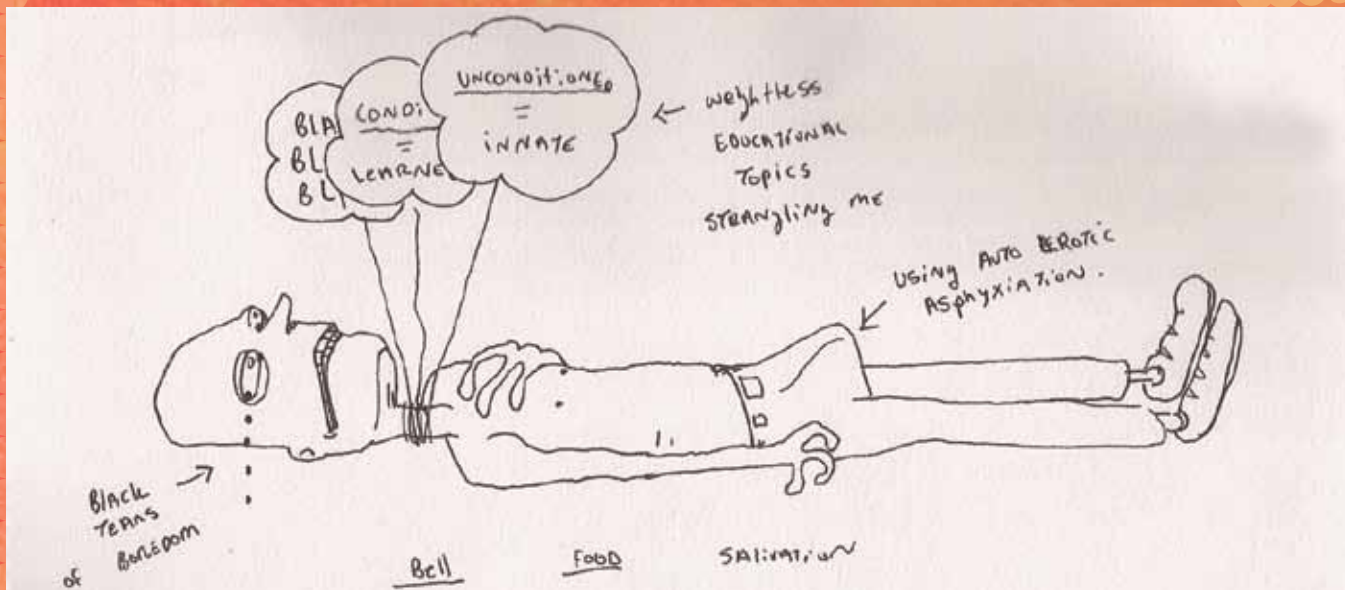


Haley Norris

Haley Norris



Haley Norris



Elizabeth Laskiewicz



Christina Silva



David Sheeley



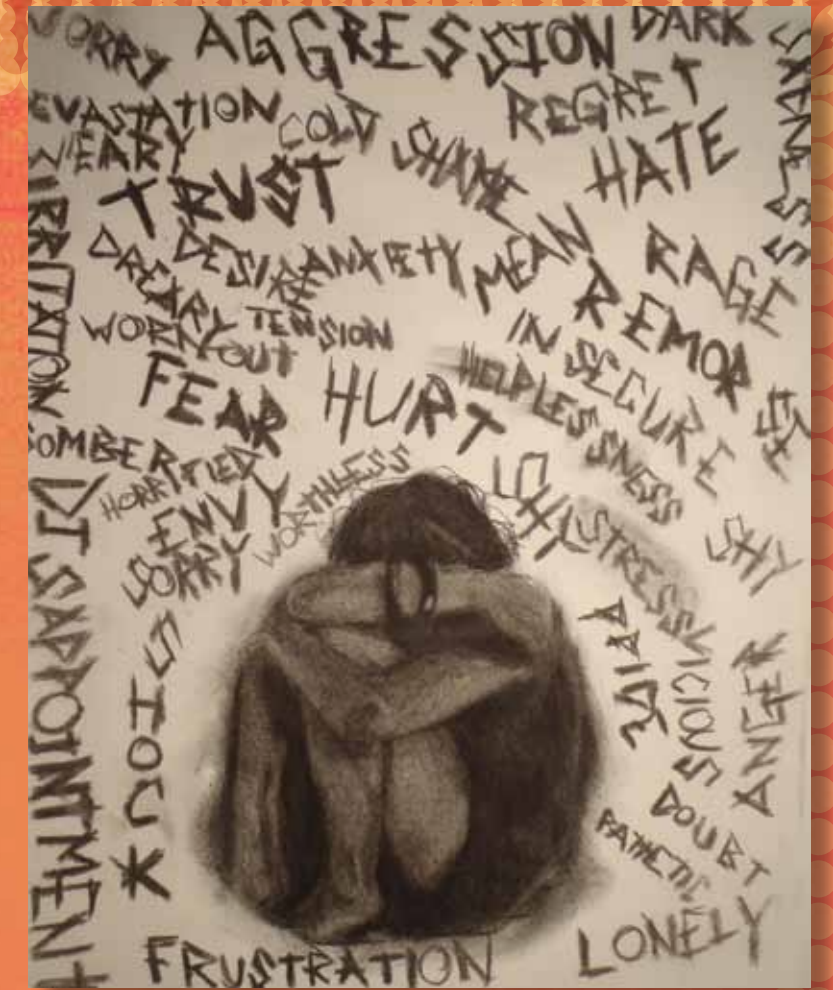
Chantelle Montgomery



Cathy Colbert



Anne Lafond



Amy Titus





Walter Margerison



Alex Kyzer

Ivan Perez





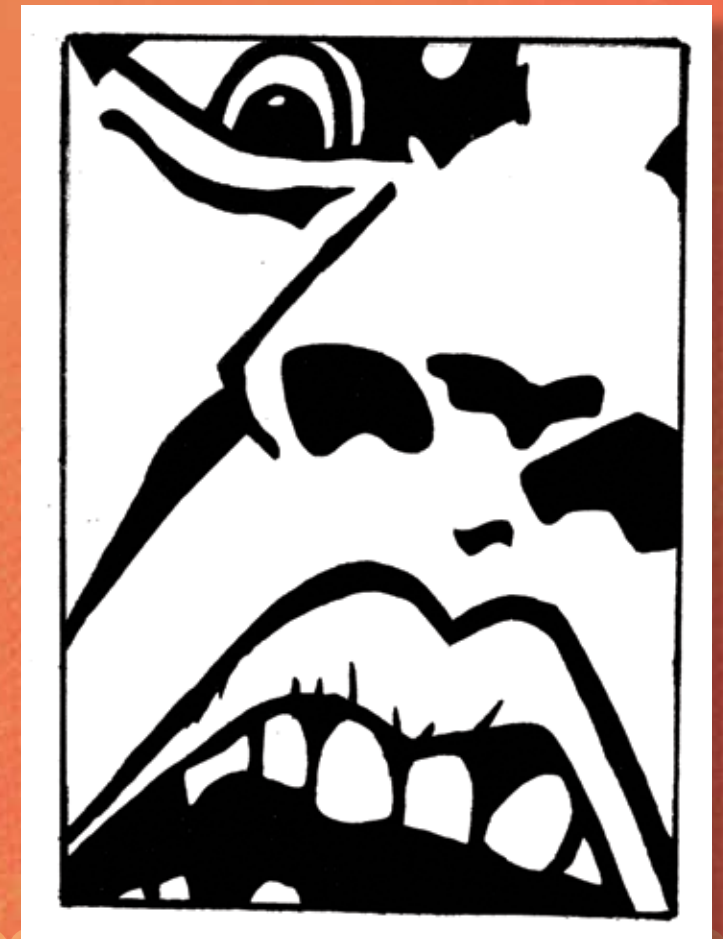
Ivan Perez



Megan Cheney



Vaughn Abbott





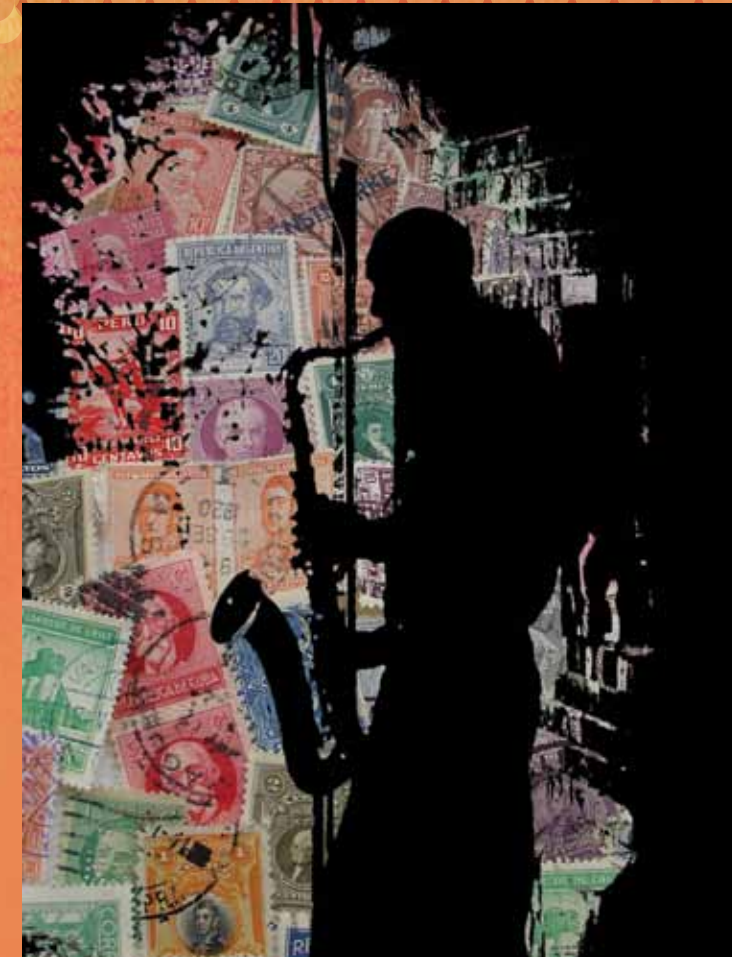
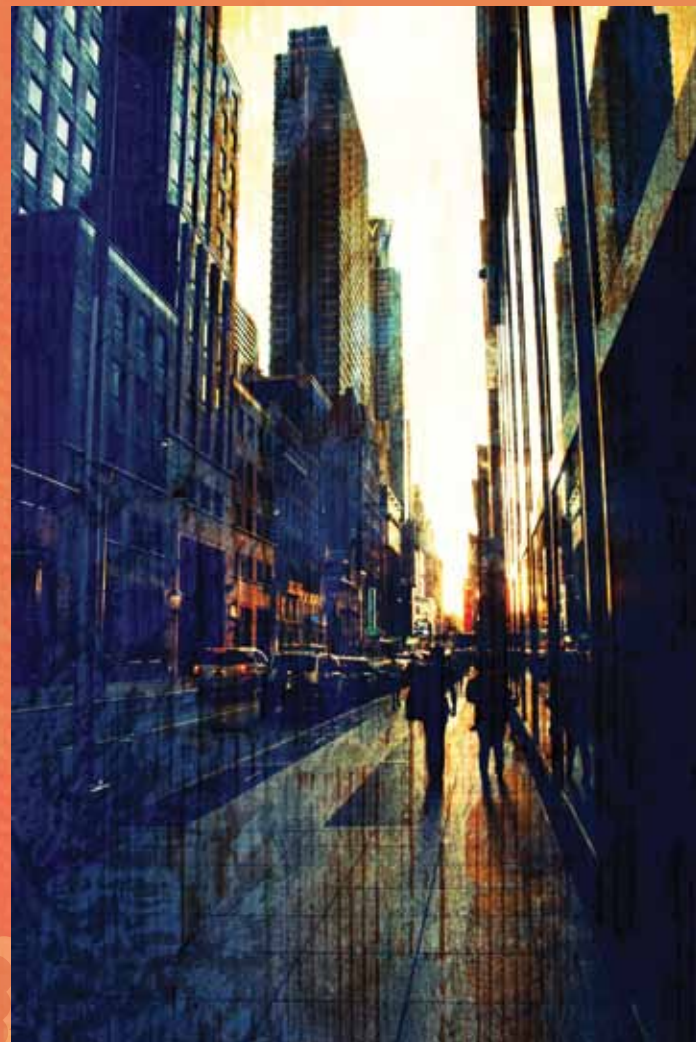
Michele Simon



Michele Simon



Rebecca McBrien



Rebecca McBrien





F. Fiction

THE PRINCESS' HORSE

MICHELE SIMON

A RETELLING OF A CLASSIC GRIMM'S STORY FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

There once was a King and Queen who had a beautiful daughter. They loved their daughter dearly and on her twelfth birthday they threw her magnificent birthday party. They gave her all sorts of jewels and treasures including a magical talking horse. The Princess loved her horse, whom she named Faithful, and they spent many days together exploring the countryside. They talked often and became the best of friends.

The Princess grew up and it was announced that she would be traveling to Faraway where she would eventually marry and spend the rest of her life. The King and Queen talked about the Princess going away and becoming a beautiful Queen that would rule a nation, and they decided it would be best if she left her childhood things behind, and that included Faithful. They decided to sell the horse.

Faithful overheard this and said, "If the Princess only knew, her heart would break in two."

The King and Queen became very sad when they heard this, for they loved their daughter dearly. So they arranged for Faithful to travel with her to the new land.

The journey started well, but after several stops for water, Faithful could see that the Princess had changed. She stopped talking to Faithful and became concerned with other things.

One day the Princess came to Faithful and she was crying. She told him she had given him to the other woman they were traveling with. Through her tears she said she would always love him and wished him a long happy life.

Faithful didn't understand, but he tried to honor the Princess' wishes and behaved very well for his new owner. He tried and tried, but he could never please the girl. So he tried to talk to her. She beat him. Faithful held his head up high and said, "If the Princess only knew, her heart would break in two."

The girl would not listen and became angry and tied his mouth shut.

They finally arrived at the new land. The girl stopped the horse at a rundown building that smelled of blood. She talked with an old man, then walked past Faithful without giving him another glance. The old man led him into the building. Faithful was horrified to see many bloody carcasses of animals hanging from the ceiling and realized it was the butcher's warehouse.

Faithful cried and cried for his Princess, but she could not hear him.

He cried to the Butcher and told him he was a Princess' horse. "If the Princess only knew, her heart would break in two," he said. The butcher did not care.

So Faithful died in the butcher's shop, and his body was carved into meat. The butcher hung Faithful's head on his gate. Every day the girl and many others would walk by, and Faithful's head would say, "If the Princess only knew, her heart would break in two." No one listened, and no one cared.

LEMONS

HALEY NORRIS

I know there is something in here constipated deep. I cant wait any longer and must squeeze from its thick lemon peel the days hung in jell-o humidity before the suspend becomes hung, then dead. working on saving up with all my might but spending it all on the ocean and the moon. i didnt know crickets could find me there and tie me up to one foot on land and the other in the deep. i cant straddle this without pulling tendons and tensions. cant keep trying to even it out by filling the in between with long walks to bar breathing in bored conversations and amnesia. but there is something i need when im needing to let this all be what it is at once. i want to let it catch up to my neck so i can feel it dripping down my throat this lemonade im squeezing. holding on so tight comes out of my hands drips of the ocean actually being warm, the shore line sucking me down against all will power to push me under its dress to touch its thighs, the sand sticking to me on the way in and out as i keep coming back for more things that makes this place here. navy blue t shirts against white sail boats and little boys digging for crabs, creepy clown faces fried dough and fortune tellers after everyone has gone home but us. chips hangovers texting and train rides to boston. saying goodbye all too much in the matter of two weeks. taking this all in with dark bitter beers until im numb enough to feel like im still at the bottom of the titanic on that fateful night. one foot in one foot out, up to my neck in taste, debt, and the knowing that this will hang as inevitable as my memory will fail. it is sinking and i will always be there on a titanic watching it all fade under the piles and piles of lemons used to awaken she hung so by apathy. it is bitter sweet and so is life. fading fading fading

The Front Page

Lisa Mahoney

She was shot twice in the back while she stood at the register. That was almost twenty years ago, and although the blood had long been cleared away, Chuckie could still see it. He saw it every morning when he opened his bagel shop and every afternoon when he closed up. In between he was able to distract himself. He supposed he should have closed it completely when Liz was murdered or even moved it across town, but in some strange way he found a level of comfort there. He never mentioned it to his buddies but he was sure her spirit was trapped in the shop, and he wouldn't leave her.

He busied himself with his opening tasks and thought about when he and Liz started the shop four years before she died. She had gone to school for business and always wanted to be her own boss after running other people's offices for 17 years. He was a firefighter, and although he loved his job, it brought on asthma, so he knew he should retire anyway. After 23 years, he figured a change might do him good.

A customer cleared his throat as he pushed through the door. Chuckie hadn't yet flipped the *Open* sign so he was caught a bit off-guard.

"You open for business?"

"Oh, yeah, sorry — got caught up. What'll it be?"

He glanced at the clock — 6:10. He usually had half of the bagels out by now but he had been distracted since he read the news. He flipped the sign, took the man's order, and then looked at the clock again. Only four more hours. Maybe then Liz could have some peace.

He went through the motions of his morning without much thought and just wished Liz was there with him. Jerry, his baker, was in the back spreading the flour and punching the dough while Chuckie brewed the coffee, kept up with the cream and sugar refills, and chit-chatted with the regulars. He smiled as he thought of her, there behind the counter greeting everyone with a big *hello*. Sending them off with an enthusiastic *have a nice day*.

She really loved that shop. It was all her — every last nook, from the handmade country curtains to the mini vases filled with fresh flowers on the few tables, always daisies. She claimed they said the most — simple yet elegant. Her wedding bouquet was from her grandmother's yard, tied with a simple white ribbon.

They worked well together, too. Chuckie leaned against the counter and shook his head. Images flashed as if he were watching old home movies on a slide reel. She would flirt with the regulars then coyly glance in his direction to make sure he was within earshot. She had a habit of licking her middle finger and dabbing it on the counter to pick up crumbs which she would then wipe on

the back of her jeans, despite having an apron on. That apron, brightly colored, was splattered with flour and splashes of cream, but the crumbs hung to the edges of her back pockets.

He remembered the day they opened and how the local paper ran a big article right on the front page. It was the only bagel place in town — before Starbucks and Dunkins jumped on board. Liz was so excited, she ran to the store after dinner that night and bought half-a-dozen papers. She kept a copy in a clear plastic sleeve to show anyone who would pay the least attention; she even showed those who didn't care and waved off their disinterest. She sent a copy to the family in California and even started a scrapbook.

The next time the shop made the front page of the *Daily Snooze*, as the locals called it, was the night Liz was murdered. Murders didn't happen in their sleepy little beach town. Murders happened in the big cities. Above the fold, there it was: *Beloved Bagel Shop Owner Shot*. They used the same picture that was in the paper when they first opened. Liz was on the sidewalk in front of the etched sign — Bagels and Brews. She had her bright apron on. Her arms were crossed and she smiled, smugly, with an *all-mine* hint to it.

Over the years, the shop made the paper a few more times, a scattering of appearances, new menu items, fund-raisers for the PTO — but never the front page.

And then the third time the shop made the front was just a few weeks ago. In a strange irony, there was a large write-up on how Chuckie and his shop would begin catering to the late lunch and early dinner crowd by offering salads, soups and what else but bagel pizzas. This was the first major overhaul of the menu, and for a small town, it was big news. Then in the lower right hand corner of page one, there it was: a small clip about Ronnie Bartlette — the man who had killed his wife. He was up for parole.

Chuckie's morning had slipped away with the routine of things. He wondered if he would miss it. He glanced at the clock and figured that he should get home to change before the trial. He called out to Jerry and told him he was taking off.

"For the day, boss?"

He thought before he spoke. He thought about Liz. He thought about the scumbag. He thought about the gun.

"Don't know yet," was all he could say.

He removed his apron, went to the door and glanced again, maybe for the last time, at the register. He pictured his wife alive, smiling at him, holding her daisies.

Creative Nonfiction

The Other Side of the Beach

I could feel the house shaking from the ferocious storm winds battering it. Outside, the winds wailed like a woman at the funeral of her soul mate, magnified a hundred times over. More than a decade earlier, a hurricane had passed through the area – this storm seemed even worse. When the power went out, I pulled the covers up to my chin, paralyzed by fear.

“In New Hampshire, even the state Emergency Operations Center was operating on a generator. A wind gust of more than 90 mph was reported in the state.”

-Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

The windows rattled and quaked against the pressure assaulting them. My eyes were transfixed on the pitch black night through the window. When the darkness gave way to a golden glow, my heart started pounding. I didn't know anything that could light up the entire sky like a sunrise during an earth-shattering night time storm. Scenarios from end-of-the-world movies and monster flicks consumed my mind. Fear moved me into action, and I raced to the window. I saw something worse.

“The glow from the flames could be seen from miles away,” a witness said. - USA Today

I picked up the phone and called everyone close by, but no one knew what was going on. Then I did something I never thought in my life I would ever do: I threw on my coat and boots and bolted out into the storm. I drove my car straight for the flames.

It was obviously a very bad fire, but I had to make sure that it wasn't going to rip through the entire area. I lived on a one mile peninsula section of the beach that was jam-packed with vacant vacation rental houses. The back roads would be flooded by now, and the only two ways to exit the beach were by a bridge that was under construction and a road that could well be under water by storm entrenched high tides. If the road was flooded... if the fire engines were unable to reach us... if the bridge was impassable due to high winds and tides, we could all be trapped between a wall of flames and the raging ocean.

“A roaring blaze fueled by hurricane-force wind gusts blowing off the coast of this seaside community ripped through a decades-old wood-framed hotel early yesterday, dancing from building to building.”

-Boston Globe

The firefighters had made it. I heard a loud crackling, and sparks burst from a transformer on a utility pole as it exploded and went up in flames. Fire trucks and hoses blanketed the streets. Streams of water blasted the fire from all sides.

“The first crew that arrived found heavy smoke,” Lang said. “With the strong wind coming right off the ocean, it was blowing right into the heart of the building and creating a blowtorch environment.” -Eagle Tribune



Michele Simon

I parked my car and watched, shivering in the cold of the winter night. The ocean had swallowed the beach, the sandy shore was barely visible, and wild waves were breaking over the wall only feet away from the firefighters. Many other residents gathered nearby. One woman worried that the firefighters had used all the water in the water tower, our water supply, and they couldn't keep fighting the fire. By dawn's first light they had fought the flames to a standstill, losing the entire block but saving the rest of the beach.



Fire chief Chris Silver said, “The prompt response of 40 fire crews, some coming from Maine and Massachusetts, helped keep the fire from spreading.” -Nashua Telegraph

The tide had receded and the storm died away. I went home, wearily picking my way through scattered debris from rooftops and smashed signs that had once hung all over the beach-side stores. It was the worst storm I had ever been in but I was told by others who had lived there longer they had seen many winter storms just like it.

The AP reports that Hampton Beach has a history of major fires, including incidents in 1915, 1923, 1950, and 1999.

-The Huffington Post

The next day the sands on the beach were covered with seaweed and thousands of still-living clams larger than my hands. There were many more storms during that winter, none as bad, and always a treasure was left behind. One time it was a treasure of lobster traps that scattered the sand as far as you could see. Another time hundreds of sand dollars were left behind. I'd often walk by huge shells, passing them by because I already had buckets of them at home. But I'd think about the children in the summer who would gaze in amazement at the treasures I was leaving behind.

There were days when the back roads were completely flooded; the houses were surrounded by water like the pictures you'd see in the news of the floods down south, but no one seem to care. It happened too frequently here. A large tree washed up in one storm and another time the carcass of a dead animal. Though I called the police about the animal, its carcass remained there all winter. I guess it happened too frequently, because they didn't even bother to call back. It joined the shells and driftwood and other treasures scattered all over the beach.

A steady stream of tourists had come to see the disaster the day after that fateful storm that had taken a whole block of buildings. For a brief time the quiet solitude of the winter beach was broken, reminding me of the thousands of tourists that called this place their summer home away from home. Though I only lived there for a year, I came to realize that hundreds of thousands of tourists may enjoy the beach in the summer time but only the few residents who call it their home year round truly see the full nature and power of the beach.

FERTILITY GODDESS

KASSIE RUBICO

I didn't know *The Woman of Willendorf* from *The Creation of Adam* the first time I stumbled into Coburn Hall. It was a warm day in early September. I did know that the brass door handle at the top of the landing got stuck, and that I had to push hard against the five-panel door for it to open. I balanced my new leather book bag on my right shoulder, trying desperately not to draw any attention. Inside, the lobby was shady — dark wood, dim sounds, and the mysterious scent of something startling. I checked my schedule one more time to be sure — classroom 432 — then headed for the staircase. My heart seemed to beat in time with the clicking heels of confident girls and curious boys wearing pants well below their waist. Nylon backpacks bumped up against my bare arms. Maybe I should have worn a sweater. No, it was way too warm. *Was I having a hot flash?* I pulled at the front of my shirt, trying still to prevent the intrusive book bag from sliding off my shoulder. Finally. The fourth floor. A gold nameplate on the side of the door was a welcomed relief: Liana Cheney, Art History, 432.

I had made it.

"My name is Liana Cheney," announced the robust woman with thick blonde hair and a deep Italian accent. She marched up from the back of the room, arms swinging in perfect rhythm. "I am a Professor of Art History, and this class will teach you how to think critically about art and life." I had no idea what that meant. So far, my only college experience was a few years of night classes in accounting, over twenty years ago. Back then, questions had only one answer, and mine were usually wrong, which is why I decided to switch majors this time around. In order for my accounting credits to transfer, I had to enroll in the Department of Liberal Arts, of which Dr. Cheney was the Chair. Her Art History class was mandatory.

Professor Cheney went on to explain the logistics of the class and her rules for classroom decorum. "I will not tolerate cheating," she said, pumping a tight fist on the last word. "If you cheat in my class, you will cheat for the rest of your life." I thought of the time in fourth grade when my teacher Mrs. Burns asked me if a girl in my class had copied my answers. It was probably the last time my answers were worthy of being copied. Professor Cheney continued her class

introduction, with as much influence as a General Patton: "If your cell phone rings in my class, get up, go to the registrar's office and drop my class." I didn't know whether to hide under my desk or salute her. We didn't talk like that in our mothers' group. There we used indoor voices, mostly to validate our importance as stay-at-home moms. I looked around the classroom to see if I was the only student feeling anxious. I was not. The woman next to me, who seemed to be about my age and would later become my lunch buddy, looked like she had just seen the ghost of "Old Blood and Guts."

Not having a college degree felt like a missing tooth. I could have lived without it, but I'd always be aware of the hole. I had made the decision to go back to school the year before, when my youngest daughter was in kindergarten. I announced my plans one night during dinner. My three daughters peered at me across the table. "What?" "Why?" "Aren't you a little old?" Later that night I explained my role as a full-time student: "While you're in school, Mommy will be in school." It sounded easy enough, but even I was a bit apprehensive. I worried about there being enough time for classes, homework and homemaking. I worried about creating new holes.

Art History was on Tuesdays and Thursdays for an hour and fifteen minutes. The lectures went like this: Dr. Cheney would stand in the back of the class, peering over a slide projector, each click demonstrating another work of art from a particular historical period. Dr. Cheney was eloquent. From memory, she'd walk us through the ancient world of art, which I soon learned was art before the written word. She'd described the religious symbolism of *Stonehenge*, a famous "cromlech" in southern England, built of posts and lintel (horizontal slabs). "The text will tell you that Stonehenge was built in 2000 B.C., but this is false," Dr. Cheney would argue. "It dates back to 7000 B.C." I had no reason not to trust her contradiction and quickly became awestruck by her knowledge and confidence to challenge the facts of others.

Later that semester we moved on to the Middle Ages, Europe after the fall of Rome. We discussed gothic art and the great cathedrals. Dr. Cheney was opening doors to a whole new world for me, a world beyond scheduled play-dates, carpools and conversations inspired by diaper rash. I'd leave class, and head for the O'Leary library, where I'd spend two hours printing out pictures of prehistoric fertility goddesses, fresco paintings, and renowned Italian sculptures. I was mesmerized by the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh, Hatshepsut, Foremost of Noble Ladies, and the limestone bust of Queen Nefertiti. I was intrigued by these women who had enough strength and intelligence to transform a society. I was captivated by their courage.

I had a collection of index cards as thick as the Book of Kells. I'd study the cards over and over again, hearing Dr. Cheney's voice, accenting names like Caravaggio, Donatello, Raphael. After some hesitation, in class, I began displaying my newborn data, answering her questions in great detail. I'd ask Dr. Cheney questions, too. I was supplying her and my own mind with the pleasure of knowledge.

One day, the week before our Art History midterm, Dr. Cheney came over to me at the beginning of class. "I'd like to speak to you after class," she said. I immediately put my hands under my desk, over my pant's pockets. Had my cell phone gone off without me knowing it? My pockets were empty. I had gotten in the habit of leaving my phone in the car on Tuesdays and Thursdays, just in case, a risky move for a neurotic mom like me. I spent that entire class wondering why Dr. Cheney needed to speak to me.

She was still standing behind the podium in front of the class when I approached her.

"You wanted to see me?" I said.

"Yes." She smiled.

I hadn't noticed the sparkle in Dr. Cheney's eyes from my seat in the front row.

"You take good notes, Katzie," she continued.

There were at least forty students in the class. I had yet to hear her call anyone by name. I nodded, letting out the breath I had been holding.

"I was wondering if you could share them with a student who has been out sick, so he can take the midterm."

"Of course," I said.

"Great," she replied, walking toward the exit sign.

That was it. She was gone. *But Dr. Cheney knew my name.* Well, sort of.

I discovered later that semester that Liana Cheney was my Advisor. In her small office, also on the fourth floor of Coburn Hall, was where I got to see Dr. Cheney's softer side. I'd meet with her at the end of each semester to go over my schedule for the following semester. During one of our meetings she explained how I needed to take a language in order to meet the graduation requirements. "Have you studied a language before?" she asked.

I was embarrassed to admit that I had studied Spanish for three years, but not since Fransisco Franco had reign over Spain. "Um, Spanish, but a long time ago."

"No problem," she said, picking up the telephone receiver. "Bonjour, Professor Garneau." Dr. Cheney was fluent in seven languages. "I have a capable student here who needs to take the placement exam for Spanish I and possibly Spanish II."

She put her hand over the receiver. "If you pass both, you'll receive six credits, without having to take the classes."

I left her office thinking about her conversation with Professor Garneau: "I have a *capable* student here..." I thought about what that might mean: Competent? Skillful? Efficient? Able.

My final meeting with Dr. Cheney was the winter before my last semester as an undergraduate. She figured out which classes I still needed in order to complete my degree, and then said something that shocked me. "And when you go on for your Master's degree —

"What?" I asked. Had she fallen into one of her other six languages?

Maybe she didn't realize how old I was, or that I had three daughters at home who needed me. Maybe she didn't realize that getting a college degree was a goal. That's it, just a check on the bucket list. I had planned on going back to being Mom again once it was achieved. An office job with mother's hours had seemed more realistic, but was that what I really wanted?

"So you can teach," Dr. Cheney continued.

Okay, she had misread me! I hadn't shown any interest in teaching. When I would volunteer in my daughters' classes, it took all of my patience not to glue half the students to their seats. Had I given Dr. Cheney too much credit?

"I'm not interested in teaching kids," I finally said.

Her eyes sparkled, just like they did when she'd discover an error in the textbook. "I'm not talking about kids."

I skipped down the concrete steps, floating through the spring air like a piece of papyrus. I called my husband on my way to the student parking lot. "What do you think about graduate school?" I asked.

I sent Dr. Cheney an email two years later, right after receiving my first Master's degree in Creative Writing and Literature. "Thank you for noticing something in me that I had yet to see in myself," I wrote. She wrote back congratulating me on my wonderful accomplishment and asked me to send a picture so that she could put my name to a face. I never did. It wasn't important that Dr. Cheney know what I looked like. I wasn't looking for her praise or validation this time; I only wanted her to know that she had made a difference in a student's life. I hope to do the same one day.

Like the city of Rome, it takes many years to build a person. It takes understanding the past to create the future. It takes breaking down the fragile walls of distrust and anger in order to reconstruct a sturdy foundation of love, security and self-worth. It takes being ready when the Art History teacher appears.

31 30 N / 34 45 E

BRANDON LAVOIE

I could feel her breathing, as if the nocturnal meridian of time was a brief respite the arid day through which she had spent long hours working herself into a spasming fever. The night was her time to come down from the hyper-polarization of immense heat and the inferno that took place from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on a daily basis. There I lay in her unforgiving bosom, a shag rug separating the cool, sweaty skin of my burned back and the cool, unforgiving, granular sand that was the tissue of her breast. Above me, I gazed in awe at the vast awning of the Bedouin tent I was lying under, knowing that it was the only barrier separating me and the mosaic of terrestrial wonders that hovered above me. Oh how I wished there were no tent surrounding me so that I could gaze up into the mosaic of star-ridden blackness.... Perhaps the opaque tent just shielded my gaze from a piece of art too immaculate, true, and full of grandeur for my eyes to take in and fathom all at once.

Nights in the desert are torturously long. She needs to recover; she is a woman scorned. She has been abused since the beginning of time, beaten every day by her abrasive and abusive husband, the sun. Oh, how he beats down on her — battering her with his heavy rays. Night is her escape; he is not around. She takes this opportunity to release her frustrations, to cool down. We, her visitors, are at the unfair mercy of her childish defense mechanisms. She teases us with cool breezes and brilliant gusts, only to be followed by a tornado of sand blowing into the tent and blanketing us. It's an almost motherly act of covering a child with a blanket while lulling them to sleep. Sleep I will not, for she keeps me awake with her ever-longing catechisms, questioning how much I can take: "When will you break, Brandon? When will you become the very sand that I am so abundantly comprised of?" She has driven many more a-men crazy during the night than the day.

Time seems to hold a certain sympathy for her. He slows his steady pulse for her, allowing her more time to recover — more time to build her insurmountable

bitterness. Subsequently, she retracts for a brief moment, she becomes silent and serene. She torments me with this hiatus, indoctrinating the thought that sleep is attainable. She delivers cool smiles in the magnificent light breezes that sweep ever so slightly across my brow as they drift through the tent. I begin to truly believe that the storm of her cruel intentions is over. Little do I realize, I have just reached the eye.

As I let my guard down, forgiving but not forgetting her aforementioned cruelty, she takes notice. I have insulted her, taking her gentle caress for granted. A woman scorned, she begins to once again display her nocturnal omnipotence over the Kingdom of Heaven. In her anger and loneliness, she howls a malignant whine, "WURHHH," awakening all of the Bedouins' donkeys, camels, and livestock. No one is excepted from her revenge and angst. The animals scream at her temperament, mimicking the screams of her soul, the living, breathing channels of mediation, translating her cries for help.

The torment continues as she takes advantage of time's slowed heart rate. I am hopeless, praying for father Sun to come and put this motherly abuse to an end. I've begun to get accustomed to her cruelty, closing my eyes and taking it, overcompensating it as an almost forlorn affection. Suddenly, a stranger emerges from the eastern sky.... "שאר (rosh) שמש (shemesh)!" a Bedouin screams, pointing at the sun. Looking to the Israeli next to me, I inquire as to what the Bedouin just screamed. In his broken English the soldier smoothly replies, "The head of the sun." The night begins to take in the realization of her ending reign. I exit the Bedouin tent to an almost dusky sky. She retreats quickly, knowing it is almost her time to be reprimanded for the havoc she wreaked throughout the night. Her man is rising ever-so-slowly in the east; my hero. He is coming to save me from her grasp, coming to put this desert-bitch in her place.

I venture from the tent to a nearby ledge at the edge of the Bedouins' desert plantation. The ledge is high above the now-phosphorescent landscape below. I gaze as the father Sun illuminates the portrait below, taking in the views of the Dead Sea, her tears; the Lisan Peninsula — her outstretched arm, reaching in agony to her sister Jordan. Right as she is about to grasp her sister for help, the sun rises and blankets her with the first battering blow of his rays. She retreats as the blow reveals a landscape that could have only been sculpted by an other-worldly being.

The sun has risen upon the land of Milk and Honey.

CONTRIBUTORS

Vaughn Abbott is an old dog learning new tricks. The "on-hold button" has been released and he is a participant on stage once again instead of a member of the audience. Being eternally grateful to those pushing him forward, Vaughn is constantly surprised at what he is finding out about himself and is determined to keep the momentum going. He thinks musicians are the coolest and fools are a waste of time. Hippies and Hipsters should take heed.

Nia Araujo is a lazy, yellow alien from the galaxy of Andromeda. She loves coffee, playing Kingdom Hearts, and is also known as Niatendo. She can school you on cameras and astronomy as well. Please do take a Nia hug when it is offered, because she has been named the World's Second Best Hugger. Nia made a poster for Elvis Creep, creator of the Swedish Nintendo death-punk band called Bondage Fairies. That poster stood in New York, alongside with other cool "Nia-y" stuff. She is one lazy artist, and needs to stop watching He-Man episodes and missing her cat, Yuffie.

Eddie Brophy is a would-be nihilist with a penchant for soapbox rants, chain-smoking, and a good bourbon. When he's not marveling over the Jesus Toasters, Full House board games, and holographic Jesus portraits that would scare the piousness into a rationally godless man at his thrift store job, he's a useless wealth of pop-culture trivia in radio, and a diligent student who feels the need to remind his classmates how cold and unforgiving the working world truly is outside the halls of NECC. In his own mind, Eddie is a poetic prophet, rather, an under-achieving would-be cult leader, who inspires his followers to reject the bumper sticker politics that amass more odious hippy stink than actual change, to ditch their spray tan in a can bottles, and to embrace his sense of unapologetic cynicism toward any ideology that discourages intellectualism and promotes fist-pumping. He also enjoys being serenaded by Bryan Adams, paying thirty-five dollars a month to be ignored and rejected by women, when he got the kind of service for free prior to aforementioned subscription, and failing to write a proper bio for *Parnassus*.

Megan Cheney, dual majoring in Illustration and Graphic design, has an everlasting affection for all things art and nature. She is expected to graduate with both degrees by the spring of 2013. Megan's future plans tend to change on a monthly basis, ranging from educational art teacher to managing her own bakeshop. Her ultimate goal is to keep her mind open to all opportunities, and to never commit to being professionally tied down.

Wallace E. Clark IV is a Haverhill native. He is a lover of beauty, a naked-eye astronomer, amateur ornithologist, minimalist runner, avid outdoorsman, and poet.

Cathy Colbert is a graduate of Pratt Institute, a professional art director/graphic designer/photographer, and is continuing her education as a student at NECC.

Noemi Cruz is a twenty-three year old undiscovered photographer. No one knows her by her photography... yet. Noemi is very shy, but not shy behind the camera. Mary Poppins once said, "A spoon full of sugar makes the medicine go down," but Noemi says, "A camera makes the world go around!" She lives for art whether it's through her photos, or the way she walks, talks, and dresses. This is Noemi.

Mary Ellen D'Angelo-Lombardi lives in Methuen with her husband and three sons. She is happy to share a few pieces of her work here in *Parnassus*, along with being on staff. What fun!

Ann Goodwin is a middle-aged mother of four. She enjoys writing and does her best work as she walks on the treadmill. Although walking and typing on her Mac were difficult at first, she finally mastered the skill with only a few injuries to herself and her computer. Ann is an adjunct instructor at NECC and also a student in a Creative Writing class at the school.

Kelly Goodwin is the photographer who insists on using large format film cameras. The true nature of her appearance has not changed. Don't let her silence deceive you. She will bring upon many colors and ideas. Kelly is no mystical creature; she is a human of her past. From a young child of beauty, she does not struggle to find herself, for she has realized she can only be who she is. You cannot change her because she gives everything to you pure. When in thought, deep thought, you might raise an evil eye. To judge is the evil.

Anne Lafond is a freshman at NECC. She is an illustration major and hopes to use her education in art in the future. She plans on transferring to a four year school in South Carolina to study art as well as communications in hopes of a career in advertising.

Elizabeth Laskiewoz enjoys a good laugh along with keeping things short and sweet.

By day, **Brandon Lavoie** is a 20-year-old aspiring screenwriter/director with an affinity for hip-hop music. During daylight hours, he enjoys spending his time amongst his close friends, listening to music, going to the gym, writing, and thinking. By night however, Brandon assumes a different, more mysterious identity. People have claimed to have seen him scaling the walls of the world's tallest buildings, without a safety harness. Many of my contemporaries have stated that he can be in more than two places, at the exact same time. A friend recently told me that she heard that Brandon ghost-writes for God himself. It has been said that Brandon once figured out the meaning of life, but forgot to write it down. He can speak fluent Cantonese, in five different languages. He is a false deity in every religion, including his own. Children trust him. Overall, he's just a normal guy.

Lisa Mahoney teaches at NECC and online for UMass Lowell. Writing is her cacoethes! Her first short story was published in the literary magazine *Voices* in 1997. She is enrolled in the low-residency Solstice MFA in Creative Writing program at Pine Manor College, where she hopes to finally finish her novel. Nulla dies sine linea.

Walter Margerison was born and raised in the Merrimack Valley and is currently residing in San Francisco, CA pursuing a BFA in Photography, fighting for pitbulls, and trying to keep himself motivated in a world filled with scum and ugliness. His photos are an attempt to capture something pretty during his time here on cesspool earth.

Rebecca McBrien is a lost soul, wandering the halls to find her place in this world and her 10:30 class. There are too many important people in the world, so she has decided to be one of the dedicated few who serve you French Fries at your favorite or second favorite fast food joint. Please no comments about the uniform; it is mandatory. She tries to creep around with a camera because both people watching and getting candid shots are her favorite past times.

There is a young woman, or perhaps a young lady would better fit the description. Regardless of her title, her name is **AJA METCALF**. This girl is missing. Some people will try and tell you she's been missing for years; others will admit they've never heard of her. But I know the truth about this young girl: she is not missing, oh no. Not missing at all. But she is misplaced. As misplaced as this girl may be, she is not trying to spend her days trying to figure out who she is. She is taking her time creating herself. And although she doesn't know what's to come for her future, she does know that given time, she will figure it out.

CHANTELLE MONTGOMERY is a 23-year-old student majoring in graphic design at NECC. Chantelle is one with an amazing gift for art. She takes what she feels and almost effortlessly conveys them to her chosen medium, be it through paint on paper or through the lens of her Nikon camera. She has a knack for showing the world what she sees through her eyes. She aspires to become a great graphic designer and one-day design for a great magazine and be part of its draw to the people to better send a message through her skill. The earth, Africa, and those in need are topics to which she holds dear to her heart, and due to her intuitive style and bubbly personality, there is no doubt that this girl will not only be an asset to her company but she will change the world in the process.

CATHY MORROW has had a varied career ranging from pizza delivery to limo driver, to mortgage originator to substitute teacher and special ed assistant. Cathy graduated with high honors from NECC in 2008, currently and is studying philosophy. She has also had a newspaper column and authored several children's books. Cathy has worked at NECC for 13 years as coordinator, reader, and producer of audio textbooks for college students, in addition to scanning books in order to provide PDF files for students of course materials, when necessary. She also works one-on-one with students in the classroom as an aide acting as liaison when necessary between student and staff and outside of classroom as reader/scribe for testing both for courses and assessment testing.

HALEY NORRIS is probably out doing something fun right now, but feel free to leave your name, number, and a short message at the beep, and she will get back to you when she can. BEEP.

NICOLE OLSON also known as Nolson, is currently a graphic design major. She enjoys writing poetry, traveling, and the arts.

IVAN PEREZ SANTANA "El Matatan": Futuro ilustrador, pintor, photographo, y modelo de calzoncillos aporta su arte para la Revista, *Parnassus*. Un estilo excéntrico y apero pero a la vez muy tradicional. Adquirió su motivación para el arte desde una pequeña edad. Cuando no había luz en su casa, se pasaba dibujando y jugando Nintendo con una vela. Y ahí surgió un pasa tiempo a una carrera que hoy persigue con mucha vigor.

You may know **TONY ROSSETTI** You may know him as Mark. Depends if you know him on a formal or personal level. You may even recognize him but simply not know his name. You can find him kicking around on a piece of ground in his hometown of Haverhill. (He's also on the *Parnassus* staff)

KASSIE RUBIGO is a Writing Instructor at NECC. She received a Master of Arts in Creative Writing and Literature in 2009 and an MFA in Creative Nonfiction at Pine Manor College in Chestnut Hill, Ma in 2012. She is currently working on an interconnected collection of personal essays. Her work has been published in *Insight: An Academic Journal*, *The Offering*, and *Mill City Stories: Tales of Lowell and the Merrimack Valley*. When Kassie is not writing or reading, she is running—sometimes from reality! She lives in Chelmsford, MA with her husband and three daughters.

DAVID SHEELEY is still showing you his interpretation of life. Find out more at And I Photography: [facebook.com/AndIPhotographyDS](https://www.facebook.com/AndIPhotographyDS)

CHRISTINA SILVA is a full time realtor, part-time student, and a full time mom to Autumn and Noah. She likes photography and art. It is just a side hobby that allows her to enjoy a few moments of sanity.

MICHELE SIMON is a student at NECC with a dual major in Writing and Multi-Media. Some of her favorite hobbies or classes are Writing, Photography, Web Design, Digital Art, TV Production, and saving horses from slaughter.

MARTHA SOUIERS, preferably known as Marti or a "Stockbroker of Evil", spends far too much time walking about in the dead of night speaking with herself and other devils in the dark as they whisper interesting things to write. She claims that she has no clue where her creative quirks come from, but all should know better that it has to do with a deal she made at a crossroads long ago. Otherwise she enjoys puppies, not singing Christmas carols, and overly blunt individuals.

EVERSON TAVERAS is a Journalism Major at NECC. He enjoys writing and reading at his own leisure. Currently he is a reservist for the United States Army. His name is commonly mistaken for "Emerson".

AMY TITUS is an Illustration major who likes dogs, baseball, books by Michael Chabon, and pretending she's still living in the 90's.

Reporting live from suburbia is **NANCY WALKER**, a part-time domestic goddess, artist, substitute teacher and bird watcher, and full-time warrior princess.

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HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

Submissions to *Parnassus* are limited to NECC students, staff, and faculty, with two deadlines per year. We accept submissions in the areas of art, photography, fiction, poetry, and creative non fiction. Feel free to bend those rules as you see fit to accommodate your creativity. Entries are reviewed and chosen democratically each semester by the staff and faculty advisor. Deadlines are announced online and around campus, and *Parnassus* is published each spring, when the air is thick with dewy awesomeness and the syrupy promise of things to come.

Full information on how to submit your soon-to-be-famous work can be found in our super handsome and fully functional website:

www.parnassuslitmag.com

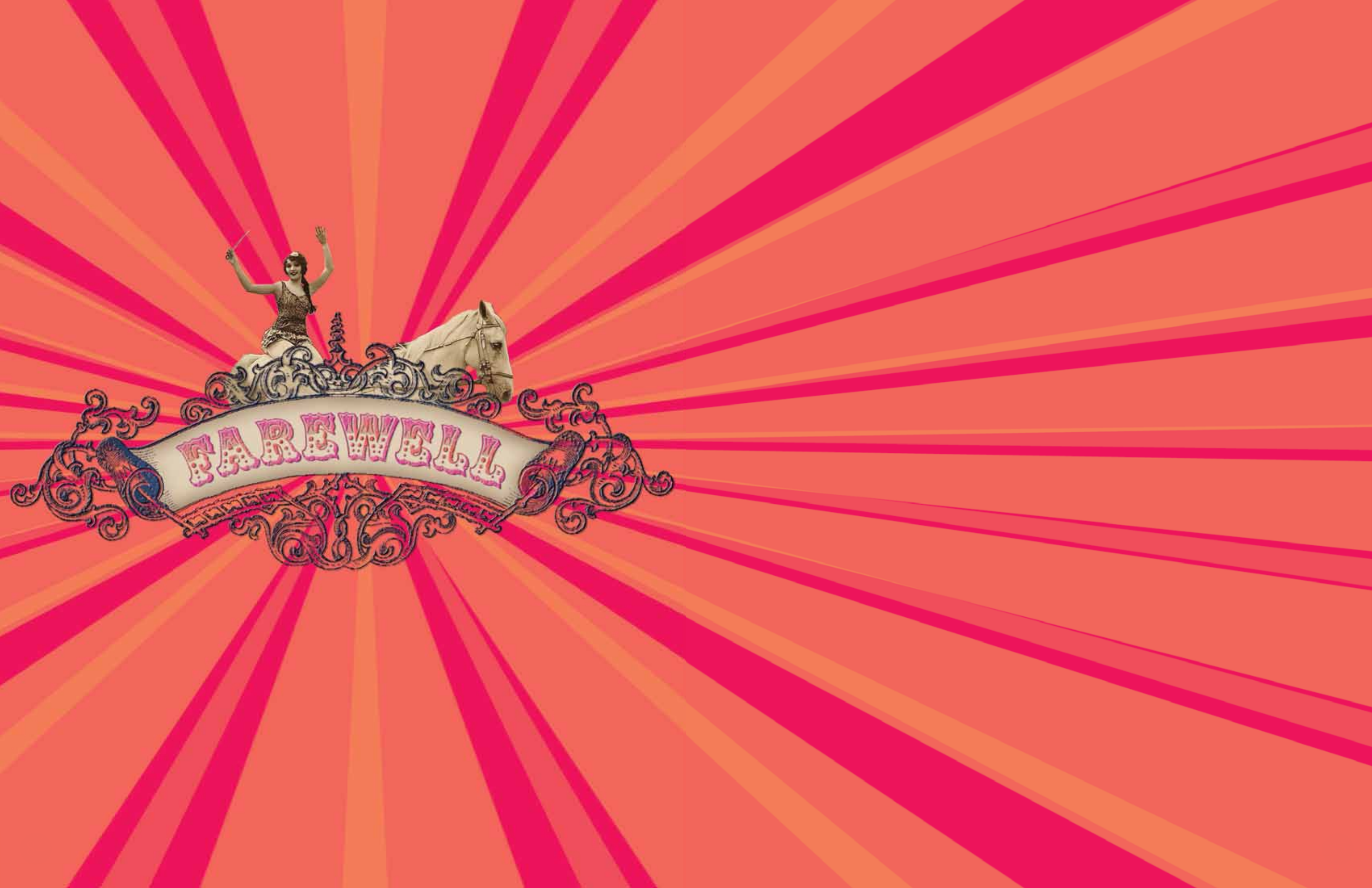
Every Parnassus-related whim and desire can be satisfied there.

We look forward to reading and viewing what you send us!

Any questions or comments are encouraged - please send them along to faculty advisor Patrick Lochelt: plochelt@necc.mass.edu

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