

The John Carroll Review

Fall 2012

Volume 66 Issue 1



216.622.6360

jakprints.com

General Editor	David Young
Poetry Editor	Samantha Syracuse
Prose Editor	Ann Visintainer
Visual Arts Editor	Rachel Hoag
Assistant Visual Arts Editor	Darcy Egan
Poetry Staff	Ashley Campbell Hillary Froelich Vicky Hume Noah Lamprecht Elizabeth Malloy Leah Tremaglio Zachary Zippert
Prose Staff	Danny Caine Maureen Ginley Erin Manning
Visual Arts Staff	Kara Krawiec Paige Webb
Faculty Advisor	Dr. George Bilgere

Editor's Note

As a burgeoning poet in my final year of undergraduate work, I brazenly submitted three poems I felt were well-written to several journals in hopes of my seeing my work published. One of these journals happened to be published by a university not far from where I lived, so I thought maybe a local poet would have a good chance of finding his name next to the likes of Rita Dove and C.K. Williams, authors this particular journal published. However, after months of waiting for a response I received the correspondence every author dreads: "We appreciate your submission, but..." While momentarily upset by their obvious ignorance to poetic genius, I moved on. However, it turned out their editor had recently accepted an adjunct position at the university I was attending, and when I was introduced to him by a senior member of the English faculty I was able to say, "Yes, I know him already...he rejected three of my poems for publication." Though I did this in jest (I did tell him that there were no hard feelings and that I realized the poems still needed more work and he was right to reject me), his terrified look and his garbled "I do hope you'll submit again" were worth the rejection. But now I am well aware of the difficulties he faced in selecting the work other artists slave and stress over...and he had to do it quarterly.

As the submissions came pouring in for this edition of *The John Carroll Review*, I knew my staff and I had a difficult task. With so many wonderful poets, authors, and artists walking our campus, how were we to limit this edition to a select number of works? To say some tough choices were made would not be saying enough. The plethora of strong submissions we received this semester were some of the strongest I have read in my three semesters working on this publication, and had we space and money, all would have been included. I know this is no solace to those who received the same kind of correspondence from an editor that I received, but I am confident when I say that I suspect many of those names will find their way into future editions of this, or another, journal.

Until those editions and other journals are published with the names of John Carroll students gracing their pages, we can look to their contemporaries published here. We can sit and listen to the oldies station with Danny Caine in "As the Oldies Station Plays in the Twinsburg Handel's Ice Cream Parking Lot," witness the spectacle of one of punk rock's most infamous performances with Carson Parish in "Extermination Night, 1974," squint our eyes as we try to read the names on Rebecca Ferlotti's cover photo "Love Lockdown," and take a photo-flash quick journey with Corona in Samantha Syracuse's "Corona."

Acting as General Editor of this *Review* has not only been an anxiety-inducing experience, it has also helped me realize that creativity still exists in our watered-down, reality-television-driven culture and that artists still care about their craft and creating something new to share with whoever will take the time to read or view their creations. I thank all of the poets, writers, and photographers who submitted for bringing me to this realization. Perhaps someday I will share space in a table of contents with some of the artists who made this edition possible.

Enjoy,

David Young
General Editor

Samantha Syracuse graduated from Ursuline College in 2010 with BAs in English and sociology. Prior to attending JCU she worked in Yellowstone National Park. She is currently in her second year as a graduate assistant in the English Department, where her focus is composition & rhetoric.

Robert Cormac Utrup is a first year graduate assistant in the English department. In his spare time, Bob enjoys synchronized slam dancing and trap shooting with lobsters instead of clay pigeons. Bob is also a championship bear wrestler.

Paige Webb is a first year graduate assistant in the English Department. Paige enjoys sculpting members of British Parliament out of Gorgonzola and collecting vintage coonskin caps. Paige spends her free time standing outside of Dr. Rosenthal's office hoping to catch her for an impromptu meeting.

Stoehlea Whitman was born in November 1992 in Fairview, Ohio. She is an aspiring neuroscientist currently enrolled in John Carroll's Cell and Molecular Biology program.

Christina Mihalic is a first year graduate student at JCU. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English at Mercyhurst University in 2012 and is currently working as a letter composer/editor for Concord Advisors, while pursuing her Master's Degree in English. Christina lives with her family in Chardon, Ohio where she enjoys teaching Scottish Highland dancing and like many writers, has the pleasure of living with two cuddly cats. Christina began composing poetry in sixth grade and hasn't put the pen down since.

Halle Novotney is a Junior English Major. She is an observer, and onlooker, a beholder. She is open and willing to try new things. She's fantasized on a Brooklyn fire escape with Francie Nolan, did her beset to experiences the purges of the Nazi's with Anne Frank, and took the magical train ride deep into the English countryside with Harry, Ron, and Hermione. All of who she is comes from the combined effort of her family, and to them she would like to say, "Thank you."

Danielle Pannella is from Pocono Mountains, PA. I am an English major with a minor in Biology. I will be pursuing a graduate degree in speech pathology.

Carson Parish O.B.E., currently lives with his wife and three children, Grace, Virtue, and Helen, in Vermont. For more information, go to www.geocities.yahoo.com/vermontpoet2004.

Bailey Powell is a Psychology major at JCU. She enjoys long walks but not on the beach and appreciates all forms of literature except biographies. In her free time, Powell is prone to reading, working out, and asking questions.

Samantha Rump is a first year Graduate Student who recently graduated with a B.A. in English from Clarion University of Pennsylvania. While working as a part-time nanny in the Cleveland area she writes poetry as she has done since high school. Her love for poetry comes from her mother, Amy, who has guided her through her life with many wise poems of her own.

Conrad Selnick lives in Ashtabula and works on the far east side of Cuyahoga County. He gladly drives in to John Carroll for a poetry-writing workshop with Dr. George Bilgere. The rest of the time he is the Rector of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Gates Mills. He has been actively writing poetry for three or four years. His wife, Elizabeth Eaton, is also clergy; she is the bishop of the North East Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Their oldest daughter, Rebeckah, is a graduate of John Carroll. She and her new husband, Michael, are spending a year in Slovakia teaching in an all-English high school sponsored by the Lutheran Church. Their youngest daughter, Susannah, is finishing an MBA in health care management at Cleveland State and works at University Hospitals. The Selnicks have two dogs, three cats, and two ferrets.

Marilynn Skeggs is a first year graduate student. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Middle Childhood Education from Baldwin-Wallace University in 2006. Marilynn now teaches middle school part-time, while pursuing her Master's Degree. She has always loved to write and is very excited to be developing her skills at John Carroll. Marilynn currently resides in Mentor, Ohio with her cat, Grady.

Contents

Poetry

Stoehla Whitman	Untitled	7
Marilynn Skeggs	I'm Sorry	8
	In the Barn	13
Paige Webb	The Sea	14
Conrad Selnick	Wrist Watch	15
Belinda Johnson	Epiphany	18
Kaitlin Gill	La hermosa expresión	19
Charmae Cottom	I'm a Walking Cliché	24
Jasmine Cammack	The Garage	25
Danielle Pannella	Mom's Jealousy of Dad's Mistress	27
Samantha Rump	Heat Like a Sky	28
Bailey Powell	Yellow: The Color of Ambivalence	35
Max Harcsar	Ode to a Black Macbook	31
Rebecca Ferlotti	Jesus in Starbuck's	35
Carson Parish	Extermination Night, 1974	36
Rebecca Gilman	Passionless Passion	37
Robert Cormac Utrup	I Love You	38
Kaitlin Gill	Scenes from a Street in East Cleveland	40
Keva Mickey	Pretty in Think	41
Charmae Cottom	The Double Stroller	42
Chloe Dibbin	They Don't' Fit, Mama	44
Christina Mihalic	Cultural Burning	45
Chris McDonald	Cleveland RTA "Punch"	47
Paige Webb	How to Win Friends and Influence People	48
Danny Caine	As the Oldies Station Plays in the Twinsburg	
	Handel's Ice Cream Parking Lot	49
Barbie Curatolo	Images	50

Samantha Rump	Deer on the Wall	52
Chloe Dibbin	Chinese Food Expiration Date	54
Danielle Pannella	A Break from Saving Lives	55
Robert Cormac Utrup	As Adam	56
Danny Caine	Schrodinger's Voicemail	57

Prose

Robbie Bellusci	Sleeping Beauty	10
Samantha Syracuse	Corona	16
Rebecca Ferlotti	Eva	21
Samantha Syracuse	Palindrome	32

Visual Arts

Rebecca Ferlotti	Love Lockdown	Cover Photo
Rayfield N. Benton III	Minimal Ghost	9
J.P. Calubaquib	Open Gloom	17
Rebecca Ferlotti	Handlebarred	20
Carson Parish	South Chagrin Reservation	23
Halle Novotney	Isle Au Haut	26
Katya Caravella	Dad's Boots	30
J.P. Calubaquib	Faded Skins	34
Rayfield N. Benton III	Untitled	39
Carson Parish	Cleveland Fun Wall	43
Katya Caravella	I Like the Way You Move	46
Rayfield N. Benton III	Drift	51
Halle Novotney	Maine	53

Chloe Dibbin is, regrettably, a senior who often has nightmares about growing up. And zombies. Which are occasionally actually frightening and end in her waking up clutching a large stuffed penguin named James. Once she woke up after banging her head into the wall. The latter end is, of course, not preferred. She is looking forward to a long life of looking for a job, so if you have an offering, please, for the love of God, let her know. Seriously. She may not enjoy long walks on the beach, but she does enjoy eating and would like to continue this habit.

Rebecca Ferlotti will never let her age surpass the number of countries she has visited

Kaitlin Gill is a senior from Concord, OH. I will be graduating in May as a major in English on the writing track with a minor in Spanish. I have a passion for writing and language in all forms, and whatever life throws at me post-graduation, I intend to utilize this love for writing in my endeavors.

Rebecca Gilman is 22 years old and lives in Cleveland Heights, OH. I am an English major. I am a store manager at Justice and I love my job. During my free time, I enjoy running, spending time with friends, and of course shopping. A fun fact about me is I cannot live without my Starbucks.

Max Harcsar is senior communications major. Passion for graphic design. Fan of Chipotle, Yankee Candles, and vinyl records. When I'm not sleeping or studying, I'm usually at a concert. You should come stage dive with me. Maybe I'll see you in the mosh pit. Or not.

Belinda Johnson is a senior at John Carroll University. I double majored in Chemistry and English. I enjoy laying out my life on paper.

Mickey Keva is a freshman at John Carroll University, and writing has been a passion of mine ever since I was in eighth grade. At the time, I aspired to become a screenwriter and had written my very first screenplay, "Lipstick". From ninth grade, at John Hay Senior High School, up until my senior year, I began a vast collection of poems, in addition to the few screenplays I worked on through the years. Currently, I am developing a memoir, *Koi: Traveling Up the Waterfall*, which is to be later formulated into a chapter book.

Chris McDonald received his B.A. in English from Case Western Reserve University in 2012, and now serves as a Graduate Assistant in the English Department at John Carroll. His academic interests include the Textual Diaspora of the Arctic Circle, Literature *sous vide*, and the poetics of airplane travel in Victorian fiction. He is currently working on his Master's thesis titled "Who speaks? Why Listen?: Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Campbell's *Alphabet Soup*." McDonald's work has drawn considerable praise from contemporary critics, who have remarked that his imagery is "nice," and that his line breaks are also "nice." McDonald currently lives in Cleveland Heights, Ohio with his cat, Puck.

Author Biographies

Robbie Bellusci My interest in writing started in high school when I took a semester long writing seminar. My love of films has also been a major source of inspiration with my writing. When I write, I try to play the story out in my head as if it is up on the big screen. My ultimate dream job would be to write and direct my own films. Other than writing and film, I enjoy sports. I played baseball for 3 years here at John Carroll University.

Rayfield N. Benton III John Carroll Senior, writer, audio curator for nowlisteningto.com, and visual artist. Hopelessly fixated on challenging the seemingly infallible nature of our human experience.

Danny Caine is a first-year grad assistant. He recently quit his job as a high school teacher, and is getting married on New Year's Eve. As for this poetry thing, it all started when his twelfth grade English teacher read him Billy Collins's "Marginalia."

J.P. Calubaquib is a Chicago native enthralled with the culture of society. Photography became a hobby built purely off the stimulation of visual perception. Perception to him is limitless as this world is of discontinuity. His work aims to portray his perception through his lens.

Jasmine Cammack I am twenty-two years old. My hometown is Cleveland, Ohio. I am a graduate of Collinwood High School and I am proud to say that because most people are ashamed to admit where they came from. However, I am currently a senior at John Carroll University with a major in English. Here at John Carroll University, I have been involved in many activities, such as; Gospel Choir where I served as the secretary and The African American Alliance where I worked under the president on the academic chair. I have also devoted time through volunteering at various schools and other interests. After graduation in May, I look forward to attending graduate school to receive my Masters in English. In the future, I have intentions on teaching, but later, I would like to pursue a career in nursing to become a nurse practitioner.

Katya Caravella Kristin Martz beautifully reveals, "We lose ourselves in the things we love. We find ourselves there, too." Photography is one of those things I love. It provides an escape into this world's intricacies; meanwhile, I discover reflections of myself in the images I capture. But really, I just like taking pictures.

Charmae Cottom has a BA from Baldwin Wallace University in Speech and Communications and a BA from BW in English. She also received her teaching license from BW and teaches 11th and 12th grade Language Arts at Pioneer Career and Technology Center in Shelby, Ohio. Charmae spent over 20 years as the Director of Cleveland Events, where she coordinated national and local marketing, special event and fund-raising campaigns before beginning her teaching career. She will be completing her MA in English at JCU in the spring and plans to continue her PhD in English in the fall. She is an active resident of Columbia Station where she resides with her husband Mike and five children.

Barbie Curatolo is a senior who is majoring in Communications and English with a minor in Philosophy.

Author Biographies

An electronic version of this issue of *The John Carroll Review* can be found in the online archive at <http://www.jcu.edu/english/jcureview.htm>

The John Carroll Review, Fall 2012.

The John Carroll Review is published by John Carroll University in the fall and spring semesters. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the university or its affiliates.

The *Review* considers poetry, fiction, nonfiction, translations, drawings, and photography for publication.

For more information, contact Dr. George Bilgere at gbilgere@jcu.edu

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Christopher Roark
Professor, Scholar, Friend



Sonnet 155

My professor's eyes were somewhat like the sun.
They burnt bright with knowledge
to be, and not to be (if that were a question).
So much in his life became him like the leaving it
that he thrust our glorious summer into discontent.
Come back, come back brief candle!
Make the classroom a stage once more
for we were all poor players,
with eyes cast upon your infinite variety.
Friend, teacher, countryman,
we lent you our ears!
And now in this out-of-joint time,
perchance we can share what dreams may come.
Good night, sweet Prince.

Carson Parish

Schrodinger's Voicemail

When I see that I have a voicemail from mom, I know it—
Grandpa had a heart attack.
Uncle Mike's blood sugar went sour.
Dad left the gas on.
Grandma wandered onto 271.
Aunt Lynn tripped in front of the Rapid.
Nana drowned at aquarobics.
Cousin Alex OD'd on bath salts.
The dog ate the other dog.
My brother is in a car chase on Fox News.
The falling window unit crushed the neighbor kid.
A tea party birther shot the president.
Al Quaida hit the Capitol—
everyone, for a moment,
both alive and dead.

Danny Caine

As Adam

I woke tenderly that morning.
Your head against my chest,
I was still and breathed lightly
as not to wake you.

I felt something ancient,
while recalling the preceding millennial night.
A story that together
we've retold:

that piece of me,
finding its way into you.
Songs first sung in the garden,
screaming mortality

Robert Cormac Utrup

Untitled

Modern crusades
killing minds of masses
unconsciously persuades
to wear rose colored glasses
justifying horrendous deeds
of blind indoctrination
and sowing unwilling seeds
in effort of globalization.
Programming youth
to ensure autonomic reply
eye for eye, tooth for tooth
when answering question "why?"
The sage's words manipulated
into grotesque teachings
spirituality's path stipulated
by interpretation preachings
unequated to divine meaning
of acceptance and peace.
Now society is weaning
on what will surcease.

Stoeblea Whitman

I'm Sorry

Every night amidst blue sheets
named Ocean, but not the color of the sea,
more like cotton that should be called
where airplanes glide
weightless and amazing near heaven,
we slept. Together.

Swimming in dreams
that may have matched,
face to his chest, I smelled Tide.
He smelled my hair, saltwater taffy.

But one night inside Airplane Sky,
I woke and knew I faced away.
Turning slow like ships, I looked:
arms flung out like I was in them,
he slept. One of two.
Still floating.
And there I was, folded into myself.
One of one.
Sinking.

Gazing at his face, Ocean between us,
I knew I didn't want to puzzle
piece myself back into him.
My sleeping body had beat
my waking mind to the truth:
I didn't love him.

Marilynn Skeggs

A Break from Saving Lives

I sat behind your cigarette, as you placed
your focus on the contents of a newspaper.

You didn't even notice me there.
Behind you, in the wheelchair, using my newspaper
as a barrier to the attacking clouds.
As you sucked into your lungs,
it absorbed into mine.
The final ash tapped against your fingertips,
flung into my eyes.
The shorted flame tip indicating the end, you sucked feverishly.
A leftover stub on the ground,
was kicked against the bottom of my wheelchair by the breeze.
Placing on your white coat with the clipped name tag,
you went back inside the hospital.

Daniell Pannella

Chinese Food Expiration Date

He ordered general tso's.
I made that two.
Only one order needed to survive the weekend.
Chinese food would never go bad
for us.

We ate chicken drenched in red sauce,
Egg. Rolls of blue and green
blankets kept us safe,
warm, away from the cold
reality.
We drank Pepsi from the bottle,
reminisced, embraced, kissed.
His Irish soul wrapping around a mutt's,
ignoring the world beyond my dorm's locked oak door.

I asked for a boyfriend over rice, on the floor,
husband over chicken, on the bed.
He called my raise through steam. The wisest
most experienced nineteen year olds ever to breathe and eat.

Friday never turns to Sunday
when you're in love.

But Monday came.

Chloe Dibbin



Minimal Ghost
Rayfield N. Benton III

Sleeping Beauty

I always loved the way she looked during a deep sleep. So peaceful, and yet, that bare expression upon her face electrified my body. I always let her fall asleep first so I could gaze at her beauty as her mind slipped into another world. I wish I could say it was love at first sight with her, but it was not until the first night we spent together that I fell hard for that face. Everything else just seemed to fall into place. Maybe that 's why it fell apart just as easily.

I get in the cab. "Airport please."

"You never close your eyes, anymore when I kiss your lips. There's no tenderness like before in your fingertips."

My head snaps around straight towards the direction of the jukebox in the back of the bar.

"Jesus man, did you just have a mini seizure?" My friend Mike clearly isn't aware of my obsession with the movie Top Gun, and my current, dire need to get a glimpse of the person who put the Righteous Brothers song, from the famous bar scene of Top Gun, on the jukebox.

"Shut up," I reply, as I just want silence while I scope out the potential winner of a free beer from me due to his excellent taste in music.

The crowd finally thins out enough for me to get a good look at the jukebox. Standing there, using a beer bottle as a microphone to serenade a laughing friend is not the kind of man I thought would be standing there. It's a girl, the girl of my dreams. Well, she's just a girl, but her song choice and her apparent common appreciation for Top Gun makes her the girl of my dreams at this point in time.

"Hooly shit," I mutter as my eyes widen and my jaw drops in a cartoonish fashion.

"What's the matter dude," Mike asks in confusion, "aw man, did you piss your pants again?"

"Yea...I mean what? No!"

"Then what's your deal? Cause you're giving the same look my sister does when she misses her period."

"First off, that was a totally unnecessary comparison. Second off, you're sister is a slut. And lastly, I think I'm in love."

How old do you have to be to experience true love? You may think you love somebody, but how can you really know? Maybe we were too young. Maybe it was because our relationship was based off some stupid fucking song she put on the jukebox. But then how come every time it's played I smile? Maybe we didn't have enough in common. Maybe we were too similar. Maybe we weren't meant for each other.



Maine

Halle Novotney

Deer on the Wall

Tan hide stretched over a circular piece of plywood,
pulled taut and stapled into place.
Coarse fur smoothed down by only a taxidermist's touch.
Fake glass doe eyes stare stoically out
watching every action to ever take place
in the white-walled living room.

Slumber parties, where ten year old girls
were forced to sleep under your watchful gaze.
Each one taking turns peeking over
to see if your eyes ever moved from side-to-side.

A first date with a young boy
too afraid to slide his sweaty hand
into my palm because he could feel you analyzing him.

Decorating the Christmas tree each year
only to find your own antlers covered in silvery tinsel,
your marble eyes still fixed ahead
as cheer warmed our home.

Silently like a king keeping watch on his castle
you hung there, year after year,
soaking in my family's monumental moments,
creeping out and scaring away friends, boyfriends,
neighbors, and even some relatives.

Until one day your nail grew rusty,
your coat dusty, because mom forgot to feather dust you
and dad took you into the basement
and we haven't seen you since.

Samantha Rump

But then why haven't I dated anyone since we split? Maybe there wasn't enough trust. Maybe I trusted her too much. Maybe if I didn't leave her after our fight, she wouldn't have been driven to another man's bed.

"Attention all American Airline passengers, now's the time to turn off all electronic devices, store away all tray tables, and position your seats in the full upright position, we are preparing for take off."

"Talk to me Goose." It was the first thing that popped into my head.

She and her friend both shoot me blank stares of disappointment.

"Really? You took all that time to stare at me from across the bar before you and your friend mustered up enough balls to walk on over here to deliver me a witty line from Top Gun, which you hoped would get me to throw all my inhibitions to the wind and go to bed with you, and the best you could come up with was, 'Talk to me Goose?'"

I can hear Mike snickering behind me.

"Well actually I've used this line before in a similar situation. Twice to be exact."

"How'd that work out for you?"

I could tell she's taking the bait.

"On the first one I crashed and burned. It wasn't pretty."

"And the second?"

"I don't know, but uh, it's looking good so far."

I can see the muscles in her jaw trying to fight back a smile, trying not to give me the satisfaction of a well-delivered line. However, she eventually caves and lets out the cutest little laugh.

"Alright, I'll give you that one," she confesses, "You redeemed yourself with that line."

She then walks right past me and heads for the door. After a few steps, she stops and pivots around. "Come on Maverick, my place is only two blocks from here."

As I make my way through the airport terminal, I think of that night at the bar. Why is it that at the end, you always think about the beginning?

We were so perfect for each other that night. It was so easy to be with her. Not in a slutty way, but in a loving way. Staring at her sleeping face, I felt lucky. I thought about all the guys in the world sharing a bed with a girl that night, and how convinced I was they were not staring at a more stunning face than the one I was.

Where did that feeling go? I don't think it went anywhere. I think all the stupid shit life throws at young couples just buried it. Actually, I know it didn't go

anywhere because it has been eight years and I still dream of her face sleeping next to mine.

Walking outside the airport, I hail a cab. It's raining. I stare out the window. I try to think about what I am going to say. It has been eight years, what can I say?

The cab passes the bar where we first met. Just like our relationship, it has been boarded up and abandoned.

The cab arrives at my destination. I remain still for a moment. I take a deep breath to calm my nerves. I chant to myself, "Alright, you can do this." I pay the cabbie and walk out into the rain. Seems fitting.

I make my way through the front door. My presence had been requested but suddenly I don't feel that I should be here. It's hauntingly quiet. I creep my way to the back through another set of doors. As I cross the threshold of the room, I become frozen. I see it. That elegant sleeping face is there before me. It has been eight years since I've seen that face and now it almost doesn't even seem real. It's as if I am in one of my dreams. I want to lie down next to her. I want to feel what I felt the first night we spent together so long ago.

As I slowly approach her, I become filled with emotion, just as I did the first time I laid eyes on her as she slept. Except only, this time I am not filled with the same emotions. I do not feel lucky or electrified.

Kneeling down beside her, I want to wake her up and explain everything I still feel for her before she has a chance to speak. It's too late for that. I waited too long to get her back.

I get up from her side, leaving her undisturbed in her peaceful slumber. I turn around and pick out her husband from the long line of people. I recognize him from their wedding invitation I never RSVP'd to. Although we have never met, he gives me a look of warm recognition. I walk across the room, give him a comforting hug and say the first thing that pops into my head.

"I am so sorry for your loss."

Robbie Bellusi



Drift

Rayfield N. Benton III

Images

I simply cannot forgive myself
 for the inability to picture you in a wedding dress.
 I could, however, see the look in your eyes
 which led me to the depth of your bedroom.
 Your fingers holding me tightly
 by the hair on the back of my head.
 And I could see those fingers interlaced with mine.
 Clothes were lost in a bundle of blankets.
 The next few months I would find myself
 wrapped up in those sheets next to you.
 I saw you in the way I washed my hair
 and behind the expressions I used when I spoke.
 I could see you with me mixed in with layers of noodles
 in homemade lasagna on movie night.
 Yet I could not see you gowned in white ruffles.
 For that, I take full responsibility.

Barbie Curatolo

In the Barn

Gliding upwards on wings of feathered down,
 a sparrow builds his nest above the light.
 Firm in his beak, 3 horsehairs taken: brown,
 ignoring chores, I watch him in his plight.
 Not just horses' hair, but feed he carried.
 The bird worked quickly, starting with the hay.
 Breeze blows: my tiny robber grows harried,
 while he placed the first, mane did float away.
 Brunette hairs now sit at my dusty shoes.
 Aloft, in thought, the sparrow stares at me.
 Foe perhaps, but the mane he cannot lose,
 and so prepares to claim his goods and flee.
 Arrow quick he dives, taking what was lost,
 to finish weaving shelter, before frost.

Marilynn Skeggs

The Sea

To the children she irons her chin,
I just don't know. Just permission—
 feet lifting sand, breaking thin spume.
 She smiles into and is lovely.
 What can know her but this wind she parts
 praying in, then cursing them, praying in.
 Pinned limbs to this cold quake
 and centuries of bodies suspended below.
 I do believe in the horror, the blue,
 the propelling dark that quells us
 and the sound in crossing—
 the morning decides this form
 this room, with only a bed to touch on.

Paige Webb

As the Oldies Station Plays in the Twinsburg Handel's Ice Cream Parking Lot

Easy Like Sunday Morning
 these ice cream sundae nights.
 Baby I Love your Way
 of licking that mint chip.
 Oh, Pretty Woman
 with golden thighs on your golden Malibu.
 My Girl
 in jean shorts and flip flops,
 I Want you to Want Me
 like chocolate chips want cookie dough.

Summer in the City
 of Twins, the suburb of siblings:
 Summer Breeze
 sends essence of grass and charcoal across asphalt.
 Listen to the Music
 thrumming like powerlines in the late evening glow.
 I Say a Little Prayer
 as the sun slides behind the Mexican restaurant, because
 Wouldn't it Be Nice
 if my curfew had longer legs.

You Make Me Feel Like Dancing
 between yellow lines,
 Dancing in the Street
 between Blockbuster and CVS,
 Dancing in the Moonlight
 between school years,
 Dancing in the Dark
 between now and everything else; here I am
 Stuck in the Middle With You.

Danny Caine

How to Win Friends and Influence People

The banker plays it on audio, on the drive to work, to save time. After the *Times*, to the owners of the bread shop, to the collateral damage they sweat, speaks only in the necessary, in an economy of words. In bed, upright on the double pillow, impassioned by the novelty, he highlighted a section (“Remember That a Man’s Name Is the Sweetest Word to Him”) and placed it on her chest as she slept.

Paige Webb

Wrist Watch

The lithe, knowing beauty dabs perfume there,
to be released seductively in time;
While another woman needs surgery after having a baby,
to relieve the carpal tunnel constricture.

With pitchers, bowlers, anglers,
That is where the secret, the skill is evident;
Some small minds speak
the bigoted, ugly talk of limp ones.

The executive in a starched shirt shoots his cuff;
Long-ago gentlemen and officers
threw down their gauntlets in challenge.

Cell phones are replacing wrist watches for time
(Pocket watches are now novelties or affectations.)

The perp is handcuffed, “for everyone’s safety;”
But the nurse gently touches with two fingertips,
measuring pulse for measuring health.

Bangles or bracelets adorn, casual or glamorous;
And the lover never tires
Of contemplating and stroking the adored’s delicate wrist.

Conrad Selnick

Corona

The brain swells in excitement

Housed in the skull, the brain floats in fluid. Windshield wiper fluid sloshes around as a car makes a left turn. Corona stands at the corner waiting for a bus. Fumes from cars and busses stream through the air, some visible, some invisible, like wafts of freshly baked bread floating out of windows in cartoons. Intoxicated by the scent, her nose follows the source. She clomps along as if inebriated and possessed by her solitary sense of smell. Corona snaps a picture with her eyes closed, smells the blue of the bus arriving and boards.

The brain takes pictures

The car turns left aiming for an outdoor market at which fruits of many varieties, sizes and ripenesses await hands to squeeze them, especially the melons. Corona rides the bus to the market. Her brain registers the fruity colors and turns them into bitter smells. Scents smell like colors. Pictures consist of scents and strokes of luck. When split open vertically, grapes resemble the human brain, gelatinous to the touch and segregated into two hemispheres by a bundle of fibers down the middle. Corona's grapes step into the street.

The brain swells with pictures

How the world began no one knows, but the world will end when Corona cannot smell blue, of that she's sure. Fresh baked bread with jelly from smashed grapes tastes like manna of Biblical times, like fumes of busses make Corona's mouth water for more. Luck plays like cartoons in her head, as a car following an invisible aroma collides with the brain housed in a skull. Gelatinous grapes squeezed together produce wine. Windshield wine sloshes around as the car makes a right turn.

Samantha Syracuse

Cleveland RTA "Punch"

Stronger than a Christmas ale, this playful little cocktail knocks out bitches on bus lines. Served straight up, AIN'T MESSIN' with no bull - shit. Talkin' about how this is madness

bitch, this is Cleveland: *If she want to act like a man I'm-a treat her like a man.*

Quick cut to uppercut, brace for impact - in the event of emergency you can

not use your face to protect less vital body parts. Please keep blood, teeth, & weave on your person at all times, the aisle should remain clear of debris, do not leave

your common sense unattended. Today, we thank you for choosing the R.T.A.

Chris McDonald



I Like the Way You Move
Katya Caravella



Open Gloom
J. P. Calubaquib

Epiphany

In front of me laid my grandfather in Hospice hospital bed.
 My eyes analyzed his frail, chiseled body.
 Then, I looked into his yellow eyes.
 It was obvious the endured pain had risen.
 Tired of being bound to a hospital bed,
 the war was finally over.
 He fought many battles against cancer,
 deliriously diseased, he was ready to leave.

The family surrounds him.
 Looking onto an apoptosis sight,
 our bodies tremble.
 As water dripped from the leaves of our family tree,
 into a stream of water flowing into denial river,
 a glare was caught by my peripheral.

Sun rays pierced through the window,
 particle of dust bouncing around his lifeless body,
 I envision that his soul has risen.
 A celebration of life,
 the chants of spirits,
 to the honorable Allah,
 in a room of death.

Belinda Johnson

Cultural Burning

Culture says, woman be calm.
 Calm like a charmingly suitable house-wife
 living inside damaged cookware.

It says, cook me something sweet and dainty
 which, by the way, is the only clothing
 suitable to wear.

But if not dainty then it must be something tight
 and ruined. Ruined like those girls outside
 my dorm room window.

College is running wild in stripper clothes screaming,
All I want is a nice warm man to love me.

Love me like those drunken nights where men
 liquor girls into sick-sodden games.

Games under solid glass pavement
 I have stuck on my shoes. Shoes that go
 clicky clack, I can only walk in six inch stacks.

Stack me some wholesome babies screaming,
 Mommy mommy change me.

Change me into a mother, good lady,
 I've always wanted fifteen babies crying
 me out of career-runnings,
 imagine homeliness.

To hell with lady liberty holding books
 and fire, she's ready to light up something.

Something like spansks, and corsets
 setting skin into bone into skin
 into game, set, match.

Matches flaming glass, me screaming,
calm will be the aftermath of this culture burning.

Christina Mihalic

They Don't Fit, Mama

Shoes.

Souls.

Bulging nomads
With mullets
And denim overalls
At The Four Seasons.

Squeezing midgets
Not yet grown
Left handing the pledge of allegiance.

Halloween Harrys,
Halloween Belles.
Cheap is fifty bucks a pop these days.

There's no such thing in a cereal-for-dinner house,
You'll have to wear your brother's old costume this year, dear

What are you? –
Spidergirl in floods with a blue trash bag and a hole undiscovered till home.

First day of school in last year's shoes and a jumper.

They don't fit, Mama.

100% wool suit.
An R-rated sex scene at thirteen with your parents.
A professor bartering your passing grade with what your mama gave ya.

None of it fits.

Souls
Bulging,
Stretching,
Trapped.
Till death do us part.

Chloe Dibbin

La hermosa expresión

Adopt the complex sound,
of a tongue not native to your own.
One where the intricate articulation,
is practiced incessantly.
Until the elegance of foreign expression,
foreign style and conversation,
becomes effortless, comfortable.
Accept the universal emotion of love,
but embrace the beauty, the delicacy,
when expressed in a foreign tongue.
The simplicity of such a phrase as,
"I love you with all my heart,"
gains intricacy and allure as,
"Te amo con todo mi corazón."
Emerged into artistry of foreign language,
is nothing short of exquisite.

Kaitlin Gill



Handlebarred
Rebecca Ferlotti



Cleveland Fun Wall
Carson Parish

The Double Stroller

There it is, hidden, behind the blue and white lawn chairs
and the red thermos jug and Mikey's tattered football spikes.

Crouched in the corner of the garage like a scolded child
waiting to be forgiven. Faded grey and white stripes beckoning,

wisps of Similac and Gerber, well-worn tires and remnants
of my children's laughter waving at me.

It seems to have changed, somehow. Maybe it grew up since
our last visit; so much heavier and harder to open.

I tug at the handle and push on the lever,
the one that often gave me a hard time,

and with a thud, the limbs relax, revealing
two worn but sturdy seats.

Hurry, the truck is coming! He shouts with his coffee
escaping his mug. *I'm bringing it right now.*

I hesitate. Then push it to the end of the drive,
and on to a new family.

Charmae Cottom

Eva

On all of my birthdays, I was reminded that it was the anniversary of Hitler's suicide.

One classless year, my family threw a Hitler-themed birthday party for me – eleven years old. I even got a swastika on my homemade birthday cake (because what decorator would make that?) which I proceeded to chuck at my mom's face. This whole event caused me to truly question her intentions as a mother.

I was greeted with pink balloons every time I came home from the hospital because "girls are supposed to like pink," my mom said. Having my tonsils removed was okay because I got to eat ice cream a lot. And my broken leg healed pretty quickly. I hated going to the hospital though because they always stuck me with Dr. Baumgartner.

Aside from his stunning diploma from Harvard, Dr. Baumgartner didn't have much to offer the world. A nurse once told me he had a small penis which my thirteen-year-old self found to be hilarious.

I went to college. Princeton. Top of my class. I majored in Political Science, but ended up becoming a writer. My college years are blurry because I was on drugs for the majority of the time. I only remember one night clearly.

It was my twenty-first birthday party. My friends and I were hanging out at Lacy's, a cute little bar on the corner of Kale and Baker. I was sipping a complimentary ap-pletini when the men's bathroom attendant approached me and asked me to dance. The lights were dimmed; I shrugged and took his hand.

We sat down in the back room and he told me about his life. His grandpa taught Albert Einstein how to tie his shoes. And this man, who never formally introduced himself to me, explained to me that he had been questioning his sexuality for years, wasting condoms on women he barely knew. He didn't want me to be another one, so he abandoned me in the back room and drove away in his blue Dodge Kinsway.

I quit drugs after college. I aged slowly.

I found love some time in my forties, but it didn't last long and it ended in a messy divorce. Carlos was a lanky man who tripped over his own feet and couldn't deliver a pick-up line. He was too young for me anyways, so I let him pursue his life dream of being a singer and forgot about the sleepless nights where we would lay in bed and look up at the stars in our eternally roof-less home.

I ended up on the streets when I was fifty-one. I owned two things – a guitar and the clothes on my back. I could never sing well, but I made a little bit of pity money. No one wanted to have sex with a wrinkly, dirty, old woman so I couldn't sell myself. Well, I couldn't sell myself to anyone with a shred of dignity. But hope came in the form of an eighty-two year old man named Martin with an empty home and a full heart. So we got married.

Our marriage ended when Martin died a month later.

Since I had so much extra money, I figured I would move somewhere nice, so I ran away to California and settled in a house near Bolsa Chica Dog Beach. I started a business selling homemade dog treats to passers-by and quickly became the talk of the town.

My sixties were regrettable, so I chose to forget them a long time ago.

Everything changed on my seventieth birthday when I met Charlotte. We were instantly best friends and love blossomed from there. Charlotte lived a long life, but like many of my past loves, she died from a stroke soon after we met.

And I was alone again in a big house.

By this time, I was seventy-nine. I couldn't work. I didn't have much of a reason to live, so I took up knitting and rocking in a rocking chair. I knitted for three days straight until I realized I hadn't eaten anything and my dog was dead. My fingers trembled too much to write. My next-door neighbor brought me tuna noodle casserole and a Jell-o mold.

The next few years were dull. The beach was quiet at night after the dogs' barks faded into the cool sand. The water was chilly to the touch, but my feet adjusted quickly. It was dream-like – the temperature suddenly shifted from freezing to a radiating warmth. I think I screamed, but no one heard me. In the morning, an inner tube floated calmly in the ocean.

Rebecca Ferlotti

Pretty in Think

Seventeen™ magazines blanket the vanity and make clear,
The fictional aspirations of the girl in the mirror.

Her pink lipstick paints a plastic smile onto the canvas of a set of unhappy lips,
as her hair mists capture the hairstyle from page 76.

Clouds of thoughts and rainfalls of uncertainty were the weather of her every day.
But the rain began to fall as tears, her priorities were in disarray.

Red ink on homework meant that she needed to come back alive,
for her preserved heart lied within the sarcophagus of a woven spine.

In such a spine, were not glazed pages of commercialized glamour,
but were of prized ideas delivered by dignified authors.

Genuine satisfaction painted her lips,
as her spiral-bound notes captured the ideas discussed on page 76.

After sessions of looking back at herself in the mirror,
what she felt to be her true purpose became clearer.

She claimed her favorite color,
and it was no longer or ever was the color pink.

Her true color, her true motive was to be inspired to think.

Keva Mickey

Scenes from a Street in East Cleveland

On East 17th, a man plays a saxophone,
with an instrument case open for money.
A woman holds a torn piece of cardboard,
with a message that reads, "Help feed my children."
A dog hobbles with three legs,
in search of food scraps on the pavement.
A businessman in a gray suit grasps the handle of a briefcase,
as he hurries past each scene.

Kaitlin Gill



South Chagrin Reservation

Carson Parish

I'm a Walking Cliché

So, don't get me started.
I am as honest as the day is long
but, as luck would have it
I am at the end of the pecking order.

At the last minute,
In the eleventh hour,
with my back against the wall,
I will pull it out of my ass.

I may not be the belle of the ball
but, beauty is in the eye of the beholder
an although, occasionally, ass backwards
beauty is only skin deep.

Therefore, if I do not bite off more than I can chew,
and If I can avoid the bump in the road,
I will crack the code
and laugh all the way to the bank.

So, save the drama for your mama,
Save your breath
and say your prayers
because some day you will thank me for this.

Charmae Cottom



Untitled
Rayfield N. Benton III

I Love You

The shortest amount of time
it took me to say it to a girl
was about three days after
we'd started seeing each other.

I was after we'd watched *Beauty and the Beast*,
That I realized, that Belle hadn't known
That fucking Beast for that long
And if a woman like that could love a beast
Then I must have a pretty good shot.

When the words left my mouth
Her face began to contort
As if the phrase
Was like a knife I'd stuck in her and twisted.

I could say "Elves" to her,
But I wouldn't mean "Elves"
And nothing I said would mean anything to her.
Just silence and a long walk back home,
I'd never see her again.

In every case
I'd always been the first one to say
I love you
and never heard it back.

Robert Cormac Utrup

The Garage

The smell of spoiled milk and cheese
or dirty piles of laundry
that have been sitting for weeks.
You would think the garage
was a basement, but it was a place
to escape.

I think of my brother
after being whipped
by our father.
Loud music he played
that made the house shake
or his friends knocking
on the garage to get his attention.
Everything around him is crumbling
in his hands like - school,
his family, his girlfriend,
his life.

Sometimes, he ran to me for advice
but the garage was a place to break free.
I could hear his cries murmur
as the tears fell down his red plump cheeks
or the sound of roars
he made like a wolf hollowing.
I once caught him throwing
darts at the door
with pictures of our family as the target.

My father and I would take the trash outside to smell
weed which circulated through the muggy sky.
To my brother's body that remained still,
and the look on his face that was in denial.
his last words, "This garage is mine, get your own."

Jasmine Cammack



Isle Au Haut

Halle Novotney

Passionless Passion

He looks her way,
with a delicate yet erotic gaze,
that could only mean one thing.

They head to the bedroom,
and quickly dishevel the perfectly laid out Ralph Lauren comforter
she had prepared just for the occasion.

Time is far from wasted,
for in the next moment they are embracing one another,
bare skin fully exposed.
Their heavy rhythm slightly shakes the bed,
and her cries echo off of the walls.

He softly hushes her into silence,
only to hear the heavy breathing being produced
by the rhythmic movement of their bodies.

He picks up her hand,
and intertwines his fingers into hers,
as two become one with laced up fingers and sweaty palms.
The curves of her body fall perfectly into his,
like a puzzle piece being placed into its corresponding other.
He pulls her towards him once they've finished defining passion,
and lets out a long sigh into the darkness of the room.

Minutes later, he's out of bed,
dressed, and out the door,
leaving behind only a plastic wrapper and the scent of his aftershave.
His exit has left her in a dead silence, still bare skinned,
but now her cry is no longer pleasurable,
and no longer echoes off of the walls.

Rebecca Gilman

Extermination Night, 1974

“I remember what you wrote about me,
you lousy shit.”

I slipped my index finger between my choker collar
and the sweat christening my Adam’s apple.

The bathroom had become a fountain of waste,
spilling into the bar. It was the Cuyahoga river
and the oozing waters were ready to catch fire
and make the Clockwork Orange live up to its namesake.

“I remember what you wrote about me,
you lousy shit.”

The walls were covered in tin foil,
and the red mercury in the thermometer climbed past 105°.
It stretched the metal strings on Laughner’s guitar,
forcing it out of tune.

Blood was pouring steadily from Crocus’ nose
and it made a popping sound as he spit it into the mic.
The Behemoth had started a fight by acting queer,
and threads of blood spooled through seventy pairs of leather boots
jammed into the charred punk Mecca off Payne Ave.

Cheetah pointed at me again.
I gulped and discreetly shoved the bulge
in my skinny jeans further between my thighs.
“You’re from The Plain Dealer,
and I remember what you wrote about me,
you lousy shit.”

I heard glass shattering in my ear
and felt something warm flowing from the side of my head.
Maybe blood. Maybe beer.

“You said I’m shit when I’m on speed.
It makes my guitar sound incoherent.
Well, tonight you’re in for a fucking show.”

He began to strum,
and the whole room fell silent,
under the spell of amphetamine.

Carson Parish

Mom’s Jealousy of Dad’s Mistress

You shared the salami sandwich with her,
I glared at the scene.

You delicately tore the toasted crust
her favorite part, just the way she likes it.
Then reserved a corner of the meat
for her consumption.

You never shared your salami sandwich with me.

After your intimate meal,
you snuggled on the couch.
She wriggled under your arm,
even placing her head on your lap.

I overheard you calling her a good girl.

That night, I decided to lock her out of the bedroom.
But she began scratching at the door,
and you asked for her to be let in.

We slept with her furry body
squeezed between us.

Danielle Pannella

Heart Like A Sky

His eyes were blue like the color of the sky.
Looking at me, head turned to one side,
those eyes silently prying open my heart.
Attempting to see what makes the blood
course through the blue veins
making my very organ pump so hard.

The stare he is giving me pierces my mind so hard
I feel as though we're playing crack the sky
and the clouds are replaced with my thinning veins.
And not even the angels can take my side
as the color changes from blue to crimson blood.
Soon all the world is exposed to my heart.

The birds are flying straight for it; my heart
and they seem to speed up as if to work just as hard
as I am. As they come closer I can hear them choking on blood
and suddenly I am aware of the strangling my heart has on the sky.
I want to tell the green winged creatures to return to the other side
with their beautiful feathers and eyes blue as my veins.

But then they begin to take pleasure in their pecking at my veins
and they are screeching and squawking as they eat out my heart.
Their just as evil as their creator intended them to be on this side
of life. They will not cease until their hard
work has chased my battered, holed life out of the sky,
and rain droplets soon fall like blood.

And those below me open their mouths and bathe in my blood.
Because my past has caused so much pain, they explode; my veins
retracting, slithering, sliding slowly back across the sky
back to where they belong, my once beating heart.
The heart that is working over time, extracting hard
efforts to keep life on my side.

And I've no choice but to abide, return my focus to the side
of my heart that matters most; the flowing of blood
is most important now. Causing me to fight back, hard
against the marble stare, ice cold blue like my veins
once were. Now the blood is warmed by the heart
and as life breathes into me the blue returns to my sky.

Samantha Rump

Jesus in Starbuck's

He looked like he needed a few cake pops,
a \$5 mini sandwich or two to fatten him up.
His feet barely filled his sandals
and his tan coat's sleeves were frayed.

He turned his loose change into coffee.
Hail Mary, full of grandes!

I chuckled as I made my way to the counter,
parting a black sea of indie rockers
and college graduates
that got stuck working at Wal-Mart next door.

Don't mind me, I'm just a virgin coffee drinker.
Maybe I'll give birth to a sugar cube
and name him Matthew.
How about some immaculate contraception?

He removed his robe
and, clad in a cloth diaper,
ascended to the spot just above the restrooms sign
to hang out.

Rebecca Ferlotti



Faded Skins
J.P. Calubaquib

Yellow: The Color of Ambivalence

I wake up knowing it's going to be
 one of those indecisive yellow days
 where the sun won't choose whether to smile or frown
 toast goes into the toaster upside down
 the light unbleeds like egg yolk in the sky
 to where the horizon starts is fuzzy
 in their nests, birds are droning, bees chirping
 my whisper is a throaty feral growl
 anger implodes in a deafening silence
 tears of rain are inhaled back up into clouds
 and tiers of mountains fall down as quickly as they rise
 I had missed you while you were still present here
 but now, I know that I cannot afford
 to care about what you do or don't do anymore

Bailey Powell



Dad's Boots
Katya Caravella

from somewhere else they're not *real*?" Clearly You doesn't get this.

"Me, you, everyone, everything. I mean *life*. What if everything we do is part of some gigantic imaginative plot, so we don't actually have any real thoughts of our own? What we think of as our choices are actually manipulated by someone's thoughts."

"You mean me and you? That'd mean we're not real." You responds.

"What if we're all part of someone's imagination?" I inquires.

Suddenly I is born and sees You following close behind.

Samantha Syracuse

Palindrome

You squirms around. I stares into You's face. You stares into I's eyes. I and You.

You and I. The imagination starts, then stops. Neurons fire, then fizzle out.

This is how it feels to skydive in Heaven.

Silence.

"What?"

"No, I'm not. I'm gone." I feels life seeping out of her.

"I can still see you, I" You says unsympathetically. "You're still here."

"I'm going." This time I isn't kidding. She hides her face and covers her eyes.

"Wait . . . I didn't mean to upset you, I. I'll try to come up with an answer. Maybe it's that we're too controlled by the government, so we can't think about ourselves in concrete terms. Should we both leave?" Oh You. You is back at square one.

"You know, maybe I will," I lies. "I'm leaving you." I loves being melodramatic.

"I don't know. Why don't you use your imagination to crawl along one of those neurons you like so much? You might meet someone along the way who has an answer to your asinine problem." You begins to understand.

"What else is there to think about?"

"That's too much to think about," You burbles. "I don't get why you're thinking about this."

"No, not God. If it was God's mind that'd be too easy. It couldn't be Him because we already *know* about him and he'd have made us forget about Him for guessing that we're manipulated by His imagination, you know, You? I mean, what if we're figments of something else's brain cells firing and we only exist in the spaces of synaptic clefts between neurons. And when people meet, it's because we've crossed to another synapse and run into each other!" I gets really fired up about this.

"Like God's mind is controlling us? And who's to say that even if our thoughts come

Ode to A Black Macbook

Six years you kept me afloat
along my rapid river of studies
and well into the dark dry nights
and dew-drenched mornings,
skimming the waves of the Internet.
The light blooming forth
from that shiny white Apple
like a night light to a child
with a fear of the Bogeyman.

You drink my eyes dry,
inhale dust like an addiction.
With arteries clogged,
and an ever-growing fever
you fail, and you fail me
as you overheat, torch my research,
a week's worth of writing zapped in a flash.
I am left with my own fury,
a reflection in your face.

Now you are hollow underneath,
your battery bulging like the stomach of
a beer-gutted food fanatic
after claiming gold at the
World Championship Hotdog-Eating Contest.
Well past your prime, you are
a crippled old man, beard extending
down to your knees, wrapping
and wrapping and wrapping around into
a cocoon, a loaf of grey carpet
that also helps prevent scratches on
your fragile matte skin.

Now you are like a man on a deathbed,
or rather a death shelf, shackled
to an IV drip of electricity,
refusing to depart even in old age.
You have stayed on a dusty desk, on or asleep
but never powered off, for six years and
my fears have come true, old friend;
a backpack five pounds lighter,
my heart a full hard drive,
heavy, bogged down
with no chance of repair.