

The English Department presents  
the 2019 Annual

## *Seven Gill Shark Review Anthology*

A collection of original composition by students, staff, faculty, and community members at College of the Redwoods. We are pleased to present these original compositions for your enjoyment.

All of this would have been impossible without the hard work and dedication of the following people:

### **Spring 2018 Student Editors**

Wendy Hnilo  
Saje Wolf  
J. Franklin Turner  
Nicholas Wilczewski

### **Faculty Advisor:**

David Holper, English Faculty

### **Graphic Artist:**

Erin Jones

## Spring 2019

Diane Elizabeth Caudillo

Elaina Erola

Wendy Hnilo

Daniel Nickerson

Daniel Nickerson

Catherine Peacock

Heather Quarles

Heather Quarles

Tana Reynolds

Caitlyn Still

J. Franklin Turner

J. Franklin Turner

Josue Valdez

Lynne Wells

Nick Wilczewski

Nick Wilczewski

Saje Wolf

## Performance Pieces

Moth and Flame

Wine in the Lanai (Second Place Fiction)

Remembering You

Ode to Don's Donuts

Sunflower Uses the Payphone on H Street

Healthy Sexuality

At the End of My Walk (First Place Poetry)

For Carl Milles' Man and Pegasus, Stockholm

What I Am

A Message for Sexual Assault Survivors

Gumbo

When I Speak of Love (Second Place Poetry)

Split Tongue (Hobson Award Winner)

The Last Pickle

Ars Poetica

The News

Entangawoos (First Place Fiction)

## Honorable Mentions

Diane Elizabeth Caudillo	Marina Music
Larry Crist	Courting
Elaina Erola	The Kind of Woman You Are
James Floss	Addiction Restriction
Wendy Hnilo	An Ode to Coffee
Allison Iafrate	Fishing on a Lake
Roy Marin	The Bus to Oakland
Daniel Nickerson	Donuts for Peace
Amy Peterson	I Am Trying
Amy Peterson	Carrie Ann Lucas Died
Heather Quarles	Sendoff
Joe Shermis	Dreamed As Needed
Joe Shermis	The Space Between Hand and Soul
Dawn Katherine Tisdell	Sextual Frustration
J. Franklin Turner	Street Junk

Poetry prize is generously sponsored by Northtown Books & College of the Redwoods Foundation

Prose prize is generously sponsored by Booklegger Books & College of the Redwoods Foundation

Hobson Prize is a combination of an anonymous donor and the College of the Redwoods Foundation

*Diane Elizabeth Caudillo*  
MOTH & FLAME

I begin to understand -  
the agony of the pull  
the command that rises up  
and will not be denied –  
that moth feels for flame  
despite the cool knowledge  
known for sure in the dark  
that moth must stay away.

Flame says, no – I do not wish to cause you pain  
but it's a magnetic demand,  
a force of nature, a law–  
like gravity, during  
this fall through the cosmos  
as I taste infinite ecstasy  
in these precincts of heaven.

There is no choice but  
to move toward  
your light and heat, toward  
your magnetic charm  
to fall and fall, further in  
each time you look into my eyes  
each time I look into your eyes  
and in this realm of no-choice  
yet I do choose:

I point my toes and dive  
the iron in my heart's blood  
surges forth to meet you, and I enter the fire  
again and again  
destroyed and remade  
bigger and deeper and  
wider and more dense  
ending unimaginable –  
though each cycle  
contains many end points  
as the circle turns  
and turns again.

December 20, 2011

*Elaina Erola*  
WINE IN THE LANAI

“When I was in fourth grade, my teacher told us a story about how she had to call her credit card company. She was being sent from machine to machine, so when she finally got connected to a person she was so excited she asked the woman where she was located, and the woman replied, 'Do you know the state of Florida? I'm on the little Western curve right above Tampa.' And my teacher replied, 'Well, I'm on the Washington Coast. I guess we're about as far away as two people could be.’”

I am sure the teacher told us this story to teach us some life lesson about the vastness of the country, but to me it seemed that this story was strategically placed in my life with these exact two locales because these were our destinies. Michael would stay here in Florida with his brother, and I would return to Washington and finally begin my freshman year of college, as I always knew I would, since my first day of school.

He had been in that fourth grade classroom with me, and I could close my eyes and picture him next to me in the dark classrooms of that grade school building. The green chalk boards, the short wooden desks were vivid to me, yet I looked over to see if there was any flash of recognition at all. There wasn't. He just nodded.

Florida was such a juxtaposition from my frigid home in the Pacific Northwest. The humidity hit you like a brick wall here, sucking the oxygen out of your lungs and hanging its weight on you like a damp comforter. My bare feet slapped across the kitchen floor tiles and that hit me as I slipped into the night and onto the burning cement of the lanai. The bright green anoles were peaceful and clung true to the screen that enclosed us. It was serene and deafeningly quiet there.

There wasn't much a view off the Lanai, just a jungle of dark foliage beyond the screen. Our conversations back home always had backgrounds of sweeping landscapes like the ocean or forest, because there they were plentiful. Here, this ground level urban apartment was a change from what our heavy heart to hearts were used to. I slid down into a cheap green lawn chair, causing the plastic legs to scrape against the flat cement. It was ten o'clock at night on this August evening, and still my body was covered in the sticky humidity, his thin white undershirt clinging to my bare breasts. Immersed in Floridian heat, it emanated in his sweet spicy scent that rose through the night blooming florals. It always smelled like tropical trees, fruit and flowers, there.

He sat across from me, bare chested with his young, brown muscular torso adorned only by his lone tattoo, the Italian flag over his left bicep. He wore only a pair of tan cargo shorts that looked one hundred years old. They fell off his slim waist and over his hips, held on only by a thread bare belt and showing me the hair on his lower stomach. I saw he had lost so much weight since he had moved here. It could have been the stress, the drugs he was taking, or because he was broke and not eating. It was probably a combination of all three, but we were unafraid and consumed by youth and freedom.

His hand stretched across the table between us and reached for a menthol cigarette. He lit it. He gestured the box toward me, and I took one for myself. I wanted to be a part of everything he did tonight. He offered me some wine and raised his thick black eyebrows at me, his pouty lips forming into this kind of gentle half smile that he always wore.

I asked what kind it was, but I didn't really care. He could have told me it was the blood of a goat, and I would have drank it right down to keep the night from ending a minute too soon. He told me he had no idea. He didn't know anything about wine. Neither of us did. He rose to

retrieve the mysterious alcohol.

I jerked my head after him and yelled over my shoulder as he disappeared into the kitchen. "Let's celebrate my last night here, okay?"

But what were we celebrating? These were our final moments. The end of summer, the end of high school, the end of us. I knew that I would never come back to visit. I knew I wouldn't stay in touch with Michael. I knew we would never see each other again.

I leaned my head over the back of the plastic lawn chair, letting my long hair pull me down with its gravity. I reflected on my week in Florida with him and how surprised I was with myself. This was the first trip I had ever taken by myself, and it was across the country. I had no friends here, and I had no money. I had just trusted him that I would be safe there. Through high school we were friends and then lovers, and then high school came to end. Michael's family was scattered, so staying in Washington was not an option, and he had moved out to Tampa.

There were mere months between our breakup and his move, yet it was a whole lifetime of an emotional education. We continued to have sex, never really saying goodbye, never really moving on, yet we were separated and moving forward in different directions. I wanted to be with him, yet I could not give up my scholarships to move to Florida, so I continued, thinking that each time we slept together, it would ease the pain, or we could live in denial a little longer. I was behaving like an addict, living only for our time together and thinking nothing else mattered.

When he finally did leave, I had been adamant about coming out to visit him, against the advice of my parents, the pleadings of my best friend, and any voice of reason in my own head, I had made up my mind to do this. He was welcoming of the idea, having extended an open invitation to anyone who could come out to Florida. I bought my ticket immediately, with all my

savings from my summer job on the boardwalk. I was too determined to consider whether I would be wanted there or not. Now it was my last night here, and I was out of chances to pretend the future wasn't coming or that our lives had not already begun when we willfully looked in the other direction. His life was full of sunshine, nice cars, and palm trees now.

He sat back down across from me and began pouring some very cheap red wine into two delicately small coffee cups. It had a colorful bottle with a picture of a smiling old man on the front. I imagined it was the kind of smile you might have if you were drunk on some shitty Chianti. I sipped the wine and took a drag of the cigarette, letting the smoothness of the tobacco and the bite of the wine mellow together. It felt inviting here, as though I had always been meant to come. For years he had always invited me on his trips to Tampa, but my parents never let me out of their sight. Their worry was not unjustified. I remembered the summer I spent on probation I wasn't allowed to leave the house, so I called him every single night. He was up all night, so it never mattered what time I called him. We never ran out of things to talk about in those days, when teenagers spent countless hours on the phone.

“What was it you wanted to say?” he asked me. My mouth opened, but I just closed it again and shook my head. That night we just sat there in silence. There was nothing left unsaid. Our time was up. I only wanted to ask him if he still loved me, but I knew what he would say. He would tell me yes and whether or not it was the truth.

*Wendy Hnilo*

REMEMBERING YOU

Sometimes I wonder if my moonlight  
is yours, too? And especially tonight  
I wonder if you look up with a longing glance,  
wanting to join its light up there, with me by chance?

Some nights I look out over the ocean  
and wonder if you remember the steady motion  
of each wave tumbling into itself and crashing,  
watching you watching them – my heartbeat thrashing?

When I walk on the trails through the trees  
I remember how you accepted nature with ease,  
and I wonder if you found it fascinating  
just as I found your hand holding mine captivating?

When I lay back and quietly take note of the stars,  
I hope to God that you aren't at those bars  
forgetting me, remembering you  
forgetting that those moments – our moments – were all true.

*Daniel Nickerson*  
ODE TO DON'S DONUTS

Pillar of glutenism!  
Carbohydrate community center!  
Sugar sanctuary!

Pass gas  
and pledge allegiance  
to cheap food!

There should be a sign  
above the counter  
blinking  
"Bread is Life"  
while the people  
order apple fritters  
and roast beef sandwiches

At the crack of dawn  
or at the heart of midnight  
people of all shapes and sizes  
lining up  
to get what they want  
and also a little  
of what  
    (though nobody says  
    this part aloud)  
they need

*Daniel Nickerson*

SUNFLOWER USES THE PAYPHONE ON H STREET

From Don's,  
you're only ever just a block  
and a couple quarters  
away from communication  
    (though usually the cost  
    seems much greater)

Anyways,  
only so much can be said  
over a phone

The rest circles around the receiver –  
huge trembling moments  
between words

*Catherine Peacock*

HEALTHY SEXUALITY

I need a healthy sexuality.  
I need a sexuality that can admit my hypocrisy,  
Unashamed of who I am.

I want a sexuality fully integrated into my being.  
I want a sexuality which can discern  
Harmful character from constructive.

I aim for a sexuality mature enough  
To know the ways in which I am still a child,  
Whether petulant or innocent and full of wonder.

I aim for a sexuality fulfilled enough  
To withstand and channel different needs,  
Whether my own or someone else's.

I fight for a sexuality that communicates lovingly.  
I fight for a sexuality which fights,  
Apologizes and forgives well.

I work for a creative sexuality.  
I work for a sexuality as strong as the heart  
Of an Olympic athlete.

I pursue a sexuality that can want  
The best for my enemies as for myself,  
Whether myself or not.

I pursue a sexuality which can love freely and deeply,  
Expecting nothing from others in return,  
Pregnant with life and joy.

I want a healthy sexuality  
More than sex.  
I have a long way to go.

*Heather Quarles*

AT THE END OF MY WALK

Tonight through the window  
I saw him: friend.  
He was busy with the dishes –  
dark features and a pale face  
inside a warm room.

I've been in that kitchen before  
and the living room  
which has a sousaphone  
hanging  
on the wall  
and inkwell bladders  
dripping from the ceiling.  
Last time  
three of us drank until the candles  
burnt their white stubs black  
and we played pennywhistles  
until we laughed ourselves silly.

We even unhooked the sousaphone  
and tooted into the same mouthpiece.

But this evening, just as I was looking in  
at my memories,  
a car turned gravel  
down the road  
and we each lifted our head to it.  
When I looked back  
he had just looked down again.

A few steps later, my boots stopped.  
My thighs burned from the cold  
and my mind turned back.

It knocked on the door  
and smiled a bright hello when  
the dark green wood swung open.  
It cheered the face  
who greeted it and laughed  
and it shook off its coat,  
hanging it with others in the hallway.

I'm not sure how long it would have stayed—

for dinner?  
for just a few minutes?  
—nor how long it would have liked to.

Instead,  
eventually,  
my mind  
met up with me again.  
I'd been standing outside  
waiting for it  
on the long strip of white road  
that led to everything else.

The light  
slipped into a Nordic winter's dusk.  
Did it only take that moment  
for the day to change?

My cheeks stung.  
I rallied my thighs  
into walking again.

I can't be knocking  
on everyone's door.

*Heather Quarles*

FOR CARL MILLES' *MAN AND PEGASUS*, STOCKHOLM

I saw you again  
today, after  
only a few months.

A lifetime  
passed between summer  
and winter, just as  
different lives passed through mine  
forever  
in the seasons before we met.

In fact, the reason I know you  
was because I lost two others  
and couldn't come up for air.  
So  
I joined the plane  
to fly me somewhere special  
and I landed at your feet.

You, though, have been stretching  
into the sky  
all this time.  
You are still reaching,  
wanting  
to fly without your winged horse.  
I know the feeling.

He reaches with you though.  
Your muscles and his  
nearly touch, but  
also, impossibly,  
aren't quite separate either.  
I guess this goes to show  
you can't shake off your beast.  
I guess your creator  
like mine  
knew which one to give you  
which one  
would be the match of all your strength  
the one  
to make you stronger, too.

The two of you together  
are a tangle of parallels.

Futility  
reaching for a world  
without him.

Did you hear me?  
Climb onto yours again—  
as I have had to straddle mine.

But, you're still extended, even now.  
    Is there something to  
    the perpetual reach?  
What do I know.  
You have been flying for  
more than two of my lifetimes.

Well, for me, this season  
I have managed  
to ride the flighty grief  
with fewer crash landings  
and sometimes even—  
and this is a stretch—  
with  
happiness.

*Tana Reynolds*

WHAT I AM

I am not this thing.

This wife. This friend.

Your secret confessor.

I am not.

I'm an octopus,

every sucker a desire!

A book to read,

a skyline to peer,

a boot to try on.

Every tentacle holds meaning,

holds a place card

for who I am to that person.

I am not this thing.

This daughter. This sister.

Your partner in crime.

I am not.

I'm an octopus,

every sucker a desire!

A dish to eat,

a painting to ponder,

a glove to pull on.

Every limb carries obligation,

my history, our history,

what I mean to you.

I am not this thing.

This worker. This student.

Your neighbor next door.

I am not.

I'm an octopus,  
every sucker a desire!

And no desire greater than  
to be as a snake,  
new skin under old.

Wriggle out and leave behind.

Glide coolly away through  
fresh, wet grass with  
fresh, wet skin.

But I am not that thing.

I am not.

I'm an octopus,  
every sucker a desire,  
every tentacle weighted.

*Caitlyn Still*

## A MESSAGE FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS

This is a message for sexual assault survivors – to the 1 in 6 American women who have been or will be assaulted in their lifetime and to all the men whose assaults go unacknowledged because of the belief that men don't get raped.

This is for everyone whose trust was taken for granted by a stranger, friend, classmate, colleague, family member...

This is for the people who were told that due to their location, clothing, or alcohol consumption that they were "asking for it."

This is for every person who has been touched, swabbed, and photographed as part of an invasive 4-hour long rape kit exam, only to have their rape kit backlogged and untested.

This is for everybody who has had to relive their trauma in court, only to have their assailants never serve adequate time.

This is for all the people who, upon proclaiming their assault, have been called a liar or been asked why they did not speak up sooner.

This is my message for you:

It is not your fault.

Nothing you did is equivalent to what has happened to you.

Your clothing did not give consent for you.

You deserve the right to feel safe.

It does not matter when you come forward or if you come forward at all.

There is no shame in reclaiming your assault or in doing what is best for you.

I'm sorry for the people who have let you down.

I believe you, I will stand with you, and I will fight for you.

*J. Franklin Turner*  
GUMBO

When Aunt Marge and Grandma Alee came to visit Los Angeles from the South, Mama went down to the garage and retrieved a giant stock pot that she kept in a box in the garage. When she busted open that box, we knew that good things were about to happen. I don't know how Faye knew it, but when that pot made its way to the kitchen, my sister was on the phone spreading the good news. She didn't yet know the particulars of the feast, but something good was about to jump off in Mama's kitchen. She advised that I grab the kids and get over there in a hurry, preferably before dinner was served.

After I hung up the phone, I looked around my sparsely furnished apartment: the undersized blue couch in the living room salvaged from a local retailer going out of business, the unstained wooden table with two little chairs purchased for the children as a Christmas present, and the scared dining room set newly acquired from a recent garage sale. Bits and pieces of odds and ends thrown together to make a home for a newly divorced mother of two. To the outside observer, it looked like the mess that comprised a life falling apart. To me, it was the welcomed beginnings of a life finally coming together. I smiled, then perked my ears for the sounds of chaos that would lead me to the exact location of my three-year-old daughter and two-year-old son.

I got the kids scrubbed and shackled in their car seats, put the key to the ignition of my little brown Buick, said a silent prayer, and smiled when rewarded with the sound of the engine sputtering to life. I engaged the clutch, pulled away from the curb, and we were on the way to Mama's house to see what was for dinner.

When we entered the house, Mama was busy in the kitchen amongst piles of crabs, freshly cleaned shrimp, chicken wings, and andouille sausage all simmering in the large stock pot emitting an aroma that made the eyes water with pure joy. Grandma was sitting on a stool watching Mama's progress, and Aunt Marge was standing nearby. Much to the annoyance of Mama, my sister Faye was loudly providing suggestions for improving the spice mix simmering in the pot and trying to convince Mama to add more okra to the mix. Grandma proclaimed loudly, while looking on the activities with a matter of fact look on her face, proclaims, "That ain't Gumbo!"

The room got very quiet, even Faye stopped talking, and all eyes turned to Grandma. "Gumbo only has seafood in it, no chicken and no sausage. That ain't gumbo."

In a fervent need to change the subject, Aunt Marge, grandma's sister, looked over and noticed me sitting on the floor wrestling my son's flaying arms from his jacket. After providing the appropriate level of silly child-directed conversation, she turned to me and said, "Where your man at?".

"Aunt Marge, I'm not married anymore" I said. "Things didn't work out for us. It's just me and the kids now"

Aunt Marge took a long, confused look at me, and began again, "The man you left, did he beat you?"

"No, ma'am. Things just didn't work out."

"Well, can't you go back and get him?"

"No, ma'am, I'm not interested in having him back."

My sister Faye, pulled up a chair facing Aunt Marge and Me and sat down, leaned forward, no longer interested in what seasoning were needed in Mama's pot.

Aunt Marge cocked her head to one side and continued where she had left off, “I don’t understand why your man would leave you. You ain’t ugly.”

Faye slapped her knee, threw her head back, and let out ear splitting laughter that immediately brought Mama’s attention from the kitchen, with Grandma looking over from her chair. Aunt Marge looked more confused by the minute, not seeing the humor in the conversation at all. I remained seated on the floor, looking up at Aunt Marge with a dumbfounded look on my face, wondering what would made her believe that he had left me.

Lucky for me, the front door opened, and in piles my three brothers with their wives and four more kids, all boys under five. I was so happy to see the flood of pandemonium that washed through the door that I grabbed one of my nephews and planted a kiss in the middle of his dirty little face. Soon we were piled around the table stacked high with a steaming platter of rice, hot bowls of gumbo, a bottle of Louisiana hot sauce, and a side of steaming black-eyed peas. To our delight, a glass domed platter of red velvet cake sat on the counter behind the table.

When we had our fill of food and conversation, Grandma’s quiet piped-up again,

“That ain’t gumbo. Come back tomorrow, and I will make some real gumbo for you all.”

We looked around at each other with credulous looks. Gumbo requires expensive ingredients; at most, it was a once-a-year treat. We were certain that stockpot would find its way back to the garage, and we would not see it again for a long while. Was it possible that we would eat gumbo again tomorrow? Grandma was going to make a “real” gumbo? This was one generational fight that we were sure to enjoy!

Later that evening, I stood by Mama’s side helping with the last of the dishes. I asked her how she felt about Grandma’s pronouncement that she didn’t know how to make Gumbo.

She smiled, “There are many ways to make Gumbo. Some people add sausage and chicken, and some just the crab and shrimp. Don’t matter much what you put in it. It’s all messy. You get to eat it twice in one week. Don’t overthink it.”

That night my sister helped me load the sleeping kids in the backseat of my car. I inserted the key into ignition, and surprisingly the engine, again roared to life. I headed in the direction of home and thought about Gumbo’s similarity to family. Doesn’t really matter if you add a little sausage and chicken, or just the shrimp and crab, it’s still all messy. In the end, it’s all gumbo, and it’s all good.

*J. Franklin Turner*

WHEN I SPEAK OF LOVE

When I speak of love, I speak of words with the aroma of hot maple syrup spread over buttered pancakes. Our easy lovemaking pre-arranged, like the Cuisinart you set the night before, slowly percolating in early morning bliss. I wrap my well-seasoned body against your flaccid abdomen, long brown arms play with breasts no longer firm and perky, maneuvering ample hips close enough to feel your breath against my ear.

Gone, the frenzied passion of tangled clothes, body pressed against walls of our yellow kitchen, ears tuned for boisterous children seeking to quench afternoon thirsts. I feel the coolness of the open refrigerator door, forgotten when you entered the room with that glint in your eye. Head pressed against my face, with sweltering gasps, delirious legs encircling your body and soft muffled moans of stolen mid-day pleasures; but I digress.

Our love fermented and aged, like fine wine tested with the smell of the cork, the swirl in the glass and anticipation of its full and fruity taste in the mouth. When I speak of love, it is earliest light of a new day, savored with knowledge there will be no knock on the door. This time is measured by the slow ticking clock on the bedside table, reminding me this moment is mine to speak of love.

*Josue Valdez*  
SPLIT TONGUE

I

I abandoned the last remnants of broken English  
in Kindergarten, the first utterance of “R,”  
real strong, comic, pirate-like:

*rrrrrrrrrr* – a hard sustain of the tongue  
curled under the bridge, usurping the purr,  
the humming of its former Spanish roll,  
a letter unto itself: “*rr*.”

It was as if I could become  
whiter through speech.

In third grade, I spoke only English,  
wishing for reddened cheeks in public  
with each syllable of mother tongue,  
my mother, father, unveiling our shame,  
our stain on the fabric of suburban idyll,

*porque no quiero hablar así*  
*aquí, ¡mira!*

Nappy curls, one of three little brown boys  
with a picture of grandfather, mestizo  
on both sides, trapped between southern soil  
and the ships of Columbus.

On the fringe of another suburb at thirteen,  
a valley north of San Diego  
south of California’s own Detroit  
and the mission of Riverside,  
the hills and mountains scorched,  
jagged, a bottom-jaw with broken teeth,  
wildflowers and burnt grass.

The split in my tongue, forked, scarred  
over skin still too dark, thinking  
about blonde-haired, blue-eyed girls,  
tending chickens in the coop,  
bare feet over twigs, dirt, leaves

and from the edge of two acres through  
a lattice of cypress trees, skin like mine, a family–

*¿Hablas español?*

someone else's mother asks.

## II

Inside, two children with remnants of  
twigs, dirt, leaves, on feet building with  
Legos, a rare pastime at the dawn  
of burgeoning adolescent angst.

I want to speak a dumb Spanish.  
The fork in my tongue, invisible,  
the sensation real only when brushed  
on cheek, roof, and lip.  
A traitor.

My parents relay their plan,  
together, they cannot risk me, my brothers:  
*We are driving them to Los Angeles.*  
*They made it through the hills*  
*all the way from Mexico*  
A sacred duty stirs yearning blood  
pumping in a shared, forgotten heart,  
an understanding for which no words exist.  
We will never be closer,

then the moment is gone:  
three little brown boys sit alone,  
the glow of the television paints our faces.  
These are breathless hours.  
These hours will not pass within reason,  
but linger like the spirits of an old house.  
No harm will come,  
still, the shared heart's rhythm  
builds an obelisk of this day.

## III

Two years removed, a border  
patrol station at a stone's toss  
from a network of branches  
bordering two old acres,  
a negative: crosshatched aluminum.  
Its crown: razor wire.

I feel composed of dark cloth  
dipped in bleach.

*Lynnn Wells*

THE LAST PICKLE

She floats in the salty brine  
bobbing up and down,  
sloshing side to side  
as if dancing, weightless  
in the arms of the sea.  
Nubby, more oval,  
certainly not pear shaped,  
she listens to a hum  
in the cool darkness,  
safe in the knowledge  
that she has been hand picked  
for her perfect shape and size.  
No beauty queen of course,  
but raised to be admired,  
savored, devoured in love.

Alone after months  
of being packed so close,  
jammed next to the others,  
she is suddenly thrust  
into the light  
as the refrigerator door huffs open.  
The husband's craggy face looms  
as he lifts her briny bottle,  
gazes at her with hope,  
sighs, returns her to the shelf,  
slams the door, leaves her in dark again.

He and she will not dine together today.  
Though his desire for her burns,  
his bologna sandwich bare  
save the mustard and bun,  
the wave of love  
for his wife has wiped out  
his salivary needs,  
reminding him that he

has vowed never to eat  
his beloved's last pickle.

*Nicholas Wilczewski*  
ARS POETICA

Of everything that has happened to me,  
It is the best thing that's happened to me  
I see the letters dancing into infinity  
Into crowded sentences making sounds that construct bliss  
As I scribble spontaneously on the cover of a magazine  
They flow fluidly out of my fingertips  
The words drip slowly onto the page  
Mental acrobatics in arial bliss, soaring slowly through my bloodstream.  
In the early morning fog  
The ideas explode through the salty sweat that beads on my skin.  
Driving on the Freeway, windows rolled down,  
The words blow through my hair.  
In the shower while the water  
Careens off my back and soaks into my skin.  
Inspiration astounds as I gaze into my son's familiar eyes,  
They peer through me.  
I walk amongst the ancient beasts in a place that pictures can't explain  
And the trees whisper to me.  
These words are both the shelter and the storm.  
The cold night, the firelight and you in my arms.

*Nicholas Wilczewski*  
THE NEWS

I can't handle watching the news anymore. it's disgusting  
A bunch of maladjusted criminals  
Talking about Justice?  
I feel like I need crutches,  
but I can't afford em.  
They'd rather spend my money  
detaining babies at the border  
Then force us to follow laws  
That we've voted against  
and blame it all on the foreigners.  
There's war on us,  
interrupting our 7 inch entertainment buzz that comes flying in our face  
faster than fame does.  
Famous? that's a joke cuz.  
We're all chasing it like designer drugs  
While Our one planet melts  
From under our feet.  
Advertising has us coveting things  
That are Impossible to reach.  
Can't pay a decent wage  
For professionals to teach?  
Where do we look for help?  
we can't trust our politicians speech.  
We need more fighters  
That want to stand up and unite us.  
For People to see  
The commonalities that make Us, We  
Or am I caught in a daydream?  
Trying to fill these vacancies  
inside my head  
That are left there from,  
The news,  
I cant handle watching anymore.

*Saje Wolf*

## ENTANGAWOOS

The concrete room was dimly lit with a worn-out light bulb hanging from the ceiling. The long dark wooden dining table in the center of the nearly empty room, recently filled with ten, now stood nearly empty, some of the dirty white plastic chairs returned to their rightful place under the table, some still askew from lethargic Americans, full on the homegrown and cooked Ugandan meal. Rings from tea cups hastily finished littered the sleek surface of the table. The metal thermos was still steaming, recently filled with the sweet entangawoos, stood a trademark of my months spent in Uganda. My pants were a photobook of my day's activities, red clay encrusted on my pant legs from my walks to and from the school, smudges of white powder from fingers caked in blackboard chalk, crusty yellow snot from the countless noses wiped, rich soil and ripe dung from the gardens plowed, thin black lines of ink from pictures drawn with giggling children, earthy grass from the short soccer game in the field, and pork juice from the stew at lunch. My white T-shirt showed that I'd been "gyiming for free" as my host father Paul liked to call it, layers of dried sweat from the humid heat, fresh sweat caused the cotton to contour to the insides of my unshaven armpits, an outline of my forehead dusted in clay lay upside down upon my stomach from an attempt at freeing myself of the never-ending perspiration. The clothes on my body told the story of my day better than the pages that filled in my journal. As I sat there with Paul and Matt, talking about the organization we had started and how much we had grown, the streaks upon my clothes become a badge of honor, and I was so proud to be sitting in this dark room covered in dirt, working for something bigger than me. Somehow Paul managed to avoid the constant film of dust in the air and always looked fresh in his dark blue pressed button

up shirt. I'd seen him in this shirt for three years now, and he still looked as proud of it as the day Matt and I bought it for him. As he finished his cup of tea, I rose to pour him another. "More entangawoos?"

"Please, kali."

I nodded to Matt, offering him a refill and pour us both another cup. We sat in silence as locusts sang in the distance, and the occasional chirp of a gecko echoed the empty room. Paul scooped three heaping spoonfuls of fresh cane sugar into his entangawoo. He looked at Matt and me as he stirred the ginger tea into his cup of sugar, and the spoon clanked against the edges of his yellow mug.

"We are making a change here and becoming a family. I think of you two as my son and daughter, and I hope you can see me like a father. Family is deeper than blood and expands further than a country's borders."

Matt nodded in agreement.

"Yes," I sighed with genuine relief and allowed the comfort and love to wash over me with the deep sense of belonging throbbing in my gut. "My father is very unstable, and I spent much of my childhood being the parent to him, so it is refreshing and rewarding to come here and see the love you give your children and the open arms and love that you offer to us and all of our volunteers. We love you and your family, Paul. Thank you."

And in typical Ugandan fashion, Paul looked me sincerely in the eyes and said nothing more than, "mmm."

We were on our fourth thermos of entangawoos and Jr. was crushing more ginger in preparation for the next pot. My cheeks were tender from smiling for so long, and the sugar in my tea provided me with a short buzz that fought the fatigue of a long day of working in the hot

equator sun. Most of the volunteers had eaten their dinner and gone to bed after their first cup of entangawoos, but Olly and I couldn't get enough, so we sat at the table for hours refilling our mugs.

Our host mother Rose was telling us how she and Paul met. "He was my brother's friend, and I always thought he was so handsome."

"Is he older than you?"

"Yes. He is older. By twenty-two years. But that is normal in Uganda."

"How long did you know each other before you married?"

"Because he was my brother's friend, I knew him one year before we married."

"Do many women get to choose their husbands in Uganda?" We didn't know how far we could push, but Rose was sweet like the perfect mom everyone dreams of, but also only a few years older than us. Excited to have women her age to talk with, she liked to chat like young girls do at late night sleepovers after the lights are turned out, and all the secrets bubble to the surface.

"No. Most women don't get to choose. Most women are not happy in their marriage. I am lucky Paul is a wonderful man, and I love him so much." You could tell by the sparkles in her eyes that she was being honest and that she and Paul deeply loved each other. "Would you like to see photos of our wedding?"

"Yes!" Olly and I exclaimed together. "Okay, after this cup of entangawoos."

Paul walked in the room then "entanga-" he waited for us to repeat.

"Entanga-" "Woos!" "Woos!" Olly and I hooted. "Entangawoos!" Paul said, satisfied with the fact that he was helping us remember how to say 'ginger tea' in Llugandan.

I turned over the teacups stacked in the middle of the long table, filling them one at a time with the hot entangawoos. As the steam rose to my face, my nose tickled with the sweet

tease of ginger. It was dark out, and the light bulb up above only seemed to have gotten dimmer over the years. The volunteers lazily filed into the dining room, if you could call it that. The long dark wooden dining table gave it the air of a dining room, although the large chalkboard with children's drawings, the coal-filled iron sitting upon the table covered in hand washed laundry, the bowls of hazy water that lay on the concrete floor for dishwashing, and the metal gate that served as a door were a little different than what Americans typically think when they hear 'dining room.' Matt and I had a rough discussion with the volunteers earlier in the day, and the bitter taste left in many mouths stunted the usual dinner talk. Spoons clanked against tea cups, and every now and then you could hear a subtle murmur of, "Will you pass the sugar?"

"Mmph." I was annoyed and pissed off and did not feel like talking.

I sat back in my plastic lawn chair and held the cup of entangawoos in my hand, breathing in the sweet hot ginger. As I blew to cool it down, I observed the small ripples that spread throughout my mug, hot tea splashing on the purple script writing that read 'Romantic' on the inside of the mug. I took my first sip of entangawoos since the last cup I had at lunch and got an instant reality check. The ginger reminded me of the deep roots I had grown in Uganda, the immense love and gratitude I had for my host family, and the core understanding that this was what I was meant to do. As the fresh ginger and locally grown cane sugar dissolved in my mouth, I released all the useless distraction of disagreeing with group members and remembered why I had traveled to the other side of the world – to connect with this new family I had found, to grow and empower the best version of myself, and to be of service.

My cup of entangawoos took me back to every memory I had drinking tea at that table over the past three years, and I did not want to add a bitter memory to that list by stewing and adding to the tension of the dinner table. I sat in the same seat for every meal I'd had at Paul and

Roses' house, Paul sat at the head of the table, with his back to the door; Rose sat to his right, (if she joined us for dinner); Matt sat to Paul's left, and I sat to the left of him.

My first trip to Uganda I found sitting so close to Paul intimidating. He liked to talk, and I was unsure about my ability to understand his accent and felt pressure to impress him. Over the years, I had greatly valued my seat at the table and being close enough to Paul and Rose to have deep and insightful conversations that have led to our growing relationship. Now I used this seat to my advantage placing myself as far away from the people I did not want to talk with but had led on this trip. I remembered a question I had from the market earlier that day and turned to Rose. "Something strange happened to me in the market today."

"Oh?"

"I was buying more of these beads." I pointed to the two strands of small white beads I had wrapped around my throat on my first trip to Uganda three years ago. "The man laughed at me and asked if I was going to wear the beads. I said yes and pointed to my necklace, but he just continued to laugh and told his friend something in Llugandan and then they both laughed! Is there something I should know about these beads?"

Rose looked embarrassed, an expression I'd never seen upon her face. Then she said, almost in a hushed voice, "I'll tell you after dinner, when there are no boys around."

Everyone at the table looked at me like I was getting sent to the principal's office. I helped with dishes and then went to my room after dinner to read until I heard Rose's soft voice outside of my door.

"Saje, will you come have some entangawoos with me?" She and I sat at the far end of the long dining table, each with a 'Romantic' cup in our hands, trying to calm my nerves and my wandering mind. I focused on the warmth the tea emitted, the round of the mug in the cup of my

palms, and the condensation that grew in the space between my skin and the ceramic. I sipped the tea, and the tip of my tongue went numb from the burn of the liquid. ‘How could the tea still be this hot?’ I thought to myself. ‘They must have made another pot.’

Rose took a sip of her entangawoos, but the heat didn’t seem to phase her superior tongue. “When you announce that you are engaged, your mother’s sister begins making you a string of beads.” She sipped her cup of scalding tea and swallowed with no hesitation. “She gifts them to you on your wedding day, and you wear them during sex.” I felt very comfortable with Rose and thought of her as a close friend and mother figure but hearing her say the word “sex” made me blush. I felt like a teenager getting the ‘birds and the bees’ talk for the first time, a talk I had never had with my own mother. I tried taking a sip of my entangawoos, the tip of my numb tongue tingling from contact while I tried to answer the question in my head myself, but when I failed to do, so I shyly asked, “Are they for pleasure or just to look appealing to the man?”

“They look nice and help keep the rhythm.” She put her hands on her hips and swayed from side to side. How they helped keep rhythm perplexed me, but I decided to go with a more awkward follow up question. Cheeks red and hot I giggled as I asked, “Do you have a set?”

“Yes, but I don’t really wear them. Paul doesn’t find them too exciting and is fine without them.” We both giggled, and like a native Ugandan, I looked into Rose’s eyes sincerely and responded with no more than a “mmm.” We sat at the table drinking our entangawoos, not saying much more but rather spending our time drinking in each other’s presence in comfortable bliss and the purest form of love.

## HONORABLE MENTIONS

*Diane Elizabeth Caudillo*  
MARINA MUSIC

Lacking stable foundations  
perhaps makes sense  
of my penchant for  
sitting by water  
or on it, floating,  
swaying, tilting  
on the dock  
coruscations of light  
entering the rhythmic cascade

I love the music of marinas,  
a gamelan of wind and tide  
and boats

A black bird  
repeatedly shakes its wings  
in the water, fast  
to create a cloud  
of droplets, and then,  
graceful inversion like a comma,  
tail up,  
into the water it goes.

Over there, some sea lions –  
or are they seals, perennial question –  
speak in raspy-throated voices.  
One basks on the dock  
and the others stretch their necks  
to investigate the way up.  
Augh-augh-ahau-hau, one seems to laugh,  
I'm up here too now.

Useless anthropomorphizing  
but one way to connect  
with the only other mammals I see.

I want to be on that deck  
with them, to share a moment  
in the sun,  
to make contact  
with those liquid inky eyes  
and the sea people behind them.

The soaring of seagulls  
and their cries,  
the Quality of the Light,  
the way I can't uncouple  
my impression of satisfaction  
from the sight of that black bird  
sailing along  
and disappearing,  
sailing along and disappearing,  
its own idiosyncratic counterpoint  
in this gamelan of ships  
and light  
and water  
and motion.

Maybe stability can be found in this fluidity.

June 23, 2014

My father was fairly useless to me until I expressed interest in the opposite sex, which began early and has never wavered except for maybe half a moment last week. But then only for maybe a minute. I may have been driving, or dozing in the tub, or looking at the expiration date for a pot roast I was considering buying at Safeway. Then the moment passed, and I was again reminded of that beautiful, all-encompassing, thought monopolizer, otherwise known as women.

I was immediately curious about breasts, boobs, tits, nipples right from the get-go. My own non-Websterian definition was that breasts were the whole package while tits were but the tips, extending on into the shadowed puddles of aureoles; which all gals, whatever their age, possessed, while breasts come with time and go away with even more time.

My mother, whose breasts were a modest affair, but at least she shared what she had, told me early on that I should never smack 'em. That they might, from a certain angle, resemble punching bags, but there was never any reason to treat them as such.

First day of school would have been traumatic all on its own without my father sending me off to school in short pants and a girl's name. "A Boy Named Sue" by Johnny Cash was a big hit at the time. Being named Laurie was not a big deal until I showed up at school in short pants. We had lived in England before this. My understanding was that Lorrie was a truck. Some might be pressed recalling what they learned first day of school, but not me. Second day of school, I reemerged as Larry and had covered my scabby knees with jeans.

Between all this, however, I returned from Kindergarten that day thoroughly smitten. Prior to this, I thought I was in love with the girls next door, Suzy, who was my age, and Cathy, who was an exotically distant she-vixen nearly twice my age. Suzy I probably liked because she liked me. I would learn this is the oldest ploy there is and that we are constantly falling for people for no other reason that they express an initial liking for us. Then out of guilt perhaps or something psychologically nefarious, we reciprocate these feelings. Next thing you know . . .

Well, Cathy wasn't like that. She could care less about me, a mere child, boy-next-door-type with waxy ears, dirty nails, incrustated snot on his sleeves, using a girl's name no less. Around the tall stately blond I'd become even stupider than I was already. I'd drop my pants or sing some borrowed ditty from Captain Kangaroo or scoop up something disgusting, or present

Cathy with the mummified corpse of one of my dead turtles or a prized beetle, and she'd smack me and tell me to get the hell away from her.

There were other reasons why Cathy and I were never going to work out, but it didn't stop me from thinking about her. I hung out with her brother, whom I didn't like, so I could stare stupidly at Cathy from time to time.

There was talk in our five going-on six year old world of girls being afflicted with cooties when in fact girls were made of sugar & spice, and we were the ones purportedly part puppy dog tail and other suspect ingredients.

Suzy may have carried round a cootie or two.

Everything changed, however, after that first day of school when I met Barbara, or as I would have said it, Bwabwa; short pants and a girl's name were not my only problems.

I came home, gushing love like an oil well gushing crude, and after I told my dog and the goats in the field, geese by the pond, cats in the barn, and whatever turtle currently serving out its days on death row. Having no one else to tell, I told my father.

We lived—as you may have guessed—in the country, California wine country, where distances were great and people few. My father quickly put it all together as to whom this Bwabwa was and who her parents were, and of course he knew where they lived. Well, maybe not right off the bat, but over the course of my yammerings, he put it together.

Serious feelings were exchanged and deepened when for lunch one day she traded me a chicken leg for my sandwich. I don't recall what kind of sandwich. It was probably a fresh, somewhat dry, peanut butter, but her drumstick was quite the opposite of fresh, and feelings of love were later overwhelmed with copious barfing and fever.

I recovered but my strong feelings for Barbara did not and seeing me pine and mope over the little brunet with missing front teeth and blue cats-eye glasses, my father—not the first time, nor the last—called me a coward, told me to seize the bull by the horns, and go pay a call to my lady-love.

“Girls need to be told things,” he said. “You can't assume just because you like 'em that they like you—you have to tell them, and risk everything. There'd be no you if I hadn't said something to your mother at some point.”

Well, I could see what he was getting at. And I couldn't allow for mere inexperience to

keep me inexperienced. I should take action. But what action?

“Go visit her,” he said. “Go call on her. It’s called ‘courting.’ You pick some flowers, go to her door. Say hi to her mom, and ask if Barbara’s home. You hand her the flowers, ask her what she’s doing. See if she wants to go for a walk, go skip stones or something . . . It doesn’t matter what you do, only that by visiting and chatting with her, she knows you like her, and nine times out of ten, it’ll dawn on her that she might as well like you too.”

My head was spinning. A dread wave of confusion and panic I had never known before and would not feel again until later in life when applying to universities or filling out my income taxes . . . Only this was different. “Tell me what to do.” I asked. And this was a question that seldom came from me, whatever my age.

He drew me a map. Her house was beyond the river that was at least a mile or more away, something akin to dog years in distance for a lad my size. Nevertheless, rather than have my father toss the “C” word my way again, I set off like Moses crossing Gaza. My father prepared me a Spam sandwich for lunch. Spam for me was like spinach for Popeye. I chased it with a glass of cold goat’s milk, and, wearing long pants and armed with my father’s map, I set out to conquer the blue-eyed Barbara’s affections.

Were this a story, I’d make up the rest, for the facts, fifty years later have begun to blur. I made it there. However many miles it was. I picked something besides my nose along the way, something that probably died in my sweaty hand, forcing me to pick more. I likely picked some flourishing California Golden Poppies, which I was told you weren’t supposed to ever pick. I vaguely recall the look of shock on Barbara’s mother’s face and the pleased look Barbara wore, that she had received her first gentlemen caller. I think we walked down to the river, and I probably skipped stones because, then like now, I’m a stone-skipping fool. I don’t recall whether I kissed her, which means I probably didn’t.

School that Monday was about the same, except that I recall soon afterwards, I began having strong feelings for Lorraine.

Someday I would develop feelings for a girl, or ghoul, whose name I could actually pronounce. But until that day, challenges arose on every front, taunting me to keep trying.

*Elaina Erola*

THE KIND OF WOMAN YOU ARE

He leaned forward on one hand, crushing his palm back and forth into the wooden countertop. He swayed as he looked up at me with glassy eyes, barely able to keep my gaze. He sneered at me with one lip pointed skyward, like a panther ready to fight.

“I know wha kinna woman ew hour,” he slurred through hours and hours of gin. He was drunk before he got here, and he been slamming down alcohol since he arrived. “You like the bad boys,” he cooed, his voice jumping an octave. “You like those jerks, that fuck with you. The ones that treat you like crap. You can’t get enough of them.”

I stared back at him, aware that he was completely blacked out. I stared in silence as my friend looked on at us, watching to see what I would do next. No words left my mouth. How was I to argue with someone who wasn’t even aware this conversation was happening? How could I stick up for myself against a stranger’s stream of consciousness? What would I have said if he was sober? My inability to lie left me with no counter argument, no way to form words like, “Actually you’re mistaken, because all the men I’m attracted to have been very secure and nurturing to me. I usually form healthy a communicative relationships with my partners,” or any variation thereof. I was being called out, by a demon who did not exist absent of alcohol, and he was the most accurate entity to ever assess me.

The man leaned in and said in a deep and quiet voice, “You like those assholes.” He threw his drink in my face.

It is five years earlier, and I am waiting at home on our couch. The cheap canvas cloth is rough under my thighs. I’m wearing shorts because it is summer now, and he told me he would

stop on Thanksgiving. He promised me he would stop. But he doesn't stop, and I never learn to trust him. He promises me he will stop if I stop going through his private phone calls and text messages and emails, if I stop invading his privacy, and he'll stop lying about it. I lay there with my head against his chest, and I cry and ask him why he can't love just me. I cry so much my tears soak through his gray sweatshirt and turn it into a giant dark puddle. We make love. He promises me he will never do it again. I promise I will never do it again.

But then I notice that he is waiting for me to fall asleep at night. He asks for more time to himself. He tells me I'm smothering him, he needs his own friends, his own life. I check his phone. I check his email. No matter how many times he changes the password I figure it out and everytime I do, I make myself physically sick. I stop eating, but I throw up as long as I carry the knowledge with me, so I wait for him to come home so I can confront him. I sit on the couch all day waiting for him to come home. I drink while I wait. I wait until five, then six. When he finally comes home, the bottle is empty. We are both drunk. I consider not telling him and living with the vomiting one more day, so we can pretend we still love each other. But wine provokes me, assuring me I do not have to worry about the consequences. I stand up and tell him what I saw. He puts me into the bookcase.

It is eight years later, and I regret moving in here. I tell him I'm going to leave, and it upsets him. He tells me I better get the hell out of town fast. He tells me he doesn't like the way my best friend and my sister talk about him. He tells me that I have no friends, and I should hear the way that people really talk about me in this town. He grabs my wrists and pushes me against the wall. He growls through gritted teeth, "Your name is mud now." I smell hash oil on him. He threatens to tell my friends I've been unfaithful. He threatens to tell my parents I've behaved

criminally. His small Jack Russell terrier barks relentlessly at my bare ankles. I hate her. I want to kick her, but she would surely attack me then, and I think that he might kill me. I close my eyes, and I am afraid. He tells me I have no one and nowhere to go and drags me by my hair into the bedroom. He hits me, and I go face down into a lavender comforter.

It is four years later, and I am sitting on the kitchen counter with just my skirt and blazer on. He runs his hand up my thigh and tells me his wife will never find out. The lights are off and just the street light shines into the kitchen. He looks at me like a superbowl ring, impressed and with desire. He whispers to me that he would protect me, that no one ever has to know. He bites me. He tells me I'm the only one who understands, that I'm the one he really loves. He tells me he takes pictures of me while I'm sleeping sometimes. He tells me he doesn't want me to see anyone else. He tells me it's not the same way when he has sex with her. He grabs me by my hips and pulls me off the counter, then turns me over on the cold yellow tile counter, pushing my face down to surface so fast I have to slap my hands on the counter, to prevent myself from breaking a cheekbone. He slaps my ass hard enough to leave a mark.

It is thirty years earlier, and I am just a child. I sing aloud songs I am making up on the spot, continuously because no one told me not to. I take off my clothes all the time because my family is part Finnish and part Blackfeet Indian, and we sit in rooms naked and sweat together a lot. I didn't know I wasn't supposed to. I run through grass fields and spend a lot of time alone or napping under trees by myself because I am an only child, and I didn't know I wasn't supposed to. I am an average child, but my skin is not too dark, and I never struggle with my weight. I am tall but not too tall, and my hair is long and straight. My skin clears up in high school, and my

teeth are straight when my braces come off, and one day I realize I fit the stereotype for pretty that all my dolls and the women on MTV do. And one day, that's the kind of woman you are.

*James Floss*

ADDICTION RESTRICTION

Bless me, Padre, for I have sinned  
My last confession was 3 poems ago

Padre, I watch porn; food porn  
Lamb shank in a garlic fennel sauce

Pig parts unknown wrapped in bacon  
Tri-tip and tripe marinated in marrow

Padre, I eat my veggies  
(caramelized broccoli florets in Béarnaise sauce)

But damn that man Bourdain!  
Again and again and again!

I find myself drawn to pork stewing  
In decadent assorted sweet-meats

Padre, I need a chlorophyll cleanse  
Please accept my humble supplication...

What? Three kale martinis and one cauliflower?  
I repent! Let the cleanse begin!

Wendy Hnilo  
AN ODE TO COFFEE

In your most simple form--  
fresh, hot, fragrant--  
you evoke the inevitable sigh,  
relief, our morning is saved.

Now, we all know you can dress up.  
sticky dollops of honey,  
rocks of raw sugar,  
the milk that so contrasts your surface.

Even as you're poured over ice--  
crackling, splashing, stirring--  
your rich, full bodied taste  
is a myriad of mixed essences.

Some like it hot  
hot as it can be with  
cinnamon, chocolate, nutmeg  
infused through you: a delicate art.

Some like it blended  
with rich ice cream, goopy caramel, spicy chai  
they can't even recognize your taste  
and yet they insist, "Oh I *need* my coffee."

As for me, however,  
I'll keep your simple form in my mug  
with a dash of cream  
and a spoonful of honey.

*Allison Iafrate*

FISHING ON A LAKE

The water sloshes against the dry heat of the sun,  
licking the aluminum sides of the boat.  
My leg falls asleep from the thinly cushioned seat, Dad  
across from me, his eyes gazing across the water.  
We named the boat Turbo-Cooker, for the flakes of skin  
we'll peel off of our arms when we go home.

My eyes slip away from him and dream of home  
where the cool shade washes the sun  
from the air, where my skin  
drinks the dark deeply, and the boat  
bobs alone on the waves of far-off water.  
The crossword puzzle on the table in front of Dad.

I blink and again, I am here with Dad.  
His plaid sweatshirt has long forgotten the shade of home,  
damp on one wrinkled sleeve from a brief splash of water.  
It will soon dry in the afternoon sun,  
the smell of the lake, its only memory of the boat  
as it clings loosely again to his skin.

We sway gently, leaving small ripples on the skin  
of the lake, and I wonder if I should ask Dad  
if this is what fishing is. Two people on a boat,  
each longing for a reason to dock and go home.  
My eyes follow the line from my pole, the sun  
washing it in light as it slips into the water.

Oddly, the line plunges downward as if tugged by the water,  
wrinkling further the lake's smooth skin.  
Heat swirls in a sudden flurry of motion, the sun  
heating his back as he lunges for the net, Dad  
shouts "It's a fish! Reel, reel! Reel it in! Bring it home!"  
He leans for a better look, his hand gripping the metal edge of the boat.

We tip violently as he hauls the large bass into the boat,  
frantic waves course through the warm water.  
We laugh at our soaking clothes and talk about home,  
the fish, with its pale flesh and lightly striped skin,  
will taste better if we use garlic and butter, Dad  
says as he settles back into his seat, his smile bright in the sun.

At home here, he sits, his sweatshirt damp against his skin.  
The boat returns to its gentle sway on the water.  
I want to ask Dad, if this is what fishing is, as we bask in the sun.

*Roy Marin*

## THE BUS TO OAKLAND

We are all boarding the bus to Oakland. It is 6:30 in the morning at the Greyhound station in Santa Rosa. It is a free ride.

We are all the same age. Nineteen years, ten months. We have all been on a free bus ride to Oakland once before for our pre-induction physicals. That ride was round trip. This ride is one way.

As we board, a young man stands and greets us at the door. He hands each of us a note on a sheet of paper.

“When we arrive at the Induction Center, I will refuse to enter. Join me.”

We march on up the stairs and find ourselves a seat. The door closes. The bus pulls away. There are probably fifty of us.

It takes a while for the message to sink in.

Around Petaluma, the grumbling begins. Back then in 1968, many a young Petaluma High School grad was proud to be chosen or volunteer to go off and fight America’s war.

Who is this hippie radical freak? they wonder. Who does he think he is?

The young man’s hat is snatched off his head and spit into. The grumbling rises to shouting and cursing. The hat is passed around for further contributions, and slammed back down upon his head.

It is a chaotic scene on the bus to Oakland. Cries to take his life are hurled in his direction.

The bus continues down Highway 101.

Amid the din and confusion, the young man struggles from his seat and claws his way toward the back of the bus in a desperate attempt to reach the small bathroom. He is pummeled the entire way amid ever increasing pandemonium. Reaching his destination, he slams the door and locks it.

The call goes up to the bus driver to unlock the door and let us at him. The bus to Oakland rolls on.

This is the morning after our last day of civilian life. The bus to Oakland is hot and crowded. There is no access to the bathroom. Last civilian meals find their way onto laps, seats and the floor. For some of us this is truly a bus ride to hell.

And we are only in San Rafael!

Many of us light up cigarettes and gaze out windows as home slides ever farther away from us. An uneasy calm of resignation settles in. Perhaps we are all examining our lives up to this point. The young man in the bathroom is mostly forgotten.

Until we turn the corner onto the street in front of the Induction Center. Before the large imposing building the sidewalks are filled with young people about our age singing songs and carrying signs. Many stand in the street in an effort to block our progress. Police are there to clear the way. The bus to Oakland finally reaches its destination.

Our past is forgotten.

Our future awaits.

Starting now.

We exit the bus to Oakland and march single file between a phalanx of policemen holding back those young people striving to block our progress. We reach the door and cross the threshold. We step from our carefree civilian lives into the arms of the military.

Only the young man in the small bathroom at the back of the bus has stood up and fought to make his own choice.

*Daniel Nickerson*  
DONUTS FOR PEACE

Gigantic morning is upon us!

I ask for nothing more  
than a cream cheese danish  
with blueberry jam,  
twelve ounces of  
something like coffee,  
and another chance at union  
with the human family

Before this day is through,  
the world could send itself  
into the final spiral  
of war, famine, chaos, and  
bankruptcy of the soul

Nothing is certain  
but endless, various,  
unpredictable life –  
and Don's Donuts

Let the pop radio roll on,  
let the free newspapers  
spill off the racks,  
let the people buy bread  
with pocket change  
and eat together  
in peace

*Amy Peterson*  
I AM TRYING

Looking back:

Now it hits. That “normal” was a struggle.

That I was smart, but felt incapable.

That I was Different, but

Continually.

Consistently.

It was Enforced. That I was Bad.

I was asked, Why can't you just do this? I was asked, Why don't you try?

I am one of the most compassionate people you could ever meet. Yet. Time after time.  
Friendship after friendship. Job after job after job. People said, and still say, “It feels like you just don't care.”

I am so sorry  
that I have to be sorry  
for being me.  
But I do.

I forget things.  
I can't listen.  
I can't follow directions.  
I lose track of time  
I can't multi task  
I struggle to keep  
just one thing in my life  
consistently in an organized state.  
I lose things  
while I am looking for lost things.  
I can't make it through a movie  
I can't stay focused on a lecture  
I can't learn a skill the first go  
or the second  
or the third

because I don't remember  
what you said the last time.

Please don't get upset  
that I forget.

I care.

I am trying.

I try until my head throbs.

I try until I feel like I just can't.

And then I try some more.

To learn as quick as you expect.

To pay attention like you expect.

To remember, to not forget  
that thing that you asked me twice.

Please know that I care.

I am trying to make myself fit  
into a society that wasn't made for me  
following a strict schedule  
with endless daily tasks to do.

My life is normal

if I lock my keys in the car again.

If I forget what I misplaced.

If I don't know where I parked.

If I forget what day it is.

If I forget what I was supposed to remember  
to not forget.

If I stare and stare

at a school assignment

seeing right through the words

and feel overwhelmed,

If I spend a day making lists

that remind me of other lists

of things I need to do

but feel like I can't get dressed

because I can't hold on

to a fraction of a thought

because I'm ADHD and depressed.

Pardon me, when I seem  
deaf and dumb –  
My meds don't fix me.  
They just make my life  
slightly more bearable.

I am forcing myself to function  
In a world built by neurotypical people,  
for neurotypical people  
with a brain that's anything but  
neurotypical.  
Please know. I am trying.  
I didn't ask for this either.  
But to function I must force it.  
Every day.

And no one is harder  
on my messed up brain  
than Me, Myself and I.  
I am beaten down.  
If it's not someone else, it's me.  
If it is someone else, it's me too.  
If my employer says,  
Why don't you try?  
I say I'm sorry.  
I say I'll try harder.  
I tell myself I'm lazy.  
I tell myself I'm stupid.  
I tell myself I'm worthless.  
And yes, day after day  
week after week  
one failed attempt at employment after another  
one lost cell phone after  
another  
one failed relationship after  
another  
I go home and pull my hair out,

Yell Fuck me!  
Bang my head into a wall  
and cry.  
But I will forget things again.  
No matter how much  
I am punished.  
It will happen again.

The thing is: I AM trying.  
That was never the problem.  
But I must face the punishments  
for something I was not aware of.  
That is the reality  
I was forced to accept  
to stay sane.

Trust me, I am aware of my flaws.  
My dearest friends make fun of me  
and mock me  
and tell me I'm incapable.  
My clients tell me they have plans  
for me to not be such a scatterbrain.  
I am a caregiver. The people I take care of  
have memory loss  
and they remember more than I do.  
They keep me on track.  
They say I'M hard to talk to.  
And I laugh and make fun of myself  
because it's how I have learned  
to survive my own self-sabotage  
and the mockery of those around me.

Occasionally, someone will notice  
that my ambition runs higher than most.  
That situations that make others scared  
are situations that attract me.  
That I can stay calm when others panic.  
My response to their comments is:  
You are free to choose to live

without a risk.  
Life is easy enough for you  
that trying, and fighting, and struggling  
are an option,  
but not a necessity.

Then I add:  
It is tiring, being tireless.  
And I have insomnia.

Just kidding!!!  
I don't say any of that.  
I just smile, and laugh at myself.  
That is my survival,  
my coping mechanism:  
The life preserver I throw to myself  
after I throw myself off deck  
to the sharks.

What I have learned  
from living in this brain  
is this:  
I can only hope  
that you will see my compassion,  
my goofiness,  
my love for the Earth,  
my love for life  
my love for people  
my never-ending tenacity, to  
try again and again and again  
because this is all I have known  
since day one  
and overdrive is normal  
and chaos is normal  
and getting nothing done is normal  
And I choose to try again  
but it's never enough  
And I will laugh.  
And try again.

I have learned to put up with me.

But as I have been taught,  
not everyone has the patience.  
Or the tolerance.

If you can stand it –  
be kind. Don't get mad.  
Just remind me again.

Please don't get upset  
that I forget.

I am trying.

*Amy Peterson*

## CARRIE ANN LUCAS DIED

Carrie Ann Lucas died.  
Who heard about it?

I did not know who she was  
Until she died  
And hardly anyone I have asked  
Knows her story.

Everyone knows  
what Bruno Mars song won the Grammy  
What song Bradley Cooper sang  
With Lady Gaga  
And how many times Justin Bieber's  
Been engaged.

But no one knows who Carrie Ann Lucas was  
Or how she died.

I'll tell you who she was.  
She was a voice to the voiceless,  
a face to an invisible movement.  
She used her life to fight for others like her  
As a fierce advocate, an attorney,  
For adults with disabilities.

She adopted four children with disabilities  
Despite the invalid judgements  
And unfair discrimination  
Based on her disabilities  
Which she had to stand up against  
In order to adopt them.

She had hearing and vision loss,  
Type 1 Diabetes  
And a rare type of muscular dystrophy  
Which left her dependent on a ventilator

And a power wheelchair  
For the last few years of her life.

She founded the nonprofit  
Disabled Parents Rights,  
An organization established to fight against  
The discrimination that makes parenting  
For parents with disabilities  
That much harder.

And she died because of the very discrimination  
She had boldly resisted.

Carrie Ann Lucas died  
Because her insurance company  
United Healthcare  
Would not pay for an antibiotic she needed.

So she had to take a cheaper medication,  
Which was less effective  
And had terrible side effects  
And she eventually succumbed to septic shock.  
She was 47 years of age.

What a way to go,  
For a woman living with significant disabilities  
Who spent her life advocating  
For others like her.

What was on the news that day?  
Probably something about a singer,  
Or something a celebrity might have said about the president,  
or what Trump tweeted this morning.

Disability isn't cool, it's not hip and exciting,  
It's not "sexy," and it makes us uncomfortable  
So it's often left out of the news  
And social media  
And the topic is largely avoided,

Shoved under the carpet  
In news about human rights and social justice;

When we do talk about it, which is rare,  
It's always in sympathy,  
It's always a story of a hero,  
Being "great despite"  
Making a difference despite,  
Braving the world despite,  
The great human who "overcame"  
Disability  
And used their journey to help others.

I have some news for you.  
Carrie Ann Lucas was not "great despite."  
She did not "overcome"  
She did not make a difference despite  
She made a difference With.

She was disabled and it did not stop her.  
Carrie Ann Lucas was a hero with a ventilator  
She was a hero in a power chair  
And this is what we need to change:

Disability rights is human rights.  
Disability rights is social justice,  
For those who are less able and still try  
But are still every bit as human  
And we need to see that.

We need to see that a hero does not have to leave their wheelchair to be a hero.

If we can change the way we think  
About disabilities  
Maybe one day people like  
Carrie Ann Lucas  
Who had influence nationally  
In human rights  
Will be national news.

*Heather Quarles*  
SENDOFF

The sunrise stretched  
over the lawn today.  
I was the only one who saw it.  
Pink, orange, lavender—the  
color that is those together—  
stained the snow  
and made ice crystals  
dance.

A pheasant going about her business  
plucked right through it.

Hello, I said, This is  
my last and very special morning  
on the island.  
Hello, she said, This  
is a good spot for breakfast.  
Yes,  
I said,  
I know.

I closed my eyes as a shutter  
and fed on that picture  
all day.

*Joe Shermis*

DREAMED AS NEEDED

Once there was a dream I had  
that felt like floods from rain,  
I saw the river rising  
and it slept across the plain  
like a current coming at me  
with waves of large debris  
that knocked me with that flowing  
as I was swept to sea...

Twice there was a dream we dreamed  
and shared like bread with friends,  
we talked of what was noticed  
and what awareness sends  
when you see it in an image,  
a flash on brain from soul  
that comes like rain that floods that plain  
you dreamed as dreams will pull...

Three times we will share our souls,  
connected in our sleep  
by what comes from flowing waters  
that run both swift and deep  
and washes us to where we go  
when things we need to see  
present themselves as ships and trains  
and waves of large debris...

*Joe Shermis*

THE SPACE BETWEEN HAND AND SOUL

Once my hands ran over her and felt her like song,  
felt her like a painting that as I went along  
was crafted with both words and the colors that you write  
when writing this here poem with these hands that will excite...

Twice I reached within her soul and touched her with both hands,  
I saw what came as energy and what that flow demands  
as it's crafted with the questions that come up in her mind,  
asking what is felt as stone that's just as hard to find...

Three times I would see her smile and count it as a touch,  
it tripled as I noticed that the smile gave as much  
as the painting and the poem and the song we want to write,  
its seen as hands that reach within and bring light into sight...

Dawn Katherine Tisdell  
SEXTUAL FRUSTRATION

This is the night I choose fire on one end  
And a fool on the other  
I don't need another lover

Sit on the porch and watch the bus station  
Loneliness is the bug that chews through my foundation  
Lose two vices and gain another  
I just want one male friend to call brother

Or is everyone with equipment tested?  
Leave someone  
Anyone, undigested

Feel the old, familiar call  
I hear it every damn nightfall  
No more hiding under the prayer shawl  
It's all in the open

Oh, the shameful pub crawl  
'Drag that gorilla on home  
So for about an hour or two  
you don't have to feel all alone'

Unwrap that mystery  
Because, sir, our friendship is history  
And don't worry

I'll always remember  
When I made you moan  
Involuntarily groan  
And quiver

My favorite part  
give me your DNA  
And I'll just throw it away

Don't be shy  
Use every part of me  
You can even choke me  
To a tolerable degree

Because my Father was an absentee

And though you may see me as a giver  
When you're done with me

I'll send you home to shiver  
Because you're my drug  
That fills a hole made  
when I never received a hug

So this is the night I chose fire on one end and a fool on the other  
Here, I don't need to use another lover  
Sit on the porch and watch the bus station

In this cold  
With this cigarette  
I can handle  
A little sexual frustration

*J. Franklin Turner*  
STREET JUNK

Human wreckage forgotten on street corners in shabby dirt coverings adorned with shoes sizes too large, tired and worn. Dust covered pieces, fallen debris, wandering unwanted, unseen. What stories lie hidden behind your vacuous stare?

Dare I ask? Would you tell?

I imagine you dancing in an Alex Hailey production on toes that defy gravity, reaching with extended arms that touch music circulating through souls. You fall into outstretched hands and are lifted to heights in gauzy light with his loving embrace. Only, your lover loses his grip, dropping you hard into darkness, broken and afraid.

You wake, wrinkled and gray, dirty and hungry, searching for him. Surely, he searches for you, a rare jewel lost. Perhaps he is just around the next corner wandering,

just as unwanted,

just as unseen,

just as afraid.

Lost in a dance of life known only to you, only to him.