

A black and white photograph of a dilapidated building. The walls are made of brick and have significant peeling paint and missing plaster. There are several windows and doorways, some of which appear to be boarded up or broken. The ground in the foreground is a mix of dirt and concrete slabs. The overall scene is one of decay and neglect.

# Trestle | CREEK | Review

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## **And So I Remain**

I dreamt of you last night—  
a soft, hazy dream  
of smooth skin and whispered desires.  
Your hands brushed my face,  
a blind man searching for answers.  
Your fingers slowly pressed my lips,  
my eyes, my throat—marking every feature.  
You told me you loved me.

I woke.

Cold sheets wrap around my body  
where your warm arms held me moments ago.  
I lie here, lost in the myth of us,  
of how we will never be.  
And so I remain—still  
lost in a vision of pleasure and pain.

## sonnet 204 vi [so quickly the night ends]

(*no coma miel* it s too sweet this season)  
 (dark comb black *las abejas*) (striped thorns  
 dead) (in sugar sap *cuándo la cae colmena*)  
 (tree bark soaks in honey)  
 (quit carrying the moon  
 on your back)  
 (set it by *el árbol* i ll be your  
 whore) (again *mi amor* while night hides)  
 (*nuestras almas las abejas* aren t coming)  
 (we ll make our own before sun hardens  
 our limbs) (*la luna* rolls to brush)  
 (garrotes *los lagartos su presa*)  
 (*o lorca déme su voz*  
 bring me your lyric  
 make flesh sweeter  
 than the hive) (so  
 the lady may take  
 the whites of her eyes to wash  
 my face)

## Genesis

My part-time job. Reading poetry to babies. We cry and laugh and burp and spit up and pass gas together. I've only messed my pants once. It was a Russell Edson poem. It made the babies cry. Something about a wall that developed breasts, which tasted of varnish and not milk. Babies love breast milk and I can't blame them. They love it so much they cry. I read to babies and I cry and I laugh and sometimes I make a serious face for added effect. Breasts and breast milk and free verse and unrhymed poetry. These are all great things. And volumes of James Wright, which I sneak into hospital nurseries, wrapped in a blanket and carried in a bassinet for easy transportation. I sneak in e. e. cummings for laughs. I sneak in John Hodgen for sadness. I wink at security guards. They escort me off the premises and threaten felony offense. My town is full of hospitals, which are full of newborn babies with mouths hungry for breasts and ears hungry for poetry. I find another hospital and repeat the process, which eases a burden of mine that I do not fully understand. I've been trying to write a poem about my babies for years. It doesn't have an ending. It always begins like this:

Faded blue gown and jungle screams  
 ripple pools of wet emerald  
 where my sons and daughter were born  
 of tired feet, semen, eggs, and blood.

**ABC News Reports that a Utah Valley University Study Finds that Facebook Photographs Are Making Us Unhappy, but I Find Myself Happy Looking at a Photograph Posted on Facebook of Dancers in a Piece from Which I Was Cut Almost Twenty Years Ago. Does my Relief Contradict the Results of the Study?**

*What I Saw Then*

**T**hirty real dancers. One fraud dancer. I am cut, not included on the cast list, yet phoned and told I have gained weight. Something about big thighs. I am the one dancer who is not real because I am not in Martha's dance *Panorama*. I am the one fraud dancer. I confirm in the bathroom mirror.

*What I See Now*

Young women who do not look like dancers but like cruise ship ballroom-dance wannabes. I am not in the photo. But I remember myself—now I remember myself as I was then—as a *real* dancer. The dancers who were the real dancers then and who have been recorded in this photo now do not look real. Not even human. They look like extras in *Madame Butterfly*, makeup too black around the eyes, lips too red, eyebrows arched up. The position in which each dancer poses is supposed to look like the same position on each dancer, a call to revolution; instead, each one of the thirty young women interprets the pose in her own distorted way. The thrust forward of the chest, the pounding of the fist, the extended back leg is posed in many different ways.

*What I Thought Then*

I don't remember exactly, but there was a pomegranate involved.

*What I Think Now*

Lucky me. Why? Because each of these young ladies looks immersed in her unique freak-out. One looks bug-ish. Another appears to be a vertical slug with arms, head, no legs. The Facebook comments below the photograph suggest these are beautiful women, such beautiful girls, what memories: Oh, girl, you gorgeous!; look at that fierceness!; work it out!; so beautiful!; divas! I do not leave a comment, although I recognize every young woman in this photograph.

*Comments I Want to Write: Reader's Choice*

Choice A: When you leave the teacher, you become sane.

Choice B: I was cut from this dance because Susan Kikuchi told me I was too fat to jump like the rest of you.

Choice C: I am the only sane one in this picture because I am not in this picture.

Choice D: Is this a Facebook happy photo?

Choice E: None of the above because any of the above sound bitter, and bitter does not read well online.

*What I Felt Then*

Like a cantaloupe whose innards had been scooped out, leaving only the skin.

*What I Feel Now*

Like a split-open watermelon with seeds and juicy pink meat. Ready to eat. To be eaten. I'm green on the outside, juicy on the inside, and I am not freaked out by your desire.



**Baker Street Station****Dusk**

Dusk. White-washed walls glare and show their jagged teeth. A cold ground made of toil, sweat, and ground up bits of cigarettes. Sleep finds those that wearily search. Though even the dogs know better. Man on the corner, where is your smile? Eyes closed and arms crossed, is that the routine? Nobody waits for him, covered in his own rags and bags. The cold seeps through, clothing a vanity. Downward looks, but he alone knows how bright the sunlight is. Stairs, steps, and the sun's humble mercy lead to a door as white-washed as the walls around it. Fingers with lines, hooks, curves, and scratches press gently. Welcome home, you old ghost, the ideas left behind are still where you threw them.

## Call and Response

As I walk, my arms swing through the air.  
 If I'm present, I can feel the air's response,  
 a living thing that fits me. Back and forth we slide  
 inside the other, now the hand, now the glove.

I try on my mother's coat, sleeves lined  
 with satin—cool, indifferent—let it drop.

Downstream, a fattened bear is denning up  
 around her winter cub—one sleep, two sleepers.

I have never been alone.  
 I have never been unheld.

## Flashing Lights

Her back to the wall, Payton listened to the television her parents were watching in the living room. She leaned her head back as the news anchor described the accident. “An accident on Eleventh Avenue and South First Street occurred last night. A man, twenty-one, Nathan Doyle, in a black Ford Ranger, died on impact. His girlfriend, Payton Connors, twenty, who survived—”

Her dad shut off the television with a firm click. Her mother tried to calm him down. Payton pushed herself off the wall and headed up the familiar stairs to get away from the whispers that passed between them. Out of memory, she went from the stairs to the left door. She paused to touch the bandage around her head before she pushed open the door, dropping her bags on the floor. She was too tired to put them away.

The posters were there but not where she remembered them. They were on the ceiling. Her mother must have moved them after she moved out. She was a bit surprised that it was still her room. They could have changed it into an entertainment room or office.

The walls now had pieces of artwork rather than the drawings that she posted there. The desk was moved into the closet when it should have been under the shelves by the window. In its place was the dresser. She took a deep breath and sat on the bed, the one thing that wasn't changed. The moment she sat down, she felt a sudden depression. The bed that used to sink under her weight was now stiff. She lay down on the pillows hoping to smell a mix of musk and cologne, but instead, she found unfamiliar lavender and citrus.

An hour later, she pushed herself off the bed. Her head began to ache, but she ignored it as she pulled on a dirty sweatshirt, worn from a day's work and still smelling of cologne. Hugging herself, she took a deep breath of the aroma it gave to her. She took a seat in the computer chair, her body stiff and her hands clenched, fighting the memory of him, which would lead to her crying. Putting on a pair of shoes, she headed quietly down the backstairs leading outside. The rain was falling as she stumbled down the pathway to the garage. Once inside, she pulled a blank canvas out of the storage room and moved it



toward the empty spot in the garage where her mom's car was supposed to be. She grabbed the paints from the shelves near the workbench and put them in pans.

Taking a deep breath, she pushed paint around the pan. With a flick of her wrist, paint splattered on the white canvas. Flickers of black stained the purity while her eyes, tarnished grey, went back to the pan, this time dipping her brush into the purple. Flicking her wrist again, she glanced to see the purple start specks against the white. She pushed her dark bangs out of her eyes only to have them fall back. She let out a huff, causing a small cloud to appear in front of her face. The cold crept into her bones, but she just pulled the sweatshirt—old, gray, and holey—around her. Her jeans, with knee holes from heavy wear, did nothing to keep the heat inside of her.

Putting the paintbrush down, she went over to the radio sitting on her dad's workbench, covered in dust. Flipping the switch on, she heard the static before a soft tune came through the speakers. Back to the painting, she started flicking the paint against the canvas. It was methodic. Flick the wrist then dip it back into the paint. Flick the wrist again. Dip into the paint again. The music didn't even reach her consciousness. Black. Purple. Black and purple.

She stopped when she heard the back door open. "You coming in soon, honey?" She took a deep breath and turned to her mom, who was leaning against the door.

"Not for a while."

"Alright, but it's getting pretty chilly." Her mother dropped a jacket on the work bench. "Here's a jacket for you, baby."

"I know. Thanks." Her voice didn't rise above a whisper.

"Alright. Just remember what the doctor said about taking it slow." She watched her mom leave, shutting the door behind her, then turned back to the canvas to see the paints dripping down, oozing black and purple. A wound seeping out the bad blood. She knew what the doctor said but wasn't ready to listen. She reached for her brow where the stitches were hiding underneath a bandage but quickly dropped her hand.

She flicked and flicked until her wrist was sore and humming unpleasantly. Putting her paintbrush down in the almost empty pans, she sat down with

her legs crossed as she stared at the canvas. There wasn't anything to look at. A canvas with purple and black paint all over, spots of white peeking through. When she glanced out the window, the rain tapped against the glass like pebbles against smooth pavement.

She rubbed her face, her eyes, then her cheeks. She felt the heat rise into her face before the cool pushed back. One deep breath. Then another deep breath. Pushing herself back up, she started for the door. She turned off the radio, the static silencing loudly in the room. She saw the missing dust and stared for a moment. Her eyes then went back to the door, and her feet moved on their own. The lights turned off, and the door shut behind her as she walked in the rain back to the house. The porch light beckoned her, and she felt repelled by it. She paused in the middle of her steps and glanced at the sky. A moonless night. Not even a sliver of silver light to glance down at her. She went into the yellow porch light, the repulsive yellow light, and into the house.

"Are you done for the night?" her mother asked the moment she walked into the living room. She glanced over at her mother, gave her a strained smile and nodded. "Are you doing alright? Is there anything I can get for you?" She shrugged in response before walking out toward her bedroom.

The sweatshirt and jeans fell on the floor in soggy wet piles. She grabbed them to put in the laundry basket, but two steps into it, she dropped them back on the floor. A pair of sweats and a loose t-shirt replaced the cold clothes. She pulled the ponytail from her hair, letting it fall around her shoulders. Dropping her hands to her sides, she felt the edge of her shirt fall off her shoulder.

Turning onto her side, she pressed another pillow into her chest and felt the cold race down her face and up her spine. She decided to try and sleep, hoping the flashing lights wouldn't wake her in the middle of the night. She turned around to reach out and, like cold water washing over her, she remembered there was no one there to hold her.

## Upstream

I left a pile of sticky pots in the sink for the third time  
 this month and forgot about the slick of honey  
 swallowed metal. My lovers see the things I don't: handfuls  
 of dust on the windowsill, drying flowers from  
 someone else, and pockets of old letters in the crevices

between books. I never meant to be  
 that person—the one who lets things pile up. And yet, here you are,  
 sharp-knuckled hands, lips that say *sweetheart*, and frayed  
 nerves thinly obscuring that beating something explosive in your  
 chest. You wash in swirls of soapy water, centripetal  
 acceleration natural in your quick joints. Don't  
 do the dishes, I say, so we both know

what I mean. On my twenty-eighth birthday someone before you  
 bought me breakfast because he forgot what day it was. He furrowed  
 his brow and I feigned forgiveness over something vegan and local,  
 cooing I didn't mind. Damn thistle, he said when we left and  
 the edge of his shoe caught the dry needles—he noticed the

things that stung, I noticed the things I lacked. Now, dishes  
 swim like salmon  
 through the ceramic buckets of my kitchen sink, sometimes  
 stopping, sometimes rushing through the fingers of  
 the ones who make the time to clean up  
 after me. You remembered my birthday, in advance,  
 and today your square

knuckles coax bathed cutlery into a basket to  
 dry. The word throws me off—  
 but, *sweetheart*, if we can  
 swim fast enough

maybe  
 this river  
 will be forgiving.

sonnet 812 ii [*mi emilia*]

(if you grow cold in sight of a blackbird)

(who will rub

the ribs

of water) (catch

light *con piernas*)

(condensing her many faces kept

in crystals women step out of)

(so much goes on in this space) (but

eternity waits like

the sea patiently) (taking breaths of light

for her to tangle)

(cast little red shinings about

the top of foam)

(blue wrinkles fetch sleep) (in its

waking please see this dream of mine)

(take your ladder of light)

(to the depths of memory where

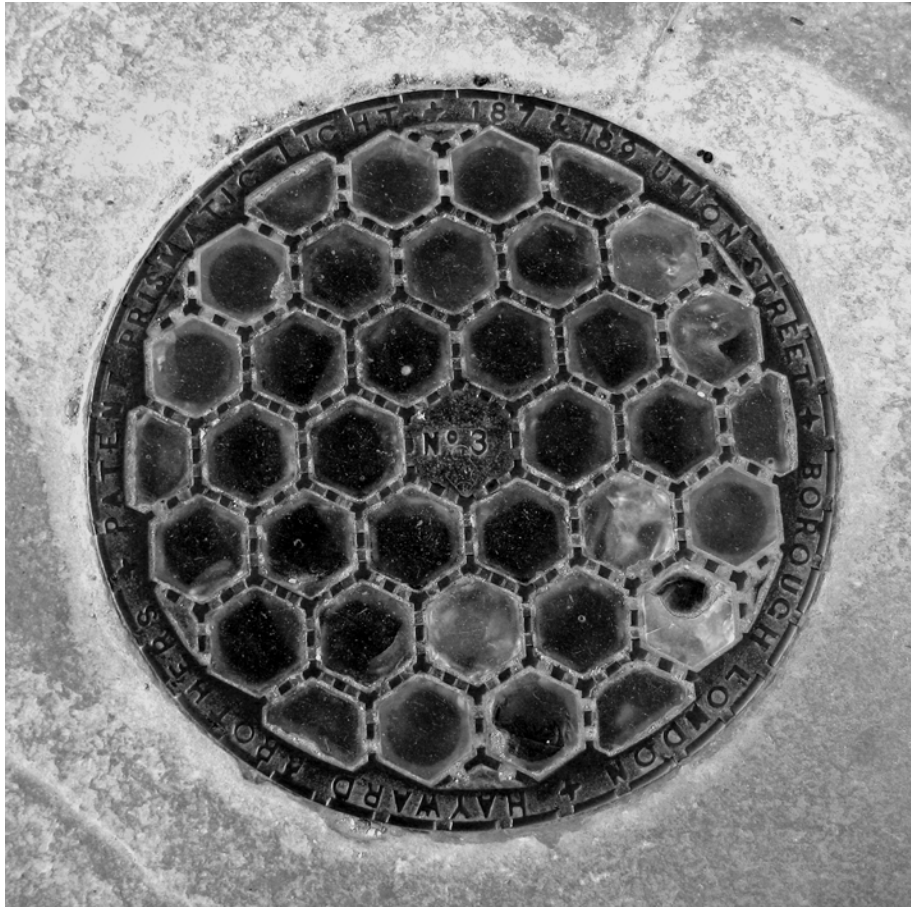
the eternal plays with sand)

(look again for flight) (endure like

the blackbird its wings against

the wind)

### Manhole Cover Study #3



### Relating to Time

Jim walks into the courtyard where leaves are pasted on the pathway that leads him to the doorway. Plastic is covering what is left of the vegetable gardens. He breathes in this moment, letting his breath out into the cold air like smoke. It is that time of year; fall is in the air. He tries the door. It opens, and instantly he is in a room full of warmth and love.

Wrinkled faces look up to see who has just entered. Feeling a little like an intruder, he notices smiles of recognition from the residents of Bee Hive Assisted Living. Two ladies are sitting on the couch with their heads together. Jim bends down and looks up at them. Jodi, Vi's best friend, is reading her Bible scriptures printed out in BOLD LARGE LETTERS. Vi is soon to be ninety-one; she has lost most of her sight due to macular degeneration and can barely hear. She had hearing aids once but refused to wear them because of her pride. We gave up that fight, so now she is stuck trying to guess what you say most of the time.

When greeted, she says she is so thankful to have a good mind; Jim agrees with her, knowing she will make the same comment a dozen more times before he leaves. She used to ask us what time it is but doesn't bother anymore. Now she just says, "When we all get to Heaven, we will be together." She then breaks out into singing that old gospel Hymn: "When we all get to Heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be; when we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory." It's like she has already left this world, time, and space; he loses her for a moment. Then her thoughts shift back, and she asks how is Jim doing: her son, my husband.

In the same moment, living in a small two bedroom house are two families and a bachelor. Eight people are crowded, adjusting to a time in their lives when the economy has forced them to live in this environment. It is Kessa's home. A full time student at North Idaho College, she organizes her time, keeping everyone, including herself, on a regimented schedule that contributes to the success of the day. This is the only way to accomplish everything

that needs to be done. Kessa Sanchez, age twenty-nine, has three children. Each child challenges her; a preteen daughter, age twelve, does not have her own room and has to sleep in the living room with her nine-year-old brother, who is diagnosed with ADD. It is time for Kessa to walk her four-year-old son, who is autistic, to the bus. She readies herself for a full day at school. Her husband, Juan, who is also a full time student, is already at his engineering class at Spokane Falls Community College.

Elsewhere, Ben Fairfield, the office manager for Keller Williams, is preparing for the office meeting and completing his speech for today.

And, at the same time, Natalie, my hair dresser at HIP Salon, is putting the finishing touches on my hair, and I am preparing to tip her for doing such a nice job.

How is it that all these people can, all in the same moment, be in dissimilar action, at different locations, during separate events? In some parts of the world, at the same instant, people are just getting up for their morning coffee while others are preparing to go to bed. Even the seasons are different from one global location to the next; it is fall in North Idaho but spring in Australia. I think the commonality of diversified moments throughout space, in the same timelines, allows us to look at the reality of time travel being a possibility. If we all share the same moment differently in the present, then why can't we share in the same moment past and future?

I ask Kessa what she thinks the definition of time is. She says, "Time is linear, circular, repeats and loops. I believe time is the events in our lives." She is right. Clocks rotate twenty-four hours a day. Day and night repeat; spring, summer, and fall loop; history repeats itself with similar events.

So what is time, really? Is it something we can manage, like our money? We treat time like a commodity; we spend it, donate it, waste it. We don't have time to spare, like spare change. I want another perspective so I ask Natalie,

my hair dresser, to describe time. After a long moment, she replies, "It is a tool for measurement of when and where. We use it to schedule and organize." For some reason talking about time as an object or thing stressed her, so I changed the subject.

Since I do not have a scientist to interview and expand on my idea of time travel, et cetera, I interview Ben Fairfield, my office manager, who has taught several classes on time management. So how does one effectively deal with time?

Ben is a hard man to track down. I felt honored to have some of his time to discuss my subject, especially when he responds to my question "What do you consider a waste of time?"

"Anything that does not result in a tangible result" is his textbook answer. My look of concern causes him to explain that an interview for an essay qualifies as a tangible result.

Ben's office is different from the average office of an executive. Looking around the room, the wall space has well-organized shelving stacked with papers, books, and a laptop computer with his stool standing alone in the corner. A table with four chairs was the only invitation to sit down. No desk. Hmm. Motivational signage is posted around the room; it all feels a little too mechanical for me.

I am guessing his age to be thirty-something, this brown-haired, blue-eyed gentleman. He confesses to being twenty-nine years old, only after I promise not to expose him. He is a bit shy about it, like his youth is a handicap for him to do his job with adults twice his age. Does time have anything to do with age, or is age how we relate to time? I decided not to go there, since age is a sensitive subject.

Instead, I move our conversation back to time management. Can we manage time like taming and bridling a wild horse? Ben has some interesting insight on this. He is a teacher, trainer, as well as a recruiter for the company. We talk a little bit about techniques he uses in his training classes. There isn't a class that he teaches that doesn't have a section on Time Blocking for Success. There is, he says, a major resistance towards organizing, scheduling, and time blocking. We both agree it seems to be a natural human trait to resist

looking seriously at how we spend our time. I ask him, “What is the one thing you strive for when teaching time management?”

“Keeping track of your time: It’s not more chains; it’s more freedom.” Another scripted answer.

Ben confesses that he was resistant to this concept and new discipline until he realized he freed up twenty hours of his week for family, down from an eighty- to a sixty-hour work week.

“If you had all the time in the world how would you spend it?”

He answers as if I had asked him how he would spend all the *money* in the world, if he had it. “I would spend it with my family, showing them the world and all it has to offer.” Natalie my hair dresser gives almost the same answer, and Kessa wants to volunteer for charities, including starting her own. A parallel: They respond as if time were a commodity. Why is it we relate to time that way?

Just before Ben’s phone rings, I throw Ben a curve ball. “Ben, do you believe in eternity?” He says, “Yes,” thinking it is a religious question. When I asked Natalie, the hair dresser, she says, “No,” thinking it is a religious question.

Time to me is fascinating; if I can set more time aside, I would like to explore the scientific side of the subject. In the meantime I’ve decided to settle for the new discipline of time blocking. For now time is just a tool for me, a means to an end.

## Metamorphosis VI

I take your hand in the dark of the concert hall where Philip Glass rocks  
two fingers between the top of a minor chord  
and I imagine black dots, stacked in thirds—climbing on top of each other  
before rolling forward in a pattern, like vertebrae. Repetition hides  
between the lines, like the soft creases in my forehead  
when I tip my neck to the right to listen  
and I forget how many times I have heard this piece  
or how many times you’ve mouthed *no* while cradling my fingers.

Every Saturday we go to the yoga studio on Lexington, and Clare urges  
your hips back. She says the same things about “folding forward from the waist”  
and “straight lines with your limbs” while she walks in circles around  
the room, her own hips rolling and flexing with each foot pressing  
against wood. You tell me you’re getting better, that you keep  
pushing your heels toward the floor and stretching your arms  
away from the arch of your neck. We go on Saturday and another Saturday  
because somewhere we heard that “repetition” means “progress.”

We listen to Philip Glass or we go to yoga, stacking our days in thirds  
and rocking between what’s familiar. You take me with you  
and you repeat *yes* or you repeat *no* in a thousand different ways  
while tracing your fingers along the flesh of my belly  
but rarely further, and I learn the absurdity of expectation.

On Saturdays, Clare rocks between the insides and outsides of her bare  
feet on the wood and tells us with her eyes closed, “If you are making a sandwich  
and the world is ending, just keep making your sandwich.”  
I reach forward from the base of my neck and wonder if you notice  
the way I sometimes secretly throw out the molding loaves from your cupboard  
so you aren’t embarrassed. You stretch and I listen, and maybe

no one is really getting any better,  
but I think I have learned that metamorphosis is just recurrence,  
as long as you figure out how to wait.



## Mother

If only you were old enough  
I'd send you to buy  
a case of the good stuff  
  
get out of the kitchen  
before I spank you  
know your room is a pigsty move it  
Father will be home anytime  
  
next month here's a five get on your bike  
  
goddammit

see this blue spatula

carving the air between our faces?

## Mountain Lake





## Coyote Jack

With a goatee and grey hair pulled back into a ponytail, Coyote Jack looks the part of a hunter. He is in his early seventies. He is wearing camouflage when he meets us at the door of his old farmhouse, which is nestled on the edge of a ten-acre parcel with two large shops.

The heat from a wood stove in the corner is a nice contrast to the cool night air. The living room is covered from wall to wall with antique tools, signs, pots and pans, Indian artifacts, and a punching bag that is strangely out of place. In the far corner, there is a hunting show on TV; it seems somewhat cliché, like it was planned ahead of time. The house is very clean and organized. It looks like a bed and breakfast, or a museum, rather than a home.

Jack pours some coffee grounds into an old blue pot (the type of pot you would see in a cowboy movie), adds water, and then puts the pot on the stove to brew.

As we are waiting for the coffee, he takes me back into a small room littered with guns, arrows, pictures, a deer head and several deer antlers. “Everything in here has meaning,” he says. He acquired the name Coyote Jack by helping some ranchers in Chelan, Washington, who had a coyote problem. Apparently he shot forty coyotes in one winter.

We walk back into the kitchen to the smell of a fresh pot of coffee. Jack sets out the cups. “This is cowboy coffee, it might have a few grounds in it,” he says as he pours. Not a coffee drinker, I watch in horror as the coffee, grounds included, is poured into my cup. I keep asking about hunting, but he insists on telling his life story. He looks tired, almost sad. His glasses sit crooked on his face. “It’s hard to tell you who I am without telling you how I got here,” he says without making eye contact.

Jack was born in Lancaster, Washington. When he was young, his dad went to Germany to fight in World War II and returned a paraplegic. “I pushed him around in a wheelchair,” Jack said. His parents divorced after his dad’s injury, and his mom took him and his two sisters and moved to Spokane, where she remarried five years later. “We were excited to get a new daddy,” he said, “but the whole stepfather thing turned out to be a joke.” His stepfather was a cruel man. “He raped my older sister in front of me,” Jack said. “He

was a drunk, he was heartless, he would pick me up by my hair and kick me against the wall; I would find myself in a heap, wondering if I had any broken bones.” Afraid that he wouldn’t survive his stepfather’s abuse, Jack ran away from home and went to live with his grandparents, in California, for the next seven years. His grandma would make him go to her church; this had an impact on young Jack. “I felt the call of God on my life, so I decided that I was going to be a minister and serve him for the rest of my life.” After he graduated from college, he pastored several different churches in California over the next fifteen years.

I listen intently as he tells his story, not realizing that I drink my entire cup of coffee. Before I can stop him, Jack refills my cup.

He tells me how he became an avid hunter. “My passion has always been hunting and the outdoors.” Not your typical preacher, he somehow managed to combine the two interests. I imagine Jack out in the woods with a gun in one hand and a Bible in the other, perhaps offering counsel to someone in need, or just spending time with them in the quiet woods; maybe that would be just what they needed. He often used hunting as a way to minister to troubled men. “Hunting was a real outreach that most ministers simply can’t do.”

In 1976, Jack’s life changed dramatically. He had met a Vietnam vet named Denny. Jack described Denny as a troubled man, deeply affected by the war. Denny became hooked on drugs. This concerned Jack, so he invited Denny to go hunting with him, hoping to be a positive influence. On their first day hunting, at dusk, Jack hit a deer with his Jeep, and the Jeep rolled over, killing Denny and severely injuring Jack. He awoke in the hospital, not remembering the accident. The right side of his skull was crushed, his jaw was broken, and the optic nerve in his right eye was severed, leaving him blind in that eye. He also suffered major trauma to the brain, causing him to lose his memory. Jack’s life would never be the same. “That sent my life into a negative spiral; due to my accident, I lost my family and my wife. I was an angry person, mostly at myself,” and because of his memory loss, Jack walked away from the ministry for several years.

As Jack is telling his story, he rarely makes eye contact. He always seems to be looking off in the distance, looking at something far beyond us. Jack is not

reluctant to tell his story, but the graphic details seem to trouble him, causing him to wring his hands.

After walking away from the ministry, he bought a ranch in Chelan, where he hunted coyotes and raised chickens and turkeys. This seemed to be an important time in Jack's life, a time for healing. Even years after his accident, he still had memory loss, and his time on the ranch seemed to help him regain his memory and renew his spirit.

Three years passed, and he started receiving calls from people begging him to come back. The church, Christian Life Center in Spokane, had been in disarray while he was away. He returned, only to discover that he no longer desired to fill a pulpit, but that didn't stop him from ministering to people. He started preaching at gun shows, becoming the chaplain and often having special services for the vendors before the gun show started.

Surrounded with the hunting memorabilia he has collected his whole life, he wants to talk about his life as a minister and about his tragic accident. "Life has been full of triumphs and tragedies for me. The good came with the bad, and I didn't try to figure it out or rationalize it. It was just *que será, será*, whatever will be, will be." Jack actively ministers to people to this day. He hasn't let his nagging injuries or his age slow him down. I suspect that he will remain faithful until the end of his life.

## At the Talking Drum: On Becoming a Woman

You can borrow one thing from me,  
only one, but it must be something  
that holds the rhythm of being a woman.  
If you want celebration, I can provide it,  
darkness, too, if you've got the stomach for it,  
but I won't give up my light,  
not even for you, my child.

If a silver fish flashes its tail,  
it intends to swim out of your life.  
You must accept each loss as  
the beginning that it is. Imagine.  
The same idea can come to more than one.  
It isn't stolen. It's the wind delivering a door  
through the wall of become. We all have access.

A leaf hides in the cold and wet under the snow.  
It neither rolls, nor increases. It waits to reveal the crocus  
that will split its flesh, come spring. There are many kinds  
of warriors. We women make up the biggest tribe.  
Join us when you have returned what you borrowed.  
There will be a place for you at the talking drum,  
where all women seek their true selves.

**Snake after Lovemaking**

When you nudged it with your foot it collected its s's  
 and reared to strike, red tongue tasting the air to get  
 the scent of you. Whether fear or fury choreographed  
 what followed, what followed transcended fear or fury:  
 It tightened suddenly to a coil from whose center  
 a god's head rose swaying over a twisting spiral  
 it dipped and looped through, kinetic Celtic knot,  
 mad scribe's sinuous cursive. You had moved off.  
 No longer concerned with you, it was caught up in its own—  
 ecstasy it appeared to me—this small being that a  
 tire would flatten without the driver's feeling a thing,  
 the twill we wound in our lovemaking with threads of desire  
 that ran through our bodies made visible and perfected.

**sonnet 111 [*instantáneo*]**

(lend me an hour i need time) (yours  
 you took *cinco años* s l o w l y)  
 (not like most capitalists  
*pero estamos en méxico*)  
 (our money measures  
 the number of cabbage leaves  
 we put in boiled seawater *sopa*) (can one be  
 intrepid but full of  
 trepidation) (*los mexicanos*  
*envidian la vida de la américa*)  
 (yet *americanos* no longer have  
 garish wristclocks concrete sundials)  
 (plated in a new precious metal  
 one gaunt blackboy found) (used to smash  
 the toes of men who rape his mother in  
 the evenings before supper)  
 (*tiempo moneda* i buy coffee with mine)  
 (the kind that resembles crack  
 candy poprocks from  
 the fifties patent)

## Your Boss's Dead Son's Car

“Alan?” John knocked on the dark cherry wood door of Alan’s office. It was nicer than any door John had in his own house. When John imagined Alan’s home he saw cherry doors throughout and a balcony in the bedroom overlooking one of those lawns that was so big it needed to be cut on a riding lawn mower. He imagined that his wife walked around the house in full makeup with a glass of white wine.

Alan invited him in with a sweeping arm movement and said, without looking up from the papers on his desk, “You know, John, you’re doing a great job. Working out better than I hoped, even.”

After retiring from twenty years as head janitor at West Seattle High School, John had taken this part-time job working as a driver for Buckminster Motors, the only boutique German car repair shop on the west side of the state. People came in with their Mini-Coopers or BMWs—or sometimes the rare Apal or vintage Kleinschnittger—and John drove them to their jobs. He used Alan’s dead son’s old Audi A3. The car had been purchased new for his high school graduation, and in seven years’ time, had managed to stay clean, since most of that time the car was in storage while Alan’s son was either in the Peace Corps or hiking on the Olympic Peninsula with troubled youth. Alan often talked to John about his son’s philanthropic accomplishments with a tone somewhere between complaint and bragging.

Despite the years in storage, the son had left his mark via a slew of hippie bumper stickers on the back of the car. As payment for being a driver, John received minimum wage and the car. He wanted to take those bumper stickers off, but he was finding it tricky to talk to people about matters concerning their dead sons.

“Oh. Thanks, Alan.” John smoothed over his eyebrows. Even though his once full eyebrows were now significantly thinned, he still reached up from time to time to make sure they weren’t unruly. On Sunday evenings when he performed his usual maintenance—shaving his ears, plucking stray shoulder hairs—he’d sometimes look close in the mirror and contemplate trimming them like he used to.

“See those balloons in the corner?” Alan stopped shuffling papers and looked at John.

John nodded.

“See how they’re all yellow?” John saw the picture of Alan’s dead son on the bookshelf behind the desk.

“They are. Bright.” John, to avoid looking at Alan for too long, kept glancing at the picture. He had a vision of the son putting bumper stickers on the car: peace signs, “We must be the change we wish to see in the world,” “Free Tibet,” and one of those Jesus fish with the little feet, whatever that meant. He thought it might have something to do with walking on water. Amongst those who believed—John never did—was there ever any question as to whether or not he walked on water?

“That’s right. Bright. Clean. Monochromatic.” Alan folded his hands behind his head and leaned back in his chair. “Anything can be classy if you do it right, even something as cheesy as balloons.”

Alan told him to put the balloons outside by the Buckminster Motors signs. He walked past Karen, the receptionist, who had arrived when John was in Alan’s office. When he was first hired, she told him that, if he dyed his goatee and hair, he could pass for forty-five. With hair still grey, he passed for fifty-five. She also told him, on a separate occasion, he was handsome for his age. John decided that, if Karen ever lost twenty pounds, he would ask her on a date.

“Morning, John.”

“Hey, looks like you lost a few pounds.”

“I don’t think so, honey.” Karen called John “honey” and “sweetie” even though she was ten years younger.

With the pen in her hand, Karen motioned to the balloons and asked John what they were for. When he told her they went out by the sign, she rolled her eyes. She often rolled her eyes. Or clicked the large diamond ring on her right hand against the granite counter. She’d bought the ring with her divorce settlement.

He hung around. He looked at the deep wrinkles around Karen’s eyes. He could almost imagine her face animated—laughing at something he said. She might have found him funny if she’d gotten to know him, he often thought to himself.

"You need something?" Karen asked.

"Well, you know that car I'm driving around?" John stepped up to the counter.

"Christopher's old car," she said loud, loud enough that Alan might hear.

"Right—well, it's got these old bumper stickers on it." Leaning over the counter, he spoke quietly.

"I've seen them—God, was he a lefty. I wore a leather skirt here one time and he happened to come in." She leaned in. "The little shit lectured me about it. Still can't believe he's dead." She shook her head.

"I'd like to take them off, or for Alan to take them off, but I can't seem to bring it up."

"You have to be assertive with him. You have to just go in there and let him know what you think." She was pointing her pen at John, moving it up and down in rhythm with her advice.

"I've tried." He could tell, by the look on Karen's face and the way she was wagging her pen, that she was not thinking—and had never thought—about him sexually.

"I'll see what I can do," she said.

Around four o'clock every afternoon, when John got home from work, he'd put a little pot in his pipe—the same one he had when he was in Vietnam—and chuckle to himself about the things Alan would say: "I'm going to make a to-do list. You know why John? If you act like a go-getter you can't help but become a go-getter." Alan had not been in the war because of asthma, although John did not remember him wheezing or using an inhaler. Then he remembered the other things he'd said in passing—about how his kid had gotten mangled up when he fell off that cliff. About how, except for the greyness, his face didn't even look dead when Alan identified him; how he looked like he was smiling even though his brow was furrowed. About the way his wife cried. She wailed, he said. He never really knew what wailing was until he saw his wife do it. It's nothing like the movies, he said. It's nothing like you've ever experienced, he said. Alan managed to patronize John and make him feel pity in the same sentence.

After hanging up the balloons, he dropped a Mini-Cooper owner off at her house in Queen Anne. The lady didn't say much, but every time John looked

over at her, she smiled—a smile big and toothy enough that John knew she was nervous. He wanted to say, I'm not gonna hurt you, but he thought that was something people said before hurting someone. He tried to think of the conversation Alan would have made in a similar situation and drew a blank. After, John stopped at Safeway for a bagel and bottle of orange juice. When he stepped out of his car, a young woman came up to him and started talking about Tibet. How she was glad it was still relevant. The truth was, John didn't know anything about Tibet other than it had something to do with China and was, apparently, not free. If the woman hadn't been relatively good looking, he would have gotten in the car and pretended to not notice her walking toward him. But he was always prepared for good-looking women to take an interest in him.

On the drive home, he thought about googling "Tibet" instead of watching TV. He'd taken to getting stoned and googling things. A few nights previous he learned how to kill a chicken, why high fructose syrup is killing America (Alan avoided the stuff), and he'd watched a video of a tulip growing then dying—it must have been filmed over a few weeks. It showed it breaking through the soil, the stem crawling up, the leaves growing, the petals opening and closing, and stopped when all that was left was those black stem things, stamens. It was called time-lapse video. He had to do something to stop him from eating away the night. He could handle getting old, but not fat. He thought that being fat had more to do with not being able to get an erection than getting old.

When John pulled into his driveway at Alki Beach (his childhood home turned investment rental that he was permanently renting from his youngest brother who lived in New York), there often sat a bunny or two, seemingly awaiting his return. His next door neighbor, Alice, had six bunnies. Five of them had gotten out two years prior, and she'd never been able to get them back in the house. There was a block council meeting about the whole thing. Normally, John would have agreed with the neighborhood—who wanted five wandering rabbits perusing their gardens? But since John had no flowers or plants for them to eat, they would simply munch on the weeds in his grass. For him, it was a beneficial situation.

As he was pulling up to his house, he saw a rabbit in the middle of his driveway. Except, where the middle of the rabbit was supposed to be, there were red insides smashed on the pavement. The head and the tail were intact.

He parked on the street and walked to the house. Who would have pulled into his driveway?

John went inside and called the Humane Society. They referred him to Seattle Animal Control. John waited outside to show them where the rabbit was. He went up close to look at the eyes, which were not bulging out of the head. His face was intact—he, or she, was still a pretty animal. He bent down and stroked the ears, too soft for death. It was the orangish one; if it were the white one, the blood wouldn't blend in so well. The black one would have been the least gruesome.

After animal control came and scooped up the bunny with a big, wide shovel, John went inside and looked for any signs of intrusion. He thought maybe someone came to rob the place but left because the bunny was a bad omen. When he finally settled in to smoke and poke around on the computer, he heard a knock on the door. It was Alan.

John was surprised and muttering; Alan had to invite himself in.

"Sure, sure. I was just about to have a beer. Want one?" said John.

John got them each a Miller Lite. Alan kept looking at the label between sips. He talked about being thankful in every situation—that you can give thanks for having a son at all, even if he was taken away too soon. John felt like he would have been thankful if Alan had knocked on the door five minutes later, after he'd smoked a bit. As it was, he was a little impatient and having a hard time listening. While Alan went on and on, he contemplated saying he had to go to the bathroom and sneaking in a few puffs. He would have felt much less awkward. He might even have asked: Alan, can I help you with something? Like Karen had asked him earlier.

Finally it comes out: "I see you cleaned up that rabbit."

"Animal Control came out. How did you know about it?"

"I came here earlier." Alan looked at the floor.

"Did you see who did it?" John went to take a sip of his beer which had been empty the last two times he'd tried to take a drink.

"John, I did it." Alan's beer was still half full. His long legs were spread out wide, elbows placed on his knees. John thought that Alan was probably one of those boys in high school that girls whispered about in the hallways. He imagined girls touching themselves at night, thinking about Alan's long and solid arms wrapped around them. Alan held the beer with both hands and shook his head.

John thought about telling Alan that it was his bunny. That it must have gotten out of the backyard. Maybe Alan would offer him a new one. Maybe Alan would feel like he owed him something and John felt that Alan would be a good guy to have in his debt. But Alan kept shaking his head and moving the beer bottle around in his hands, so finally John told him the story. About the neighborhood council meetings and how they ate his weeds.

Alan's relief was visible. He laughed while John talked about the meetings—how one woman raged about the deformed petals on her tulips and how one young man who kept stepping on rabbit droppings said repeatedly, in a low voice, "I'll kill those fucking rabbits." John had been stoned at the meeting and didn't know if anyone else would have found those events as funny as he did. When John had nothing else to say, Alan, in a seemingly much lighter mood than when he walked in, asked if he'd like to get a beer somewhere. John noticed that Alan still hadn't finished the beer in his hand, but he agreed anyway.

Alan suggested they take his son's old car and held his hand out for the keys. As John got in, he realized he'd never been in the passenger seat. Maybe, John thought, he might like Alan after all. Maybe their difference in station, income, family status didn't matter that much. Maybe he'd be a good influence, or if not good, at least a wealthy one. John didn't ask where they were going because he was busy imagining what it would be like to be friends with someone like Alan. His life might be changing. And who would have thought that was possible this late in the game.

It was one of the few sunny days in spring and John noticed the dark outline of the deep green douglas firs against the clouded blue sky—he'd never noticed such a sharp contrast. He blinked, wondering if his vision was getting better. He'd always had twenty-twenty vision, and never realized that



this might be something that not everyone could see: hard lines. He looked at Alan in his thick dark-rimmed glasses and wondered what kind of contrast he saw.

As they drove onto I-5, John wondered why they didn't go to a bar closer by—there were plenty of places to go on Alki. But maybe Alan knew of a place. He thought that if Alan and he were friends, he might learn a new Seattle. He doubted Alan would be interested in his Seattle. He watched the contrast between everything they were passing—the alder reds and the young couple walking on the street and colorful buildings painted to stand out on a rainy day. John remembered when he was young and had a group of friends that he could call up to go out on any given night. They used to walk around Alki heading into the bars full of men who'd just got off work and women waiting for them. Alki used to be full of industrial workers. Every day, when he drove over I-5 to Buckminster Motors, he saw the old plants. When he was nineteen, before he went to war, he washed dishes at Alki Tavern. He would get off work and head straight out to meet up with his friends. He couldn't recall anything they did besides drink and smoke pot and sometimes ask a woman to dance. He didn't remember any specific nights and only a few specific women, but he can still call up the feeling he got during the last half hour of his shift. The excitement of heading out, the contentment of heading home with either a woman on his arm or drunk enough to sink deep into his solitude, paroxysms of freedom he'd spent years trying to recapture.

Alan and John passed the Discovery Park sign, and John realized they were no longer going for a beer. He drove the car further onto the bluff than was allowed and finally stopped.

"Karen told me about the bumper stickers. I didn't even think of it." Alan's hands rested on the steering wheel. John noticed that his large hands were speckled in age spots that he'd never noticed before.

"It's not a huge deal, it's just that people come up to me sometimes." John watched him get out and walk towards the path that led to the bluff. Although this was getting uncomfortably melodramatic for him, he figured he should get out and follow him. John was in good shape—he walked down to the Java Bean Coffee by the water every morning to read the classifieds and

the local news section of the paper. But Alan's legs were considerably longer than his, and he had to half jog to catch up to him.

"I thought we'd light it on fire." There was suddenly something scared and mean in Alan's voice. Something John hadn't heard before. He felt nervous and thrilled and, suddenly, tired.

"It's still a good car."

"Or drive it off the cliff. Although that might be illegal."

"They're both illegal." John shifted his weight from leg to leg, he tried to remember how bail was normally set on those law shows he watched? How much money did he have in savings?

"I'm a liberal guy. I donated to the Hillary campaign for god's sake." Alan had sat down looking over the water. John felt like this speech would have been better delivered standing up. "I hated everything he did." Alan barely moved while he talked.

John remained silent. He looked over his shoulder at the trees but his vision had blurred since the car ride.

"The Peace Corps. And the outdoor adventure shit with those sad, abused kids who can't get over their problems. Whatever the name is. I just wanted him to get a job and a wife and appreciate everything he had. He actually believed he could make the world a better place. I could hardly listen to it. But what was I supposed to say?"

"Maybe he made the world a better place?" John cringed when he heard the words come out. What did he know? Alan had begun to cry quietly. John placed his hand on his shoulder.

"Not for me, he didn't." His voice was aggressive again.

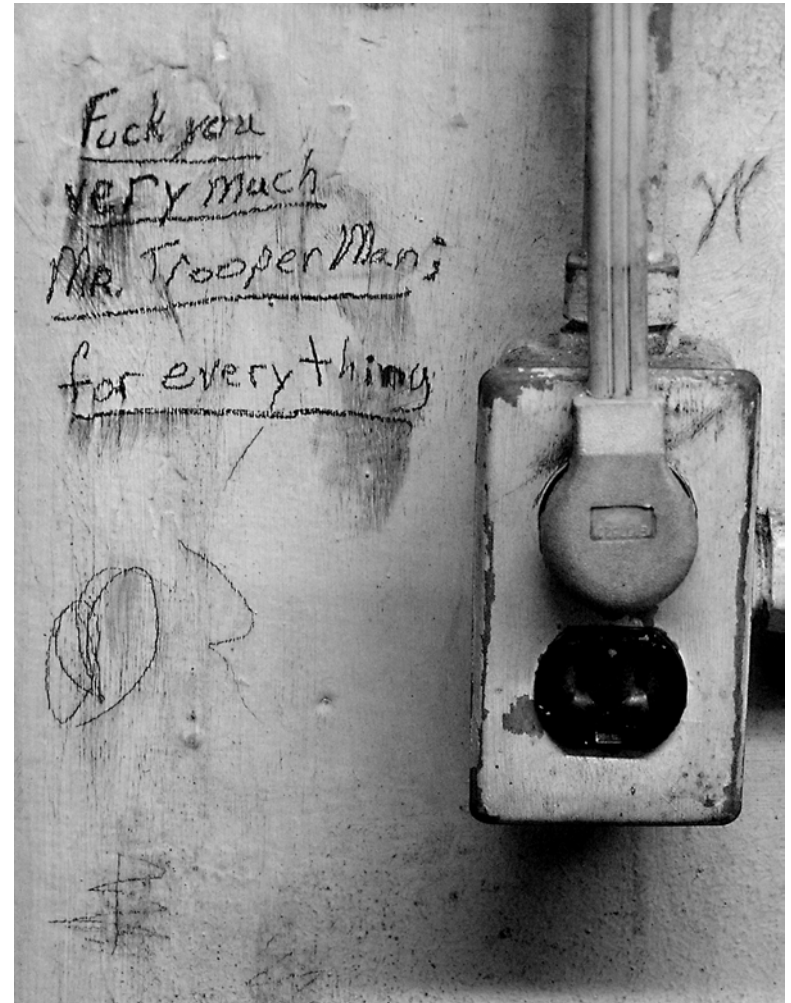
John became aware that Alan was at an extreme, an extreme that was made possible by an equal and opposite extreme, and that both extremes were unknown to him.

Or maybe he had known them once—those nights walking around Alki with his friends, exaggerating their last sexual encounter; or that day he passed a baby who'd had half its face blown off and was just alive enough to cry—but he hadn't been able to hold onto them. He thought about a quote he'd read online while searching about quantum physics—which he never figured out.

COMM 101

It was something about extremes, about the opposite of fact being lies but the opposite of one profound truth often being another profound truth. At the time, it didn't make sense, but at the time, he didn't try to make sense of it. He wanted to repeat this quote to Alan, but instead, he removed his hand from Alan's shoulder and walked back to the car.

He lay down on the long hood of the car, a car that was nicer than any he had ever bought. It was built so well that, except for the rubber of his shoe on the metal of the car, it hardly squeaked below him. The Seattle sun, kept hidden for most of fall and winter and spring, beamed with a hot strength, the energy of something wild that had been too long contained. John felt that strength and wondered how strong the sun must feel in a place where it's allowed to shine freely—a place like Mexico or Hawaii. He remembered a show about Hawaii that he watched on the travel channel: there was a shot of some sea turtles surfing waves. John wanted to be the animal caught up in those waves. He wanted it to be his head that peeked out of the water at the crest of the wave with a tight-lipped, droopy-eyed smile. He looked over at Alan, who was coming back to the car with his head down, and knew that a friendship between them was not likely.



**To Hold Me Over**

1. My tiny arms reaching up to my mother, threatening to cry if she doesn't shift focus to me.
2. The underground terrorist group known as drug users
3. The difference between money and toys
4. Hiding in pure darkness next to a bush, feeling clever, when everyone decided to end the game and not tell me.
5. My best friend and his toys
6. Just one kiss from someone special to hold me over for one week.
7. Allowing the tears to make a sentimental path on my cheek.
8. Reserved happiness
9. The difference between people and toys
10. Resolving to try every hallucinogen I've read about on Erowid.
11. Morning Glory seeds,
12. Vasoconstriction, and Heavenly Blew.
13. My best friend hating me for having a sense of home.
14. Waiting in the parking lot of a church for someone to deliver drugs I've already paid for, feeling less explosive with each passing ten-minute period,
15. knowing I've been taken advantage of.
16. Just one fuck from someone special to hold me over for one week.
17. My tiny arms reaching for someone special.
18. My sister downing a bottle of Benadryl and then asking to be taken to the hospital.
19. My sister, who's never done drugs in her life
20. Not being able to control my eyes when I'm rolling.
21. My sister sneezing. For a second I thought it was going to be a seizure.
22. Not being able to control my posture when I'm rolling.
23. Oh fuck, a seizure. Someone alert the doctor, just please don't shout.
24. Crying and not even feeling sentimental about it.
25. Expended happiness
26. Sitting and doing nothing because anything else would be too large an investment.
27. My best friend cutting himself in front of his girlfriend.
28. The difference between sympathy and toys
29. The smell of living at home alone
30. My two favorite people
31. Sobriety as a reason for happiness
32. Happiness as a reason for laziness
33. Laziness as a reason for anxiety
34. Anxiety as a reason for productivity
35. The future: money and love and my sister

36. The selfishness of excess
37. Not becoming a number in society's bulk.
38. Communicating to people through art.
39. Communicating to people through money.
40. Productivity as a reason for happiness
41. A moment of intimacy with any person to hold me over for every five-minute period for the rest of my life.
42. The difference between love and toys
43. The difference between the people that surround me with love and the people that surround me with toys
44. equals two.

## They Say, in a Southern Field

They say that when walking fields in summer  
the senses are stronger.  
Air presses upon the shoulders, heavy in late afternoon,  
making breathing labored, longer.  
When walking, they say  
you can feel row upon row, field upon field  
of ghost cotton—now gone, but once  
it tore and ripped the fingertips, refusing to yield.

And if you are still and silent,  
you can hear faint wailing echo there.  
Slave songs seep with the ache for peace  
and drift mournfully in the thick air.  
A century and more cannot fade  
and erase sorrow and grief from the land  
though they say that when you grab the brown earth  
and toss the dust to the setting sun,  
you've moved a piece of history with your hand.

## My Father's Gift

The paper weight you gave me sits in a corner  
 dust-covered and heavy—  
 smooth glass blown into the shape of a bird.  
 I used to run my hands along its sides,  
 feeling the cool lines slide beneath my fingertips.  
 You gave it to me  
 hoping its heaviness would anchor me to you,  
 keep the pages of our history held tightly together.

But there it sits,  
 dust-covered and heavy—  
 a gift given too late.  
 Our pages were scattered long ago.

## The Art of Making Dancers

### *Part I: Another Dance Class*

In the corner of the studio, I pull off my green sweatpants and sweatshirt and stuff them into my black leather dance bag. My live-in boyfriend Chris says that I need to wear earth tones. With my blonde hair and pale skin, he says, the earth tones help me look less washed out in the dance studio. Is black an earth tone? But I like pastels. I've heard that pink is the new black. My unitard today is pink. Hot pink. I take a place at the back of the studio and stretch before class. The teacher arrives. We stand. We sit. We begin. We stand again.

During the center floor leg brushes, our teacher, Ms. Buglisi, screams at me, "You, there in the pink. What the hell are you doing here?"

"Taking class," I say. I shouldn't have said anything. I know better.

"That's the whole problem with this school," Ms. Buglisi announces to the room, "moving people up to higher levels before they're ready."

In fact, I've been taking Level IV classes for a year at least, many of them from Ms. Buglisi herself, and I got permission from Ms. Bachmann to move up to this level. Everyone else like me who had previous dance training had enrolled in Level III, but I thought I should start at Level I and work my way up. So I did.

The training here seems inconsistent if lower levels don't get you ready for higher levels. In any case, the dancers who only study Graham aren't going to get a job with any company other than Graham, and they probably won't even get a job with Graham because some dancer who knows how to breathe will audition at the same time. She'll dance so fresh and so light and so full of breath that the artistic director will hire her. What does it mean if a place doesn't take care of its own?

In the studio mirror, my face is burning bright. The color of my cheeks matches the color of my unitard. I bought the unitard on sale for ten dollars. It is ribbed lycra and shiny. Yes, pink. If it were gold-colored—not pink—

John Travolta would have worn it in *Saturday Night Fever*. The top part of my outfit is shaped like a tank top. The shoulder straps are wide enough to cover my bra.

Ms. Buglisi yells: “Stop staring at yourself in the mirror.”

I don’t know where to look. I don’t know how to wipe my eyes without anyone noticing. I look down at the floor.

Ms. Buglisi yells: “Stop staring at the floor.”

I walk across the floor and pick up my black leather dance bag. I leave the room. The door to Studio One is open, and I just walk out. I walk upstairs, take off my hot pink unitard and throw it in the garbage can. I step into the garbage can and press the hot pink unitard into the bottom, into the banana peels, so that no other dancer will ever find my unitard and wear it. Not because I don’t want someone to find a free outfit, but because this pink piece of Ross’s Dress for Less Jane Fonda aerobic crap is my downfall. I do it because I don’t want any other dancer to be yelled at for wearing hot pink in class.

“It’s not disco,” I say to myself.

*I don’t say this to myself. I don’t leave class.*

I stand in class, cursing the eight-dollar bargain unitard from Ross’s Dress for Less. My face is hot hot hot pink. I stare at Ms. Buglisi. It is not safe to stare at the mirror, although the mirror is across the whole front of the room, so I don’t know where Ms. Buglisi expects me to look, but I take her point that looking and staring are different. So I stare at Ms. Buglisi. She nods at me, which makes my stomach flip knots, and then she makes a downward motion with her arms and her hands, palms down, and somehow we all understand to sit back down on the floor, and we all sit back down on the floor.

Later, I now forget the timeframe of what later means, but it is months or years later, I receive a phone call from Ms. Buglisi. She doesn’t know me, but someone told her that I take her class. She has also been told that I teach on the Upper East Side of Manhattan at Ballet Academy East. Ms. Buglisi is phoning to ask me to babysit her kid on a regular basis, every day after school. She wants me to quit teaching Mommy and Me classes to kids and toddlers on the Upper East Side. I want to ask her if she remembers my hot

hot hot pink unitard that I didn’t put in a garbage can but that I never wore again. Ever again.

I don’t ask why Ms. Buglisi abhors the color pink. Instead I say, “Thank you for thinking of me, but I’m happy teaching at Ballet Academy East, so I’m not taking on more work right now.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. I’m not happy teaching little kids with little bellies how to do little squats and bend and leaps and sing “My Donkey” while riding on my back. I’m desperately broke and desperately looking for more jobs, but I will sleep on plastic orange subway train seats before I will work for this woman.

“And you could do some press work from our Company, too,” Ms. Buglisi says amicably. “It would be good training for you, Renée.”

*Part II: Because Our Theme Revolves Around Making Dancers, I Will Include a Body Part*

Heel down. Heel down. Put another way: Put your heel all the way down on the floor when you land from a jump; otherwise, you run the risk that eventually your Achilles tendon will snap.

*Part III: How Do You Become a Dancer?*

When I was growing up on Bainbridge Island, my mother and father always waltzed in the kitchen. My father would hum, and they would dance, my father frequently stepping on my mother’s feet. I remember that my mother never stepped on my father’s feet. In front of the hanging herbs of mint and thyme and rosemary, there was nothing awkward between them—they waltzed around the room. We moved the furniture out of their way. When we were teenagers, my eldest brother and I started waltzing together along with our parents.

How do you become a dancer? It helps to have parents who love to waltz together.



## Review of *Body of a Dancer* by Renée E. D'Aoust

Here's something I don't usually say: I majored in theatre. Normally, I opt for the also-true: I studied playwriting. But, really, the first gives a more complete picture. Like all the other playwrights, directors, designers, and stage managers in our program, I took classes in acting, in movement, in voice. I took stage combat where I learned to pretend to fight with a rapier and dagger. I took stage makeup where I learned to give myself realistic-looking wounds and bruises using latex and pancake makeup. I was no good at any of this. Worst of all was anything that involved me moving my still-awkward, recently post-adolescent body across a stage. The problem, according to the acting faculty, was that my brain got in the way.

At one point, I remember worrying myself into near-paralysis trying to remember whether it was natural to walk with arms and legs in opposition (right arm with left leg) or in tandem (right with right). Flummoxed, I wrongly opted for the later and went across the stage like some kind of retarded marionette.

This total incapacity for movement when I think anyone else is watching is my point of entry into Renée E. D'Aoust's new book *Body of a Dancer* (Etruscan Press, 2011). Unlike me, D'Aoust (pronounced "Dao"), who trained at the elite Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance, is competent of mind and body. Her book is a series of essays that chronicles her immersion in New York's strange world of modern dance.

To call this a memoir is reductive. It is a history of modern dance, a critique of Martha Graham, a rendering of the world of dance both inside and outside the studio. It is a memoir too, of course—D'Aoust's own journey into and, eventually, out of the physically and emotionally arduous world of Graham's modern gives the book its larger structure—but it is more than that. D'Aoust is not enough of a prima donna, it seems, to limit herself to the traditional constraints of memoir. Instead, a testament to her generosity as a writer, she spends much of her own memoir in the wings, ceding center stage to often tragic, often beautiful, always frank and fleshy renderings of the lives of the dancers around her.

In an essay called "Daniela Can Fly," an Argentinian dancer leaps from the fifth floor window of her apartment. Leaps, not jumps. Flies, really, as the title suggests. D'Aoust goes out of her way to clarify that this is not a cry for help, hardly even a suicide attempt. It is an insane extension of the insane rigors of the dance. We see Daniela again later in the book, out of the wheelchair and back in the studio. This isn't romanticized.

None of the people are romanticized. Ted, the subject of a later essay, "Holy Feet," left Lutheran ministry in the Midwest to study modern in New York City. D'Aoust takes us with him on his new mission to bring modern to the masses. He could be, D'Aoust says, Lear's fool, "the wisest one around," and, like much of the book, Ted is comical in ways that subvert trope. The closest D'Aoust comes to lionizing a dancer is Liz, who, in "Theatrical Release," succeeds where Daniela has failed. She uses a rope. It is a chilling moment, Greek tragedy to Ted's Shakespearean comedy. The eulogy for Liz is deftly interwoven with the narrative of D'Aoust's work alongside her and others in the well-known Kevin Wynn Collection, a professional high point for D'Aoust.

What makes this stylistic range possible is that D'Aoust approaches it all with a clear, steady gaze. Her prose is straightforward, even as it reaches toward lyricism. She avoids the clichés about dance and dancers, often going out of her way to unmake them. The second essay in the book, "Graham Crackers," begins with a line of dancers jumping across a crusted patch of dried blood on the floor.

Spilled blood is a regular occurrence in a Graham class. Since modern dancers dance barefoot, often the skin tears or burns from the pressure of contact with the floor. If there's blood, Kristi gets the rubbing alcohol and paper towel and wipes the floor. She never uses gloves.

D'Aoust studied at the Graham Center during the early nineties, "at the beginning of AIDS." This is in the mix too.

Writing about dance, D'Aoust must render the physical movements with precision and clarity on the page. And she does, as in this moment, from "Theatrical Release":

I had to drop to my knees at the same moment Stef kicked over my head; if our timing was off, Stef would kick me in the head or, worse, the neck. I waited as long as possible to duck, daring Stef to kick too soon, and Stef smiled, her legs so long, so powerful, she controlled me with her limbs. After I ducked, I reached both arms overhead. Stef pulled hard, while I jumped, from a crouch up into her arms.

And, from “Island Rose”:

I brought my right leg down, made a quick turn while curving my arms overhead in Fifth position, took a step, and repositioned myself solidly into the same stretched, titled shape. Every cell of my being reached through and beyond my arms, my legs, the theatre walls. All else was appendage. The center was the whole.

The writing feels kinesthetic, beginning in D'Aoust's own physical memory of the movement—in the deep places of the body, the spine and the gut—and expanding out toward the lyrical.

By the end of the book, D'Aoust has left Graham. She has left professional dance altogether, but her rift with Graham feels more pointed. In “Dream of the Minotaur,” she returns years later to see a performance by the Graham Company. She is shocked by the ugliness and angularity of it all, by the lack of flight. “Modern now has too much irony, or maybe just cynicism, but it is especially hard to think where so much head-banging and meta-commentary can go but down into the dirt and into more earthbound movement.” She is longing for ballet, of course, where she began as a dancer, long before New York and the Graham Center. But she is also longing for a version of modern made more in the image of Isadora Duncan than of Graham.

D'Aoust's prose—and her book—exists between these poles. There is Graham in her language: bodily and plainspoken. There is Duncan in her scope: lyrical and large. A book about modern dance should inhabit this very pull between gravity and levity, between grit and grace. It is the beauty and problem of the form, and D'Aoust stands at the intersection taking the better impulses from both.

For those of us who do well to lurch across the stage, it is a particular pleasure to see all of this through D'Aoust's eyes, to experience it through her physical memory. It is an exercise in physical and literary grace, an affirmation of the possibility of beauty in an age of irony.

**Editors' Note**

The TCR board is delighted to welcome a guest contributor for this issue. Although she lives outside our region, Lee Sharkey has, for the past two years, held skype-seminars with us to help us think through some of the issues surrounding publishing a literary magazine. She is co-editor of the prestigious *Beloit Poetry Journal*, and she was kind enough to allow us to publish two of her poems here.

**Naomie Barnes** graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in Literature, minoring in Art History. She is currently a resident of North Idaho as a recent transplant from her native Mesa, Arizona. When she isn't reading or writing, she enjoys playing a variety of instruments, singing, fishing, or just taking in the beauty of the Northwest region.

**Lauren Brandt** is a student at North Idaho College, majoring in graphic design, and does some part-time graphic design work for Mountain Gear. She loves playing video games, illustrating, and reading Grimm's fairy tales.

**Andreas Braunlich** left a career in information technology to pursue graphic design. He started without any related skills and learned everything he needed along the way from the great instructors in the Graphic Design Department at North Idaho College. With only weeks left in his second college career, he has already started a new job as a designer with the *Coeur d'Alene Press*. He is very grateful to everyone who helped make this possible.

Etruscan Press published **Renée E. D'Aoust's** memoir *Body of a Dancer* in 2011. The pieces in Trestle Creek Review stem from that writing project but were not included in the book. D'Aoust has taught at North Idaho College since 2007 and would like to thank her students for working so hard and juggling so much with such unfailing good cheer. She would also like to thank the NIC English Department for giving her the opportunity to teach, which she loves. For more information about *Body of a Dancer* and other publications, please visit [www.reneedaoust.com](http://www.reneedaoust.com).

**Wade Erban** is a man who took ordinary events and distorted them for fun. He placed his short writings on his facebook page, until a friend asked for creative submissions.

**Jonathan Frey** teaches writing at North Idaho College and serves as editorial advisor to Trestle Creek Review. He is a regular contributor to *Bark*, a blog of literature and culture. He lives in Spokane, Washington, with his wife and daughter.

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**Richard King** is a photographer who lives in North Idaho. He is always searching for what he calls “the textures that humanity leaves on the world” to photograph.

**Daniel Knapp**, 25, is a geology student at the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho, and received his AS at North Idaho College in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Initially interested in digital photography, he moved to 35mm and then medium format photography in 2010, specializing in black and white landscapes. Daniel utilizes a combination of traditional darkroom and modern digital techniques to achieve print-quality photographs

**Philip Marosi** is currently a student at NIC. He has enjoyed taking English classes at NIC. They have resulted in many unique experiences for him. It was his privilege to interview a gentleman named Coyote Jack for an English 101 assignment. His essay is the interview with Jack, an extraordinary man.

**Robens Napolitan** lives in a concrete geodesic dome in North Idaho with her husband and cat. She belongs to a writers’ group that meets weekly where they do timed writings to prompts. She is also active in a once-a-month open mic that has been in existence for over thirteen years. In addition to writing, she paints, and is an avid gardener, who, when hiring out her gardening skills, sometimes recoups her expenditures for plants.

**Jack Ortiz** is an English major at NIC. He’s graduating this spring and transferring to U of I in the fall. He enjoys dancing, reading, and loitering at coffee shops.

**Neal Peters** received his MFA in creative writing from Eastern Washington University. He teaches composition at North Idaho College and Spokane Community College. Neal lives in Spokane with his wife and three children, where he keeps a fridge perpetually stocked with bottled Coke imported from Mexico.

**Kate Reed** writes and teaches in Spokane, Washington. She also blogs at [katejreed.tumblr.com](http://katejreed.tumblr.com).

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**Liz Rognes** is a writer, musician, and teacher originally from the Midwest. She now lives in the Inland Northwest, where she teaches at North Idaho College and Spokane Falls Community College. She is a graduate of the MFA program at Eastern Washington University, and she is currently working on her second album and a collection of essays about literal and figurative landscape.

**Lee Sharkey** is the author, most recently, of *Calendars of Fire* (forthcoming from Tupelo Press), *A Darker Sweeter String* (Off the Grid Press), and *To A Vanished World* (Puckerbrush Press). She was the Maine Arts Commission’s 2010 Fellow in Literary Arts and a recipient of Zone 3’s *Rainmaker Award*. She is the co-editor of the *Beloit Poetry Journal* and the facilitator of a writing workshop for psychiatrically-labeled adults.

**Jennifer Stevenson**. Currently a student. Second year. Full-time worker, full-time student, and part-time writer. She is attending NIC for an English degree while she is working with getting a teaching degree. Later she hopes not only to get a master’s in English but a creative writing degree as well. Idaho is her state of residency, but she comes from the rugged plains of Great Falls, Montana. A writer is not one person but many trying to fit in one shell, and that is her. She is both reader and writer.

**Aubrey Stribling** has an English degree from Brigham Young University-Idaho, yet works for an accountant. After living in Boston and Beijing, and a few places in between, she has nestled into North Idaho—the jury is still out about the snow.

**Adam Walsh** lost all sensibility along with his hair at nineteen. Poetry permits people to fulfill the primal aspects within them. Richard Hugo said something along the lines of: “If you are going to kill someone, kill them in a poem;” it lasts much longer. Enough with death and suffering. Poetry, specifically the kind Walsh composes, attempts to briefly show the faults of others through his own. Speak of tolerance in your poems, he advises; rest under the words to attain a different level of sleep.

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**Judy Werre** lives in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho with her husband Jim Werre. They have been married forty-three years this June and have four children and eight grandchildren. Besides raising her family, she has developed over five hundred residential home sites and has been a home builder for twenty-two years. She comes from a family of craftsmen, originally from Norway. She has her real estate broker's license in both Idaho and Washington with Keller Williams Realty and has been in the real estate industry for over thirty-two years. Recently, she decided to go to college and pursue a fine arts degree. This is a personal goal she has always wanted to achieve. She loves interacting with the younger students while developing her artistic skills. She finds education enlightening and a fun part of her current life's journey. She is grateful to have the opportunity to attend North Idaho College and continue to grow as a person.

Trestle Creek Review would like to thank the following for their support and collaboration:



# Trestle | CREEK | Review

**welcomes submissions of any genre of literary or creative work** for its 2013 issue. Submissions of poetry (3-5 poems per submission), prose (5,000 words maximum) or black-and-white artwork (any style or medium) may be sent via email. We consider work by any member of the North Idaho College community—including students, faculty, staff and alumni—and by residents of Idaho's northern five counties.

No previously published work can be considered, but simultaneous submissions are welcome. Please include a brief bio with your submission. More information and complete submission guidelines are available at our website, [www.nic.edu/tcr](http://www.nic.edu/tcr). Submission deadline is **January 31, 2013**, for May publication.



Established in 1982, Trestle Creek Review is published annually by the students and the English Department of North Idaho College.



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