

Have you ever ignited the pages of a book with the briefest look?
Here's a toast to the arrogant art, the poignant prose, the impassioned poetry
that dares to remember the perpetual promise
that all men and women
are created equal but not the same.
So when pen hits paper I hope it bleeds rainbows
and drips onto the stoic soil.
I hope it tells stories of 20 dollar bills and late night thrills
and building impossible walls
just to tear them down.

Kevon Turner '15
Phoenix Editor Emeritus



2016

THE PHOENIX - GONZAGA FINE ARTS REVIEW

VOL. XXXI



THE PHOENIX

2016

Gonzaga,

No matter which names appear in this book, know that the stories, art, and poetry inside are your own. The Phoenix has been a cultural mainstay of Gonzaga's fine arts since 1976 (apart from its hiatus) and whether or not you've submitted anything, be assured that you are among a group of students who inspire and foster the creative talents of others. This magazine is as much yours as it belongs to those who helped put it together.

As editors, we're especially proud of the submissions this year. People from all walks of life at Gonzaga sent in something, so we're gonna wager that it gives a pretty good snapshot of the school in general.

If you submitted something and you don't see it in here, we apologize. There were just too many fantastic pieces submitted, so you have only your classmates to blame. In the meantime, send those angry emails to hrissetto@gonzaga.org

Here it is: the 2016 edition of The Phoenix, Gonzaga's premier literary and arts magazine. Have fun, kids.

Sincerely,

Luke Allen
Holden Madison

THE PHOENIX

2016 - Volume XXXI

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Holden Madison

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Weider '10, Johannes Schmidt '09, Will Felker '08, and all those
who submitted art and literature for consideration.

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Dedication

Dr. John C. Warman '57



A Gonzaga legend who put his life into the school. A mentor, teacher, and friend. His spirit still lives on Eye Street. From the Alma Mater of St. Al's to the *Salvete Discipuli*, *Salve Doctor* of the Latin classes, Doc was a pillar of Gonzaga College High School. From Sheehy shows to shouts against St. John's, Doc was our biggest booster club member. He was a true renaissance man – a scholar of language, a musical voice, and organist extraordinaire. With all this and more in mind, we dedicate the 2016 edition of *The Phoenix* to Dr. John C. Warman, Class of '57.

Forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit

“Perhaps one day it will be a joy
to remember also these things”

-Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.203

Literature
&
Poetry

The contaigous smile
and invigorating handshake
greeting me everyday.

The steadfast memory
only expanding
through time.

The undying devotion
to his friends,
his schools,
and God.

The unique fascination
in every one of your students'
thoughts, feelings, and lives.

All of these
I will miss
about you Doc.
I could count
on you everyday until
this fatal fall.

While you may
be gone,
your spirit lives on,
resting on Eagle's wings.

Angsty Teenagers

Bumping up and down like the angsty teenager I am
I patiently stand in a line that stretches around the block full
of other kids waiting to break their ear drums
on colossal speakers blasting bass-filled music.

Brimming with courage my friend and I spark
a conversation with the pretty girls next to us laughing
like hyenas from the jokes we stole. Before moving on
Lucas and I exchange our numbers like dollars for change.

Its finally our turn to be searched by the hulking men
whose clothes match the dark night except bright letters
flashing “SECURITY” and after being checked and waved on
we walk through the doors
like they were the gates to God’s kingdom.

A brick wall of smoke and blaring music smacks me
across the face yet the strange distopia satisfies me.

We begin talking to girls more mysterious than
the dark side of the moon and suddenly forget the ones
we met earlier like our responsibilities for tomorrow.

The night carries on and the noise drowns
out our means of communication
but we exchange nods and smiles of happiness.

A Cold Day in Hell

Snow fell in hell tonight
fallen flakes
on the faces
of foes felled tonight
somebody i know will go to jail tonight
and a praying mother's face will go pale tonight
forever forgotten feats of the ones who marched
the leaders that led the people, and the ones who taught
that God gave you a life so you can leave your mark
so you can leave your mark, on every street you walk
and then the masses talked, and so a movement grew
"me and the other three are sitting in Woolworth-will you
come too?"
bands of children from Birmingham-they all came through
The harvest moon lights the sky while we enjoy our fruit
so there wasn't a tear to be shed,
stood stoic in proud defiance
beaten while being seen as the epitome of violence
how could've a detached source ever define this?
understand the pain and motivation behind this?
but just then a cold wind came and stuffed out the flame.
the movement died the moment it finally came.
Snow fell in hell tonight
fallen flakes
on the faces
of those felled tonight
just then i saw and heard the siren
saw the broken mother crying
at first I thought I wouldn't care
but in my heart I made it where
I had a voice for hope
and I had to voice her sorrow
the snow continued falling
but the sun will rise tomorrow

Questions for a Rotten Fruit

In response to Frank X Walker's Rotten Fruit

You gotta be a real rotten fruit
to think that christening a man
with gasoline, and purging
him could save you.

But, who preached that sermon?

You did not wake up one morning
in need of saving. No,
I assume someone spit hate in that
kisser and it pleased your palate.

But, why did you like the taste?

Maybe too much time with the same
nicotine between your fingers had you
looking for a new buzz to remind
your sick soul of a body.

But, how do you kill this time?

Why not grab the rifle that your
preacher gave you, and drink
the six pack calling from the passenger seat
as you just hunt for game.

But, what happens after you catch?

drag yourself back to the dirt
and tell your granddaddy's
stone because the dead
like good stories in hell.

Harold the Immortal

As I stepped out the door, I caught a glimpse of Harold slouching off down the street. An old man in his late sixties, he had been shuffling around my neighborhood ever since I had moved here. Whispers around the whitewashed houses said that he lost his job after becoming an alcoholic. Since he had virtually no limit, he drank himself out of house and home. Poor guy. Many of the neighbors' kids had taken him up as a kind of sport. They threw rocks at him, called him names, and stole anything from him they could.

It was good to see that he was up and moving; only last night, the police had to get him down from the lamppost he had tried to hang himself from. It had been quite a sight to see, him struggling against the officers. The dirt on his clothes had rubbed off on their pristine uniforms. Eventually, after a while, they had given up and let him back on the street.

After all, it's not like they could put him away for life. Disheveled and dirty, he limped off between the neatly trimmed hedges, displaying the age-old ragged socks from the multitudes of holes in his shoes. I decide to follow him. I had a few extra dollars in my pocket, and he looked like he needed them more than I did.

I walked past the house next to mine, where Janice had been living before she discovered she was immortal. After a nasty battle with the bank, who then refused to remortgage her house, she left, leaving the house behind. A few days later, I saw her near the store, dressed in rags, devouring saltines from the plastic wrapping. She was a little crazy; her usual tactic was to jump in front of your car, since she couldn't die, she tried to make a living off of the insurance payout. Her insurance made her drop each case because, due to her *condition*, there was no danger on her part and therefore had no need for any money.

I trailed Harold for a while, weaving between houses. Maybe it was rude to do that, but I wagered that he had probably seen much worse. He picked up speed, almost a short jog, and eventually he had tottered out of sight. Nonplussed by his sudden disappearance, I turned around and

headed home.

I had left the door open to my house. Mesmerized by the immortal's sidewalk odyssey, I had forgotten to lock it. I went inside, fearing the worst. However, nothing was amiss; my TV and computer, the first things I checked, were still there.

My kitchen did not fare so well. In the few minutes Harold was here, he somehow ransacked all of the liquor I had in the fridge, and he had emptied the bread drawer as well. I sighed. This wasn't a problem-- I could buy more food, I had the money -- but I was more annoyed at my own mistake.

Something did catch my eye. A crumpled, faded dollar bill, one that wasn't there before, that was placed on my alabaster tablecloth. I picked it up and unfolded it. There was hastily scrawled writing on it.

One one side: *You need this more than I do.*

On the other: *Life's short, kid. Enjoy it while it lasts.*

A Stripped Prayer

Born on the charred streets of Howard Hospital
i remained unseen and unheard, hopeless
Just a child.

But raised in a city of progress and power,
DC was my mother tongue and it spoke
through my soul, lifting me ---
Showing me a way.

Echoing it's power, on the horizons of north and south,
DC stood below me
Through my existence, it spoke unto the world
But what would that do?

There on that violated edge sticking out of the world map,
There stood one bloody corner of hell,
my second home, bathed in hispanic blood,
With the exalted words *ayuda El Salvador, salvanos*.
DC could barely hear its cry.

And further down,
On that rough Spanish terrain,
Stood my third home,
A repressive regime ---Bolivia, home of Evo,
a prison for my people.
DC, just the other side,
Freedom.

What could I do, anything but preach
My mother tongue,
DC -- land of work and prosperity
Value it had given me, but my heritage
Cut through it, skinning it away.

Where does your value lie,
If piece by piece it's stripped from
you, hidden to the world, invisible
to your own eyes . . .
Dios Mio, ayudanos.
Amen.

Abdul

I listen
To you on 88.5
On a Sunday afternoon.
Your story, Abdul,
Reaches me. You
Are afraid of The Taliban like me.
You crammed into a
vehicle and crossed
borders with broken
breaths. You arrived in
London, but cannot pursue
dreams because of an asylum status.
You're 18
Now. You fled
Illiteracy and oppression
8 years ago. And now you
Face it again with deportation.
I pull into the driveway,
but your story continues on the road.

Ode to an Oratory Warrior

Thus strode the captain of Legions,
On the fields of injustice,
he did battle
On the citadel of prejudice,
and on the ramparts of racism,
he lay siege.

Far he traveled,
and long he struggled
Resistance was futile, but he endeavored
With his loyal,
but not royal,
Steady guard by his side.

The line was held,
and with a call that rallied companions,
off he marched,
To the hot gates of Memphis,
where the pallet of a lost artist,
painting nothing but ghosts
would be corrected with color.

The champion rose from the blood soaked ground
To duel eternally in the game of chess,
the raging conflict between black and white.

Head held high,
with an arsenal of rhetorical ammunition blazing,
but a stray bullet,
from the ancient bow of Paris,
struck its mark.

Sullen stood the world,
but hearts did not sink,
they rose to the rhythm of inspired songs and hopes.

The war would be won, by the dream of one man.

The Devil Plays the Guitar

Woken in Eden by a steel-string guitar
Eve taught me the chords,
and I learned the ballad of the sinners.

Running from the dictatorship of the cross
I tripped down the stairs.
Limping across a highway
the devil pulled up to me on a rusty motorbike.
He offered me a ticket to the concert of the damned.
and off we rode.

So with a fist strapped to my heart
I danced in the pit of punks and demons
Singing with the choirs
of Hell's saints.

My fist pounding the air
to the beat of overdriven guitars and blown out amps,
Surfing on an ocean of tattooed hands.

What Could Have Been

A family sat devastated
at the foot of the bed
tears slowly soaked the sheets.

The thrill of being an older brother
wrenched from his grip too soon
all he could do was sit
and bathe in the essence
of what could have been.

He had a dream
where he could hand down
his prowess of life
onto a younger sibling
but that dream turned to nightmare

in the gathering of funeral
frustration running back and forth
endlessly he heard
“I’m sorry for your loss”

Coffee House Lovers

Where hipsters gaggle and gossip,
blaring indie rock music.
He glanced a woman with coffee stained eyes,
sipping on black nectar,
one-part frothy steamed milk,
another part artist's magic.

Eyes crossing paths,
locked in awkward stare.
Both tongues twisted.
No words could escape the jailed mouth.
Searching for words, but none found.
Wide cheeked smiles
and red wine painted faces only.

No idea of what to spew out,
damp clammy hands full of
curiosity. Squeezing
any courage out,
he let loose a
simple, stuttered,
"Hello".

Why Are You Surprised?

Why are you surprised?
When a happy hour drink shatters your window
When feet stomp in twisted tongues
When your law has no effect
When your eyes are glued to the TV screens
When we burn your beloved city that we built to ashes
When a Black fist is put in your face

How would you like me to communicate?
Turner killed
Douglass scowled
Thurgood negotiated
X shouted
King preached
Barack suggested
But still you don't understand

Your ways of communication must have no meaning
Just as your words dubbed strong as an oak
Let me refrain
When I burn your flag
I'm going to let you know it doesn't represent me
There was only three fifths of me at the constitution
Not any at the declaration
What about the emancipation
We were supposed to be sent back to Africa
I think honest Abe forgot to mention that

Declaration of wars I didn't sign
But I did fight proudly with broken guns
For a country that I owed nothing too
For a country that would rather me dead
For a country that was separate but equal

Do these rotten history text books tell my story
The book can be brown dusty burn sticky for all I care

But at least make it true
Even when the Nine did enter your schools
You chanted rioted and killed
Oh wait now you're the fools
Remember this if anything else
As Moses said let my people go
But as crazy as it sounds you can't
You need us
But not until situations are dire
Not until your precious children might be sent to war
Not until your stadiums are empty and pockets are dried up
That is when we will move to our seat at table we built
Sitting on chairs that we crafted
The table dressed with linen that we wove
Eating with pottery and dinner ware that we forged

We are now at our seat
You better be prepared to listen
Or
You shouldn't be surprised

I'm Here

I'm here because of you,
It was not your choice,
Nor was it mine,
But I'm glad that I'm still here,
With you by my side.

I don't know if I'd be here,
Had you not materialized,
and what we share will always be prized.
You can never be marginalized
Because you, you are why I'm alive

The agony brought on by anxiety
Was nearly a catastrophe,
But you brought me vitality,
And back to reality,
Narrowly escaping tragedy.

The Mutts of Society

There is a sorrowful whelp,
From beneath the dim yellow smog.
A hero, a savior,
and a dog.

I served for years
the voice cried out from the dark.
All those around solely heard
barks.

Nobody makes eye contact,
Everyone watches their back.
Clutching their belongings tighter,
People think all this dog wants is a lighter.

This dog has become a nuisance,
And this human,
became a dog.

Hew Himwich

Hew Himwich was stuck
quite literally in a rut
see Mr. Himwich was a miner
he'd mind things, you see
in the caverns and now he was trapped,

His leg caught in a crack, a crevice, a fissure.
Now as a minor, he minded being trapped
when he had mining to do.
Hew Himwich's frustration grew

He applied force,
and strained to pry the most uncooperative
leg from its quite uncomfortable nook

Hew Himwich pulled hard,
wrenched his leg free of the stone and
in the process, poor Hew
shattered his ankle

Now Hew was hurt.
Hurt and angry
so angry in fact that he felt it prudent
to ram his very mortal fist
into the immortal side of the cavern wall
Mr. Himwich's fist, similar to his ankle, was now
a swollen mass of red flesh and shrapnel bones

At present, Mr. Himwich's anger avalanched into pure rage
this rage, made manifest in a grand roar from a Titan,
seemingly made the whole cavern shudder, shake,
and ultimately crumble.
And crumble it did

Colors

Brown on my skin
Brown on my first love
i bleed Burgundy and Gold.

my soul is filled with Purple
yet I mostly wear Blue
accompanied by a touch of luminous Ice.

my family lives a Green lifestyle
but my father embraces a sorry new york Blue
and my siblings decided to follow his Dark path.

my sister loves Rubies and Pearls
but was born in the month of Sapphire
into a world that was once separated by Black and White
blinded by fallacious assumptions.

i strive for a tint of happiness
in this world of evolving Colors.

Rough Blue Slacks

Kids these days.
they don't see the perfect
combination of comfort, warmth, and
style that lays before their eyes.

Amazing how in a matter of
ten years, they are
known as "lame" or "nerdy."

Denim garments go with button downs,
a sweater, or a simple t-shirt.

A plain blue pair can be seen on
a redneck or a guy going out to grab
a few drinks with his buds.

The possibilities are endless.

For you young men in this world
today, I ask you to give jeans a chance
and bring them back from the dead.

Ode to GoGo

Whether it's the drumsticks slamming the skin of the drum
or the cowbell clanking the metal
the music shines bright
into your weary eyes

The singer's words gracefully enter your ear
it feels right
as a caterpillar in a cocoon
and the bass beats

at the same pace as your pouncing heart
its that beat that makes you
want to bounce in your seat
as you ride,

the lyrics resonate in you
drawing a feeling of home
it reminds you
of the District of Columbia

maybe it's none of these things
the way the music emigrates from
the speaker, and all you can do
is bob your head and crank.

Rasta Man

Born both black and white
Jamaican and European
curly, scraggly dreadlocks
obscure my other nature

Jamaican is all they see
The Wailers to solo
I have One Love
music

Catholic from the womb
turned Rastafarian
My motto No Woman No Cry
stress is no matter

the words flow from my lips
never inscribed
Positive Vibrations
my outlook

I write songs looking
out my window at
Three Little Birds
as they sit on my doorstep

music is my bones,
my blood
rasta culture my lifestyle
red, green, and yellow my colors

I say peace to the world
as I rise up
in a cloud of marijuana

My words, stained on the world

Prodigal's Son

Out of the womb
you lifted me
just so I could stare down on you
begging, praying that I would do better

I was a prize
yet sometimes a pest
you could never entirely squash
so you scolded me
berated me
but you were there
more than most can say
yet the expectation was nothing less

You gave me something to look up to
something to believe in
having me dream of heroes
with black capes
or moguls
with more digits
on checks
than in phone numbers
yet even sitting in awe of them
you stood
overshadowing them
in the recesses of my mind

Though I will stray away
I won't lose my roots
from the memories you planted
in my brain
stuck deep like
words in your chocked throat
tighter than
your grizzly embrace
I'll never forget my true home

The Bus Stop

Waiting at the bus stop
Wind whooshes by
The waning wisps of winter
Weaving through the trees
Waltzing through the barren wasteland
Of walkways, workers,
and wilted flowers on grey windowsills
Just waiting

Waiting for the bus
Two men by the wayside whispering
A woman whistling, rocking her baby
Wishing the child would wake later
Me wielding the weight of my backpack
Wasting time with myself
Working to look at the ground
We're all just waiting for the bus

Suddenly the squeaks of the wheels
Waking the sun
Seemingly working wizardry
As winter slips
Summer streaks in, soothing
The sun soaking the streets
Sorrow subsides
The bus arrives
No more waiting

The Freedom of Childhood

You cannot go where you want
or be who you want to be,
but you can walk with assurance,
knowing the hand will lead you across the street safely.

You cannot say what you want,
or escape where you please,
yet you hide anyway.

Childhood is a time of protected freedom,
a euphemism for love.

As I grow,
I let go of that childhood,
but hold, grip, anchor myself
to that love,
which is ever
so like the
Titanic.

The Refuge of Suburbia

Outside the bustling city with tall,
transparent, glass buildings
that show a reflection to those who look on
where many ride to work on a transport underground
a passage-way from the home to employ
where so many are drawn
to grasp at a chance of success unfathomed.

I come from a place beyond the city
a place of suburbia
an area that exists only to give refuge
to those who work tirelessly
where adolescence and youth are preserved
until one is ready to enter
the city with bustling, tall, reflective buildings
which dare you to glance at your own transformation
from the onlooker to the observed.

Anaphora

If I thought I had a good life,
there was always proof of that to be found.
If I thought I was hungry,
there was food to be eaten.
If I thought I was funny,
there was someone to laugh.
If I thought I was smart,
there was a good grade to be had.
If I thought I was cool,
there were friends who wanted to hangout.

If I thought I was athletic, there was a game to be won.
If I thought I was interesting,
there was someone who wanted to talk.
If I thought I was nice,
there was someone that would tell me I am.
If I thought I was being treated unfairly,
there was someone who would rush to my aid.
If I thought all those things just came from me,
there is a real fool inside me.

If I thought I was hungry, someone else had bought the food.
If I thought I was funny, someone else had to laugh with me.
If I thought I was smart, someone was helping me study.
If I thought I was cool, someone had to put up with me.
If I thought I was athletic, someone had to coach me.

If I thought I was interesting,
someone had to explain it to me first
If I thought I was nice,
someone had to teach me how to be friendly.
If I thought I was being treated unfairly,
someone had given me a sense of dignity.
If I thought I was happy,
someone else was making me smile.
If I thought I didn't need others in my life,
I sure as heck think that now.

On “The Road Not Taken”

You took the path traveled by many
You took the path traveled by cowards

You wrote of equal roads
You wrote of regret and sorrow

You claim to return to the road
You claim to take the other path

You won't return to the other road
You won't go down the other path

You did not make the right choice
You did not take the right path

You thought you could come back to this fork
You thought you could change your life

You told your descendants of a great journey
You told your descendants of a road not taken

You live your life as a lie
You live your life as someone you're not.

I'm Justice

Who am I to say that there is still racism.

Who am I to say that use of the nword by anyone is wrong.

Who am I to say that many black men are being innocently killed by policemen.

Who am I to want more black kids off the streets and into classrooms.

Who am I to believe that it is harder to be african americans in the present day. Who am I to say that Martin Luther King Jr's "I had a dream" speech isn't true until our nation makes it so.

Who am I to say that a black man calling a white man brother is quietly frowned upon.

Who am I to believe that Trayvon Martin wouldn't have been shot if he was white.

Who am I to say that as black people we must move beyond the typical black stereotype.

Who am I to believe that as a nation we still see color.

Who am I to say that as a race we, against our will, were enslaved for nearly 250 years.

Who am I to want my nation to not judge people if they are white or black.

Who am I to want to see more african americans hold high job positions.

Who am I to drive through DC and see almost 100% of the homeless be brothers and sisters.

Who am I to become angry when I see innocent black kids dying in the streets.

Who am I to say the we must clean up our act.

Who am I to say that we are not one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Who am I to fight for my race.

Who am I to love my people.

Who am I to want change.

Who am I to want justice.

Who am I, I'm Marshall Reed.

Where's the Change

In the voice of Abraham Lincoln

I didn't die for equality
Back in 1865 for our society
To have taken a few steps
Towards equality by today

It does not take 150 years

Your society cannot only
Speak of this issue
When a black man is falsely accused
Or wrongly treated on national news
Because they are in everyday life.

We need another hero
A courageous man
Willing to be told otherwise
Willing to put his life on the line.

There was me
There was King
There was...?

Wounded Knee

It was too sunny to be in a ghostly field,
hundreds of vengeful spirits, congregated
overseeing the descendants of their murderers.

There we were, strutting our preppy
confidence, unaware what our ancestors
inflicted against these “savages.”

Wounded Knee,

thousands of “savages” cut down like
corn stalks. Atop the massacre
a cemetery.

We entered
feeling an eerie gaze,
the roaring silence, of the “savages”
upon us.

A father
grieving his son’s demise with,
a glass bottle and brown paper,
exclaimed,
“Leave, this is a place of respect!”

We are the “savages.”

Witness

I click rewind on the rusted buttons in my mind. Was it my fault? Café Elliot. Chipped white coffee cups. Neon sign hawking coffee. People lounge carelessly on their dainty wooden chairs. I'm appalled by their innocence. They throw me strange, strangled looks. I've never understood why they grip their umbrellas so tightly. Umbrellas can't protect them from nails. The wide windows fail to block out the oppressive white light of the rainy sky.

The man at the table next to me smells like cigarette smoke and newspaper ink. I didn't notice that before. Maybe death sharpens the senses. He's an obtuse, wrinkled apricot. It's not his fault that he's in the wrong place. I can't help him. All I can do is watch. Watch. There are 37 wristwatches in the café. I've had time to count. 37 watches for 38 corpses. I didn't wear my watch. It's not their fault they wore their watches to die. No one else can see what will inevitably happen. It's not their fault. They can't know. But I know. I know all too well. This has already happened to me.

The waiter pours me a glass of water. I've had six glasses of water. The water here tastes like blood. His French words bounce off my ears. It's not his fault I can't discern their meaning. I blink. I blink too much. I look too nervous. Will these living corpses observe my frantic, erratic behavior? Will the outcome be less bloody, less demented? No - like clockwork, the plan unfolds. The black-clad man deftly places a bulky canvas bag near the café's entrance. His grim face marks him as the perpetrator. It's not his fault he's covered in guilt's graffiti. My eyes give me away. I look scared. I'm scared for the old man with the cigarette aroma and for the bumbling waiter. I'm scared because death is harder to face the second time.

My eyes dart around. It's always been my eyes that get me locked in padded rooms. It's not my fault. Anyway - no more padded rooms for me, just chilly, bloodstained, tiled, café floors. The little girl with the red bow is laughing at her brother, who is making a funny face. The couple at the corner table almost went to another café. They should've. But it's not their fault. They couldn't have known. The man with the canvas

bag is making a phone call to no one. I want to tap that pretty woman with the ruby lips on the shoulder. I want to tell her about the solid block of death and wires that are hiding inside the canvas sack on the wet pavement. I want to tell her that she is going to die. I want to tell her that it isn't her fault. But I can't.

The brainwashed man tosses his phone on the cracked Parisian sidewalk and walks calmly away. It shatters. So does his conscience. The pretty woman stares at it, lying silently on the pavement. I wish she had realized its impatient danger before now. I cover my face with my hands and peek through my trembling fingers as the canvas bag is shredded in a burst of orange light.

I close my eyes, resigned to the inevitability of the thing. When I open them again, I can no longer smell cigarette smoke or newspaper ink. There's a fragment of red ribbon on my shoulder. A second blast. My heart is impaled by nails and shattered glass and wasted premonitions. Wisps of life leak out of the gaps between my fingers.

38 corpses.

It's not our fault.

Age 5, a man already
shoes too big for his feet
carrying his family
singing his ABC's
a curly haired boy
no cares

no childhood, just stardom
no faces, just bright lights and lenses

touched the lives of millions,
in 50 short years,
life is too short

one white glove
a black hat
shimmery charcoal shoes
glittering pants
an inky jacket
bleached socks,
a masterminds attire

50 he died young,
without playing his last song,
leaving a permanent mark on society
his songs played on repeat
no one ever wanted to miss another beat
but he died in his sleep

the trendy dancer flying no longer
his body left to rest
no more moonwalks
no more beats
just a childhood lost man
surrounded by mahogany
encasing the voice of an angel,
who screams for one last
song, and a moonwalk

The Wind Cries Jimi

*Jimi Hendrix died of asphyxiation
He was only 27
(1942-1970)*

Your crude solos,
Riddled with distortion,
Flow like the everlasting cascade
Over the polished cliff,
And melt
Like Castles Made of Sand.

Your lyrics,
Bold as Love,
Yet raw,
Moved nations and incited
A thunderous revolution.

The metallic screams,
Of humming nickel strings,
Their fluid vibratos
Say more than words
Ever could.

All along the watchtower,
Nations gazed
As the Purple Haze faded,
And the ashamed news articles read,
Jimi's dead.

Asphyxiation was the nameless culprit,
But not the famous killer
Because your legendary melodies
Will be memorialized
Forever.

Layover

I may have seen a shooting star
Or was it the blinking lights
On the wing of the plane
While others dream around me
We're held aloft on someone else's
As we thunder through the brilliant oblivion.

Urbanite Lite

Two youngins
shepard a soda and Starbursts and
walk the slim concrete sidestreets,
suited men shouting
rejects puffing

The city screams in its silence
the smiles fade and
the lotus contorts to stone

Purple Ice

With loud, explicit music blaring
we are ready for war.
Clad in a purple and white lining
the words of God educe a silence
over the eighteen anxious bodies

St. Dominik Pettey, pray for us!
The final words roared
before our march begins

One by one
we file out
down the narrow dismal hallway.
nervous glances
communicate the sporadic
song and dance
of today's breakfast in our stomachs.

Lets go Purp!!
Our symbolic battle cry
blasts
the doors open.
We tear onto the ice
ready to defend
our home.

This is what I live for.

Ultralight Beam

Maybe there's something beautiful in sin
A kind of life we don't know we're living until we're in
Because isn't that why we turn away from Jesus?
Acting like sex, drugs and Yeezy is the only thing
that pleases us?
How the sinners and the saints arm wrestle
over broken homes
And anyone left out thinking that it's normal to be left alone?
Perhaps there's something past cracked concrete and
stained glass
Men and women staring at the street as cars pass
(*We on an ultralight beam*)
You know, I'd rap this if I knew how
But if I turn to art, could I buy my mom a new house?
Because how we get ahead messes with our own heads
What's the point of living if our soul inside's already dead?
Indebted fetters getting vendettas
Thinking that the man who rules the world
Is the man who reps Beretta better?
(*Uh*)
Maybe Chance was right,
stepping on the Devil's throat is best
So he can't whisper words of hatred to my siblings at rest
Breathing smoke and mirrors to dry the tears
And feeding off of the weakest one's broken fears
Hell no, we don't deserve this
Staggering through life as if it were a circus
The state of the world stands just to unnerve us
No way that He just turns the worst to His servants
(*We on an ultralight beam*)
(*We on an ultralight beam*)

(*Hallelujah!*)

A Seed in the Garden

Back when the world was condemned with arrogance
proud nations searched to conquer land.
sign right here, and it can all be yours
from the Garden of Eden to Sahara sands.
naive natives accepted metals in peace
they loved their land, they praised it.
by and by the saxons came
they broke their land and razed it.
the proud nations argued and fought
over what they claimed discovered.
they found riches under every stone
and left no stone uncovered.
redcoats and love-speakers
marched in with ships and rifles.
no love lost in a bitter scene
that left a continent's freedom stifled.
then the power-players with no regard
to the traded peoples like rookie cards
carved the masses, divided the races.
invisible boundaries held helpless faces...
but there was no sympathy, no compassion
they were treated like apes, and were punished with lashes
and the subliminal message lingered and blossomed
into what the brightest had never imagined...
trapped tribes fought like desperate fish
which killed kharma, and it's dying wish
was to plant a seed that thrived in greed
and have the world suffer as it's Mother did....
the seed landed in the hand of the Black
two shots rang out-a deadly attack
which started the infamous war of wars
but pride trumps sense, so came the encore.
the weed tree grew as the world advanced
proud nations of old left the world entranced
another tree grew, down an unwalked path
not glamorous nor material, so people laughed

Kharma grew a new Garden of Eden, but still people think
that weed tree keeps the good fruit out of reach
masses clamber up, grasping at branches
selling their souls for second chances
flawed judgement of ambition, for it's power that matters
but ambition is what's left the globe in tatters

You watch me in the morning,
clinging contemporary garments to skin,
I watch you in the morning,
As I do every morning.
When at school, I am lost
as your white light no longer fills my blackened eyes,
back to civilization with word of mouth,
but I'd rather listen to your white lies.
Artists fear your illustrious paintings,
Critics seek you as an orator,
Celebrities fancy your friendship,
I love to only observe you.
When friends speak of your beauty,
jealousy swells like a puss ready to burst,
yet I know you will be waiting for me at home.
When parents oppose your conception,
pleading upshot my mind will suffer,
my morality chokes without your squabbles.
Night falls cold without you perched upright,
the wall of solitude embracing your electrified power,
You watch me as I watch you,
I sleep comfortable; forever my happy hour.

Ode to You

No restrictions.

One's imagination runs wild
while around you.

You do not judge, you
simply allow someone to be themselves.

Whether free, love, epic, or
praise, you leave the final decision
to them.

It doesn't matter
speak your mind
let those around you know
your passion.

When people put others down
you are there.

Simple or complex don't matter to you so,
ode to You,

Poetry.

August 6, 1945

The homicide of a generation
and the birth of a new one.
The plane slowly sways
about the peaceful clouds,
so innocent through a murderous day.
Two faces:
one side burned,
the other gone,
while air slowly slips
out of lungs,
breath by breath.

An implosion of the tranquility
within a family torn
from each other limb by limb.
The remains of the flesh
red church float atop
the still stream.
The street lights quiver above nothing,
nothing is left.
Fall back, groups with gas masks
full of gas.

Life worth nothing
as more and more
cooperate with death.
A bent front tire
jointed with the remains
of a red, white, and blue
bicycle lying amid the
rubble.

Broken Love

*For Leelah Alcorn, a transgender female,
who committed suicide on Dec. 28, 2014*

Is there really love, or
has ...it ...been ... smeared
with the blood of politics
accosted, with the lies of temple dwellers
destroyed; fulfilled by the negligent minds
of blind believers.
Is it hatred
ruling the hearts of senseless men,
Hatred,
supported by
ancient dome-capped men,
pushed forward by
robed hypocrites,
enacted by the actions of ignorant followers.
Where is The true love?
Deep away from our grasp,
far below the deepest wells of the earth;
does it dwell beneath our very own skin
tucked away in some prickly little hole
waiting to be found

The Death of Washington

As the cold
winter wind rips
apart the dead
fields

A silence swallows
the old house.

The last breath
rattles out followed
by a heartbreaking whimper

His eyes closed once
more by the doctor.
Grief
heavier than the world
settles across a
nation.

Word spreads like wildfire,
a town crier races
through roads made
of frozen mud.

In between short gasps
of air
he bellows:
“He is dead”
“He is dead”

“Washington is dead”

Pivotal

As I fall
into that familiar
cushioned desk seat,
before that outdated Dell monitor,
my eight-year old self loses
identity like a reward.
Gaming online joyously liberated,
yet this situation would only last
for a moment
on that pivotal July day.
As my mother's message
would indeed redefine
my identity. My family's
identity. With the words
"he's moving out" she diagnosed
my sunken confusion like a
fatal sentence. And just
like that, the word "divorce" echoed
in my head pushed
me out into the world.

A Response to Tupac's Changes

Many still wake up asking the question you posed.
"Is life worth living?"
Poor and blackness still one in the same,
even 20 years after entering your damned grave.
Cops still do not care, even when the kids scream
"I got my hands in the air".

Tased, shot, choked,
hell its all the same
Injustices a plenty, but the promises
empty.

Acquitted on all charges,
ain't it a shame, nothing to do
but sing those familiar blues.

Racist faces still seen today,
and yet we still asking
have things really changed?
Prisons packed with blacks,
and yeah that's still a fact. But hey
"that's just the way it is, some things
will never change"?

Dock on the Bay

Grey, opaque, eddying endless depths,
You dive, grasping straining

The slush sloshes, you reach search
For something
For nothing

Caress the feeling, the thought, the flame.
the hallowed hollow center of it all.

Ascend, gasping, wheezing, barely breathing,
clutching your heart,
Its void, and yet,

it roars

Molokai Mo' Bettah

Molokai Hawaii is the most remote place on Earth. When standing on a particular point, deep blue water stretching into infinity, the closest Northern land mass is Alaska. The vastness, the nothingness in between, is unfathomable. Wading, chest deep, into placid turquoise water, you can feel the darkness of the abyss. I like the way that it tears at me and dares me to plunge to its depths. Molokai is not typical Honolulu, Waikiki, or Maui. Society banished the Lepers here because no living thing can survive it, escape it, surmount it. A geographic ghetto, its harsh, volcanic surface is populated by only a few thousand, including obese Hawaiians, poor Japanese immigrants, and the occasional family, like mine, visiting from Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Jacked up, rusty, dented Ford Tundras and salty, beat down Chevys buzz by as I, the sole jogger on the island, trot along the island's main road. The smell of salted pork, stale fish, and, almost surprisingly, fresh bread permeate the air. The only sense of economy on the one block Main Street is a T-shirt shop, proudly displaying slogans in Pidgin English like "Molokai Mo' Bettah." The nights appear blacker; the days seem brighter; the sunsets objectively more beautiful. Hammerhead sharks congregate to dance off shore. Red barren deserts, sheer green cliffs, provocative beaches, and explosive skies set my backdrop. But it's the rabid barking of pit-bulls that keeps me from drifting into paradise.

As I round the bend at mile marker 22, I come to a small clearing, and my pace respectfully slows. If you squint, you can make out the remnants of a small wooden shack. Forever, the paradox of Molokai will be its surreal, breathless beauty and yet corporal poverty. It is this obscenely wild and defiantly sublime place that my grandfather called home. This is where I come from. My history is here. My roots lie among the banyan trees.

Ode to the guitar

I need no incentive
to choke
your wooden neck
with three chords
or to dance
on each string
with my fingers
til' they callus
to a crisp.

Like a microphone
stuffed in a smoker's
throat, you cough up
all of my emotions,
so I don't feel
the need
to swallow them.

You give refuge
to the cigarette
stenched youth
with every song
that tells them
they don't have to
be forgotten

How to Pimp a Broken Foundation

On Kendrick Lamar's "Mortal Man"

Still sprinting with questions full of wonderment
I'm trapped, surrounded without answers going
nowhere, like equality in this nation masking
our distance and change, but simply jogging in place.

Dumping your children in a pool of their own
blood. We cause shootings in your communities.
We misuse our influence and the corrupt system
lets us walk away innocent leading the war back
into the city, causing no deep depression or killer's
guilt, protecting one another with the stripes
we shouldn't have earned from a broken foundation.

The past will never be erased or rewritten
just like the scars we left on your ancestor's backs
but the future is still uncovered and unwritten.
It starts with a word.

The word is respect
and just because you wear a different skin color than mine's
doesn't mean I can't respect you as a man
Remembering
all the pain and hurt we caused you in these streets.
I respect you, so we must unify and stop
each other from killing each other
and I do know, you're a mortal man, not just another...

His White Man's Rage

His white man's rage danced hidden in a carnival
of bible verses, and his constitutional rights.

It believed in a pedestal only unencrypted
by a proper genetic lineage.

It sold his soul for his skin,
but he just wanted to be better.

It wanted to be the gun
and the bullet held over the prisoner.

It nourished distorted pride of
the blue, white, and red.

It never made his life better.

The Sin of Fire

Atop this rock, You tied me.
Bound for defiance,
the sin that burned me
for the love of my art.

Across the Styx,
he saw me.
He watched the Eagle
eat its lunch and he ran
for me.

He killed the bird
and cut my ties
Falling into his arms
He dragged me to the ferryman
payed death's toll
and sailed us home.

For the fire
gave them courage
to live in the sun
and burn your idols
I helped You end my age.
And now humanity
will end yours.

For Ninong J - The Man I Didn't Know

Silent,
sitting in the back of a church,

My dad walks up to the podium
fixes his tie
and chokes
up as he begins the eulogy
of the man who tried to cure his fever
with a bottle of Jack Daniels.

A sullen laugh falls over the crying crowd.
A few more rise to share their memories
of the man who gave candy to the kids,
the man who loved his boys,
the man I never knew.

I knew the man whose hair fell out,
the man who lit a cigarette when the chemo stopped working,
the man who sat shriveled in a hospital bed,
The man who died.

The Statue's Night

The statue waited for the precise moment when the stars came out to have fun with their friend, the moon, so the statue himself could have fun with his friend. He waited for this time when all was quiet, when all was calm, when everything was peaceful.

The statue's name was Ignatius, named after the man he was sculpted to look like. Ignatius was made of a sort of bronze colored metal, and he held a book in his left hand. Students sometimes put flowers in the book, and Ignatius usually kept the flowers as long as he could. His right hand was a little worn down, particularly his pointer and middle fingers along with his thumb.

After Ignatius decided it was time to get up, he swiveled his bronze head around to see if anyone would notice him getting up from his pedestal. His neck made a squeaking noise, like a terribly oiled machine. When he saw no one around to see him move, he started to close his bronze book and move his bronze limbs. He stepped down and placed the book down on his pedestal, along with anything else that he had with him that day, and walked towards the eagle statue across the courtyard.

The eagle also had a friend that he flew around with at night; the only thing was that it wouldn't fly without Ignatius touching him, unlike the eagle's other friend. So Ignatius reached out and touched the bird's wings, and the bird took off in a flurry of metal feathers. The eagle went higher and higher, and Ignatius watched it land on top of the clock tower, where the metal bird waited for his own friend, who always had trouble getting out to fly around because he was in the gym lobby.

Ignatius saw that the bird was sitting there when he opened the doors to the gym lobby. The eagle that was perched on his pedestal was looking at Ignatius, like Ignatius was doing something wrong, as if the eagle was trying to say,

"What exactly are you doing standing there? Why aren't you helping me?"

The bird tripped when it ran over to Ignatius out of excite-

ment. Then Ignatius let out a metallic noise, meant to be a laugh, and he opened the door to the courtyard and the eagle flew out. He watched it fly higher and higher, just until he and the other eagle were flying around the clock tower, playing a sort of game, Ignatius went about his usual walk.

Ignatius started towards Cantwell-Ruesch Hall, where he checked all the classrooms to make sure everything went smoothly that day. He went towards the seal in the middle of the rotunda, being careful not to step on it, and he walked around and went to check out the classrooms downstairs. He saw some of the flags hanging from the language classrooms, the various maps in the history rooms, and even a few of the things the students hung up on the walls of the hallways. The statue walked back towards the rotunda, and he walked downstairs to the music and religion department.

He looked at the pictures of people on the wall, the lockers, and the computer lab, but he wanted to see the actual music room. Ignatius walked into the room.

The room was filled with instruments, including a piano. This was one of Ignatius' favorite rooms, mainly because it was a wide-open space, and he could look at the various instruments he would sometimes hear while he was standing on his pedestal.

After looking at a massive drum, he suddenly realized he wanted to play ping-pong, but who to play ping-pong with? He still needed to check the upper classrooms. Ignatius quickly ran upstairs and took a quick look inside each of the math classrooms and science labs. Nothing was wrong with any of them, but he liked the purple oar in one of the classrooms.

Ignatius decided that everything went well that day. He exited Cantwell-Ruesch Hall and headed towards the church. Ignatius walked not towards the gate, but the other door in the back of the church. He was looking for his other friend, the only other human statue on campus who liked playing games with him; the others always stayed there, like they were just sitting there as still as, well, statues.

Ignatius entered from behind the altar, and he walked towards the entrance of the church. The other statue locked eyes with Ignatius, and Ignatius walked towards his friend. His name was Aloysius, also named after the person he was

representing. Aloysius started to put the flowers he was holding down on his pedestal, and he carefully stepped down.

The reason Aloysius liked playing games with Ignatius was simple, none of the other statues would play with him. The two shared so many traits despite their one or two differences. The main difference between the two friends was that Aloysius was made of a slight marble-like stone, while Ignatius was made of a bronze metal. They surprisingly hadn't had the chance since summer to get together, and even then they didn't get together as much because of summer classes, so they embraced each other when they were close enough.

The two friends smiled and walked out of the church. They headed towards the gym, took a left, and they continued towards the library entrance; Aloysius was careful to not step on the seal, but Ignatius wasn't as careful, and he stepped on the seal. Ignatius kissed the seal and caught up to his friend, who was already setting up the tables for ping-pong. By the time Ignatius got up to the library, Aloysius already had the tables and paddles and everything all set up.

Ignatius took the paddle on his side of the table and he served the ball. The two statues rallied for a while, then Aloysius got it past Ignatius, and Ignatius let out a metallic screech. He gestured with his left hand to his right hand, which showed the few weathered fingers that inhibited his grip on the paddle. Aloysius shook his head and picked up the ball, threw it in the air, and served.

The game continued on for some time, until Ignatius looked at a nearby clock. He saw that it was nearly 3:00 in the morning. The eagles were flying over the football field, and the two birds descended to the ground, tired and exhausted. The eagles sat on the field together for a few minutes, enjoying each other's company, and they looked back at the clock and saw they had to go back to their pedestals.

Ignatius and Aloysius watched the two bird statues, and they silently agreed to play to one more point, except this rally lasted half an hour, and Aloysius ended up winning. The two hugged and exited the library after cleaning up after themselves. They tried to write a thank you note, but their handwriting was illegible. They looked at the note and decided just to not write one at all, besides, the people who worked there would freak out to know that two statues play

ping-pong in the library.

Ignatius and Aloysius thought they could sit down for a few minutes in the upper commons and talk, so they did. Their conversation consisted of metallic sounds with a few noises that sounded like soft drumming. The two friends wanted to stay in the upper commons for the rest of the night, but sadly, they couldn't walk around during the day-time, mainly because the students would be freaked out to know the two statues they passed by every day were alive and well.

Ignatius and Aloysius got up, the two made their way back to their individual pedestals. Aloysius waved and let out a kind of noise, the same soft drumming sound he made when he was talking, and it was meant as a sign of farewell. Aloysius stepped back on his pedestal, picked up his marble flowers, and resumed his usual posture.

Ignatius said one last goodbye to his friend, and he walked towards the gym to let one of the eagle statues into the gym lobby where it usually resided. The two eagles flapped their wings at each other, meaning goodbye, and they also got back on their pedestals. Once he saw that the two statues were well, he found his usual pedestal in the middle of the courtyard, picked up his book and whatever he had that day, and he got back up on his pedestal.

He opened the book in his left and stretched out his right hand. And there the two statues stood, forever during the day in their individual positions, offering help to passerby and playing at night. So these are the reasons you will see a ping-pong paddle misplaced in the library, or when it looks like Ignatius is leaning over you, you know that he has walked the same halls you have at night.

Would You

would you love her if
death was at the door?
would you love her if
life had no meaning anymore?

would you love her if
the weight of the world
left her crippled?

would you love her if
her hourglass figure sagged
like the sands of time?

would you love her if
her mind began to sway?
would you love her
if the pearls of her eyes
did not shine as bright?

would you love her if
she just laid there, trapped
solely in her head?

I would love her
even if she was no more.
I would love her
till dust returned to dust.

I would love her
till the earth's crust faded
to oblivion.
till the high man called us home,
and till death gripped us and tore
us apart.

I would love her.

But would she love me?

Weak Leaves

The road with potholes is the only road in the city
the trees grow weak leaves that blow off when it's windy
and the air comes cold,
chills bone when it hits me
sometimes it's food for thought,
when your stomach goes empty

but life goes on, and that's not even what offends me
papers are curled up so I'm relaxed when it hits me
that it's better to learn now that friends turn to cobras
they used to be your soldier-supposedly in your corner
but now you're questioning
every single word they ever told you

but there's those moments that whisper it's not over
so it's not over is what i figured, but later i figured out
to never be sure on something I knew nothing about.

The Hero of This Story

Finally, the clamor died down, and the only sound that could be heard was the monotonous dripping of the liquor whose bottles had been smashed seconds earlier by bullets.

Barton raised a pale, trembling hand and lifted himself from the crystalline shards of broken glass that peppered the floorboards. The bar had served as adequate protection; the only casualties on that side of the saloon were the old wine bottles and whiskeys he had kept on the shelf behind him. Another hand feebly grasped for the rusty double-barrel's stock, but whatever had transpired there had done so already.

That was fortunate, because the gunman was still there. Everyone else had fled, and Barton could hear him breathing heavily as he scuttled around on his knees, trying to find his way around the broken glass that traced razor-sharp mazes into the floor of the saloon.

"Get out here. I know yer back there."

Barton's hands tensed up, allowing several of the glass shards to whittle their way into the tips of his fingers. The liquor splattered on the floor didn't help either. If it was any consolation, Barton thought to himself, at least it would spare Doc Donnegan the trouble of treating an infection. He hunkered down, hands stinging, hoping that the shooter would just give up and go away.

"Ain't no foolin' me, son. I saw yer yellow ass duck down the second I pulled out ol' Maggie here." Barton heard a metallic tap, which he assumed to be the man gesturing to his weapon. His mind suddenly flashed to an absurd story he heard as a boy- about a massive bird across the world which buried its head in the sand at the first sign of danger. He felt a brief touch of embarrassment, coupled with the fear of his current situation. Finding his knees beneath him, Barton shakily got to his feet, and saw what became of his beloved saloon for the first time.

Before the gunfight, the saloon was in prime condition; now, it looked like a hurricane had torn through it. The wall

behind him had been pockmarked by the shots, as well as the rest of the building. Tables had been overturned, and wood chips shaved by lead littered the floor. The bar itself had taken several rough hits, owing to the splintered craters where the duelers had misplaced shots meant for each other. Luckily, Barton realized with a shiver, none of them got through to him. The sturdy oak had done its duty. Off to the side, an unnaturally tall collection of busted tables and chairs haphazardly stood.

In the middle of it all stood the man who caused it. A permanent scowl bored into Barton, stretched across sun-browned skin stretched across the jawline and chin of a man who was no stranger to the Nevada summers. Whatever color his eyes were, they were hidden, shaded in the evening sun by the sloping brim of a leather rancher's hat.

Both callused hands lay on the most beautiful rifle Barton had ever seen. The expertly-stained wood was engraved with metal inlays that looped up and down the stock like a ribbon, catching the light perfectly at every angle and giving the weapon a sort of malicious gleam. The man's hands were gripped strongly around the barrel, while one cautious finger lay inside the trigger guard, ready to gun down Barton if he dared to move an inch in the wrong direction. The lever lay cut, oiled, and primed for use in the unlikely event that any fatally curious townsfolk were intent on investigating the scene. Not that they were going to. Scuffles took place in Barton's saloon far too often, which resulted in the rusty shotgun being personally stationed underneath the bar. Hidden from customers, but visible to the bartender, it paled in comparison to the stranger's weapon. Barton had never had to use it before.

"Hands up. I need ya to check somethin' fer me." Not wanting to cross this mysterious stranger, Barton raised his still-shaking hands above his head, palms out, and waited for the stranger's response. The man standing in the middle jerked the barrel of his immaculate gun over to the corner, to whatever was behind a pile of tables and chairs knocked askew by the violence.

Barton, still hoping to avoid a bullet between the shoulder blades, did as he was told. His terrified footsteps made

no noise as he padded over to where the mess lay. As he rounded the corner of the wooden mountain, he saw a bloodied hand extended over the floorboards. Barton pursed his lips. It wasn't a furnitural casualty of war; it was a barrier. He stopped walking, and a bead of sweat ran down the nape of his neck.

"The hell are ya waitin' fer? Keep walkin'." Barton kept going. He carefully peered around the shoddy bunker to look at the dead man. He had seen death before, but it had always been under the sugarcoat of expensive funerals. It had never been this raw for him before, and he wasn't eager to start. Barton's mustache quivered as he surveyed the scene.

The dead man had landed facedown onto the rough planks that made up the saloon's floor. Close to him lay a small piece of metal. Under the splinters of wood and the bloodstains from the bullet holes lay the unmistakable badge of a United States marshal.

Barton had seen these paragons of justice walking through the streets of town every once in a while, sometimes alone, sometimes towing a sour-faced criminal behind them. They were rough men, but they paid well, and always seemed appreciative whenever Barton poured out a round on the house for them. They were government, after all. It was a shame to see one gunned down, especially in a way like this. However, that made one thing drastically clear: the man who now stood in the middle of the saloon was a murderer. A criminal. Barton gulped nervously and continued his search.

The outstretched hand Barton had seen from around the corner had been clutching a tiny little revolver, which now lay adjacent to the man's chest. Barton whipped his head around to see the stranger's reaction, but his view was blocked by the unstable wooden tower. A thought whipped over his panicked mind: the stranger couldn't see the gun on the floor. He bent down, careful to ensure the barricade concealed his actions, and slipped the tiny derringer into the pocket of his pants. The cold metal of the gun lay in his pocket.

"Now, I'm gonna ask ya one question," barked the man, wiping spittle off his cracked lips, "Is the man I shot alive?"

Now, Barton had no medical experience. That was left to

Doc Donnegan, the town drunk, who also doubled as the town doctor. However, the marshal was dead as a doornail. Just to make sure, Barton turned down to the cadaver and poked it with a dusty boot. It failed to react. He did it a couple more times to guarantee he was dead, and turned back to the stranger.

“He’s dead.” It was the first time Barton had used his voice since the debacle began, and it now left his throat as a dry, wheezy crack. Barton cringed as he said it, and the stranger smirked in amusement, showing off tobacco-yellowed teeth. Barton coughed, trying to cover up the absurd embarrassment he felt. The man was a criminal, he reasoned, he didn’t care what he sounded like.

“You sure?”

Barton glanced down at the marshal’s hat. A bullet had come zipping through the soft leather in the front, presumably exiting and taking the man’s livelihood with it out the back.

“Pretty sure.” Barton’s voice didn’t crack this time. Good.

The man gave a small sigh that Barton couldn’t quite place. Was it sadness? Relief? In a quick turn, the stranger strode over to the marshal. Barton quickly scooted out of the way, not eager to enrage the man. Crouching down, the stranger turned his back to Barton and began to root through the marshal’s clothes, stuffing grubby hands into pockets, clearly searching for something. One hand stayed fastened on the beautiful rifle, grasping the stock as if he were waiting for the marshal to spring back to life at his feet

Since he was no longer obscured by shadows, Barton could get a better look at the man’s face. He looked like one of those fighting drunks that would buzz by the saloon occasionally, with the hardened jawline giving way to squinty gray eyes and a crooked nose that had seen its fair share of fights. He also had a wild beard, a scraggly mess that twisted down into the front of his neck.

Suddenly, Barton became aware of his surroundings. His brain, whose fourth-grade education had not done it much justice, began to work. This man was a criminal, who had just killed a government officer in his saloon. Barton had a gun in his pocket. The whole path seemed so clear; all he had

to do was take the derringer out of his pocket, point to the man, and walk him down Main Street to the sheriff's office. He could be a hero. Maybe, if he was really lucky, he would get a nice shiny medal and compensation for the damages to the saloon.

It all seemed so simple. However, Barton's hands refused to work. They remained glued to his sides, paralyzed by fear, as the stranger continued to shuffle around in the marshal's possessions.

"There we go." The stranger, with a slight groan and creak in his knees, brought himself up to this full height. A set of folded papers were grasped in his hand. He caught Barton's eyes, and looked him up and down, stopping his sweeping gaze on his right hand. Barton looked down. Independent of his own mind, his hands had seized the courage to draw the derringer and point it at the stranger. There he stood, shaking in sweat and terror, as the murderer coolly regarded the scene in front of him.

The stranger's other hand, the one not on the rifle, flashed to the weapon's trigger. The yellowed papers were mashed against the wood of the gun, crackling in the complete silence. Stunned by this, Barton flinched, losing his sweaty grip on the revolver and letting the tiny gun clatter to the floor of the saloon. The man laughed, a cruel laugh that made Barton regret not shooting him in the back minutes earlier.

"That's what I thought. Ya coward." He accentuated this last word by spitting on Barton's boots. The bartender shivered. He was taller than the shooter, yet he could not bring himself to look the man in the eyes. He cowered away, squirming, wishing more than anything that he hadn't left school in the fourth grade.

Seemingly satisfied, the man bent down, careful to keep the rifle levelled at Barton. He picked up the derringer, and flung out the cylinder. He tossed the gun at Barton, who clumsily let it drop to the floor. His quivering hands picked up the revolver and peered at the machinery. Not a single bullet was loaded in the chamber.

"Some hero you are," the stranger chuckled, flashing another nasty smile of rotting teeth, "Can't exactly kill the bad guys with no bullets."

“Here’s what’s gonna happen,” the man continued, the smile dripping off his face like hot wax, “I’m gonna take these papers and walk out that door. And you,” he poked out his neck at Barton, who flinched again, certain he was going to be greeted by a bullet between the eyes. “You are going to take yer sorry ass behind the bar and forget any of this happened.” He jabbed the rifle at Barton, who quickly scrambled to the refuge of his occupation. The glass shards remained unmoved, and the sharp smell of spilt liquor washed over him.

The stranger jerked around, satisfied with his orders, and began to stride out the door. Barton watched him carefully, terrified that the man might decide that witnesses were not a good idea and tie off the loose ends. His white knuckles dug into the rough sides of the bar, and he let a knuckle drape over the corroded rust of the shotgun.

Barton, for what seemed like the dozenth time, felt his breath leave him. He could use the shotgun and stop this man, stop this killer from walking out into the dimming light of freedom. He allowed himself to glance over from the sweat-stained back of the stranger to the husk of the derringer, whose empty barrels were as biting to him as the dead looted marshal on the ground. The stranger was right. He was a coward.

Barton let his clammy hands slide past the shotgun as the stranger stepped out of the saloon and into the evening. As he wet a rag, preparing to wipe up the spattered alcohol, he heard the thunder of hooves speeding away. Turning back to his work, Barton began to sweep up the daggers with a rag, letting his tears mix freely with the whiskey on the ground.

Don't Leave Me

What makes you feel loved?
Is it him treating you like crap?
Is it when he uses you,
Abuses you?

What makes you stay?
Is it him vowing to do better?
Is it you don't want to be "that girl"?
Is it me?
Why is it your fault?
It is because he says it is?
Is it you provoking him?
Is it your cooking?

Why can't we leave?
Did I tip him off?
Did he see the bags?
Is he going to be mad?

Why won't you wake up?
Is it the blood?

Is it me holding you?

The Columbine

A columbine is a plant with beautiful long-spurred flowers. It is also the name of the high school with the most infamous school shooting in U.S history.

On the day when the Columbine wilted,
Erupted screams quaked the sorrow
soaked skin of teenage faces
as they collapsed on the dewy
grass of their school's field.

Trembling hands could barely
steer parents to pick up spots
where an "I love you" begged
for air but suffocated in their chest.

The bullet casings rang instead
of bells on their last day.

One 14 year old boy opened his eyes
next to his two friends who couldn't
help him explain that tuesday,
so he ran as if an answer lay far away.

His legs shattered at the passing
of his sister lying peacefully in red innocence
thinking only of the pettiness in
their argument over which station to play.

If only, prayers whispered to lit candles
could have calmed the storm.
If only, the mournful tears wept on
their pictures could wake us from the nightmare,
and blossom a dream
where they could just be again

with the hope in their uncertainty,
the freedom in their youth.

The Beach

I saw waves when I woke up and ran to the shore. They had gentle white curls. They crashed and pounded like Thor's hammer.

I saw little shining creatures wiggling in the water, always on the lookout. As soon as I put my legs in they were out of sight. They did not have a care in the world. They just kept swimming.

I saw the sand when I ran to my spot on the beach. The sand reminded me of little toasted pellets of salt. I jumped up and could almost feel the sun. I felt like I was walking on air. I couldn't count all the little pellets, but I tried; I stopped after twenty.

I saw the sky, a reflection of the cool blue water. It looked like an endless supply of happiness. There were only a few white spots. They reminded me of the bad things in life, but there was much more blue than white.

I saw the rocks of the New England coast. I climbed those massive rocks and felt like I was on the top of the world. I never stopped loving tip-toeing on rock after rock.

I saw the huge power plant, something on no other beach. I was fascinated that it powered all of East Lyme. It looked like an ugly building that would destroy our town, but it gave us something to look at!

I saw the green seaweed. It looked like French fries floating in the water. It was gross, but I threw it at my brother anyway.

I saw the kids, laughing while splashing in the water. They did not care about a thing. They were in their own world, not caring what anyone thinks.

I saw the other islands. Block Island was described to me as the New England version of heaven, but I never got a chance to see that paradise.

I saw the Italian guys, surrounding Geno asking him about his tour around the world in the summer. He liked it, but I could tell he was sick of it.

I saw the parents, all reading magazines and talking about how bad Miley Cyrus is for the kids. But they loved her, for some reason.

I saw the windsurfers, doing their tricks with their yellow sunfishes. They soared across the blue water.

I saw the fishermen. Doing it for a hobby sitting on the piers. They didn't catch much, but they were happy to get anything. I saw the sun gleaming in the water. Making it unbearable to see without sunglasses.

I saw the sun in the sky. It never seemed to come down. Making people tan, but burning the idiots that didn't put on sunscreen, baking them like lobsters.

I saw the crabs while I was trying to find them. I would pick them up. It gave me satisfaction to catch blue and cheetah crabs with my bare hands.

I saw my friends biking around the town. I didn't see them much, but I always went to join them. They were typical kids from the beach, easy going and not having a care in the world.

I saw my family. The cousins and aunts and uncles I never got to see. They told me how big I was and how we were going to have a great time. I went to the beach with them everyday, and we had good times.

I saw the food walking up to the house. There were burgers, chips, and junk food. We had a feast for every meal. There was never a day where we didn't eat together.

I saw the sunset. The yellow, pink, blue, orange sunset. I will never forget that beautiful, peaceful sundown. It made me smile every night. It gave me a reason to be happy, every day.

A Day that will Ring Forever

6:57 September 11, 2015,
1 life lost,
1 family in sorrow.

Hustling out the door,
starting the engine,
putting the accelerator to the floor.

Something is off,
there was a bump in the driveway,
its never been there before

Taking a peek back,
my heart dropped.
dead in the driveway, my dog laid.

9:03 September 11, 2001,
2,996 lives lost,
2,996 families in sorrow.

Hustling out the door,
starting the engine,
putting the accelerator to the floor.

Worrying you'll be fired
if you don't pull in
to work on time.

Looking up,
a plane clashes with the World Trade Center.
dead in the streets, thousands laid.

14 years later,
this day takes another life
and continues to strangle this country.

One day leaves
2,997 dead,
2,997 families weeping.

Me Llamo Gustavo Gaviria

Cousin of Pablo Escobar, drug king of Colombia.

Spanish Translations:

Plata o plomo - Silver or lead

sicario - hitman

Plata o plomo

was our trade since birth.

My cousin and I would chop up
stolen cars and warred
over smuggling
Marlboro smoke

in Colombia. Our greed haunted
rich suits and poor rags
with no glance of mercy.
Even bullets cowered from us.

Living in puffs
of cocaine and blood
does not require a tall blockade
against your conscience

in Colombia. We were the Narcos,
kings wealthier than nations
and more powerful
than presidents.
A wolf does not feel
a sense of discrimination
for killing sheep.
Both the black and white die

in Colombia. Death is swift
like a nod to your *sicario*.
The right hand of a don
strikes without circumstance.

Sin is the forbidden fruit birthed
in Colombia.

A Ball or a Mic

a little bit uncouth,
seemingly unkempt
bags under tired eyes from effort well-spent
tryna get her funds up cause that bread is your friend
when you're working odd hours till and end meets an end
best believe she felt it when that cold wind blew
she tried to turn her collar up, but her collar stayed blue
and her heart stayed true-
but the street stayed black
she broke her shoulder and her back-
from tugging on bootstraps
cause the ones with that
told her this was how you do it
but they were born with a privilege-that's all there was to it
cause on the stairwell to the top
on every step there's a trap.
unless you got a ball or a mic
to put yo ass on the map

Photography
&
Studio Art

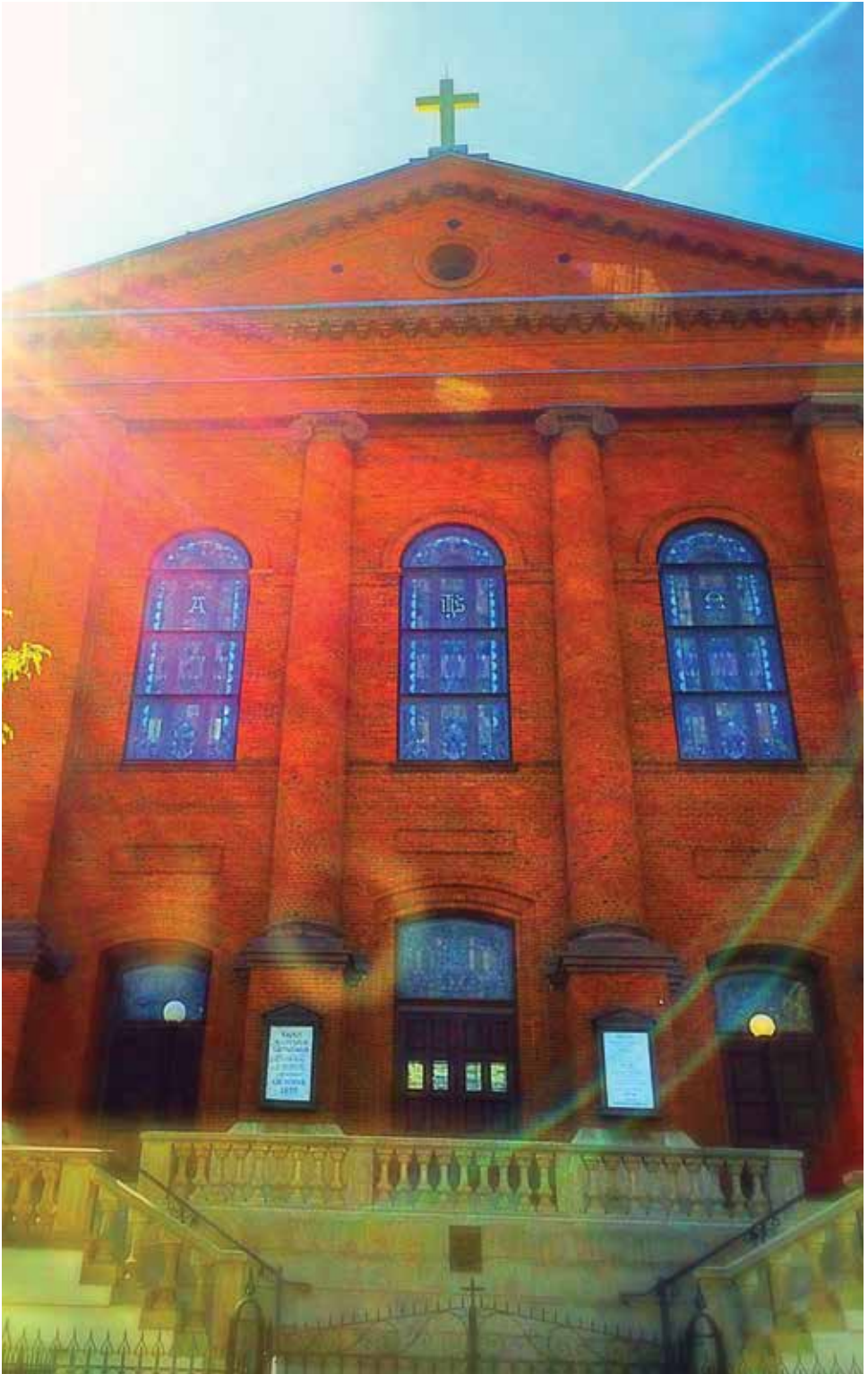


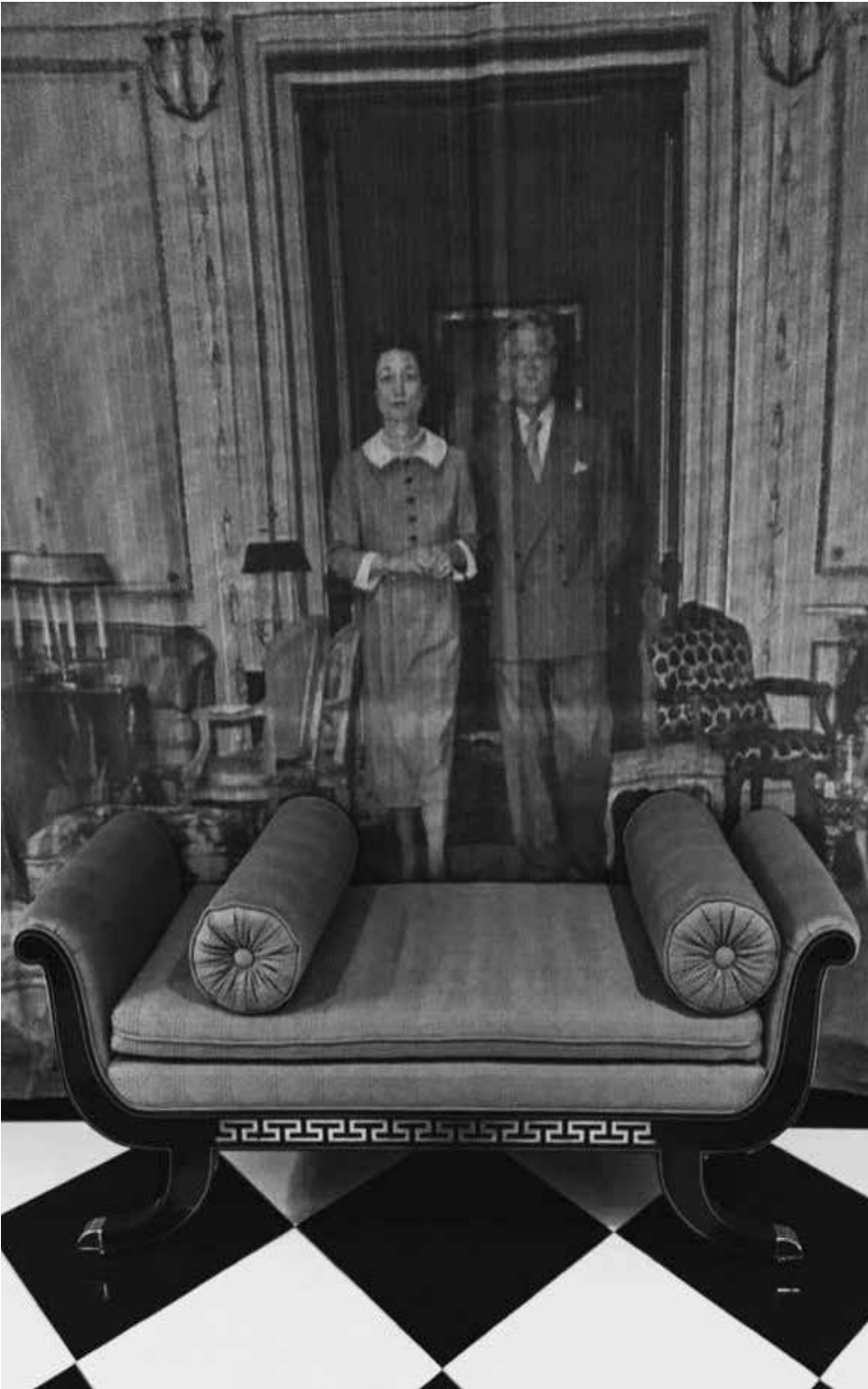












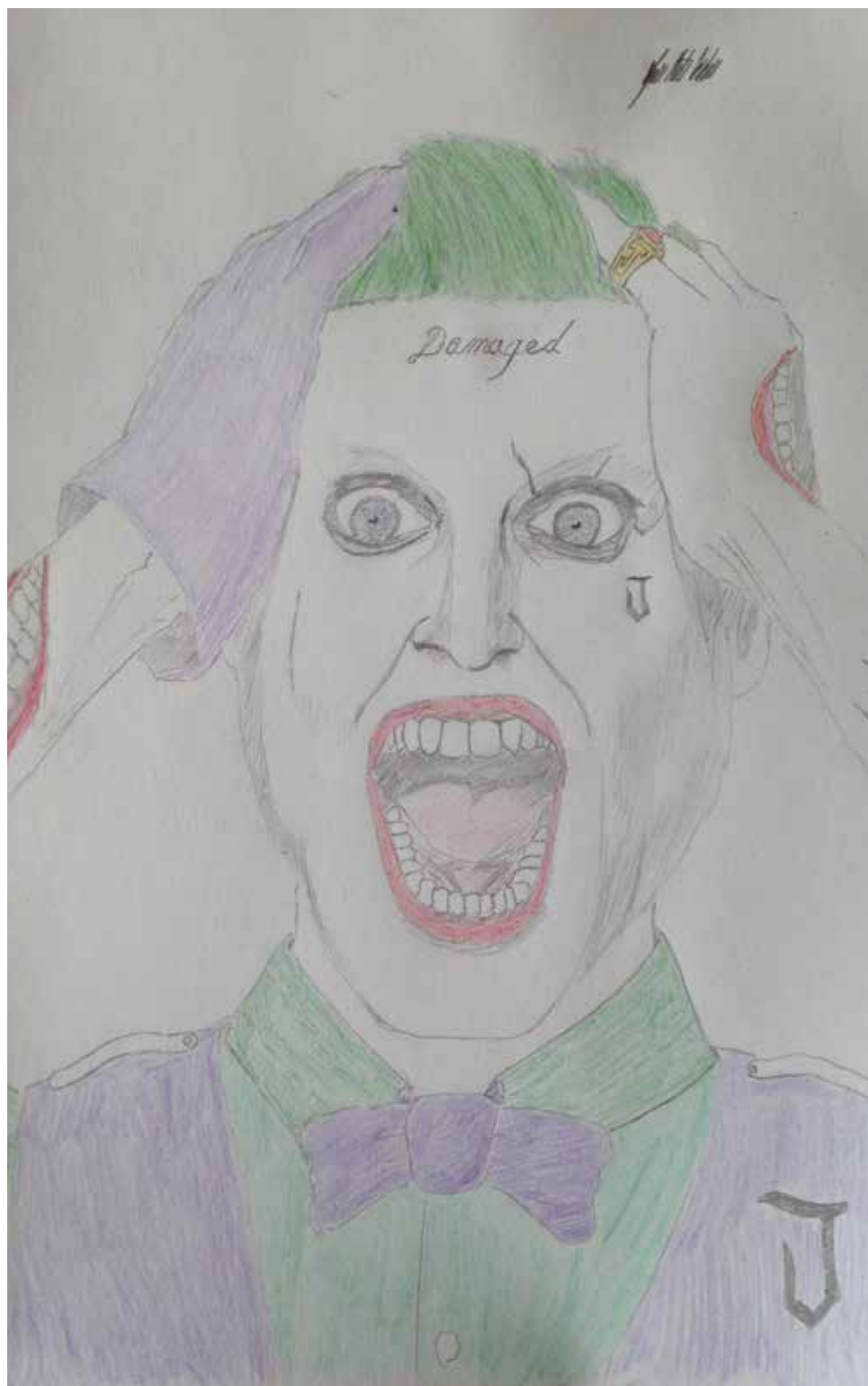


























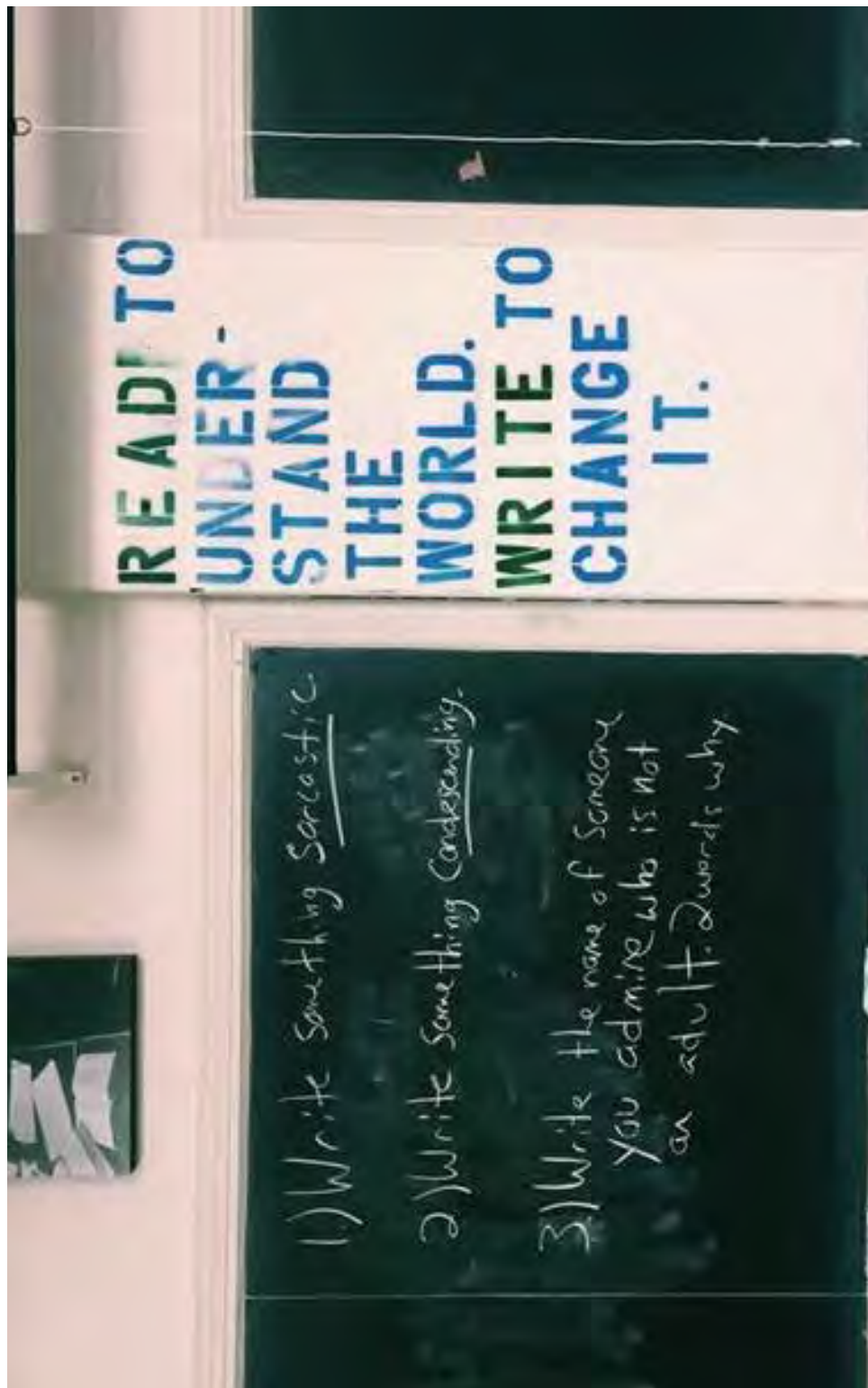








Holden Madison









Michael Gold





Matt Bailey









Holden Madison





Joshua Love





Matt Bailey







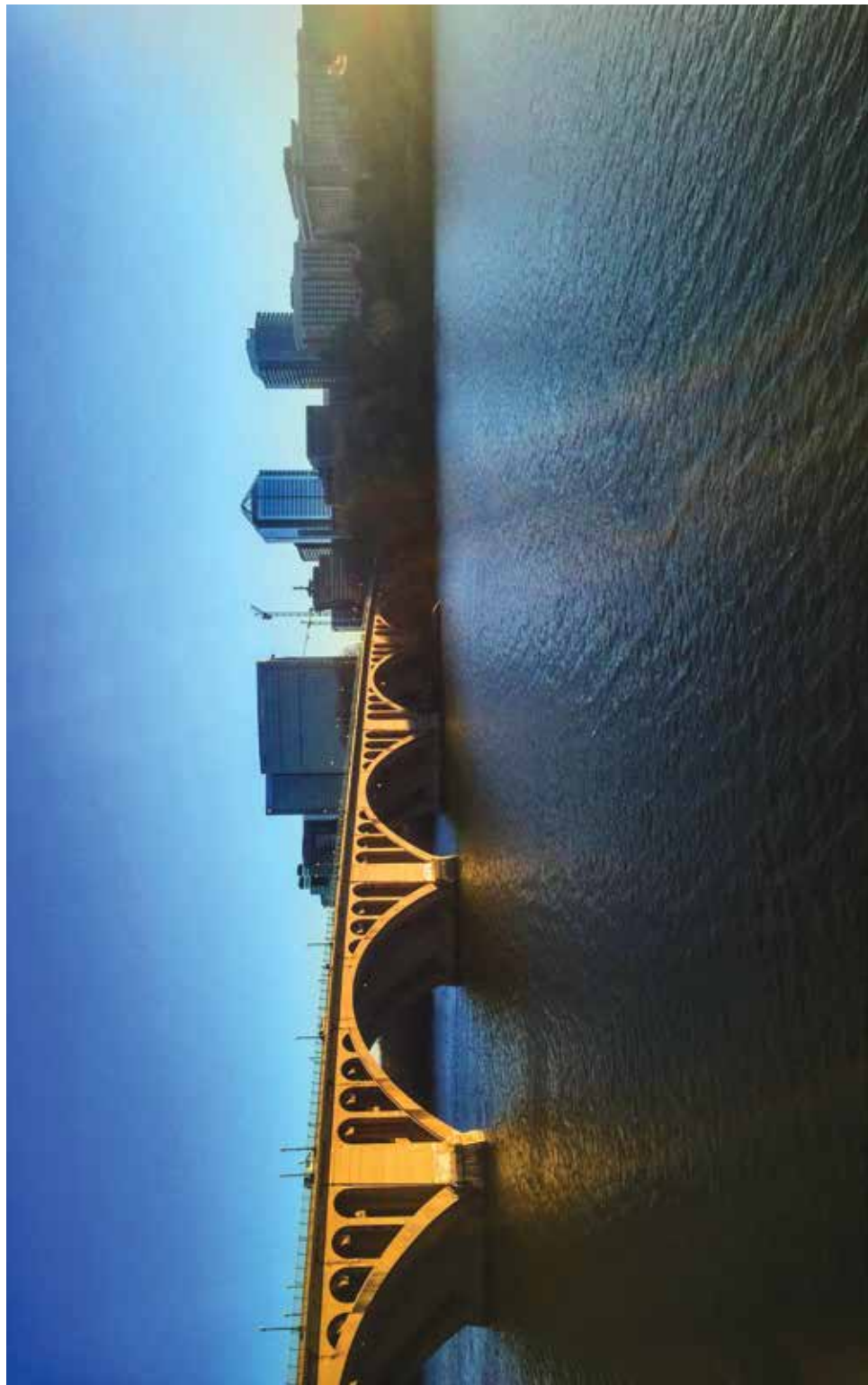


Michael Davis



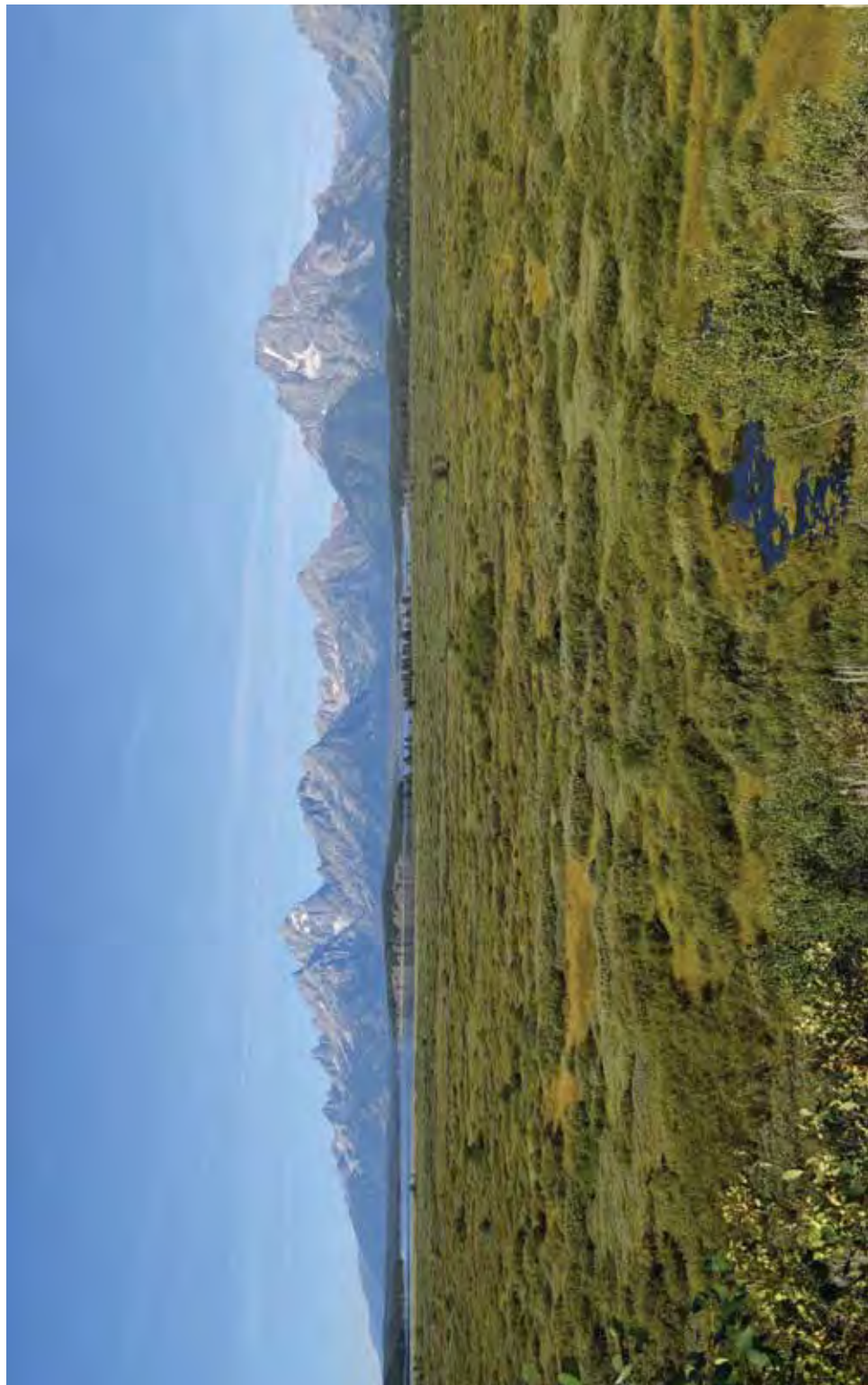


Nathan Jackson





Alec Dubois





Harry Monroe











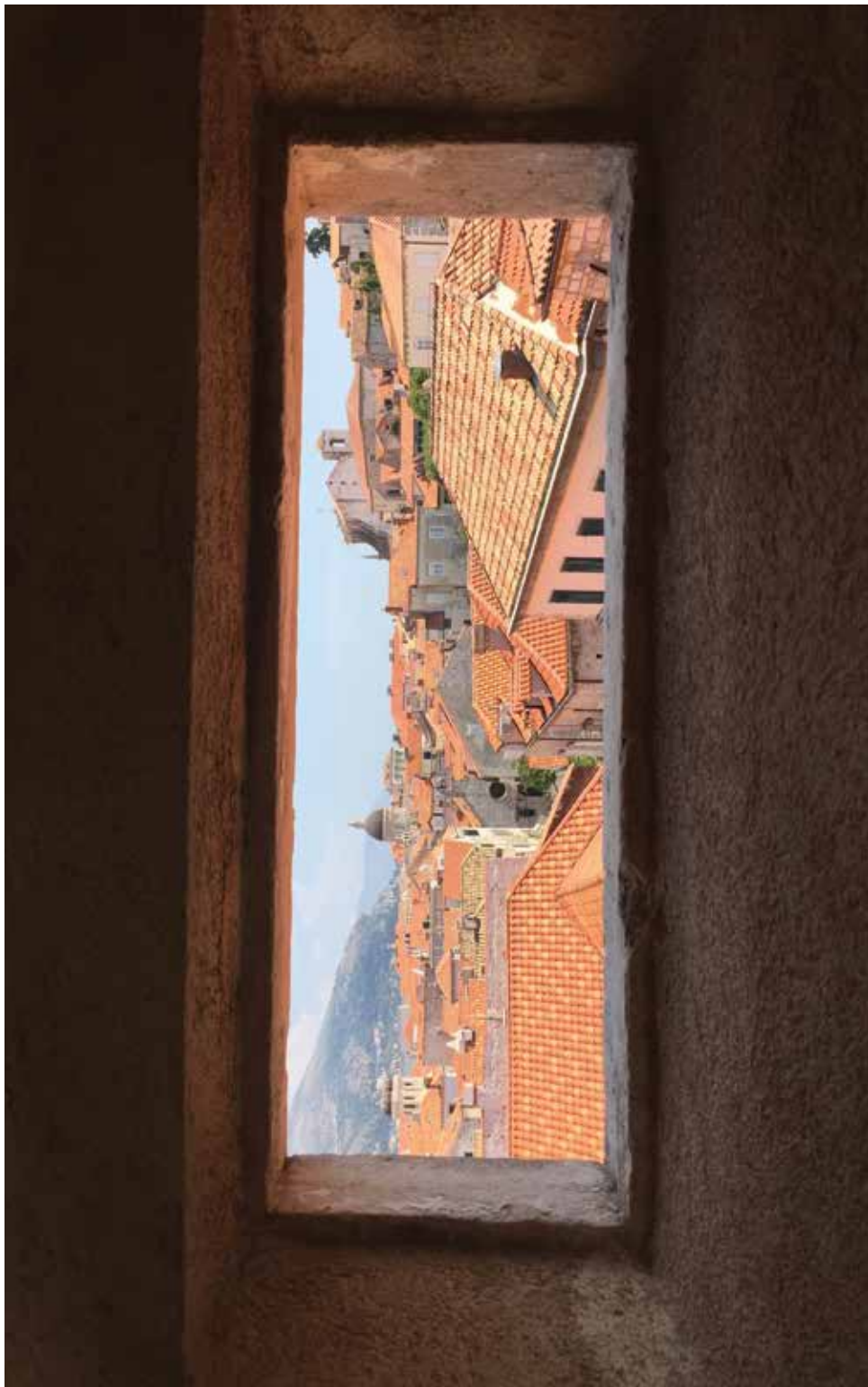


Nick Jenkins

















Jack Chesen









Nasir Phillips













Landen Buckson













