

The background of the cover is a solid black field. It is overlaid with several large, intricate, white scribbled patterns. These patterns consist of dense, overlapping lines and loops, resembling abstract calligraphy or gestural drawing. One large scribble is on the left side, another is in the center, and a third, more vertical one is on the right side. The overall effect is one of dynamic, organic movement.

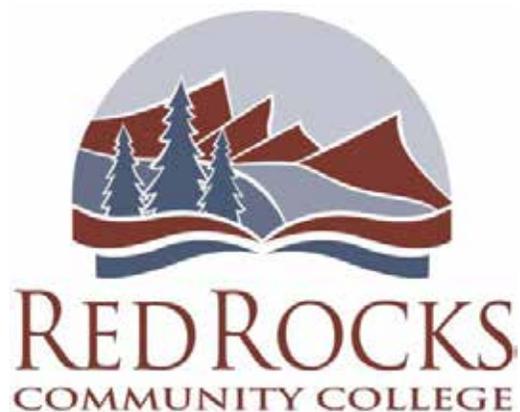
Obscura

RRCC's Literary & Art Magazine

Tenth Edition

Obscura

Red Rocks Community College's Literary & Art Magazine



Editor & Chief:

Amy Braziller

“We tell ourselves stories in order to live,”-Joan Didion

Paul Gallagher

“Wearing down 7 no. 2 pencils is a good day’s work” -Hemingway

Editors:

Lacey Sharp - Poetry

“I’m a slave to hope and whimsy.”

Jerianne Fulton - Art

Emily Crawford - Nonfiction

“You’ll never know unless you try.”

Lauren A. Smith - Fiction

“A person is but the sum of their stories.”

Layout & Design:

Marlyce Arguello

“Your writing is your child...My writing is my unruly teenager.”

Hayley Hubanks

“In order to be heard, sometimes, you must write it down.”

Communications:

Edward Baliseteri

“Fly fool.”

Marcie Jacobs

“It is better to travel well than to arrive.”-Buddah

Marketing:

Kevin Lee

“Determined mind leads to success. Determination starts from inspiration.”

Consulting Editor:

Samuel Gilliland

“Im so 3008 you’re so 2000 and late.”-Fergie

In 2004, from the shadowy recesses of the coffee-shop corners emerged the fledgling literary magazine *Obscura*. It began as a club shepherded by the English faculty members Amy Braziller and Paul Gallagher. By 2008, it was standing on its own with spine erect, as an official class. Since then, *Obscura* has grown into a staple of Red Rocks Community College's creative community. *Obscura* is one of the only student-run literary and art magazines in the country that is published by a community college. It is not only fully staffed by students, but all contributions come from the student body.

As a competitive magazine, *Obscura's* staff is charged with the responsibility of carefully evaluating each piece on a number of levels, from the technical to the emotional. Overall quality is valued over individual merits. This year, our staff of ten has carefully culled the copious number of submissions for the best RRCC's creative community has to offer. We hope that you enjoy the selections in our 2013 issue of *Obscura*, maybe even enough to submit some of your own next year.

Submission Parameters:

Contributors must be Red Rocks Community College students at the time of submission. Each student may submit up to a total of three pieces. All work must be submitted to rccobscura@gmail.com and contributors are encouraged to frequently check their e-mails after submitting.

Fiction/Nonfiction

Up to 5,000 words
Word doc or docx format

Poetry

Up to 2 pages in length
Word doc or docx format

Art

All forms of visual art are accepted
Includes: 3D art, jewelry, woodworking, sculpting, etc. (so long as a high quality picture is taken)
PDF format

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Poetry

Save Me- *Saxon Steward*

Shaky hands

Relentlessly

Tighten

Violently displaced,
Awakened to sorrow.
Weary knees bend,
Silence.

The sight of a grave.

Decaying leaves slowly soar,
Drifting, with effervescent color.
A conflagration, orange and yellows,
Brilliant flourishes of radiant reds,

Burning

Hope,

Snow shrieks, screaming.
Streaking through the sky
Bone numbing chill, frozen
Solace, a familiar embrace

Remembered,

Shattered, worthless.

Drowning in dreary dreams
Weary screaming,
It seems,
unreal...

Frustration rips curtains,
Crumpled paper covers
Carpet, completely hidden.
Tainted words, unforgiven.

Behind the charades
Decadence cascades,
Staining bone deep,
Painting,

Portraits of self-destruction

A smokey haze envelops
Burning eyes, watery red.
Midnight. Addiction knocks,
Devouring empty promises.

Maleficent, frozen winds
Whip through pages,
Stinging searching eyes,
As silent prayers die,

Distantly echoing.

Screaming, hands on head,
Violent convulsions, crawl.
Silently calling, forsaken.
A candle coldly snuffed.

Shattered glass,
Shaking hands struggles,
As shards malevolently mock.

Embedding deeply.
Despondently searching

Bleeding fingers
Tighten into fists,
Flying, lost in fury,
Knuckles breaking.

Screaming things,
repetitious, chaotic,

Lost all meaning.

Sleeping, drifting,
Like cooling water,
Solace soothing,
A cracking throat.

Eyes open.
A new day.
Lead limbs,
Resisting.

Disconnecting...

A ripped, frost coated leaf,
Caught in shrieking blizzards.
Screaming prayers unheard,
Pleading for vindication.

Bending,
Never breaking.
Barely,
Holding on.

A single leaf, slowly falls.

Fighting, alone.

Shimmering, ardent reflections,

Effervescently whispering,
Through bloodshot eyes,

Save me.

Moving On- *Ben Thomson*

Here I am again,
hesitantly chalking my hands
still sheltered beneath the overhang of the mountain.

Shrieking above,
wind buffets the face in great gusts,
determined to tear down rocks that don't belong.

Chill air grows crisp,
shadowed by the peak of the mountain, glimmering light above
is my only hope, for the kiss of Warmth's salvation.

Many times, people have attempted this climb
but only few, have seen its end.
They say it is about the climb, not the summit.

Yet it is hard to forget the last fall
when the only lifeline is cold rope,
and hard rock, in shade far below.

My hand pulls away from its resting place on the stone,
cold and smooth like Marble.
What will be left of my identity, left in chalk, outlined in white.
This time I take off my harness and lay down my rope.
No longer do I wish to keep anchored so I may try again.
And I know this time,
 if I slip and can't hold on, no one will be there to catch me.

Our Spirit, Our Vessel - *Jess Kurtz*

Is it past or future loss that deteriorates the heart?
Leaves our vessel in ruins, left to rebuild from the start?
In ambush wait, past mistakes will breach the hull.
Leave us beached, bashed, and bait for shadowing gulls.

A tide that gnaws at the cliff leaving nothing, nowhere left
For the severed self to hide, save for the cave that it cleft.
A sanctuary for when Fear grips us, and to our failures he drags,
With malicious intent his winds blow, to cast us from Hope's crag.

He'll taunt and he'll smirk. Find mirth in our sorrow,
As we struggle and we flounder, drown our tomorrow.
Rancid, Fear's waters corrode innocence with the land.
Valor's a mere solute. Hearts burst within the pressure of his hand.

Virtue consigned to oblivion, with all those whose own hearts ruptured.
Though, how vigorous are the waves? The anchor, trepidation structured.
Too freely we allow him to tailor, disguise, false-face our imagination.
What's a coward suited in the finest armor when failure's stained in the fabrication?

Stay calm, stay superior.
Panic, and sink with the inferior.
Ascend the sails. Collect your poise. The body's a harbor.
Our spirit, our vessel. Faith and heart compose the conductor.

These waves, Fear, deceitful and vile, led the masked mind to alter.
But if audacious the prow, and virtuous the seeker, ardent hearts shall not falter.
And never need implore, for one breath more, submerged in murky waters.

How I Once Paid the Moon- *Samuel Gilliland*

A golden ball set, upon the dawn
Of coat-tailed cloth
And haughty princesses
The fruitions of a mirror
And stumbling nightmares

Amidst the sea of platinum perfume
Ahab spotted a missing limb
A hateful glee
A pleasant rage
Complemented by white,
An unrelenting stare

Oblivious

The melody set at a turtle's crawl
Courage kindled, once an isolated ember
Strained questions smoked in the breeze
Worry bedded the ashes
While silhouettes sang to the lonely

The night melted, a slow call
To the unrelenting dreamers
To the time-killing young
To the terrified and haunted

Teeth illuminate the fading moon
While mountains lay like oceans
And darkness creeps,
Skittering legs dance upon taillights

Summer- *Isa*

Without purpose was my length.
Observing the clarity of a foreign sky.
Fearless, foreign waters. Far from fearful eyes.
So it came. Emerging from an innocent fairytale-like expectance of a flame...
it didn't matter how bright. I needed light.
The countdown of emotions. A backwards explosion.
A time bomb of bad timing.
It was BRILLIANT! Real? It was for me.
God, you are strong. This. Clearly stupid, destructively wrong.
Had my clothes neatly folded elsewhere.
And he burst them at the seams.
I held to this seed, the last possible piece of a mutilated heart.
Hope.

Nurtured by your freedom. Strengthened with your light.
Foreign twisted eyebrows. This is my life.
My breath pulsing in my hands. I can feel.

I was sleeping in the air. Anxiety filled my hair. A tear for the road.
Back to my reality and over taken with
memories of submersion for my first time... and so on.
A shower of ifs, like kamikazes from God.
Salt resonating in my skin; I taste and smell it. Your skin packed under these nails.
I put the images in that place between my skin and my soul...
I'll forever save it through the weather.
So was it Real? Was it Summer?
I hope I never know.

Cold Fall Rain.- *Kevin Peterson*

I smell the rain coming down

on the cars
on the trees
on the streets

Everything looks wet
And dark

This could be from my vision
blurred from the water
running down my head
as if tears,
but no
the tears will come later,

maybe

but perhaps they won't

The rain tastes heavy

Dirty.

Not a clean-warm summer shower,
cold fall rain

It's dark

I can't see you anymore,
perhaps I should go back inside

but
instead, I stay longer
letting the rain soak into me further

because you might decide to come back.

Potato Soup- *Bolingbroke*

If the universe gave of her tender bosom, the sweet milk of light and life,
And if the Earth from its dark moist loam distilled its wholesome essence,
And if they should take fellowship and prepare from these sublime things bread for
 Their children,
 If they seasoned it with love and peace and strength,
 If they brought it before The Father to be Hallowed,
 The Son to be Sanctified,
 The Spirit to be Quickened,
 And if it was brought before the Human Nation,
 And if they, smelling the sweetness of it, became free of care,
 And if they wept for the joy of it
And if upon tasting it, all the ills of the world became as nothing and there was Always only
 goodness and courage and honor,
 It would be my wife's potato soup.

And I pity you, you men who came before me, (and I know who you are).
 You who upon seeing this pearl, this pure gold, this precious jewel,
you who upon seeing her, walked past, or perhaps trod upon her for a bit only to cast her away after
 you had your fun, or even approached cautiously wondering if you should perhaps place this
 beautiful thing in your breast pocket, but fearful recanted and walked away from her.

You should have done as I did.

I saw her shining in the dirty road, I looked askance for another who might challenge me for her
 that I might waylay him quickly and unawares. I dove then for the precious beauty and upon
snatching her up strode with speed to the wall and, putting my back to it, bared my teeth and drew
my hardest, bitterest weapon, ready to take blood, life and limb for her attention to be solely mine.

If you had done this, this trifling symbol of your affections, these petty impartations
 of her vast worth...

You would have had a taste of her potato soup. Maybe even on a cool wet mountain
 evening.

I love you Beth. Thank you for dinner!

Angel

Simple Everyday Words - *Lacey Sharp*

Wait, come here,
I need to tell you how
I'm tired of being chased by words,
By the everyday words
that pierce this soft shell I call
Confidence.
But seriously, go away.
The words you spill and
my words
Chase
me as well.

Simple.
Everyday.
Words.

Words that make my soul
that take my soul around the world
that drip so sweetly off everyone's tongue
In every language.
Shut up.
They hurt.

I don't know why.
You call me shy, but it's not that;
I love to sew pictures,
take ideas somewhere,
stir them with the wind,
and
Let.
Them.
Loose.

So why do they hurt me?
The very fabric of my being
frays
like the end of a red ribbon
that was cut too short anyway.

Simple everyday words.
I like to take them in,
ingest them through my
entire being.
But they bite.
Ever so slightly, gnaw
at my aorta and
right ventricle,
as they pass through my blood stream
like acid.

Please come here.
Explain why
these beautiful everyday words
that swirl around our lives,
kill me.

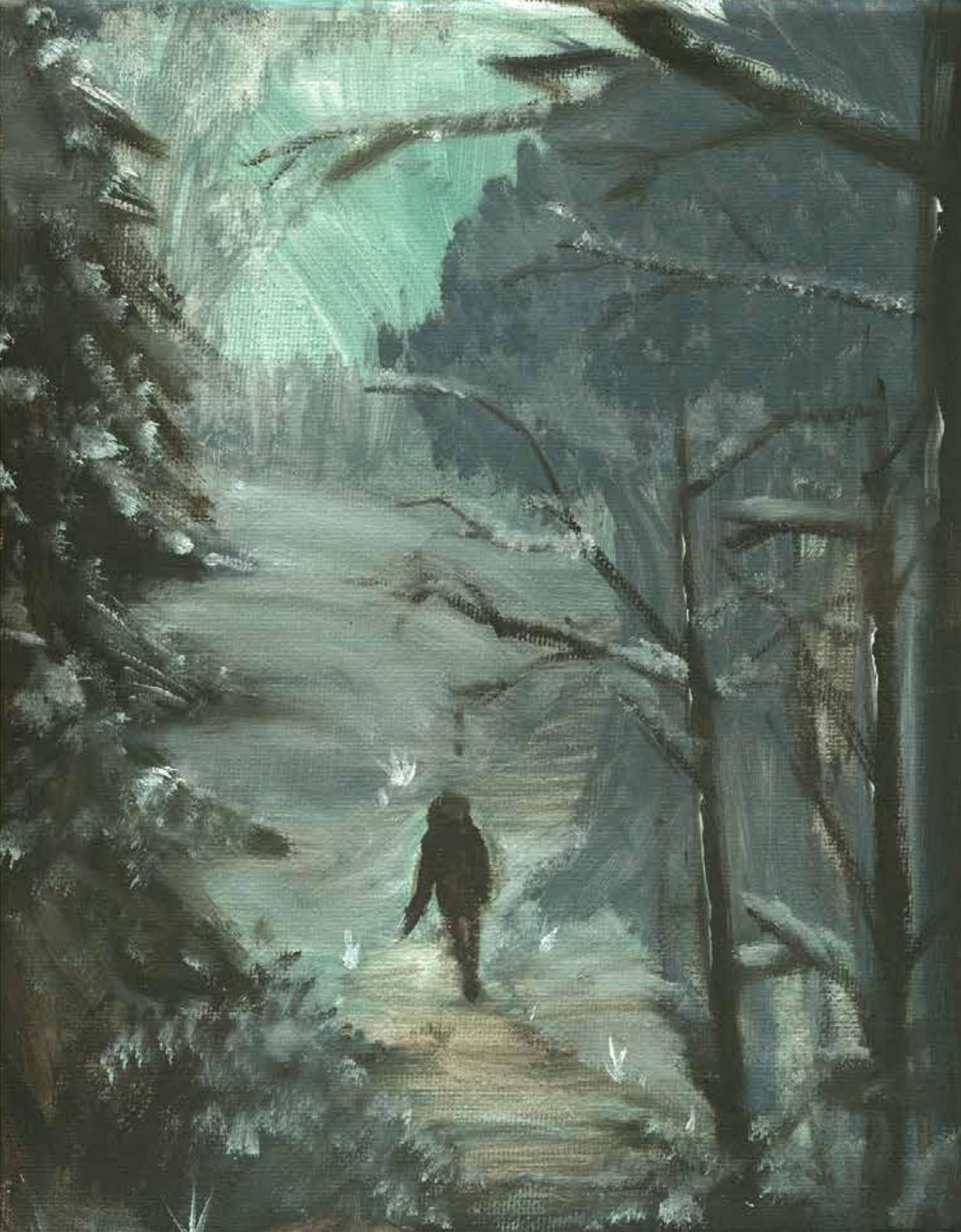
The Writer's Nightmare: Writing Out of Reach - *Sabrina Hallbery*

Is a writer's biggest nightmare that their creations may come to life? That you see the idea form and watch it hatch, then sprout wings and fly around the room above, taunting you with all of the ideas you'll never have. Chasing your mind from room to room, trying to remember where you left the damn cage. Would it be so bad that if once it landed on your shoulder, and began to whisper all of the failures you would never get the chance to regret, that you would begin to believe there may be a piece of truth among all of those lifeless words? You'll forever be stuck in some small room, writing about some imaginary bird that drools over your freshly printed papers and shits on your nice furniture. It's not about the ideas that are there. It's about the ideas that will never be there. If you were to walk out in the middle of a crowded sidewalk, just in front of a beautiful café's window and drop trou, it would be less humiliating than this metaphorical bird now molded into your shoulder bone. The nails have begun to curl around themselves and you're lost at a blank page, listening to all of the characters you'll never meet or the places you'll never take them. The useless plot lines that will never be yours and the endings you'll never know. This is the place you call home, seated among piling pages of wordless masterpieces. And the screen stares back at you, almost mocking even the idea of mocking it back. So you sit, head bowed, and listen to that stupid bird instead.

An abstract black and white artwork featuring a central, dark, swirling, organic form that resembles a stylized figure or a complex knot. This central element is surrounded by various brushstrokes and splatters of black ink on a white background. The splatters are scattered across the page, with some larger, more dense clusters and others smaller and more delicate. The overall composition is dynamic and expressive, with a strong contrast between the dark ink and the white space.

Art

Winter Walk- *Emily Crawford*



Pastel Landscape 2012- *Abbie Landcaster*



Bradford Perely House- *Michael Lang*



Sepia Cells- *Jon Watts*



Electric Sunflower- *Bri Nelson*



Eclipse- *Gary Begordis*



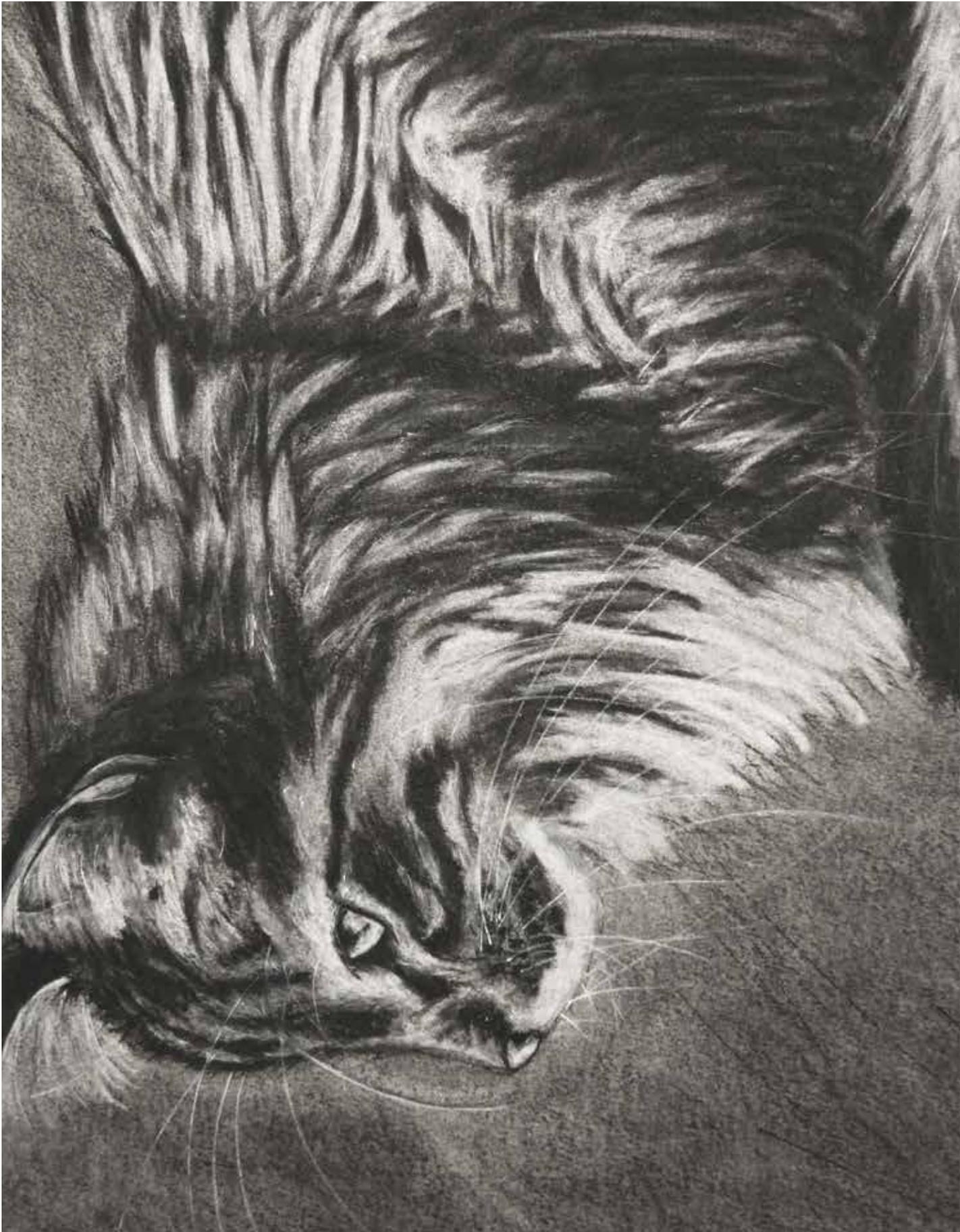
This Is A Duck- *Jon Watts*



The Black and White Lion- *Bri Nelson*



Holly- *Joelle Waguespack*





Undead- *Jerianne Fulton*



The background is a high-contrast, abstract composition of black ink on a white surface. It features several large, expressive brushstrokes and splatters. In the top left, there's a dense, textured area of dark ink. A diagonal band of lighter, more fluid brushwork runs from the middle left towards the center. In the bottom left, there's a large, dark, irregular shape. The bottom right corner is dominated by a complex, swirling pattern of thick black lines. The word "Fiction" is printed in a clean, grey, serif font, positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image.

Fiction

Lights.-*Joelle Waguespack*

It had been twenty-four hours since he could think. Rotting trash molded beneath a pile of leaves was the last thing he remembered. The torpid scent of rot mingled with morning light tickled his eyelashes; he groaned and opened his eyes. The sky was bright, but cloudy. There was no trace of what had happened the night before but for the wavering colors still painted on the back of his eyelids.

He slowly pushed himself to his feet and staggered through the rusting leaves, trying to find the road. A blue glint beckoned him through the trees—his ancient Jalopy, caressed by a muddy ditch. He looked up and down the road, hoping to see a sign of civilization, though he'd searched last night in vain; but just past the bend there sat a shiny new diner.

The bell squeaked in time with the swinging of the door; he shoved his way through the rush of new smells toward a stool. There was no one else there but him, and he closed his eyes for a moment. "You all right, hon? Look like you've seen an alien."

He looked up abruptly; a slim waitress stared back him, unashamed curiosity on her face. He frowned. "Why not a ghost?"

She shrugged and slapped a menu onto the counter. "We don't get many of them around here." She disappeared into the sizzling kitchen, leaving him alone for a moment. A high whistle pierced through the kitchen door, an odd tune that frightened him. He closed his eyes again to calm the storm within his head, trying to remember what had happened last night. He'd been driving, and... that tune... it was familiar... The clatter of plastic against counter forced him from his reverie; the waitress was back. "So..." she looked at him appraisingly, "...Watcha here for?"

His brow furrowed darkly as he observed the glass of water and small slice of pie she had placed in front of him. "Dunno. Needed to get away."

"From what?" She snapped her gum; he jumped.

"The sameness of it all." He stared at his fork, as if wondering what it was for. "Too much sameness. No change. Stuck in a loop."

She stared at the fork too, their reflections distorted in the bright tines. "Gotta job?"

"Computers." He stopped; he hadn't gone on a long drive to mull over what he had wanted to take a break from.

"What about computers?"

"Anything."

"Tell me about it," she said.

So he did. He told her what he loved about computers; what he hated. He told her that computers were sometimes better than any person; they listened to everything he said, they never talked back, they never gave advice. He told her what he wanted to do, which was a lot; he told her what he had done, which was little. He told her how everything was the same, every day, every night, every week. And then he looked up again; she was listening with rapt attention. "You listened."

She nodded, snapping her gum; he didn't jump this time. "Waitresses listen, hon. Part of the job description."

"Do you want to know a secret?" She blinked curiously; the gum snapped.

"I think I saw a ghost last night." He studied the fork, wondering why he couldn't stop talking. "There was a lot of rain. I ran into a ditch. Then there was lightning, but it wasn't lightning; it was all these round, fuzzy, colored lights, bouncing around in the rain."

"A natural phenomenon." She walked to the coffee machine and poured a mug, then came back.

He shook his head. "No. Unnatural. Definitely." He watched the steam curl upward from her coffee, spinning itself into a weave above the mug. "There was music. Whistling—the lights were whistling. Some creepy, wandering melody."

“Like this?” She puckered her lips. He jumped, knocking the fork and the crust of his pie to the shiny floor, and she stopped whistling to laugh.

“Like that,” he said.

She smiled strangely. “Ghosts. They like to sing.” Then she nodded toward the window; there was a blue flash in the corner of the glass. “Need a tow truck?”

He shook his head; she winked at him. “Seems like you do know what you came here for.” At his curious look, she went on: “Something to break the sameness. Like ghosts.”

He blinked slowly and took another sip of water before standing to leave. “I suppose it was ghosts, then.”

“Or aliens,” she said.

He smiled, pausing mid-step. “Or aliens.”

He pushed open the door, the bell squeaking, and walked to his old blue Jalopy. He stared at it for a moment, then opened the door and slid into the driver’s seat. The engine started after three tries, spitting out a rusty cough. It took three more tries to drive out of the ditch and onto the road; the old automobile shuddered as it climbed onto the weathered asphalt.

He took a deep breath, waiting for a moment, then drove on in the direction of town, past the spot where the diner sat.

The diner wasn’t there.

iKnow- *Donny Davidson*

I remember gripping the metal bars of that waiting room chair, where the masses sat radiating appropriate levels of fear in anticipation of innovation. They stared longingly at the glaring screens of their hand-held devices, almost as if they were saying goodbye. We all knew we were there for the same procedure, “Internet Implantation (i.i),” Google’s newest invention. No longer would we sit aimlessly and unproductively at our computers; with instant access to the Internet, at a single thought or verbal command, we could be as efficient and effective as possible. “Imagine the possibilities,” they said.

I will tell you what I did not imagine: I never imagined I would be sitting here, in this cold and vacant library, with my nose held up to the spine of a tattered book, taking in the smells of ink, paper, and the distant memory of people who wondered. Please, do not misunderstand; there have been countless accomplishments over these last 10 years. However, there are conflicting debates circulating the realm of scholars of the benefits and costs of the i.i era. Tonight, I have nostalgically chosen to write in pen and paper in this lonely library in reflection of the good, the bad, and the ugly of today’s digital world.

The Good

For so long we held to the idea of artificial intelligence (A.I.), a Jetsonian-like robotic future. But we out-did ourselves, surpassing machines and lifting men to new heights. We replaced portions of our mind with A.I. technology, allowing our mind to access the Internet much like our ancient computer systems. This, researchers said, enabled us to use other parts of our brains differently maximizing our mental capacity and ability. Most were convinced that this was the necessary step towards the ultimate technological advancement with neither time nor knowledge being barriers to our human progression.

Just yesterday morning I woke up to the 7:00AM CNN news flash behind closed eyelids, as programmed the night before, waking me from my moments of stillness. The report informed that additional findings have led to further curative methods in the cancer epidemics that had been progressively sweeping the nation since the early twentieth century. It is now 2030, and I have no fear of suffering from Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, or cancer.

Our once declining climate had reached a crisis point, and now we have reached a place of homeostasis among our earth and its habitants. Shortly after i.i, sustainability advocates initiated massive movement towards awareness and action through mental mapping, an i.i feature that connects like interests and ideas should you choose to participate. It is widely believed that this type of collective and easy access of pooled knowledge is the cause of such rapid advancements in the environmental, science, and medical fields. It is the gatherings of global minds that have allowed for brilliant solutions to our most frequent and draining dilemmas.

Aside from the ability to connect with ideas and information is the efficiency of our new mental condition. We sit in our vehicles, stand in our showers, and lay in our beds while simultaneously sending and receiving data that serves our deepest motivations, desires, and interests. True, it was an adjustment at first, but after time one learns to manage and sift through this constant flow of information.

Three decades ago, when Google first launched their self-driving vehicles and Google Glasses, we were shocked that the future had arrived. Many questioned the practicalities and need for such products. Many of these questions stemmed from the fear of what else innovation might bring. A few have chosen to remain free from i.i; we call them the “Wonderers.” They rebel against technology as if we’re trying to replace human will and spirit rather than enhance it. Yes, I sit here with my criticisms, which will soon be made apparent, but the outcomes of our progression are undeniable.

The Bad

I become nostalgic when reminiscing on the moments of curiosity I once had, when I asked friends, families, and mentors questions about life or academics. We rarely have time to communicate. People are generally working quietly on their own ambitions, connecting through social media after a directive thought. I remember the awkward moments I experienced as a child when my mother would lean over and talk to the stranger about her day as we waited for the cashier to scan our products. Today, we are oblivious of one another, consumed with our own agendas leaving little time for anything else. Curious that the very thing we aimed to do was to connect, yet it has been years since I have experienced a friendly glance or moment of human connection.

I overheard a neighbor scolding her son as he stared into the distance, no doubt drowning out her voice with tunes. Her anger was palpable, she directed him to get inside and start his homework, highlighting that homework downloads are prohibited. The problem with our students is grave. Dropout rates have almost tripled in size since 2012 and parents are at a loss. How does a parent emphasize education when all information is accessible at the blink of an eye? I try hard to imagine an adolescent experience where information is at my fingertips and the role of adults shifted from educators and guardians to obstacles in my access to information and fun.

I have speculated that many of these dropped-out, digitally-driven youth are then forced into very limited career choices; the choice between the path of good and evil computer programmers. Good being those who seek to improve innovative applications of the Internet or the evil who wish to hack and enter into malicious doings. The hackers hide in the shadows looking for weaknesses in programming and hijack the hard work of others just to fill their depleted sense of self-worth. They prove nothing other than inability to respect the time and space of others. They waste their own intelligence to provoke irritation, knowing they could otherwise use their knowledge of the Internet for much more productive purposes.

The Ugly

Are we addicts, addicted to information and instant gratification? Back in 2012, I remember there being talks about “Internet Addictions” being added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. I have often contemplated having the procedure removed, but I have seen what that looks like. Joe, an ex-coworker had it removed and now he paces back and forth anxiously mumbling to himself as if he is tweaking, searching for that hit of endless information. He now talks of government conspiracies and that this i.i move was a way for the government to tap into our brains and have the ultimate surveillance system. “They know your every move, every thought,” he says.

Divorce is bad these days. Constance, my wife, is gone. She met some man on a virtual dating space. Divorce proceedings have not been finalized, but I predict that is only days away. Divorce rates seem to have stayed the same, but studies are reflecting that this is because less people are entering into marriages. Most of the men who attend my online-support group place the blame on their Internet and porn addiction. I would be remiss not to add this in my analysis of our current digital dilemma. The pornography is a plague; a multi-trillion dollar industry that feeds off the lust and longings of men and women and cares nothing for the decay of true intimacy. The virtual girlfriends, dates, and escapes this provides are alluring and many fall victim to these temptations.

I don't know. What if Joe is right and this i.i movement is marketed in ways to hide the government's true intentions of invading privacy and utilizing a new means of social control? Crime statistics have decreased and streets seem quiet these days. But I cannot help but wonder how the government and military are using i.i. White-collar crimes continue to increase, however.

The Reward

My hand grows tired, muscles stiff from the intensity with which I grasp this pen. For days I will have my writer's souvenir – this bump, a reminder of what it feels like to sit with my thoughts, the intimate connection between mind and hand.

I hope that we continue to unlock the potential of great minds. I hope that we continue to break down the barriers of progress for human kind. And that the vast amount of resources available continues to provide ways for even more people to surpass the minds of our predecessors.

Alas, I am done. I must be going home now to my dog, Faulkner, who thankfully sits unscathed by our technological world. I will leave this paper here, on this neglected desk in hopes that another wonderer at heart will find and enjoy these ramblings of nothing... and everything.

An Ocean of Silver- *Trey Tafoya*

A respirator hisses. Inches below, a lagoon of frigid bed sheets offers no warmth to the tattered, grey body that lies motionless beneath it. Drifting in and out of consciousness, an elderly man sinks deeper and deeper into a ragged hospital mattress, with not a single being by his side. He is lonely. He has no close family or loved ones. He is a mere skeleton of the gentleman he once was, bathing in a clouded sea of fragmented memories. He is nearing his expiration.

As the crisp leaves of autumn scamper by, the man's glazed eyes roll to his left, where warm October hues dance outside his window. The man's deteriorating brain does not allow him to perceive these lively colors, therefore he cannot fully enjoy their presence.

He sluggishly becomes aware of the faint aroma of butternut squash soup. Although this sensation is also dampened by the dusty caverns inside his skull, it provides just enough mental activity for him to notice the hazy silhouette of a benevolent nurse that must have placed the bowl of yellow liquid on his table tray.

Moments later, she vanishes. The man wishes he had the strength to smile, and he wishes that the woman had stayed longer in the room to care for him.

Click. Hiss. Click. Hiss. The man stares at the clumpy pastel ceiling. Minutes pass, and he realizes he has forgotten about his supper. With all the strength he can gather, he succeeds in lifting his spoon and swallowing a mouthful of the sweet, warm stew.

It is at this moment that he recalls a misty day many years ago.

His bicycle rattles against the concrete as he tosses it down. A thin coating of rain speckles the cellophane wrap of the brand new vinyl he has just purchased for his lover. He climbs the stone steps to her tiny home, which is a patchy turquoise hue reminiscent of liquefied pistachio ice cream.

He taps at the front door in a most clever and rhythmic way, and waits patiently. He stares out at the foamy sea as the misty air whirls all around him. Seconds later, the soft outline of a blushing face appears in the circular stained glass window. Two fiery spreads of eyelashes flap about on the opposite side like twin butterflies. Centered just below them is a petite set of lips coated with a sedative shade of lavender.

The door cracks away from its snug pane, and a tranquilizing gust of warm air embraces the man, bringing with it the wonderful aroma of butternut squash soup; this dish has always been his favorite. He lifts his head and cannot believe the stunning sight he sees – in the door's frame he beholds a gorgeous, slender woman.

She has on a silky tangerine sundress that glows beneath the fluorescent yellow lamp embedded in the ceiling. The man is invited indoors, where he slides off his loafers and drapes his jean jacket across the leather couch at his right. As she leads him into the sitting room, their naked feet are sticky against the dark wooden floorboards. They tip-toe around the center table and plop down right in front of the smoky metal stove. All the while, the man hides the new record beneath his flannel shirt.

As the man loosens his striped indigo necktie, he tells the woman that he has a special surprise. She is told to sit still and ordered not to speak. Joyfully cooperating, she grins and chuckles as the man wraps his tie gently around her eyes. She listens carefully to the soft footsteps of the man as he approaches the record player nestled in the cabinet to her right. After she hears the plastic dome of the turntable squeak open, the machine's needle falls onto the fresh vinyl with a quiet tap, followed by a few seconds of static and crackle.

To the woman's delight, it is the Glenn Miller orchestra! She absolutely adores Glenn Miller, and as she savors the gentle, sugary crooning of horns with the man's tie still wrapped around her face, her audible excitement is swiftly hushed by a tender kiss. The man takes her hand and the two rise, swaying leisurely back and forth to the buttery music as the nearby windows are glazed with fresh rain. All the while, the magnificent scent of butternut squash soup lingers placidly.

The young man simply couldn't be happier.

This is the elderly man's nostalgia at its finest: colorful and vivacious, pulsating with reverie through the frail bonds of rosy tissue that crackle with dulled electricity in his decaying brain. He lies in his hospital bed, inhaling the sentimental fragrance steaming from the bowl in front of him.

However, it is at this moment that the man's heart monitor begins to quicken its pace, sounding off more quickly with every passing second. His brain jolts awake into full awareness of his surroundings – something that he hasn't experienced in decades. He cries to himself, What is going on here?
Is it my time to go?

Is this truly the end?

He struggles furiously to try and return his thoughts to that misty afternoon he felt so blissful, wishing only for his final thoughts to be of peaceful and pleasant nature; however, the shrieking pain in his torso has now become so intense that sadly it is all he can manage to focus on.
So this is what it feels like to die.

He had spent his whole life wondering what it might be like, but never imagined that the day would actually arrive.

Suddenly, he begins to notice spirals dancing above his head. Scattered across the lumpy ceiling, they swell and shrink before his eyes. The stinging doesn't seem quite as ghastly now. The rhythmic noises of the respirator are dampened and replaced by a soft, resonating hum as clouds of frothy static drift all around him, erasing his eyesight and hearing as they hover.

To his surprise, this delights him. He loves gazing at the shimmering dots twirling and swaying before him. Everything begins to dissolve into a whirlpool of milky-grey fuzz. As he admires this display, his cheeks are tickled by two tear drops that leak from the cracks below his veiny eyelids before hitting the sheets below. It is in this manner that the man's body commences in shutting itself down for eternity. One by one, his limbs melt into nothingness, unbeknown by him. Still marveling at the ocean of silver pulsating above him, his mind gently begins to evaporate.

The symphony of bright lights above his head is silenced. His senses are extinguished, and his lungs deflate. His heart lies motionless.

His consciousness expires. His mind vanishes.

The man's body sinks into the ragged hospital mattress, with not a single being by its side. Still, the bowl of butternut squash soup sits atop his table tray, growing cold – waiting patiently for a soul to nourish.

The Cellist and the Bartender- *Rikki Visser*

An elderly gentleman sat at the darkened bar, sipping pensively on his tankard. He wore a tailored black suit that looked like it had seen better days and a travel-worn duster draped over the back of his chair. A cello case leaned against the bar next to the man, showing as much wear as the man himself. The room was quiet, the chatter of the patrons subdued while soft music played in the background. In the furthest corner of the bar, a young man sat flirting with a couple of girls, their tittering laughter occasionally interrupting the old man's peaceful reminiscence.

His hands trembled as he lifted the cool glass to his lips, the dark brew filling his stomach with the tingling warmth of an old friend. He tilted his head back, pouring a hearty gulp down his throat and lifting the empty glass to the bartender. "I think I could use another, friend," he said gruffly.

"You've got a full one right in front of you, John," replied the bartender from his shadowed post at the far end of the bar. "Looks like you're not quite ready to go yet."

"Huh... I could've sworn that wasn't there a second ago," John muttered to himself. "I must be getting old!" He chuckled, setting the empty glass on the counter and catching up the full one.

Mommy, there's a man on that stool!

No, honey.

John sat up abruptly, searching for the source of the familiar voice. "What was that?" He looked up at the bartender who shrugged noncommittally. He looked around, confused, and opened his mouth to ask another question when a barking laugh from the corner cut him off. The cellist frowned as he turned and looked at the young man in the corner, who was now loudly entertaining the women with some silly song he had apparently written for another girl.

Shaking his head, John looked at the bartender. "That used to be me, you know. Of course, I was a real musician. I wouldn't be caught dead singing some silly, fluffy song about a girl named Brittany. My Elena and I, we made beautiful music." He patted the top of the empty cello case leaning against the bar. He smiled wistfully, remembering long nights spent in the corner of the same room where he now sat, nights where he did nothing but play, anything from Mozart, to Bach, to his own compositions. Young girls would gather around watching as his fingers glided over the strings, Elena singing in his hands, weaving songs of sorrow and joy, love and loss, painting scenes of beauty and harmony.

He especially remembered the night that she joined the crowd. He watched her all night as he played, a smile dancing on her lips. The next night, as he played, the high, lilting melody of a flute joined with the lowed hum of his playing. He looked up, and who should be standing next to him but her. Every night thereafter, they played together. John laughed to himself, remembering the joy on her face as he showed her the tickets, two of them, round trip, to Paris and back.

Momma, it's Grandpa! Grandpa John's sitting on that stool there!

John looked up, surprised. He knew that voice. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what, John? All I hear is that kid in the corner," the bartender said, pulling the old man's attention back to the bar.

"Do you miss her, John? Do you want to see her again?" The Bartender asked.

John took a long drink from his beer, ignoring the man behind the counter. Of course he missed her. Of course he wanted to see her. His tankard thumped heavily on the counter. "Can I get this topped off?" He shook the glass at the bartender.

"It's still full, John."

"Huh, so it is." The old man looked up at the ceiling, running his fingers through his hair. "I feel like I forgot something important. Something that's tickling just at the back of my mind... I remember sitting here a long time ago, just like this. In this same coat even. I was waiting for my daughter and her little girl... Why can't I remember?" He put his head in his hands, rubbing his eyes. "I'm so, so tired." He felt a gentle disturbance near his right arm, almost as though there were a small hand tugging on his sleeve.

Grandpa?

John looked up suddenly, remembering. "I died. That was the day I died. Damn it, I remember," he looked up at the bartender again, and he could make out a faint smile on his shadowed face. "I was sitting here waiting for my daughter and granddaughter on the anniversary of the day my wife died, and I drank and drank and drank..."

"I'm sorry, John." The Bartender said. John nodded sadly, looking down at the tankard in his hand, the one that never drained. He tossed it all back in one gulp and caught up his cello case.

He looked to the side, at the little girl standing by his elbow, now clearly visible to him. "I think I'm ready now," he said, smiling. The bartender, now merely a shadowy figure in front of him, gestured forward, towards the door at the back of the bar. As John walked towards the glowing door, the years seemed to fall from his face and his back straightened until he was once again the young man who played in the corner all those years ago. Just before he stepped into the light, he turned and waved at the little girl standing by his abandoned barstool.

"Rose, come on!" her mother called, but the little girl stood at the door, watching her grandfather's ghost walking away, waiting until he faded into the distance. She looked down sadly, a single little tear rolling down her cheek.

"Bye-bye grandpa," She whispered, and finally turned away, leaving behind the silent, empty bar.



Non-Fiction



Anosmia- *Trey Tafoya*

Petrichor is a name for the rich aroma that often rises from the dry earth after a fresh rain. When the weather is arid, so is the soil; during this time, parched plants and vegetation release an oily substance that seeps into the ground, whereupon it is absorbed by clay-based sediments and stones and housed until a storm is brewed.

As soon as enough precipitation is gathered by the sky, it scatters its load along the thirsty land below, soaking the patient, dormant terrain with liquid that has cycled ceaselessly since the commencement of time. Finally, the parched earth is awakened. In its elation, it bumps elbows with the metabolic bacterial by-product geosmin. Geosmin is the head honcho in this act – the real reason the dewy fragrance comes to exist. Once the bacteria spew this distinctive scent upward, it makes its way to the unwary nostrils of humans. Humans are the memory makers, delight crafters, nostalgia hunters. The odor billows into our skulls and we are instantly stimulated by memories of times past, by the chalky essence suspended all around us.

Our lungs expand, our brains numb; we call to those close enough: “Come quick! Outside! Smell this!” What pleasure. Petrichor in the air, petrichor in our homes; in our flesh. Such a familiar scent, but how might one describe it...?

“It’s, uh... Earthy.”

“It smells like rain.”

“It’s my favorite smell!”

“It smells like recently moistened parched plant oils and bacterial by-products rising from the ground.” Nobody would understand, those words, words, words... Especially one robbed of their olfactory sense. So, how is it that words have no scent, that descriptions have no odor? How is it that the only way one can ever truly experience petrichor is by inhaling it themselves?

Imagine the frustration of a disabled soul, unperceptive of the aromas surrounding them. Picture, in a room:

“I adore the smell of Mema’s freshly-baked cookies!”

“My favorite scent is drying paint on plaster!”

“No, freshly cut grass – that’s the greatest.”

“Are you crazy? Permanent marker.”

“What about you? What’s your favorite smell?”

“Well, I’ve never smelled anything, really... I’ve always wished that I were able to, though.”

The room grows silent.

Outside, it continues to rain.

Writer's Block- *Kevin Peterson*

You do realize you actually need to write something now, don't you?

Since they were first told to me, I hear the words echoing in my brain. Constantly. Unending. Write something? Sure, I can do that. Of course I can. I love to do that. I write all the time.

Except, when I don't. When I can't. The second it's for something important I freeze up. Freeze up, put it off, ignore it. Leave it until, either "inspiration" comes, or the deadline buzz comes in and saves me. But, what if there is no deadline? What if it's not really that important? What if it's so important that it NEEDS to be done? Well, then, I'll probably end up putting it off, finding an excuse and never finishing it. Because, here's the thing, if there's no deadline, or no ACTUAL deadline, no ticking countdown clock above my desk (I really should get one of those, or maybe I really shouldn't), I'm never going to allow my indecisive brain to take it seriously. Or rather, my indecisive brain, will never allow me to take it seriously.

My next step is to go for outside help. It NEEDS to be done, so I'm going to tell EVERYONE in my support system. I'm going to make them badger me, and bug me, until I irritatedly throw my hands in the air and yell FINE! I need to tell all of them, because if I leave it up to one, or just two, well, they've got lives outside of keeping me from wandering off (brain-wise, or actually wandering off; it's known to happen), and simply being my friend (God bless them if they sign on for a close friend position) is enough of a headache by itself, I mean, do you see all the parentheses? That's how I am ALL the time, but with talking. I also fear that I have to rotate between friends, otherwise someone is bound to get burned out by my, well, me-ness.

So, my first suggestion comes back:

"Kevin needs to write about glitter, hugs, unicorns and rainbows." I have pretty serious friends, you guys.

I began to think about this. I could possibly work with this. I could.....

....I had to stop here. Life gets in the way. Things change. Life happens. The usual. You know how it goes.

I'm now sitting in the ER, waiting room with my mom. Waiting. It's really not that uncommon of a place for me to be, oddly (frighteningly?) I've gotten fairly used to it. I spent my whole life waiting in hospital waiting rooms, ERs, various doctors' offices, clinics, and...well, you get the idea. That's what happens when your mom is sick. Not sick all the time, sick just one time, a sickness that affected her, and by default me, as well as my entire family, for the rest of, well, everything.

It's now 9:45. I pull out my always-with-me Moleskine notebook. Because it's the only way I know how to be a hipster writer. I try to concentrate, get back on writing. Get back to where I left off. I ask for a suggestion of what to write about, this time to get my mind off of where I am.

From the same person:

"Write a Princess story, so it can be animated."

Most people would be offended. I'm hardly offended. I'm well known as being the princess guy, although really, it's more than that, I'm the DISNEY GUY, the Disney Animation guy, but that's a story for another day. For this particular friend, all of the princess and Disney and everything else came imbedded in the DNA of our friendship, so these types of conversations are normal.

I think about the suggestion given to me. I think about it for a while. My mind wanders. I think about the uncomfortable chair I'm sitting in. I listen in to a woman bellowing at her children. Her Children. Restless. Climbing over their seats. Climbing over her.

"Why do we have to be here still?" The boy asks.

"Because. WE'RE FAMILY. THAT'S WHAT WE DO!" She roars back.

The little girl drops her Blue DS with a thud.

My head goes down, back to my notes. I change my own subject in my mind. Why would anybody want me to write about what would certainly be an awkward princess with social anxiety issues? Well, possibly, maybe. I give it a try:

Ugh. Sun. I do NOT need this today.

"Rise and shine, duckling, we've got a busy day ahead of us!"

Handmaiden! Glub! I threw the pillow back over my face, "Tell them I died!"

"Yes, dear." Her cheery voice dropping rapidly to stern, "I'm sure that will go over wonderfully."

Something like that, I suppose? Or better. I can't guarantee better. It's an interesting start. Perhaps for a later time. As much as I love the whimsically magical fiction stuff, I feel I'm much better at the interpersonal, introspective, personal stuff, I think. I'd need to find a real "hook" to really draw me in, to give me something to latch on to in the writing.

Something personal.

I'm not in the headspace to do this right now. I write this and I sit and I look around this very very backed up ER. I don't see any, 'Noah Wylie' (John Carter, just seems inappropriate now...) type emergencies, but what do I know.

We've been here an hour? More? I lost track at this point.

I'm getting pretty good at trying to figure out the plot-lines of the *USA Dramas* silently playing on the television mounted to the wall beyond me. It took me a far too long to realize that I was watching a completely different series than before. I'm calling this one, "Aging B-List Character Actors and Hottie-Milfs." I don't feel bad at my lack of creative title making. There's a dude from *Gilmore Girls* on it. Hey, that's cool. I find myself more interested in the fact that there's a hashtag logo in the corner of the screen, meaning as I assume, they are trying to entice people to "tweet" about this series on Twitter, and mark each tweet with a hashtag, in order to tack them. Interesting idea, I guess.

I have a Twitter. I choose not to update my Twitter. I feel weird posting about where I am in this situation. I do let one of my friends know. I met her because of Twitter. It's almost the same thing.

I'm starting to get antsy. I leave the waiting room to go find coffee. I find a Wolfgang-Puck-Gourmet-Coffee-Machine. I'm not really sure how I feel about this. I go back and I sit. And I notice and I wonder how many days, how much of my time have I spent in waiting rooms? Medical offices.

Sometime later I'll have a conversation with my friend:

"You'd think with all of this time spent in all of these medical places, I'd have the desire to go into a field of some sort, or at least, have the desire to learn more about this."

"No," she tells me, "Why would you?"

Of course it makes sense, visits like this, days like this, have occupied so much of my life, of my time, why would I want it to take up more my headspace?

The waiting room is filled with lost souls and hopeless cases. I try to not look, because I find it depresses me. Honestly, this is one of the least worrisome times I've waited with her. I can think of a million worse times, but I won't. I shouldn't. And I won't. For the same reason I won't make eye contact with the woman who has one arm. Or the very old man in the wheelchair, whose face is bleeding.

They finally call us to the back. It's probably close to 1 AM now. We get an observation room. I get a nametag. It says "Kevin." We sit. There is more waiting. My ex-sister-in-law works here, not in the ER, but in the regular hospital. Ironically, she works in the Neurology Department, which is the area of the hospital my mom and I frequent most often in the daylight hours. She isn't working tonight.

I tell my mom.

"Oh, that's too bad," she says, "She was really nice last time."

There is more waiting.

"It's probably ok for you if you got a new girlfriend," my mom tells me. "But, I understand if you don't feel like you want one yet."

"Uhm. yes...Thank you...I'll see what I can do," was my reply. My mother has a tendency of attempting to set me up with nurses and such.

The first doctor comes in. She's a med student from France with a very thick accent. I find her adorable. My mother asks her about her lab coat, which hospital she came from. She tells us she's been in the country for a week and she understands English very well, but people have a hard time with her accent.

Don't worry about it, I think to myself, it's fascinating, and you're adorable. I choose not to say that part out loud. I pick up a slight antagonistic animosity between the French Student and the seasoned Blonde Nurse. The nurse's tone is sharper with her, it's subtle but noticeable; well, I notice it.

The one thing that does seem to be lost in translation is my mother's sense of humor, her dry sarcasm is lost on the French Student. Lost on all the other doctors, too, apparently. Either that, or they're politely ignoring it. Something I'm very familiar with. I tell her it isn't helpful when she tells the doctor she thought she was on a beach in Bermuda.

Doctors always seem perplexed by mom's condition.

"Are you still receiving cancer treatments here?"

"No, not for a long time, like 17 years"

"Why does she see a Neurologist here, then?"

"Because, the radiation treatments 17 years ago"

"Wait? Seventeen years? OH..."

And on and on, it's the same with every doctor, every nurse, ever specialist, every time.

Now it's closing in on 4 AM. My first notebook is filled, but filled with what, I don't know. My phone has long ago died. It doesn't really matter. Anyone who I would talk to is long asleep. Those I chose to tell. I honestly didn't want to tell anyone. I didn't want people to think I was fishing for sympathy. It's also the reason why I don't really tell people about my Mom, most of the time, anyway. I deliberately decided against telling specific people about tonight. I don't want them to worry. It's my burden to carry, and it always has been. I know I'm going to catch hell for it from some people (I did).

My phone died. It doesn't matter. I'd run out of Facebook updates (or Tweets, whatever) saying, "It feels like I've been here my whole life," or something like that. I would never post that. It goes against my not letting people know issue. It seems like I'm reaching for attention. I don't want anyone to find out, not even my family, and not that way, have them worry, overreact, or somehow find a way to make me feel bad for this (believe me, I spent most of the time here running the ways it could possibly be my fault through my brain, chalk it up to Catholic Guilt, I suppose).

My phone died. It doesn't matter. My eyes are blurring too badly, I can't even concentrate on anything. I'm starting to fall asleep.

“Can you please get him some coffee? It’s no use if you guys fix me just for him to fall asleep driving me home.” I hear my mom tell the nurse. They’ve decided to release her.

My-Wolfgang-Puck-Gourmet-Coffee is long gone.

In a weird way, it’s the most quality time I spent with my mom in a long time. Time we don’t really get to spend together anymore. And in a strange way it’s a very familiar, routine, nostalgic, sentimental even, and strangely comfortable. As odd as that seems.

It’s close to 5 AM when I finally get home. I look over to my computer; the first draft of this is sitting there, untouched since I left, incomplete, vague, waiting for me to write the next line, waiting for me to write...

Something.

A Farewell to Innocence- *Alexander Lennon*

How does one define the age of innocence? With snips and snails and puppy dog tails? With wide eyed wonderment and delicate naiveté? In the case of one young boy, such flights of fancy were surely present, stimulating the imagination and tantalizing the mind, but the most influential factor in the age of his innocence was business. A driving passion to be adult, to outgrow childhood and live in the world of double breasted suits, irate phone calls and tape recorded notes to one's self. What could be considered more naive than to leave behind the beauty of youth for a world just out of reach, not understood but magical through childlike association? But for all that uffish pigheadedness and fool determination, I can say without doubt that I have never regretted any of my business ventures; not in the slightest.

I recall, on mild summer afternoon some time before my fifth birthday, a close friend and neighbor became my first business partner, my greatest confidant, and my partner in crime. We had a model idea, a novel idea. We were too big to fail. Ice cream and soda. What could be more appealing to any sane person than a proud slogan 'Cold drinks, for the dog days!' shining through the heat shimmer of burning asphalt? Almost every child has owned a lemonade stand, so many that the idea of such a thing is indelibly burned into the recesses of our brains; but such a thing wasn't nearly unique enough, business demanded a niche, and so it began. Independent advertising was key, and with the help of Coke, Pepsi, Häagen-Dazs, Drumstick and any number of helpful media moguls we found sales to be a breeze. Few could resist the snap of an ice cold soda, the hiss and spray of that fine carbonated mist. Root beer floats, all net profit and zero annual expenditures thanks to generous donations from various parental sources (who shall remain anonymous to preserve the illusion of independence). It was a golden age of innovation, a renaissance of ingenuity. Alas as any such period of relative peace and progress our greatest achievements served only to herald the coming storm.

It seemed then, the perfect partnership, an indomitable and indefatigable bond forged in trust and tempered by drive. I had become the unstoppable force and Brian, the immovable object. With vim we dispatched one idea after another, with vigor each venture met with success and accolades proudly provided once more by our anonymous familial benefactors. With our foundations firmly cemented, our thoughts turned to greater sights and projects larger than either of us, though certainly within the limits of our ego. We embraced the challenge, craved the opportunity to prove our mettle with the greatest of tasks. To produce a movie: flickering film reel and discarded, butter soaked popcorn scattering an amphitheater drowned in velvet. Of course the popcorn was more burnt than butter, our amphitheater a living room with a home video camera proudly displayed for all who cared to view our painstaking creation; the curtains were a nice touch however (bed sheets skillfully purloined from a laundry basket for the express intent of augmenting our atmosphere).

We had such plans, presented with as much grandiloquence and theatrical appeal as young children could manage. As the masters of our demesne, the invincible kings of an invisible empire the only things that could stand in the way of our absolute dominion were us. Our own greatest enemy, it hardly seems a surprise to think that as time passed and our egos spoon-fed each other, becoming gorged upon self-opinion damned by faint praise we grew too large for our own heads. Each of us, an island, we grew apart like continental drift. Our final, most amazing and remarkable attempt at greatness: The Circus.

We each knew that there was nothing greater than the big top. That each and every child would leap from their bed with a plaintive cry at the idea of missing out on elephants, tumblers, lions and clowns. We hatched a plan, as we always did, behind closed doors, in the greatest secrecy. . It was the first time our disagreements closed in on the personal, peeling quietly away from the carefully constructed criticism of peers and businessmen to become sour mudslinging and slander. In response to my attempt to direct the show I was eventually declared a "stupid baby", and so how could I respond but to call him a "poop head?"

Author & Artist Bios:

Saxon Steward “Save Me”

Saxon is a musician, magician, and writer. Favorite instruments include: guitar and vocals (he sings, raps and he loves screaming). He would like to thank not only *Obscura* for accepting his work for publication, but anyone who takes the time to read it as well.

Ben Thomson “Moving On”

Ben is a part time student at Red Rocks and a full time student at the Colorado School of Mines. Recently finding an interest in poetry, Ben looks to continue his education while learning more about creative writing and practicing it in his spare time.

Samuel Gilliland “How I Once Paid the Moon”

Sam is a really cool and humble kid who is not as clever at writing bios as his fellow *Obscura* Contributors, so he'll just write some random inspirational words to make him seem like a wise and fine role model. Valor! Integrity! Spirit! Honor! Friendship! Don't like what he just did? Too bad, it just happened.

Isa “Summer”

Isa is born and raised in Central California and is first generation Mexican-American. She is the second of four daughters, and part of a large, close-knit, loving Mexican family. She has always been inspired by the arts and began writing and singing at a very young age, embracing her native Mexican roots by performing Ranchero genre music throughout most of her childhood and teenage years. Although her passion is music, she was able to find a substitute outlet via writing. She often takes her inspiration from her direct experiences and claims to only be able to write about ‘it’ because she understands first hand. She has always had a love of culture and knowing people, therefore is constantly traveling and ‘jotting down non-sense and feelings’. She currently studies Philosophy and Religious Studies with her focus being linguistics, and plans to continue on for a Masters and PhD overseas.

Bolingbroke “Potato Soup”

This is Bolingbroke's first semester at Red Rocks. He is using his VA benefits to obtain a teaching certificate in secondary education focusing on liberal arts. As a personal tutor, he wants to be part of the movements to bring classical liberal arts education back to our youth in order to develop their interest leadership abilities. He goes under the pen name, Bolingbroke, for the sake of shyness and because it sounds freaking cool. His wife's cooking is an act of love that often brings tears to his eyes and causes visions of mighty dragons and unicorns. She is also very beautiful.

Lacey Sharp “Simple Everyday Words”

Lacey has attended Red Rocks Community College for two semesters and will graduate with her associates this fall. From there, she intends on transferring to MSU to finish her education. Her current hobbies are reading, writing, some video games, day dreaming, and hiking. She hopes to spend a period of time in Europe, study animals for a living, and eventually live in a small town in eastern Colorado.

Sabrina Hallbery “A Writer’s Nightmare: Writing Out of Reach”

Sabrina is very excited to have a second piece of work published. She has been writing for many years and is happy to announce Creative Writing as her major. Though her work tends to be on the darker side, Sabrina tries her hand at a variety of ideas. With the support of her family, she attends her first year at Red Rocks as a full time student and works hard towards her future. She enjoys collecting quotes, tattoos (“breathe” rests on her right shoulder), reading book after book and spending time with her four-legged friends and boyfriend of five and a half years. Sabrina will be 20 in September—a milestone she hopes will give her the knowledge to know better, but the heart to do it anyway. When asked about writing she states, “A writer must write for their own heart first, and then for the heart of their reader.”

Abbie Landcaster “Pastel Landscape 2012”

Abbie Landcaster is studying industrial design and illustration. She is particularly intrigued by three dimensional form and visual story telling.

Michael Lang “Bradford Perely House”

Michael has been a student at Red Rocks Community College for about a year. He returned to college after a 28 year absence to pursue a degree in Digital Photography. During the day, he is a manager for FedEx. He is hoping to take the skills he is learning at RRCC to change his career. Michael is a divorced father of a 19 and 23 year old son, both of whom work hard every day to keep up with their father. He also has a third son whom he lost to SIDS when the baby was six months old. In the past 20 years, he has inspired Michael to see the whole world through a whole different lens and never be afraid to have a life worth living. Michael loves working with the instructors and his fellow students at Red Rocks. They encourage him all the time to raise the quality of his work.

Jon Watts “Sepia Cells” & “This Is A Duck”

Jon Watts is a wanderer, both well-traveled and without a destination. He has been working with cameras since a young age and would later go on to work for a portrait studio. The drive for photography would settle into a passionate hobby as he pursued his educational goals at Red Rocks. In addition to photography, Watts is also a practiced videographer—a passion inspired by boredom and copious amounts of free time while growing up in a small farming town in Pennsylvania. His photographs in Obscura represent the first of his works to be published, though many more are likely to follow.

Bri Nelson “Electric Sunflower” & “The Black and White Lion”

Bri is 23 and loves taking photos in her spare time. She lives in the beautiful town of Conifer, which provides a lot of great photo opportunities. She is also totally awesome.

Gary Begordis “Eclipse”

Gary has always been interested in photography and using it as a form of artistic expression. He would one day like to travel the world taking pictures of historic locations and publishing a book.

Joelle Waguespack “Lights” & “Holly”

Joelle Waguespack is an eighteen year-old singer, songwriter, musician, artist, actress, dancer, and writer. She is a Fine Arts major, concentrating on the areas of music, illustration, and creative writing. She has been singing since she could talk, dancing since the age of four, and acting since the age of seven. Joelle loves to write and hopes to be a published author someday. Joelle plays the piano, guitar, ukulele, djembe, and bongos. She is an advanced tap dancer and champion Irish step dancer. She finished high school when she was sixteen and will complete her two-year college degree this spring.

Donny Davidson “iKnow”

Donny Davidson is a freelance web designer who specializes in the customization and the promotion of the *Online Presence*. Donny relocated to Colorado in 2010, from the East Prairie, MO where he spent most of his childhood. He is a full time student at Red Rocks Community College working on an Associate of Science with intent to transfer to a four-year university where he can pursue a Masters in Neuroscience or Computer Information Systems. Donny’s academic excellence has lead to his membership in the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. When he is not studying, Donny focuses his time on running his business, staying current on the mergers of computer sciences and biology, creative writing, and spending time with his family.

Trey Tafoya “An Ocean of Silver” & “Ansomia”

Trey is a ridiculously nostalgic eighteen year-old from Golden, headed from Boulder. He romanticizes everything and is very silly, confused and naive. In fact, he often makes no sense at all. Honestly, I wouldn’t even trust him to babysit my plants over the weekend. However, don’t let his melancholic, over-analytical writing style fool you - he is actually quite a mellow fellow and enjoys long hugs, warm tea, loud records, and lying under the starry night sky with his imaginary girlfriend.

L. Alexandra “Ages of I Am”

L. Alexandra is a communications tutor of eclectic interests, who recently decided to pursue a Creative Writing degree. Her work first appeared in the 2012 issues of *Obscura* and *Claro*. She was later published on *VoxPoetica.com* and in *Crack the Spine*. For her, writing is a compulsion (hence, the necessity of the four notebooks she keeps perpetually at hand). Influenced by Nabokov, Flaubert, and Angela Carter, she views figurative language as one of the most powerful tools at a writer’s disposal and often pairs it with repetition and alliteration to give her work a musical quality. While L. Alexandra started in fiction, favoring fantasy, she has since written academic essays, nonfiction, poetry, blogs (LAlexandraWordsmith.Wordpress.com), and flash fiction. Outside of writing, she spends her days talking in excess, over indulging in stories in their many forms, and clinging to the delusion that she will be able to remain in school forever.

Alexander Lennon “A Farewell to Innocence”

Alex Lennon is a former student here at Red Rocks, and a continuing student of life. He feels that of all the places he’s visited Colorado has the least predictable weather, but remains a nice place to live.

Jess Kurtz “Our Spirt, Our Vessel”

Kevin Pererson “Cold Fall Rain.”

Emily Crawford “Winter Walk”

Stephanie Quist “Yu Na Kim”

Jerianne Fulton “Undead”

Rikki Visser “The Cellist and the Bartender”

Are all students at Red Rocks Community College and valued members of the creative community.

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