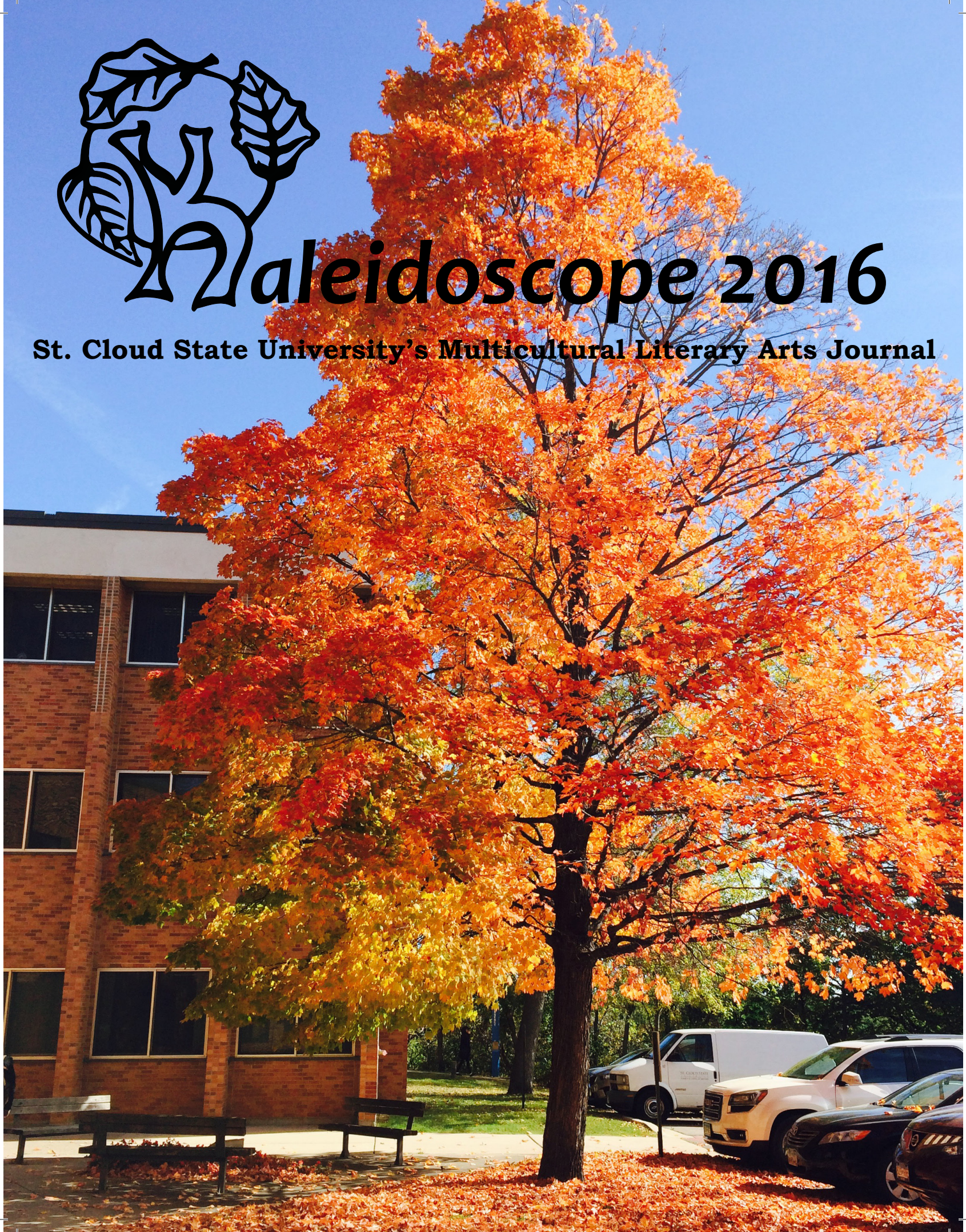




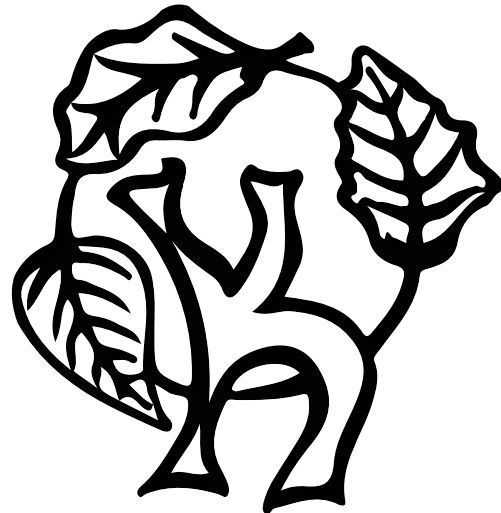
***aleidoscope* 2016**

St. Cloud State University's Multicultural Literary Arts Journal



Kaleidoscope 2016

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We receive support from the Multicultural Diversity Committee. We appreciate their continued assistance.

Each submission was anonymously reviewed by two judges. Scores from each evaluator were then combined for a total score. Major discrepancies between judges were reviewed by a third person. The top pieces were chosen for publication. In the interest of fairness and diversity, we cannot publish more than five winning submissions per author. Judges and editors did not take part in the acceptance of their own work(s), nor did they review their own writing.

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Editor's Note

We are very excited for this year's issue of Kaleidoscope and hope our readers enjoy it as much as we have. Within these pages, readers will discover new worlds, perspectives, and kindred spirits. Thanks to our diverse community at St. Cloud State University and greater St. Cloud, we have the honor of showcasing some of our best creative minds!

We continue our tradition of multiculturalism and inclusion throughout these pages. We have included the LGBT community, those from various socioeconomic statuses, people from multiple ethnic and racial groups, and folks of different abilities, ages, and backgrounds. We strive to let otherwise silenced voices echo through the pages of our magazine.

Kaleidoscope would not be possible without our St. Cloud State Community and the many submissions we received. We would like to thank the contributors for their creative poetry, prose, and images. We also extend a special thanks to the Multicultural Diversity Committee and Dr. Carol Mohrbacher, Director of the Write Place, for making this publication possible.

Enjoy our 2016 edition of Kaleidoscope!

The Kaleidoscope Staff



Perspectives

Melissa Frank

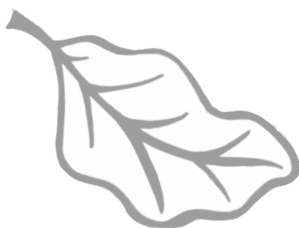
All the rhetoric in the world cannot account for the hate that we produce towards one another. We live in a town that claims unity and acceptance...but what we actually give is a different thing altogether. I see people treating one another like a pride of lions coming together to tear apart a gazelle. You tell me about harmony, but if my skin was brown would you be smiling on the other side of that window?

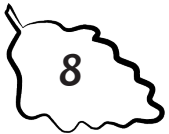
I remember moving to St. Cloud, just twenty years ago. The streets filled with white, Christian, heterosexual faces. I saw unity. I moved into a home, and neighbors brought me hotdishes and jars of cherry jam from the trees in their back yard.

Then, one day, I saw the faces begin to change, and with those variations came something insidious...a modification of unity. Rumors began to fly like a flight of Canadian geese, in and out of mouths shaped like clouds; those people are trouble, they don't pay their bills, they steal, they cheat, they lie. The color of their skin condemned them before words even came out of their mouths, and before actions were in their hands.

I asked myself how these same neighbors that welcomed me and my family could possibly be treating someone they didn't know with disdain and fear. What perspective gave them the idea that the color of someone's skin gives them certain qualities? This was really the first time I realized that I have privilege within my relationships to people. Because I grew up in a diverse community I didn't notice it. I didn't see discrimination among neighbors.

As children, we were taught that discrimination came from systems, and that the idea of discrimination from people was over. I believed the stories. I believed that civil rights movements helped to terminate the person-to-person hatred. When confronted with small isolated incidents within my community, we came together to combat them. My perspectives were shattered. Thanks St. Cloud.





Ant Wall

Kholood Abuhadid



Autumn Revelry

Jylian Charles

I crush the leaves of kamala tones
between my palms, rolling the brightness
before it fades.

I think about painting my body with the colors,
relinquishing myself to the season.
Becoming as pure as color on the hillside.

My body merging into the soil as winter begins to cloak
the stone walls above, where we sat together
& you told me you were a karmic slut.

You are angel obscure; deafening heart
pulled into love that darkens you. Your addiction,
the intrigue of the "other."

The Silva of summer then, bracing me for carnal rush
but your eyes requested amnesty from past transgressions
seeking more than lovephilia's keeping.

And I believed I might heal that empty wound.
Aching to assuage
your Magdalene nimbus of want.



Run

C. Scot Stene

He rolled out of bed and walked instinctively across the room to silence his bellowing alarm clock. He started keeping it on the other side of the room so he'd be forced to get out of bed, which prevented him from turning it off in his sleep. That had never been a problem before, but in the last year everything changed.

He grabbed a pair of sweats out of the bottom drawer and stepped into them one leg at a time in the dark, then went to his closet for a t-shirt and a sweater. He pulled the shirts over his long and lanky torso, relishing the warm comfort they gave him on this cool fall morning, then took a pair of socks out of the top drawer and sat on the bed.

Reaching down to massage his feet before putting his socks on, he felt how rough and coarse they were; scarred by the run. Theo Hartley had always been a runner, even as a child. His momma always said he ran before he walked, going from a crawl to a dead sprint between couches in the family room. Running was in his blood.

Sliding into his Nike running shoes and pulling the laces tight, Theo strapped his phone to his arm, put on his headphones, and ran out of the house for his morning run, slamming the door behind him to be sure it closed. He wasn't always a morning runner, but he'd decided this past spring he would train his hardest for the Sycamore Marathon, and that meant running twice every day.

The Sycamore Marathon is put on by the city each year at the start of fall, just when the sun starts to get low in the sky and the leaves change on the trees. Not only is the city its most beautiful at this time of year, but the air is cooler and it rarely rains. Only once in the last fifteen years had the marathon been postponed due to rain.

The morning run was the shorter of the two, covering just a couple miles through his neighborhood. He would do a ten mile run each evening, and a full marathon on Tuesdays and Saturdays. This was how Theo spent his summer, working and running, and he found it gave him peace. He struggled through the winter, trying to cope with feelings that were foreign to him; he'd never been sad for such an extended period of time. It made him mad.

He used the same playlists on his Spotify every day, having done the math so he had a playlist perfectly timed with how long each run should be. The morning playlist only had three songs on it. It started with "Stairway to Heaven," which was maybe a little on the nose, but he loved the way the song slowly built up in intensity, driving him out of sleep and into the run at an even pace.

He started out at a brisk jog as the tinny guitars played the opening melody, and found himself thinking of the first time he ran in the Sycamore Marathon. He was 21 that year, just starting his senior year of college, and he'd done it on a dare. A bunch of friends had challenged him to it, since he ran all the time anyway. He'd ran five miles every day throughout the first few years, often blowing off social gatherings to do it, but he'd never ran more than that. Twenty-six miles seemed like a lot, and he wasn't sure he could do it, but he wasn't about to let his friends get any satisfaction out of watching him fail.

He remembered how he took it slow, trying to stretch the five miles he usually ran into a full marathon. Everything went great for the first 22 miles, but the last four were hard. He hit the dreaded wall. Luckily, he found himself running alongside her. Something about seeing her strong face focused on the path in front of her gave him strength; he could tell she was as determined to finish as he was.

When he finally crossed the finish line, he felt a rush of energy from the accomplishment. He used it to talk to her, introducing himself and asking if she wanted to

get a drink to calm their aching legs. He didn't know at the time he was meeting his wife, but looking back he thought it was fate they ended up finishing next to each other. A cruel fate, as it turned out.

The next day Theo repeated the same routine, preparing for and doing his daily morning run. Since it was the day before the marathon, he decided he would skip the night run, so this would be his last tuneup before the race.

Theo and Carol got married the day before the Sycamore Marathon the year after they met, and ran it the next day before leaving on their honeymoon. It became as much of an annual tradition for their marriage as it was for the city, and occasionally shared their anniversary, as it did this year. More than the shared date, though, this was the first since she was killed. What would have been their ten-year anniversary instead became the one-year anniversary of her death.

Theo thought about this as he finished the morning run, and found he could not stop the scene from playing out in his mind over and over again. It was a particularly beautiful day last year. It had been cool and cloud-covered for the weeks leading up to the marathon, and all the trees were showing their full color, but on the day of the race the sun decided to show itself and warm the air around them. In full sunlight, the track came alive and spectators lined the sides of the starting line.

Theo and Carol never ran the marathon to win it, instead enjoying its annual completion. It served as a reminder of how they met, and they believed it gave their marriage strength. Indeed, nine years into a childless marriage, they were the happiest couple they knew.

This was the tenth time they'd ran the marathon together, including the one where they met, and so it seemed significant somehow. Everything was going great, and they were actually running the race at a record pace for them, until everything went wrong at the finish line.

Theo looked at Carol as they crested the last hill and could see the finish line up ahead. She looked as gorgeous as the day he first saw her, with the same strong face focusing on the path in front of her. She had her long blonde hair tied in a ponytail that trailed behind her as she ran, pumping her long legs up and down rhythmically, like the pistons of an engine. Just as she did all those years ago, it gave him strength to see her push herself like this. He remembered thinking how he never told her that he was thinking of quitting until he saw her in the first race; how she'd inspired him to push himself through the wall. He'd just decided to tell her after they finished when it happened.

As he ran alongside her staring, he saw the moment the bullet went through her head, and helplessly watched her crumple to the ground. He felt her warm blood on his face and arms as he dropped beside her and scooped her into his arms. She was already dead when he turned her face to his, her eyes still open with that focused look on her face, staring at the path in front of her. He closed them with a swipe of his hand, and cried as he held her lifeless body close to him.

At least it was quick, he thought. I love you, Carol.

It was raining the morning of the marathon, but Theo prepared to run anyway. He ate the same breakfast he and Carol always ate before the race: a bowl of oatmeal with raisins, a yogurt, a banana, and a glass of orange juice. Afterwards, he washed it down with two big glasses of water.

When he'd finished eating he took a shower and got dressed for the race, then got in his

car to drive to the starting line at Gramercy Park to get his number. He rode silently in the car, refusing to turn on the radio to hear the weather report. It honestly didn't matter to him if it rained all day, and they had to cancel the race. He was going to run it anyway. For Carol.

Pulling in to the parking lot at Gramercy Park, he found it quite full. That's a good sign, he thought as he searched for a spot. He found one in the back of the lot, parked, and went to go find the registration tent, locking the car behind him with the key fob and stuffing them into the fanny pack he wore to keep his pockets empty.

The registration tent was closer to the starting line than it had been in years past, but it was still in the clearing to the west of the trail's entrance. There were news trucks and squad cars parked all around it. People were wandering around underneath umbrellas. As he approached, he was stopped by an officer. "You here for the race today?" he asked with a smile on his face as Theo nodded. "I just need to see your ID and check your bag."

Theo fished his ID out of the fanny pack before unclipping it and handing both to the officer. "Is this because of the shooting last year?" he asked.

"Yeah," the officer replied as he studied Theo's ID and looked through the fanny pack.

"We don't expect anything to happen, but we have to do our due diligence."

"That makes sense."

"Everything looks good, Theo. Have a good race."

"Thanks officer," he replied as he turned to walk toward the registration tent.

He wondered if the cop recognized his name. Of the nine people killed that day, and the dozen others who were injured, it was Theo and Carol the news focused on most. Theo had refused all interview requests in his grief, but Carol had been a prominent figure in the Sycamore community. She was the president of the city council as well as a sixth grade teacher at Sycamore West Elementary, and everybody loved her. If the officer did recognize him, Theo appreciated that he didn't mention it. He was holding it together well enough without having to talk about it.

After he registered, Theo decided to wander around the park until the race started. As the skies started to clear and people put away their umbrellas, he found himself thinking of his wife's killer.

Phillip Ransom was a troubled young man from Carol's first class. She'd developed a bond with him as she tried to help him work out his troubles, but in the end had to recommend he repeat sixth grade when he didn't pass several of his classes. Whether right or not, he apparently blamed her for every setback he encountered in the following years, culminating with dropping out of high school three years ago.

Phillip had spent his last few years living and working at the Telly's junkyard just outside of town. Every once in a while Theo and Carol would see him sitting in his rust bucket outside their house. Once Theo went to go talk to him, just to see what he was doing, but he peeled off when he noticed Theo approaching, and they never saw him again.

Looking back, Theo realized they should have seen it as a sign and told somebody, but when he didn't come back, they assumed he'd gotten over whatever it was. There was no way to know for sure if Phillip killed all those people to get back at Carol for flunking him in sixth grade, but all signs pointed to yes. The news reports certainly believed this was the case, as they reported it nonstop so that Theo had to stop watching the news. The idea made him feel incredibly guilty, like he could have done something, anything, to stop it. When the cops found the hill he was sniping from, Phillip turned the gun on himself, forever condemning his motives to speculation.

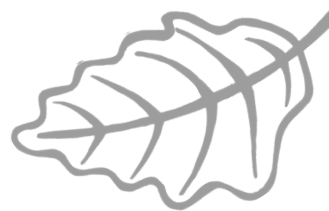
It didn't matter to Theo why Phillip Ransom killed his wife; she was gone, and he was still here. He was running this race one last time in her memory, or maybe he was running from her memory one last time.

He noticed a crowd starting to gather by the starting line, and looked down at his watch. It was almost 10 o'clock, and time to start the race. He walked over to take his place, stretching his legs and back along the way. As he warmed up, the sun peeked out through the clouds and Theo felt his mood begin to change. His legs felt excited, like they couldn't wait to run. As the adrenaline kicked in, he felt as if he could sprint the whole 26 miles.

He decided in that moment he would try to win the Sycamore Marathon today, and never run it again. Maybe never run again period, though he didn't think he'd be able to give it up entirely. He'd always been a runner. Even his momma knew that. And Carol, too. Everyone knew that about him.

Maybe he'd take up a different kind of running, and run for public office. He couldn't prevent his wife from being killed, but maybe he could help stop other senseless tragedies from happening. They happen far too often these days. Somebody really should do something, he thought. Why not me?

A horn sounded just then, signaling the start of the race. Theo looked up to the sky and silently called out to his lost wife, "I love you, Carol." Then he started running.



La Buena Vida: We Will Sing for You

Bill Meissner



Día de los Muertos

Andrea Potyondy-Smith

Sometimes I wish
my family danced on
graves; ate sugar skulls;
had picnics at the head
of a tombstone; brought toys
for dead children and
tequila for adult corpses
to toast their misfortune
when the living leave. I wish
we decorated etched granite
with marigolds and candles
instead of artlessly arranged
carnations and roses; that we made
brightly colored crafts—dolls,
matchbook shrines, wire-and-clay
sculptures—to celebrate our memories
of the deceased.

I wish we made Sweet Pumpkin
or *pan de muerto*,
not tater-tot hot dish
and Jell-O salad.

But in stoic
Minnesota, it's weird
to bring a thermos
of hot coffee to the cemetery
for a cigarette & chat
with grandma; our funeral food
is as bland as an early
winter landscape, decorations
even less alluring. It's a place where
the traditional Irish wake
has gone the way
of the passenger pigeon.

So when I die, I will demand
sombros, beads, and glittering boas
be dealt out at the door;
chocolate coffins be served
instead of banausic brownies;
the pine scent of copal incense fill
the air; and I will dance on
my own grave to the beats
of steel stringed guitars.



Fangs

Benjamin Reigstad

the man strips
down to his canines,
to suck
off her skin,
strip by strip.
she's his
doe,
slender legs,
bowing hips.
but she runs
away
on delicate toes.

what doe
willingly lies
with the beast?

the man
chases,
unbuckles
and drops
his rage.
she can't stand now.
he has her
slim neck
in his
closed fist.
he breathes steam,
and she's forgotten
how to.
she only remembers
the whiteness
of his fangs.



The Supreme Court Helps Us All?

Carol Mohrbacher

In the mid 1970's, I began living with my husband, Dan, who worked on the Duluth waterfront as a union longshoreman. Longshoreman literally means men who work along the shore. I was a non-union worker. Non-union workers got hired as "extras" by showing up at a union hiring hall, writing their names on the extra list, and waiting until the dispatcher called their names during a chaotic process known as "shape up." What was "shaped up" was a standard 8-person gang. There were anywhere from 1 to 6 gangs per ship. Union members (all male) were called first; extras (99% male) were called last. If your name was called, you were assured a pretty good paying job for at least four hours. If you could take the heavy lifting, up to twelve hours and, rarely, even more than that. I've worked up to 18 hours straight.

Often, we found ourselves on the same ship day after day, sometimes working with the same guys, sometimes in the same hold, until all holds were filled. Holds are actually the compartmentalized storage areas on ships. On many ships there are about three or four openings in the deck. These are holds. If you look over the top of these openings in an empty ship, you will see that the hold goes down several decks or layers. You begin at the bottom and fill the ship pallet by pallet until you reach the top. This was the case here and we were loading 50 kilo sacks of potatoes, equivalent to 110 pounds. The sacks were burlap and wore out your brown jersey work gloves quickly, but you couldn't do without them or you wore out your skin. I had to stop at a convenience store daily to buy a new pair when I loaded potatoes. Despite the gloves and industrial strength hand lotion, by the end of the season, my hands were rough as sandpaper and calloused across the palms.

The first day I worked on this particular cargo ship was a Monday. The ship was completely empty, so we all climbed the 40-60 feet down the scuttle, a metal ladder welded to the wall of the hold. When we reach the bottom, we stowed our thermoses and took off a layer of clothing. My gang was composed of extras, some union members' sons, and Stanley Koski, a skinny middle-age Finn from Esko who knew hundreds of jokes. By Friday, he'd begun to repeat them.

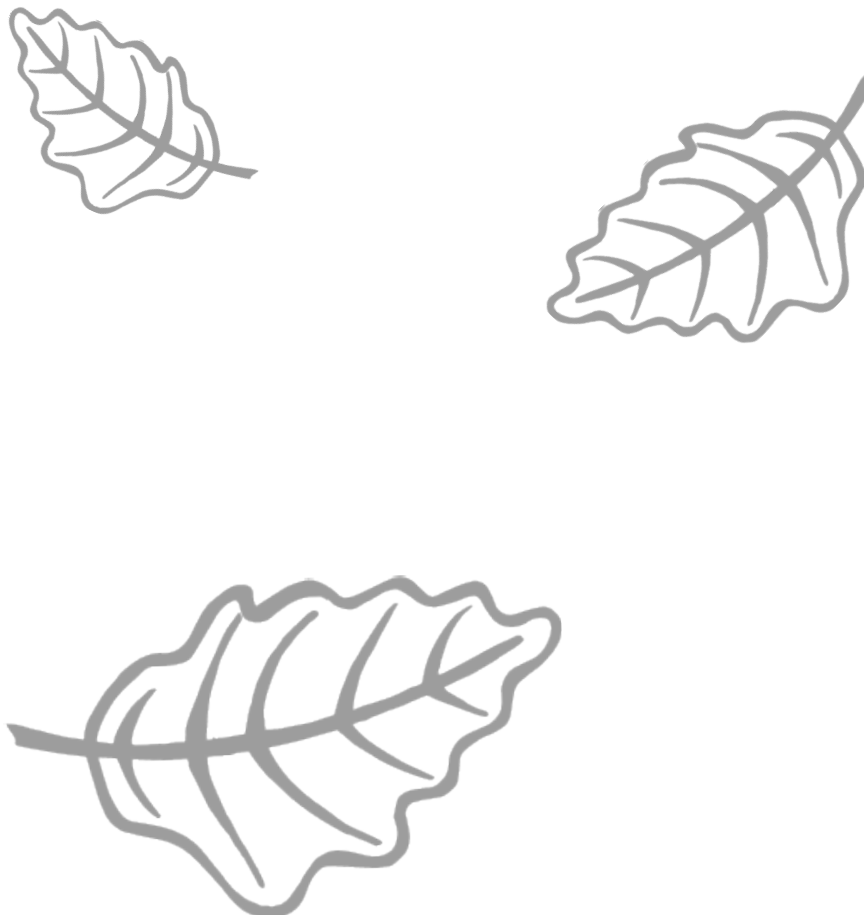
On this particular ship, Dan's seniority had secured him a "top job," a job on the deck at the top of the ship. Available top jobs were deck boss, signaler, and winch operator. They truly were top jobs because they didn't involve sweat and grime. Dan was signaler for the hold next to mine, which meant he hand-signaled the winch operator while looking into the hold to instruct him where to set down the load, swinging on a pallet attached to guy lines, manipulated by the winch operator. A signalman was necessary because the winch operator couldn't always see all the way into the bottom of the hold. If the pallet hit the side of the hold a couple of tons of cargo could rain down on the gang below. I've seen guys get hurt that way.

Okay, back to my story about Stanley. Dan told me later that night what happened next. Mike M, the deck boss, yelled down the ship. "You got enough men in the hold?" The signalers yelled back, one by one, yes or no—all except for my signaler, Al Bellman, a full time Duluth cop and part-time longshoreman. He was a union member with enough seniority to pick and choose when he worked and what job he took. In response to the deck boss's query, Al responded, "We're short here. We have 7 men and 1 cunt"—referring to my gang and me—then let out with a booming laugh at his joke. I couldn't hear him because I was 40+ feet below at the bottom of the ship. What Al didn't know is that Dan, my blessedly evolved sweetheart, was standing a few feet away. He stood chest to chest with Al over that comment, telling him that he should call me a woman and that I worked harder than he had ever worked. Al backed down. Even though Dan was a devout pacifist—he was tall, muscled up, and quiet. The other

guys never knew what to make of him.

Anyway, the week progressed, the hold filled up, Stanley told his jokes, and Al behaved himself—at least within hearing distance of Dan and me. As the hold filled, my gang got closer to the top and thus, closer to Al, who was still signaling his little heart out. When we were topping off the hold, Stanley told a particularly racist joke. By then, we were all ignoring him. However, Al, a politically aware African American yelled down at Stanley, “Hey man, the Supreme Court says you can’t call me nigger no more.” I yelled back, “That’s right Stanley, back off. By the way, Al, the Supreme Court says you can’t call me cunt no more.” We locked eyes for a moment, while my gang stood frozen. Al was a big shouldered mean looking guy and a cop, and since most everyone was doing something illegal on the waterfront, everyone was a bit wary of him, but Al grinned and mumbled an apology, not well-worded, but sincere.

Al and I bonded at that moment and he frequently stopped his cruiser to say hi to me. He even once let me skip out on a parking violation. Dan and I moved away from Duluth 26 years ago for work and school and recently moved back. I ran into Al a couple of months ago standing in the checkout line in Walgreen’s. He grinned at me, “Hey, Mrs. Jeutter.” Even though I don’t like being called “Mrs.” and even though I have a different last name, I was glad to see him—both of us paunchy, myopic, life-scarred survivors who managed to learn a bit about each other on an Indian ship in the Port of Duluth one windy spring day over 30 years ago.



île d'histoire (Island of History)

Ashley Kammermeier



Holy Land

Jylian Charles

Bridges are flooded.
Moonlight cast into darkness.
passing, some will see death,
lying in surrender, begging for footsteps.

The pacifist is dreaming in this moonlight
weaving funeral blankets from hemp cord, eating organic hummus.

The soldier searches for a way to get back to his waking nightmare,
to soothe the violent mind like calendula balm on a burn.

Scrolls of blood and scripture arranged neatly on the alter,
the devout on callused knees,
waiting for their fair share.

Earth swallows the heart of God.
No blindness or glaring light
can cure, man wrapping himself like a blanket
around the devil.

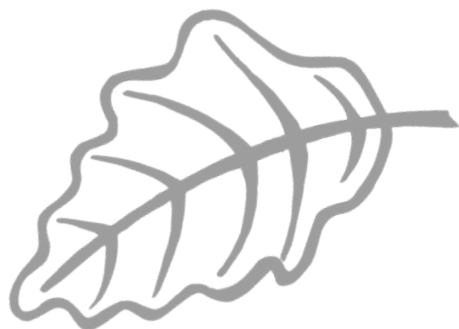
Middle ground stretches on,
making the walk from hate to love go on for ages.
Sleepwalkers dig their
graves.



A Frozen Nation

Kimberly Van Dusen

What ever happened to “love your neighbor as you love yourself?”
If we spent one day living this motto, just one day,
We would realize that we are one and the same.
What is the difference between eye color, height, and weight,
And differences of race and culture?
Where is this line that decides someone is so different,
That we may justify dehumanization?
There have been many who speak out,
Many who challenge,
Many who change,
But who will live out these changes in a land blinded by pride?
Who will blur the lines of racism to embrace diversity?
It only takes one person,
One interaction,
One smile,
To soften this ice which has frozen over our nation.
So much needs to be unlearned,
So much needs to be taught,
There is so much to be said,
But who will listen?



Blood, Bones

Andrea Potyondy-Smith

This blood slogging
through its veins is not mine.
I cannot understand its language,
the intrinsic value
of words like báint, angst,
skälm, and szerelem.
The heat of its history runs
cold through the rhythmic cadences
of circulation. Celtic fires burn
low; the flame of the Norsemen flickers
in cool blue tones.
The genocides of Imperialism, of Holocaust
are not mine. I do not
own its antigens, the A, B, or O—accidents
of a life fallen into by a fluke.

So I say
abandon the blood;
it is not yours. Do not cling
to the shifting sands of its culture. Reach
instead for the granite
of bones. Claim the stones
of the skeleton, clutch
for the foundations of the Earth,
for the things that shift
of your own volition.



Báint is Gaelic for “a mad person,” angst is German for “anguish,” skälm is Nordic for “rogue or rascal,” and szerelem is Hungarian for “love.”

What I Wanted

Emmy Phillips

I prayed and prayed,
Asked God at my pillow every night,
For someone who would love me,
Someone who would be my protector.

You loved me,
But not in the way that was right,
Not in a way that was appropriate,
You used my hope, shattered my dreams.

My body was your playground,
It shouldn't have been that way,
Playgrounds are meant for the young,
Not for the old to abuse.

I believed in your lies,
I trusted your words every day,
But you didn't want to be my daddy,
I didn't ever get what I wanted.



American

Kholood Abuhadid

I'm not Muslim enough for your radicalization of the strong and ambitious minds of the youth. I don't fit your cookie cutter mold of bomb toting terrorist or the radicalized wife of the abusive husband whose role is not that of a loving father or working man, but it is that of the oppressor.

My medical degree is an offense to you; I wear it proudly along with a carefully styled hijab. The uniform I wear to defend my country is placed next to the holy Quran. You seethe when I graduate as a school teacher, not understanding that I too am qualified to teach the youth the history of our country; the USA.

You, the media, are afraid of the educated Muslim. We are an anomaly to you. Our American patriotism is ignored and mocked and it is there where it becomes a normal routine to explain that, no, we are American.

Our children's perfect English shocks you and it becomes clear to you that it's becoming increasingly difficult to link us to terror groups. You can't link us to the bombings in Cairo or the school shooting in a small town in Washington.

Instead, link us to the knitting club held every Thursday and the gym where it becomes difficult to tell who is Muslim or not. Oh, yeah. About that. Stop with the all knowing of how a Muslim acts or dresses. We come in shades of whatever and act in shades of whatever.

Girl right there with the curly hair. Yeah, she's a Muslim. Blue eyes with the blond beard? Muslim. He's a cop. Yup, still a Muslim. You, the media, don't get us. It's not a Muslim thing you explain. We just need identifiers. Some Muslims are just dangerous. We become confused. What is Muslim? The made up man and woman that you, the media, created.

Your best friend can't be a Jew. Too late. Conversing with Atheists? Already done. Not the Christians! Suzy, pizza party at two?

You, the media, put up boundaries. You radicalize and transform the Muslim into something they themselves don't know. You preach their religion back to them and tell them how it is. Only occupation they can have is that of the Muslim you created.

Too late. The Muslim, media, is the doctor. The school teacher and the cop. They are the congressman, the senator, and surprise! The neighbor. Block parties have them, schools have them, and hospitals have them. Army? Already covered!

You, the media, stop trying to create an image of what doesn't exist in these communities. A Muslim can be a Mohammed, an Abdullah, and a Mike. They can be a Charles, a Jerome, and a Kareem.

Segregation Wall Located Around Jerusalem
Kholood Abuhadid



The Stories: San Andreas Canyon

Bill Meissner

1

These ancient fan palm trees won't tell you their story.
They wait in their green silence
as you gaze up at them.

2

Once, the Cahuilla Indians crouched low and drank from spring water
that feeds the palm's roots. They passed down stories
for a thousand years.

The desert winds rose and, in a moment, the Cahuilla
were gone. White settlers on horses,
gold dreaming through their veins,

replace them. Soon railroads cut
into the land, leaving black stitched scars.
Wooden shacks of mining towns leap up from the cacti
and collapse back into it. Concrete roads
stretch themselves across the land, then drift over with sand.

But the palms remain, rising from the fault in the earth
to splinter and massage the sunlight
as they graze the sky's blue ceiling.

3

Today you step from the desert into the cool canyon oasis.
You see a petroglyph, think you hear a distant call from a Cahuilla chief
echoing off the rock walls.
Crouching low in the palms' cool shadows, you take a drink
of the spring water.
When you taste it,
you have the sudden urge to drop
your camera and your cell phone, to leave your rental car keys, your other life
behind. Then you tip your head toward the palms,
finally understanding that the palms don't need to tell you their story—
they just stand there, waiting
for you to tell yours.



Evanescent

Jylian Charles

Reflection of descent
upon the cracks of Third Street-
filthy water blemishes the sun.
Alone, the transients drown there
in the remnants of yesterday's rain.



My Hometown

Brian T. Lynch

The hot dog eating contest was cancelled.
The Puritans showed up with long spears
And killed everyone
(Including the women and children).
Then they burned the bodies
And made joyful noise unto the Lord.



Ogre Under the Bridge

Rhoda Fagerland

I am the ogre under the bridge

The troll you must please before you may pass

I am demanding, insisting, severe,

commanding compliance at every plank

You want to go quickly

You want to jump over

You want to resist all direction you hear

You want to unsheathe the sword that you carry

And slice at the ogre obstructing your way

But as you are flailing, you find yourself slipping

You feel the bridge swaying, then bucking, collapsing

You fall, lose the hope of making the crossing

You open your eyes

And look into mine

I am not a troll impeding your progress

My back is the bridge that you have destroyed



His Father's Country

Celia Mix

Taking a running leap, Nahun firmly grasped a man's outstretched hand. The hand pulled Nahun into the bed of a truck as it rumbled up the dirt road. Exhausted, he rested against the tailgate to catch his breath, still holding the dark, callused hand. A massive pile of green bananas filled the truck bed. Nahun jolted to the right and released the man's hand to grasp the tailgate as the rusted truck hit a deep pothole. Hitting the pothole reminded Nahun of his father and the reason he had to leave home. Interrupting the young traveler's thoughts, the man who helped him into the truck bed spoke up.

"And what's a young Hondureño like you doing in Guatemala? Tell me, boy. ¿Cómo te llamas?"

The boy of sixteen answered, "Nahun Fonseca, señor."

After only getting half an answer, the Guatemalan Man did not ask any more questions. They rode on in silence under the burning sun, through the humid air. Nahun was left to his thoughts. He had come a long way since leaving home, walking for miles or hitching rides on various trucks hauling loads of produce. The men he encountered were hands, hired to sit in the truck beds with the produce, to thwart thieves. Honduras was a crime-ridden country, another of the many reasons which convinced Nahun leaving home was his best option. He was not afraid because he knew this was the only way to help his family.

"Your padre know you're this far from home?" the Guatemalan Man asked.

"No, señor, he does not," Nahun replied, as the truck made a sharp left, throwing dust up and jostling the bananas.

"Take one, boy. You're lookin' hungry," the Guatemalan Man offered.

Nahun, grateful for the hospitality, eagerly grabbed a banana. The Guatemalan Man passed one up to the driver, who honked the horn in warning as he ran a stop sign. They journeyed on as the rusty truck twisted between shacks bordering the road. They, the other travelers who walked or rode motorbikes, passed peddlers selling wares or just milling outside tin shanties perched on steep mountainsides. Raggedy, mistreated dogs rummaged through garbage decorating the ditches. Multi-hued plants grew wherever they pleased: between exposed stones, on the roofs of abandoned shelters, even balancing on overhead electrical lines. Despite the ugliness, the land held immense beauty.

"Your padre must miss you," the Guatemalan Man said.

Nahun's attention abruptly returned to reality. As he processed the Guatemalan Man's words, something cracked inside the young boy. He had not thought of that. In truth, Nahun could not walk down a road or ride through a pothole without missing his father. But did his father really miss him?

"Mi padre used to fill potholes to earn the limpira that drivers threw from their windows for his work. Until he was struck just a month ago. A drunken driver didn't slow down for a sharp bend. My father's back broke and he couldn't work. I have to do something to support my family," Nahun confessed.

"And leavin' your home country was what you had in mind, niño?" said the Guatemalan Man.

"I had to. There's no work in Honduras and I'd never forgive myself if I resorted to selling drugs. My brother..." Nahun's voice trailed off. He looked at the Guatemalan Man and his callused, work-worn hands. He wondered why he was confessing this to a man he had just met, but for some reason Nahun trusted him.

"My brother didn't come home the night of my tenth birthday. I never saw him again,

but when my father came home he had blood on his clothes and hands. Father said Edgardo was..." Nahun choked before he could finish, "...shot by an opposing gang while on a drug run."

The truck rumbled on in the dimming light of the setting sun, carrying Nahun farther from his homeland. Rage welled up in Nahun's chest. He was angry at his misfortune and hardship. Why did it always have to be him who had to be strong? For once, he wanted to be a little boy who could crawl into his father's arms and cry.

"Lemme tell you something, son. You can't run away. You've gotta make what you have better."

"And what do I have? A dead brother! An injured padre! I'm the only one left to support my family. I have to go to America. Away from the gangs and drunkards."

"Hate to break it to ya, but there are gangs and drunks in America, too."

How could the Guatemalan Man be so sure? Nahun wondered if the man had been to North America before. What made this man try so hard to change Nahun's mind, if he had not been to the U.S. himself?

"When I was not much older than yourself, I was fool enough and brash enough to think I could make it in the States. Ya see, mi padre, passed away real young and I had two little sisters to care for. I sold the few things I owned and crossed the border. I nearly starved and no one spoke my language. It's no dreamland up there, let me tell ya. If you really wanna make things better for your family, go home and fight to improve your own homeland. To make your own country better is why God put you here. You got the spirit and determination of a hard-workin' young man, and that's what your country needs, now more than ever, hijo. And at least you got a family here."

Nahun listened to the truth in the Guatemalan Man's story. Deep down, Nahun knew it was wrong to abandon his padre when he needed his hijo most. Blinded by his drive to make it to America, Nahun thought only of earning money, not of improving himself or the plight of his country. The Guatemalan Man had given the young boy perspective: a father needs his son like a country needs its people.

"Gracias, señor. May God bless you!"

As he jumped off the rear of the truck, Nahun imagined embracing his father when he returned home.



I See You

Alex Marrone

Dear gay kid
I see you
I think you're beautiful
I do not think you are broken
Dirty
Or perverted
You are a magnificent being of love
I respect you
I've got your back

Dear black kid
I see you
I think you're beautiful
I do not think you are dangerous
Lazy
Or a cause for me to save
You are a magnificent being of love
I respect you
I've got your back

Dear Muslim kid
I see you
I think you're beautiful
I do not think you are threatening
Crazy
Or less than anyone else
You are a magnificent being of love
I respect you
I've got your back

Dear Christian kid
I see you
I think you're beautiful
I do not think you are bigoted
Hateful
Or a bible thumper
You are a magnificent being of love
I respect you
I've got your back

Dear straight white kid
I see you
I think you're beautiful
I do not think you are racist
Homophobic
Or judgmental

You are a magnificent being of love
I respect you
I've got your back

Dear asexual, female-bodied, gender fluid kid
I see you
I think you're beautiful
I do not think you are confused
Sick
Or selfish
You are a magnificent being of love
I respect you
I've got your back

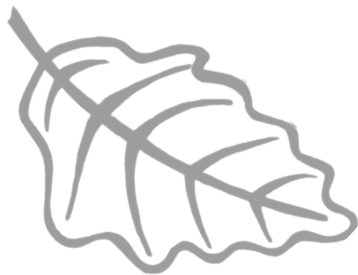
Dear bully kid
I see you
I think you're beautiful
I do not think you want to hurt others
I think you are hurting
And wanting someone to pay attention
You are worth loving
You deserve happiness
You are capable of being respected
Without being feared
You are a magnificent being of love
I respect you
I've got your back
Now knock your shit off

Dear well-intended activist
We see you
We think you're beautiful
We are not causes for you to save
We are capable
We are strong
Your friendship is welcomed
But don't act like you have been where we are
You are a magnificent being of love
We respect you
We've got your back

After the Reaping - for Lisa

Andrea Potyondy-Smith

With one swift
slice she shed
them: rotting
mangos drooping
from a moribund branch—
the surgeon's stainless
steel scalpel leaving
behind two raw scars stretched
across a sea of bare torso
she smirked at
every morning
in the mirror,
breathing easy,
like a coal mine canary
liberated from its inevitably
lethal métier.



The Palms Capture the Sun

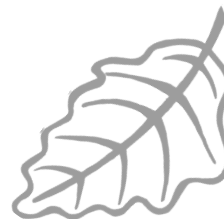
Bill Meissner



Foreigner

Andrea Potyondy-Smith

Drums pulsate, echoing off
college gym walls—
perpetual beat resounding
through my pumping blood;
dancers twirl
like Tasmanian Devils—
all bright swirls of jade and cobalt,
cherry and canary-yellow horsehair
stitched to supple deer hide.
Bells jingle around ankles, wrists,
knees and elbows—a high
pitched chime offsetting
deep bass timbres.
Voices chant a choppy
song, staccato sonance
escaping throats
like a newly-caged wildcat
determined to break loose.
Everywhere the spectacle shifts:
sterling silver jewelry for sale shines
under fluorescent basketball lights;
Gekinoo'amaaged's hands forge ahead,
each glittering bead
finding its perfect place
on a buckskin vest; the feet of colorful
coryphées sketch an endless
circle; sticks incessantly hammer
rawhide. Only the chair beneath me
is stationary, my body static. I am
in the eye of this hurricane—
motionless, inscrutable spectator—
my blonde hair in this sea of black braids
stark as the snow falling softly outside.



Gekinoo'amaaged's: Ojibwe for teacher.

Aylan Kurdi: Green Bird

Kholood Abuhadid

Cold water trickles onto his face and recedes back. Over and over, they gently lap at his cheeks. His eyes are closed and all he feels is the cold. The water doesn't taste good. It's salty, and it stings when it goes in his nose.

He's very cold.

All he hears is the sound of water. A lot of it. He's never heard that sound before, but he knows it's big. Bigger than him because he is small. He's only so little. Sometimes if he thinks hard enough, he can remember the sound of his mama. Not baba though.

The water shoots up his nose, and he violently snorts. He starts crying. He doesn't like this. It's so cold, and he can't move. He wants his mama, and he's so cold. Today, he was supposed to go play. Mama said they were going to go play, and it was going to be fun and no more bad guys were going to hurt them.

He can't move, and the water keeps touching him, and he wants to get up. He's so scared, and he can't remember. His mama put him in the new outfit she bought him. Red shirt and blue shorts and new shoes. Today, he is three.

Aylan! Aylan!

That's his name! He tries moving, but it's so hard.

Aylan! Aylan!

They got to go on a boat. It was like in the cartoons. His mama kept crying, and his brother wasn't happy. Galip is always happy, and they both had a big bear they used to play with. They had to leave that in their house. Bad guys wanted it. Mama said they were going to go back to baba.

Aylan, wake up!

There were so many people running. A lot of people were crying. They were scared. The water covers his head, and he can't breathe. He doesn't like this, but he can't move. Sand covers his eyes, and some of it is in his mouth.

Galip said they get to see baba. He remembers baba now! They used to play outside, but baba had to go. Galip said they needed a new house. The old one was bad. He misses his room. He had toys and his ball. He had to share it with Galip.

Aylan! Aylan, wake up.

They put him on the boat first. He was the littlest. He was crying because he was scared. Galip came, and he was crying too. Galip doesn't cry because he is a big boy. He is five years old. Mama came on the boat finally! She's crying and looks sad. He remembers that he hugs her. A lot of mamas are hugging the babies. He's not a baby though because he's three. He's a big boy, and mama said he's strong.

He hears voices, but he doesn't know what they are saying. The water is in his mouth and all the way in his belly, and it doesn't taste good. It's in his eyes and his nose, but it doesn't hurt because he's so cold that he can't feel anymore.

Aylan! Aylan, come on. Come to mama.

That's his mama! His body doesn't feel good, but she's calling him and when he used to play with the boys, sometimes Osama used to tell him to play more because he had the new ball, but mama said that he has to listen.

He opens his eyes and all he sees is water. Sand! He only saw this in cartoons. It's nice, but mama keeps calling him. He gets up and sees himself on the ground. He doesn't look good and when he hears his name again, he turns and sees his mama. She looks happy, and she's holding Galip's hand, and he runs to her.

She catches him and holds him tight just like when the water swallowed the boat. She's not screaming, and Galip is smiling and there is no boat. The other mamas and babies are not here. He looks back and sees himself. Mama looks sad. She holds him and holds Galip's hand.

Aylan, time to go. Look, Aylan. A green bird!

Devotions of an Abusive Man

Jylian Charles

the man who choked me, then tore the cowries from my neck
his chest grows with inhalations
of cortisol and adrenaline
inflating the empty space.

he is finished. I tell him to get out.
I am not falling asleep here- and he
does not lay by my side.

*Does he plagiarize poems ex-girlfriends wrote?
and give those to new girlfriends-
make believe a sensitive side.*

your footsteps to my bedroom, I am swallowing down
throatfuls of dread. I tie tight knots of delusion.
So you can be the gun I point at my head.

My prayers at night chant whispered repetition.
Please go away please go away please go away
Waking to you in my bed at dawn

Slow slaughter.



Depth of Field

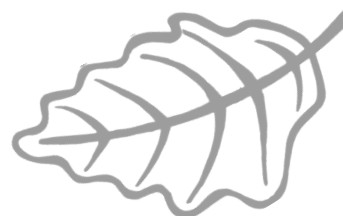
Brian T. Lynch

I looked at my old photographs
Too closely
The smiling faces
Stare back
Too joyfully
It was a mistake to wear my reading glasses

Scanning one after another
Like a camera lens
Opening and closing
Heartbeats
Opening and closing
A then heartbeat
A now heartbeat
Working against each other
Out of Sync

My life stares back at me from nowhere
My eyes open too far
My heart opens too wide
No pain or joy or heartbeat can fill
The depth of field
The empty space
Between here and there, now and then
I cannot return

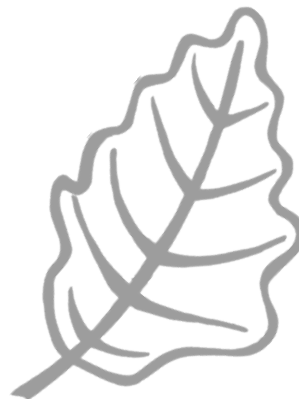
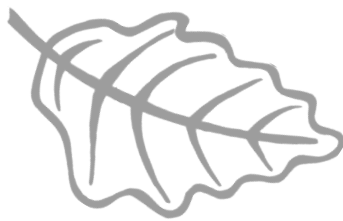
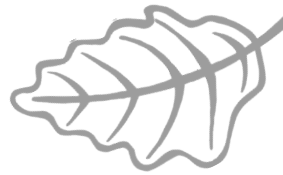
Annihilation, annihilation, annihilation
I must learn to love Thee
You hold my memories in your safe keeping
Not here
Or there
But where
The grave opens
And closes
And everyone is in the picture again
A final snapshot
I take off my reading glasses
And wait
For the flash



Auf English

Andrea Potyondy-Smith

When I was
little
my mother
would emphasize
how appalling
it was
to use erroneous English—
how deplorable
it would be
to use *irregardless*
or I should've went.
I learned to be precise
and pithy—
a zealous grammarian
teaching others to use
my native tongue
with deliberation,
who loves antiquated words
like *pusillanimous*
and *churlish*.
Yet in our family
we still say
Schömmel—
pseudo-Swabian
German dialect
for stepping stool—
idiom
Deutschland scholars
doubtlessly scorn.



Ville de la Vie (City of Life)

Ashley Kammermeier



Self-Harm

Alex Marrone

Tears fall down my cheeks
As blood falls down her arm
I wish I could hold her
In that moment
Tell her
She'll be stronger
One day
But she's lost in a memory
I've locked away



Tears fall down her checks
As blood falls down my arm
I wish I could be held
In this moment
Be told
I'll be stronger one day
One day
I will be okay



Today
I hold myself up
I whisper my gratitude
For surviving myself



The 21st Xpu-Ha Dream

Bill Meissner

At the Viviendo el Sueno beach bar, you and your wife sit on a polished wood bench, sipping Dos Equis cerveza, and a palm tree seems to grow in front of your eyes, its green leaves tickling the sky's azure underbelly. Caribbean music pulses through the thatched roof as a waitress drifts toward you and asks you questions in Spanish, though you don't speak the language.

How long are you staying? she asks. When will you come back?

You just nod and smile and exhale Si, and it seems to be enough.

She keeps talking to you, though you don't understand. What she's telling you is that you need to walk across that sand beach, so white and powdery it could be fresh snow, but warm. Warm. What she's telling you is that you need to float in the ocean's gentle waves, its cleansing turquoise color so vivid and perfect you could make jewelry from it. Her words assure you that the ocean will buoy you up, hold you there so you never want to leave.

The next day, when you wake, the two of you are sitting at the beach bar again, holding half-finished bottles of cerveza. The palm tree—which is two feet taller now—does the samba in front of you. Behind you, the waitress sweeps a small wooden floor with a straw and wood broom.

“When was the last time you danced?” she asks.

You shrug, and aren't sure how to reply.

You listen to the ocean, a few yards across the beach from you. The sound of the rising and falling of the waves makes the tears of the rest of the world seem so small, so small you could hold them in the palm of your hand. You're certain you could pour those tears to the sand, if you wanted to, watch as they sink in and evaporate.

Then you and your wife wade into the ocean, lift your arms, and sway gracefully, not caring that your passport, your old lives are floating away. You look into each other's faces, notice the wrinkles erasing themselves.

The next morning, though you're certain you're back home again, snow sifting outside your window, you wake to this beach again. And, like wading into the blue, blue water, you step easily into the dream. Inside it, though you didn't think you knew how, you dance and dance and dance.



Struggling

Mara Martinson

As I walk down the street that I used to call my home, nostalgic feelings linger in the back of my mind. This cracked and un-cared for black top road houses my most prized memories. This is where I was different, normal. I recall the mischief my friends and I used to stir-up by throwing water balloons at mailboxes and rollerblading down this road, falling and scraping our knees as if we didn't have any cares in our naïve worlds. Although I cherish these memories, they work to torment and fade like the beautiful sunset above me.

I ask the taxi driver to drop me off a few blocks away from the house to give myself some time to contemplate my potentially fatal decision. This walk is already uncomfortable as I can feel my heavy luggage slowing down my pace, but continue this lengthy walk regardless. Each time I return here, I am shifted back into the past to simpler times, but currently find my knees shaking and palms sweating with anticipation. I decide to slow my pace to carefully evaluate my surroundings.

The familiar houses and faces that pass me are not reassuring and cause me to perspire. I wipe droplets of sweat from my brow and notice a subtle flash across my right shoulder. An elderly woman whom I used to help with chores when I was younger eagerly waves her wrinkled hand at me from her front window and smiles more enthusiastically than it appears she could be capable of. I pause, painfully manage to muster a grin, and sway my right arm in a warm greeting. After a few moments of this motion I retrieve my suitcases that are now prostrated on the road and continue walking towards my destination. I have a confession. This pushes me to proceed.

It is uneasy here. I glance over my shoulder at the world behind me, a film of grey clouds breed across the sky, enveloping the baby blue hue gradually as I inch closer to the house. The crunching of autumn leaves beneath my feet appear to cry as their delicate forms are demolished into dust and cast into the street by the wind. It is too loud, and I fear it is causing unwanted attention. Neighbors walking their energetic dogs pass me offering what I assume to be forced grins. I am sure they know. Everyone must know by now. I shake my anxious head and continue walking.

Here I always feel alone, for New York City has changed me immensely. I am not the same person I once was and returning (the little I do) reminds me that I will never again be accepted here. Perhaps I can keep this secret and pretend to be what they want me to be. It would be a lot easier. However, they deserve to know the truth and I deserve to finally be free from this misery. This indecisiveness has haunted me for too long, fueled by the potential unknown.

Here it is, my parents' house. It stands behind a black metal fence engulfed with vines and remains the same century-old brick house that I grew up in. Although it is well preserved in its structure, my mother maintains annual changes to it as her restlessness prevents her from being idle in regards to it. Our wooden wrap-around porch appears to be in the process of being stained. and white paint cans line our large, newly-painted front door.

I glide up the ligneous steps in what feels like a daze as I utter under my breath, "Be strong." I nervously adjust the collar coiled like a snake around my neck and reach for the door handle. As I exhale, I grasp the handle's cool exterior. I cannot help but wonder if my fate will be worse than that of this object. It could be concluded that despite its harshness, this door handle will interact with my family more than I will be permitted, after tonight. I envy this notion with the fact that if only it was different here, I could be myself.

As I turn the knob, years of anxiety overwhelm me, and pausing to catch what little breath

dances in my weak lungs, I push the door open with all of my strength. A discrete creak reverberates through the entryway as my reluctant feet kiss the marbled floor. A cacophony of footsteps scampering and pots clambering echo in rooms away. I probably should have called since she has always been prone to fits of paranoia in this old house. Keeping my gaze cast downwards at my trembling legs, I see a light flicker on in the corner of my eye and hear the footsteps come to an abrupt halt with a forced shrill.

“Oh Sam, you scared me!” She exclaims as I set my luggage in the entryway. I look up into her crystal blue eyes, noticing for the first time how well she has lost weight.

I manage to utter, “Sorry mom.”

She sighs, and puts her emaciated hands on her hips, while maintaining a strict stare, “Well, come give me a hug.” She opens her arms as I shuffle over to embrace her, muscles tensed and teeth clenched. This is always difficult, keeping something so important from her. She hugs me tightly as my hands stay at my sides, her long brown hair circling around my shoulders. Suddenly, she pushes me away and holds me at a distance. She furrows her eyebrows and cocks her head to the side, “Is something wrong? You haven’t come home in what...six months?”

I can feel my heartbeat quicken, as well as a rising pressure within my stomach. I look away for a second to muster a smile, “Well, I got some time off from work and I thought I would visit.”

She exhales and releases my arms, “It would be nice to get a phone call every once in a while.”

I shrug, “I know. I’m sorry. I just get busy.” I can tell she sees through the palpable lie by the transformation of her face into a squinted, skeptical stare. This is the look I’ve come to know too well since I left home. I need to tell her tonight.

“Is something wrong, dear?” She takes a step forward and holds my hands in hers, “You look...conflicted.” Her reservations about my absence appear to have faded as her inherent instinct to aid me takes over. Her face is twisted into a look of genuine concern as she looks up into my eyes and raises her eyebrows, expecting an answer.

She is too good to me. Her desperation reminds me of my childhood self, my sincere selflessness and kind nature. I slide a finger into my tie, loosening it, reluctant to tell her what I’m sure she unknowingly wants to hear, “I um.” I pick my luggage back up, and kick off my loafers while repeating the same two syllables for what seems like forever, completely rendering any trace of my college degree. The silence and her stare become too much as I just want to escape from her gaze. I manage, “I just have to go to the bathroom. It was a long trip.” She gestures up the long staircase to my right that aligns the freshly painted yellow walls of our living room, “You know where it is.”

I nod and carry my suitcases up the antique staircase in long strides. I set the luggage outside the first door on the left hand side and walk into the bathroom, closing the bulky door behind me.

As I gaze intently into the mirror, I wonder if she sees what I see. Although she treats me with loving ignorance, she must know how I have changed. The changes are more than physical as I have grown to admire my courage and my ambivalence for how others see me. As I look curiously at the lanky figure in the mirror, my heart rate slows and I return to a somewhat normal state. I go with this and decide to examine myself.

I start with my eyes, the one component of myself that has always been rooting for me and encouraging my true self above the appropriate visage society has set before me. My bold

eyebrows rise as I examine how my eyes appear to sparkle in the fluorescent light. They are unique, like me. One would think the incessant compliments I receive regarding their beauty would serve to heighten my spirit, but they only work to torture me further. An eye doctor once told me that green eyes are a product of a genetic mutation. I have never been able to see past this comment since I regard myself as a mutant now.

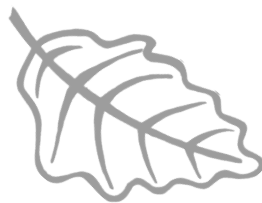
I scan my high cheekbones and follow my translucent skin to the corner of my mouth. I smirk, pressing my thin lips into a crooked grin. I chuckle. Egotism is not a trait I possess. I must be letting my nerves overwhelm me if I can entertain narcissism and anxiety rather than my mom. I quickly run my long bony fingers under the faucet, gathering a small pool of water into my hands and splash it onto my face, already feeling much better.

I flip my head to the side to avoid getting my white button down wet and notice a few strands of my jet black hair are not in line with the others. I am not sure if I like this new haircut my barber encouraged me to get. It looks odd with the sides of my head shaved and longer hair persisting on the top of my head. When I came home to Vivian that night, she appeared more than pleased by my new look. She says it makes me look sophisticated and attractive, but I feel like a pretentious hipster. I trust her though, and as I turn to the right to comb it back, an overwhelming feeling washes over me. I feel an absence. I wish she was here to give me strength; she's always good at that. I not only miss her for her strength, but for her. I miss the cute crinkles that form at the corners of her mouth when she laughs at my ridiculous jokes and how her long blond hair, smelling like strawberries, intoxicates me when I hold her.

A loud knock on the door interrupts my thoughts and startles me. I quickly blink my eyes and open the door to my mom who is standing outside adorned with her infamous pink apron that dad bought her on their honeymoon, "Would you come with me to the kitchen?" I shut off the light and decide to finally confess, "Yes mom, but I have something I'd like to..." "You still like steak right?" I nod. "Well, dad and I could use your help seasoning them. If I recall correctly, you're the master chef," she giggles. I sigh, I didn't know dad would be home. He's generally in Chicago during the week. Mom is much easier to talk to in regards to matters like this as my dad is too sensitive. Perhaps it'll be best if I just tell them together.

She grabs my hand and pulls me down the stairs, through our spacious candle-lit dining room, and towards our kitchen. I see my father holding a myriad of spices and concentrating on two large T-bone steaks that he has defrosted. I feel a tinge of guilt for making them split their steaks with me, but I know they don't mind too much. As soon as he sees me, he drops the spices onto the countertop and hugs me tightly. His scent is overwhelming with the smell of cologne and pipe tobacco alarming my senses.

He doesn't let go but exclaims with genuine love in his voice, "Your mother and I have missed you so much, Samantha!"



Palestinian Graduation Day

Kholood Abuhadid



The Keyhole

Brian T. Lynch

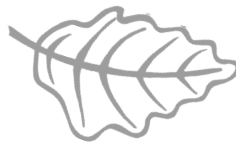
At the end of the day

I go home.

I lock the door.

I take off my clothes.

I Heart Privacy.



Contributors

Kholood Abuhadid

Kholood Abuhadid is a second year majoring in biomedical science with minors in creative writing and women's studies at Saint Cloud State University. She's always had a passion for the written art, and likes to spend her days writing and reading when she can. She likes to portray many social issues in her writing, since it is so important to bring forth issues with any form that she is able to produce. She is the President of the Creative Writing Club as well as the Co-Head Editor of the Upper Mississippi Harvest Journal. Social justice is very important to Kholood, and she truly believes that if enough people of the community come together, we can create a change for the better in all our communities.

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- American 24
- Segregation Wall Located Around Jerusalem 25
- Aylan Kurdi: Green Bird 36
- Palestinian Graduation Day 46

Enerel Bayandalai

Enerel Bayandalai is a twenty years old Mongolian girl who came to Minnesota last August. Everything is interesting for her when she first enters a new environment. Enerel's favorite season is autumn, she loves nature and she loves to take pictures. She sees beautiful things not a lot of people realize are beautiful and she thinks that beauty is in the simple things of life. She took "From Mongolia to Minnesota" to try to let people understand this idea. People don't realize how beautiful things are existing everywhere around us. So try to see it, try to feel it.

- From Mongolia to Minnesota *front cover

Jylian Charles

Jylian Charles received her BA in English Creative Writing at SCSU in 2010. She is currently a graduate student in the English Studies program, as well as a graduate assistant at the Write Place, and 2016 Co-Head Editor of the Upper Mississippi Harvest. She fell in love with poetry at twelve years old when she discovered Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" on her great grandmother's bookshelf and have been reading and writing poetry since. She is a hippy-dippy nature loving, gardening, attachment parenting,

yoga contorting, farm to table exploring, clay sculpting, trail running and hiking human being. She is especially enamored with her family, ecstatic poetry, rocks, goats, water lilies, the breathtaking Pacific Northwest and the grounding magic of the driftless region of Minnesota.

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- Holy Land 20
- Evanescent 27
- Devotions of an Abusive Man 37

Kimberly Van Dusen

Kimberly Van Dusen is a senior in the English Studies program. She enjoys writing poetry and is also very involved with music. Currently a bartender, Kimberly looks forward to graduating and finding a job working with people.

- A Frozen Nation 21

Rhoda Fagerland

Rhoda Fagerland composed her first poem (with a little help from Mom) before she could read or write. She has always loved the cadence of English. She is passionate about teaching her language to others, having taught English as a Foreign Language in Asia for 10 years. She currently teaches in the Intensive English Center of St. Cloud State University.

- Ogre Under the Bridge 29

Melissa Frank

Melissa Frank is a double major student in English Rhetoric and Women's Studies. She plans on continuing her education with a Master's and Doctorate, both in English Studies. She is proud to be a social media intern for the SCSU Women's Center, where she is able to share her passion for equality and writing through the blog CollectiveFeminism.wordpress.com. Some of her other passions include reading, video games, and spending time with her partner and their children.

- Perspectives 7

Ashley Kammermeier

Ashley Kammermeier is a Junior at St. Cloud State University majoring in English with Creative Writing emphasis and a minor in History. She is currently the Vice President of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars club at SCSU. She has been writing fiction since she was in 7th grade and just recently started writing poetry. She became interested in photography after a trip to Europe this past summer. Some of her favorite pastimes include: reading, knitting, baking, and crafting.

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- Ville de la Vie (City of Life) 40

Brian T. Lynch

How Poetry will Save the World: Mr. Lynch dreamed that, one day, he would become a professor of English Literature. He saved his money and in 1991 took his first college course at St. Cloud State University, Introduction to Poetry. He got an A. After two years, he left school and started a business. Many years and many travels later, Lynch returned to SCSU and graduated in the spring of 2015 with a B.A. in English Literature. "Ultimately, we need poetry now more than ever" Lynch says, "increasing literacy, promoting empathy, stimulating critical thinking, and facilitating the communication skills of students is vital to the survival of humanity. Not just in some futuristic technological world we can now only imagine--but in the world that exists today." Lynch is currently a Graduate student in the English Studies program.

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Alex Marrone

Alex Marrone is an undergraduate double majoring in Rhetoric and Philosophy. Alex is a word nerd and lover of learning. She loves writing spoken word poetry, YA fiction, and nonfiction. In her spare time, she enjoys playing role-playing games, practicing guitar, and reading anything from Harry Potter to academic research. She has been a college tutor for six years, and loves the one-on-one learning experiences she has with students. One day, she wishes to open her own learning center in St. Cloud to give students like her,

who learn differently, a chance to succeed and love learning.

- I See You 32
- Self-Harm 41

Mara Martinson

Mara Martinson is a freelance editor and student. She received her Bachelor's degree in English from UW-Superior and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Rhetoric and Writing at St. Cloud State University. Her creative work has also appeared in journals such as The Nemadji Review and The Upper Mississippi Harvest.

- Struggling 43

Bill Meissner

Bill Meissner has published four books of poems, and two collections of short stories. His novel, SPIRITS IN THE GRASS, about a ballplayer who finds the remains of an ancient Native American burial ground on a baseball field, won the Midwest Book Award. He teaches creative writing at St. Cloud State and his hobbies are travel, writing, baseball, and collecting old typewriters. Two of the poems [and the photos] included in this issue are based on recent trips to San Andreas Canyon in California and Akumal and Chichen Itza, Mexico. THE GLASS CARNIVAL, a limited-edition chapbook of Meissner's carnival/circus related stories and poems, will be released by Paper Soul Press in Pittsburgh in spring, 2016. His Facebook author's page is www.facebook.com/Bill-Meissner-174769532541232/?fref=ts

- La Buena Vida: We Will Sing for You 14
- The Stories: San Adreas Canyon 26
- The Palms Capture the Sun 34
- The 21st Xpu-Ha Dream 42
- El Castillo Sleeps in a Hammock *back cover

Carol Mohrbacher

Carol Mohrbacher is an English prof and the Write Place Director, at least in this incarnation. Has been writing seriously since 6th grade at Our Lady of Victory school when Sister Mary Raphael became her first appreciative audience and told her, "Dear, it's not important to rhyme

- The Supreme Court Helps Us All? 17

Celia Mix

Nerdy, enthusiastic, with a passion for little-known trivia, Celia Mix is a student at St. Cloud State University studying to become a pharmacist. Between writing chemistry lab reports and taking bites of strawberry cheesecake, Celia enjoys playing organ, sketching, volunteering at her church, and acting on stage. She finds it a shame that her account balance and degree of wanderlust are inversely related, as she loves cruising down the open road to unknown destinations, but does not possess the financial affluence to do so. As a result, she writes about traveling the world and meeting lovely new people from the comfort of her well lit room.

- His Father's Country 30

Emmy Phillips

Emmy Phillips is a junior at SCSU in the English Rhetoric program. She was sexually abused for twelve years of her childhood, starting at the age of five. It has taken a lot of work to be where she is today, and she is proud to say that she is a survivor. Some days are really easy, but some days are really hard. Her dedication to helping survivors has culminated in the completion of sexual assault advocacy training, and she is now ready to volunteer to help others through painful times. Wherever you are in your journey; never be ashamed of your story, because it will inspire others.

- What I Wanted 23

Andrea Potyondy-Smith

Andrea Potyondy-Smith is an adjunct professor at SCSU, who also works full time at Hennepin Technical College. Aside from writing poetry, her artistic hobbies include drawing in charcoals, painting in oils, & making jewelry from recycled treasures. She is also an avid athlete who participates in bicycle racing, triathlons, and Nordic ski marathons. She spends as much time outdoors/in nature as possible--which is where she finds her primary inspiration.

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- Blood, Bones 22
- After the Reaping - For Lisa 33

- Foreigner 35
- Auf English 39

Benjamin Reigstad

Benjamin Reigstad is a first year graduate student in SCSU's English Studies program. Ever since he was little(r), he has been scribbling out fictional stories, but it is only in the past few years that he has started writing poetry. Ben loves playing with and controlling words to craft evocative, visual pieces, whether he is writing poetry or fiction novels. In addition to writing, he is addicted to dogs, cats, seagulls, oceans, daydreaming, and thesauri.

- Fangs 16

C. Scot Stene

C. Scot Stene is a senior at St. Cloud State University majoring in English with an emphasis on Rhetoric and a minor in Creative Writing. He will be graduating this spring and looks forward to the challenge of grad school in the fall. He has always been a lover of words and has been writing in one form or another ever since he learned how.

- Run 10

