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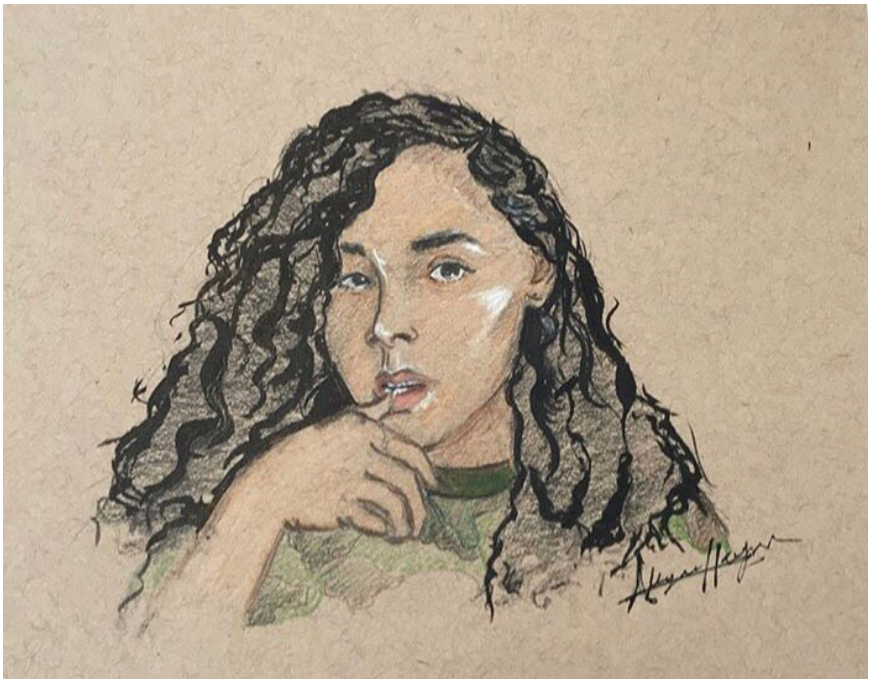


Twenty-Something. Colored Pencil. Akiyaa Hagen-Depusoir.

Backpack

by Heath Goertzen

I cleaned out my backpack today –
seemed like something that should be done.
Papers and plastic wrappers –
carried, smushed, forgotten
dragged half a world away and back in their bag
these things long accumulated, no longer valued.

Bus passes, receipts with faded Indonesian letters
barely legible, bled by cleansing walks in tropical rains.
Papers with the peculiar textures of age and wear,
a year's passing recognizable in their stiffened fibers.

Each was picked out –
weathered, stained, and smudged.
These artifacts, slowly set into a pile like
firewood, corpses, of times and places passed.

Carefully I gathered them up and shuffled to the trash,
let them flutter down to accumulate among their kind, discarded.
I moved back to the bag, reached to close it
but noticed a few coins huddled, crouched in the creases of the
canvas.

I closed the zipper and wondered where coins hide in experiences,
and if my past would only find its way back to me
in the stained canvas of my backpack.

Two Steps Forward, One Step Back. 16 x 31 x 11. Wood and Masonite.
Miner Seymour.

The Scenic Route

by Noah Larson

Many yellow fields
sway quietly in the wind,
soaking up the sun.

Stairs of broken rock
run to the side of the lake,
telling of giants.

I walk a new path,
looking back to see old steps.
I must move on now.

Harvest Nights. Photography. Garrett Smith.

Memories

by Brendan Ostlund

It was a beautiful day for a hike. The sun was at its peak, the sky was blue, and the clouds were white. I climbed the tallest hill I could see, hoping that I could get a better view. It took my breath away – the endless array of low, smooth, green hills. The wind started to pick up a little, and I inhaled a deep breath and closed my eyes.

A light, thin object flew right into my face and was stuck there by the wind. I jumped and opened my eyes, seeing only white. I grabbed at it. It was a piece of paper about the size of a photograph. It *was* a photograph. My eyes were drawn to the image printed on the paper. It was a memory of my wife, the first time I met her. She was smiling at me, holding my hand while I was blushing. The picture flew out of my hand and returned to the wind.
Another photograph floated into view. I caught it before it took off. I cherished this memory. It was our wedding day. She was in white and she was radiant. The wind picked up again. Another picture drifted near. I snatched it in the air. I hated this photograph. It showed another memory, a mistake: the time I broke her heart, the day that I lost her.

The photos kept coming, circling around me with the wind, one after another. The wind picked up. The pictures grew in number. It became hard to see through this whirlwind. The beautiful land was gone. I was stuck in a cyclone of my memories that blocked the bright sunlight. They cut my skin, slicing around my ankles and the sides of my arms. It was too much, all too much. I was suffocating. I closed my eyes and screamed.

Silence. I opened my eyes. All the pictures were frozen in the air, all of them facing me. My life was displayed in front of me. I saw the one I loathed and grabbed at it. The moment I touched the paper, it burst into flames. It burned up right in my hands, the ashes floating up.

I had a chance. I reached for every regret-filled memory, burning them up one by one. But I was losing control, and the wind was picking up again. I couldn't hold it any longer. The photos flew faster. The wind regained its strength. Each cut made my skin sting. I was suffocating again.

How could I survive? What would happen if I set fire to all of them, even the ones I loved? I closed my eyes and let the flames consume me. I let go with all my might. I let the flames burn every memory.

Silence again. There was nothing left to do now but open my eyes.

Portrait of Chuck Hutchinson. Oil. Adam Kroeker.

Tarot Box

by Heath Goertzen

The latch fell off, dear tarot box
But yours or mine? I'm not quite sure

The rote intent of origin
lost or rejected

You sit ajar –
an act of defiance, or one of acceptance?

A box devoid of purpose, function

Of course, one-eighth Baltic cares not
carved, used, or burned
What then is this gossamer melancholy?

There – understanding
meaning lost

You don't know it, but you are tragic

A natural tragedy, universal
Untimely, nondescript, non-neurological

Synapses crackle
Sounds, songs like
leaves mingling major arcana underfoot

Static sparking a crown fire
too quick to contain

This peculiar unmeant unmeaning
did mental unweavings

Permutations of iterations
cascading fractal

Fibonacci's thought spiral spilling
to the floor like tarot cards,

I stand, ankle deep already
Close the lid
with effort, latch it

Compartmentalization completed

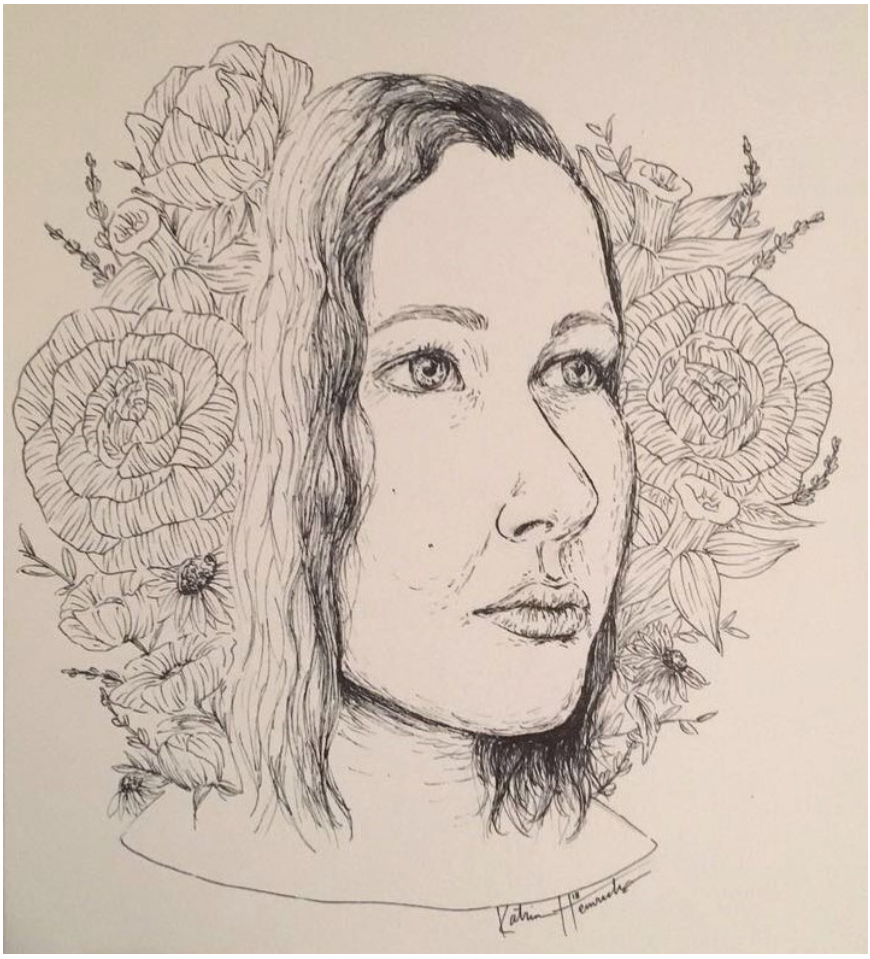
I will mourn you
another time.

On The Line. Acrylic. Chuy Alba.

Demon

by Sarah Booth

I thought I was fine.
I thought that since I had gone through this struggle so many times I knew how to handle it.
I mean, I even read a self-help book . . . Well, half of it.
After I read half of it, I thought I would know how to control the demon that lives inside my head.
I've lived with this demon since I was little.
I should know how to outsmart it, right?
Wrong. He knows how to outsmart me.
He knows exactly when to make his presence known again.
He knows the timing and how to do it.
And every time I fall for it.
I could be having a great day, week, month, even year if I'm lucky.
But if I make one wrong look in the mirror - *boom* - he's back.
He makes me rethink if I should wear that outfit today.
He makes me question if people can see my double chin.
Makes me wonder how many rolls I have when I sit down.
I have to fight with him every day, every minute, every second.
I have to tell him that I am beautiful and that I am made in the image of God.
I have to remind myself that I shouldn't compare myself to the girl I see leaving the library, or to the one I see walking down the hall.
I tell myself that I am a beautiful person and that I shouldn't care what other people think.
This makes the demon shut up, but not for long.



Bloom. Pen and Ink. Katrina Heinrichs.

Grim Reaper

by Austin Biggerstaff

Martin Shkreli #87850-053
MDC Brooklyn
Metropolitan Detention Center
P.O. Box 329002
Brooklyn, NY 11232

Dear Grim Reaper,

Imagine needing help in your most dire hour of life and not being able to help yourself. Your throat begins to swell, and you aren't able to get enough oxygen to properly stay conscious to drive yourself to the hospital. You also can't call anybody because you are already struggling to breathe. What do you do? Well, Martin, I'll tell you. You don't do anything.

You bought the one medicine that can help others buy enough time to make it to the hospital without dying, and you decided to make the price as outrageously high as you could for your own personal gain. Many will suffer gruesome allergenic crises that they will not be able to help. Is the idea of personal wealth really that much more important than saving lives? Five Americans die of anaphylaxis each day. Does that not shock you? My mother may accidentally eat something containing citrus and her throat could swell so much that she could choke and die. Would she merely be another number to add to the list? Is that what you want? Is that what you want your legacy to be? The man who was more worried about being in the ranks of Bill Gates only to kill two-hundred people each and every year?

I see through the skin you wear. Are your eyeballs even real? I could pry them out with a spoon and find that they are prosthetic. Your skin would easily peel off and show signs of glue sticking to your bones. You forgot your scythe at home and decided to tape an EpiPen to a stick instead to mock us. Isn't it ironic? The way I see it, you are the grim reaper attempting to hide behind some poor sap's skin because you have no heart.

Take your wealth and shove it. I hope you shove it toward charities. Does it count as charity when you are giving away money you shouldn't have made?

How nice of you to give away money that was not well-spent for the sake of staying alive. No matter where the money goes in an attempt to evade taxes, I hope it bites you and cripples you. I hope this money-grabbing attempt flops and you have to lower the prices. After all, the blood on your money is worth much more than that green piece of expendable paper.

Ripples. Photography. Jordan Singh.

Aaron Brown on Living into Difference, Journeying Through Memory, and Writing What You Can't Get Beyond

by Elizabeth Ratzlaff

On March 5, 2018, professor and poet Aaron Brown visited Bethel College on the invitation of the English Department. Brown is the author of one novella, Bound *(Wipf and Stock 2012), and two collections of poetry,* Winnower *(Wipf and Stock 2013) and* Acacia Road *(Silverfish Review Press 2018). He is a Pushcart Prize nominee, and his book* Acacia Road *is the winner of the 2016 Gerald Cable Book Award. For ten years of his childhood, Brown lived in Chad, Africa with his family, an experience and a component of his identity that weaves its way into much of his work. He is currently an Assistant Professor of writing and editing at Sterling College in Sterling, Kansas. During his visit to Bethel, he gave a reading during Convocation and spoke with students in Dr. Siobhán Scarry's class Studies in Poetry: Archivists and Agitators (English 251). After a full day, Brown generously took the time to sit down at Mojo's for a cup of coffee and an interview with* YAWP! *co-editor Elizabeth Ratzlaff.*

Elizabeth Ratzlaff: In Convocation, we heard that it was your first time giving a public reading of your brand new book, *Acacia Road.* How did it feel to read your poems out loud for a larger live audience?

Aaron Brown: I've read a lot of these poems over the last few years, just

kind of testing them out – everything from open mics to readings. But having the book in hand adds a new element. There is a little bit of uncertainty. *Will people like this? Will they buy it? Are they going to fall asleep?* But, it was really good. It was a captive audience, and it was exciting to celebrate the book with a lot of people.

ER: How long of a process was it for you to compile all of those poems into the final book?

AB: The earliest one I think I wrote in college, but most of these were written during my MFA program and then a number of them afterwards, in the last few years. So probably about five years, writing seriously, having this idea of what this manuscript would look like. Then, I've been sending it out as a manuscript for two years, and still working on it, still revising it. That's another thing – just how long it takes, not only to write a manuscript and shape it, but also to just wait for it to be published, hopefully. That's a whole journey in itself, too.

ER: I read that you've also written a novella titled *Bound*, and today in Convocation you shared with us a bit of the prose memoir you've been writing. I found it interesting when you said that writing poems isn't something you can do all the time. Why is that, and how does your creative process differ for you when you're switching between those different modes of writing?

AB: I think we like to uphold poetry and say that it's this all-encompassing genre that is pure, the distillation of experience. We use all these metaphors to describe poetry, and honestly I've found that poetry fails sometimes to discuss everything or to explore everything. It's amazing in what it can say, but every once in a while there are certain ideas or certain experiences that are either too big or too small for a poem. They just don't fit, at least when I try them out. That's where essays, memoir, short stories come in and give me more freedom in different genres to kind of see things from a different light or explore them in a different perspective. I feel like I write poetry very intensely for a concentrated period of time. Then I have to press pause, because I've reached the limit; I'm running on fumes. So, then I take a step back and go off in this other direction for six months or however long. Then I stop and go back to poetry. That's kind of the way I write…. I've written poems on one experience, and then I have written memoir pieces on that same experience and I got something completely different.

ER: Somebody may have mentioned or asked you about this earlier, but which poets and authors would you say have influenced your work, maybe those who have sparked your imagination when you were younger and those who might still influence you today?

AB: When I started to get really serious about poetry, honestly it was the Romantic poets – everyone from John Keats and Wordsworth … I was this really moody high-schooler, who just loved these impassioned Romantics. I moved from that to reading more contemporary poetry. So first, there was Gerard Manley Hopkins – not contemporary, but late 1800's – he does so many innovative things and is such a great model for me on how to push language and hear the percussiveness of language. Then, I moved from Hopkins to the 20th and 21st century – people like T. S. Eliot were important for me, and Seamus Heaney, an Irish poet. As far as contemporary poets, Li-Young Lee has been important for me – he's an Indonesian-American poet, one of the big poets these days, and he talks a lot about the sense of exile that I really resonate with – W. S. Merwin, and Christian Wiman has been really big for me, both with his poetry and with his essays. When I look at influences, I look at not only what they can teach me about the form and the craft, like with Hopkins – how can I push my language beyond the usual ways and use of language? – also, I look for people who have gone through the same thing, the same dislocation experience, the same kind of searching, and the same sense of exile you might find in Merwin or Li-Young Lee. I think it's really important to read widely and deeply, and imitation is something that is totally great for developing writers if you're a young writer.

ER: What would you say are some of the most beneficial experiences or maybe just learning moments you've had as you've developed as a writer, for young writers like me and my classmates?

AB: First of all, I think as I said, reading widely, finding people you really like, and just sticking with them and reading as much as you can of them, and drinking it in at your own pace. Unfortunately, in college you get assigned things to read. It may kill the joy, but over the summer or when you graduate, you're your own master. You will be able to read what you want to read, and at your own pace. Everyone reads at different paces. I'm a really slow reader, which makes it hard to be a professor and a writer sometimes,

but I work at it. So, that's one thing, just reading and seeing its connections to writing. I think, also, just being out in the world as a literary citizen. As a college student, honestly, there were amazing classes I took, but if you ask me, "What do you talk about in that class?" or "What did you learn in that class?" nine times out of ten I won't remember. What I *do* remember are the moments where I was out in the world as a writer. So, what that means is visiting my professors in their offices and talking to them and just talking through life things and questions about writing and sharing poems and getting those workshopped, and then going to conferences. It was helpful that I went to college outside of Chicago, so there was always stuff going on. It's a little bit harder in Newton, Kansas or in Sterling, Kansas to do that, but even then, one of the things we do at Sterling a lot is we get in a van, and we get some students to go with us, and we go to a conference. When I was a college student, it was intimidating to do that, to be around all these writers, but I pushed myself, as introverted and non-confrontational as I am. I would go and meet a writer I really admired, and most of the time it was an awkward "hey" or "hello" or whatever – but there were a couple of interactions that were really meaningful to me where that famous writer sat down and talked to me. I think it's moments like that where you realize you are a writer and you are a part of this community, and it's really exciting to do that and to feel that. You feel good about yourself. Then you realize that there's all those difficult things of finding a job and paying the bills and getting rejected and all that kind of stuff that comes with it – but, as long as you keep the community as a positive thing in your mind, it helps you to push through and persevere as a writer.

ER: I think for new poets and writers, the act of beginning a piece can seem daunting – perhaps the most daunting for me at least. Are there any techniques you've used or would recommend for bypassing the "controller" of our brains and just getting the piece into motion?

AB: Some of the best advice I've gotten from past professors is to, first of all, not be afraid of the blank page. It's okay to stare. Give yourself permission to stare. Give yourself permission to say, "I can only write one line." Some days will be like that, and there's no need to feel anxious about that. Don't be afraid of the blank page, and then honestly, just start with that first thought that comes to mind and then quiet that left side of your brain, that critical voice inside your head, just shut it off for a little bit. Start with

Sante Fe, Summer. Photography. Elizabeth Friesen Birky.

that first line and keep going. It's going to be messy, it's going to be pretty bad. Anne Lamott has that famous essay called "Shitty First Drafts," and she says the first draft is the "downdraft." Get it down; it's like word vomit. The second draft is the "updraft." You get it up and you start to dress it up a little bit, and the third draft is the "dental draft," which means you're picking at it, like with those scrapey little dentist tools. I think that's a really good metaphor; it's a process. If you think you are going to write a world-changing poem or story from the get-go, you are not going to do that; it's not going to be good. So you have to be patient. I think George Saunders says he revises things like forty times; that's a lot of patience. In terms of idea generation, try to keep it small. For me, I get little pictures in my head or little memories, and my first impulse is to be like, "let's blow this up! Let's put a big life-changing theme to this poem," or whatever and I have to be like, "No, no, no, no. Don't do that." All you need to do is just write about this little theme, this little fragment, this little picture, and then it will grow and blossom from there. Don't be assertive with it. Listen to the piece; don't try to impose yourself onto it and come up with these high, mighty ideas.

ER: You said you spent ten years living in Chad, Africa while you were growing up. What ages were you when you were living there?

AB: I was eight when we moved there, and I was eighteen when I came back for college.

ER: In Convocation, it seemed that your experience in Chad informs much of your work *Acacia Road*. Knowing that you lived in Chad, it seems that readers might have a tendency to incorrectly assume that the experience of the speaker in your poems is also your personal experience as the poet. Have you experienced that, and with that in mind, where do you locate yourself in your book?

AB: Honestly, I try to not be too high-minded and say "Oh, let me adapt all these other people's voices as my own." Sometimes, I think we do too much work to divorce the poem from the poet, because everything in some sense is autobiographical in some way. I'm perfectly comfortable with people saying this poem is written from the perspective of Aaron Brown, and I won't deny it; yes it is. I told the class that I'm not as talented a poet as other people. Other people are able to adapt personae and do those sorts of stuff.

All I know is to write from my own experience, my own eyes, my own lens, my own perspective and that's where I start. To do anything else would fall flat on its face.

ER: In my Diasporic Literature class right now, we're reading E.M. Forster's *Passage to India*, and Forster has posed the – I think vitally important – question: Can a person really, honestly, intimately connect at a personal level with a person perhaps socially constructed as "other" or who is of a different nationality, race, religion, and so forth? With this in mind, what was your experience like in Chad and how were you able to connect, coming from America and meeting the people living there?

AB: Yeah, welcome to my life, my identity. First of all, it's been a long time since I've read *Passage to India*, and of course, while there are quite a lot of colonial lenses and judgments and frustrating things with that book, from what I remember … the ending has this really beautiful coming together of two people of very different world views and placements in the world. I remember that, and to me, that's what growing up in Chad was like. While I was aware of my otherness – I had white skin – I still grew up speaking Arabic and French, and my friends welcomed me for who I was, which was amazing. Any frustrations with a difference of identity was kind of self-imposed, and things I had to deal with personally and grow out of, because my friends definitely made me feel welcome. So, the whole thing about difference and otherness – I've grown up in a world of difference. We're all "others" in some way or form. Just reaching out to another person is an effort in itself and when it's done, it's always a great thing to write about and a great coming together. I'm very aware of my difference. Writers are always different in some shape or form. We are constantly attuned to the world, and because of that we also feel our distance from the world, and that's where we write from, that place of fundamental difference. We seek to be comfortable with difference. As frustrating as it can be sometimes, it's also part of who we are. Every day I'm acutely aware of that. When I go to Chad, I'm aware of my Americanness. Living in America, I'm aware of my Africanness. I live in Kansas now. I both recognize that I'm a Kansan, but I also recognize that I'll never be a Kansan, because of everything that's happened in my life and who I am and what I'm a product of. Do I wish I could belong one-hundred percent to a place? Oh yes, I really do. The long and short of it is that my life is always one of difference, and that's where the writing is. That's where the rubber meets the road. That's the white hot center of things that I write towards.

ER: So would you say your writing is one way for you to stay connected to your experience and the people in Chad?

AB: I think it's a way of recreating the past, like journeying back through memory and celebrating. It's almost a response to homesickness, a longing for childhood – a longing that you know will never be satisfied, but at least you can try to get back, at least you can try to bring it back through memory and through writing. It's a reclamation project in some ways. There's some fundamental things like, here I am writing in English – of course I do a little bit of code-switching. I include some Arabic, I include some French, but I'm writing about Chad in a language that most Chadians can't read, and that's also kind of a sad thing. I'm Facebook friends with some of my Chadian friends and most of them can't read what I'm writing, which also makes me sad. Of course if they asked me what it's about, I'll tell them, or maybe they'll try to Google translate stuff. I think if there's one detractor to my project and what I do is that it's not in the language that I grew up with, or at least not most of that language. So the people I really want to share it with, I can't, unless I get to tell them about it over the phone or over text message. Even then, knowing that as I write in English, I do try to think about ways in which things are phrased. Can I phrase this description or this conversation in a way that it would be phrased in Arabic? So, that creates a little bit of a linguistic challenge, but also it complicates things in a very interesting way, and I think I try to kind of tune my ear a little bit to that. How would this be an idiom in Chad? How would this piece, this phrasing, be said in Chad? So, let me translate that into English as I write this poem, to give it an interesting flare so that it doesn't sound like something you would hear in America, even though it's in English. At the end of the day, I'm still writing in English.

ER: You said in convocation that you came face to face with the civil war in Chad when the soldiers looted your home. As I read and heard some of your poems, I felt the presence of this ongoing political violence. How do you approach capturing this experience of the present and historical violence in your poetry?

AB: That's a hard one. Violence is always a weird thing in writing, because it can easily take over the writing. It can easily be something like, "Ooo, look at what happened to me," or "look at my trauma, come and pat me on the back," or something like that. So I try to be aware of how I'm using it, and I want to use it not in a selfish way, but in a way that paints an accurate picture

of what happened – also, maybe in a way that resonates with people that have gone through similar things, that have seen things, controversies and conflicts that haven't been spoken about. I realize there are probably very few people that are writing things about war and Chad, sadly, especially in English. You'll probably find articles, or things like that, that are in French and Arabic. It's weird writing about a conflict that very few people know about and talk about. Some of what I'm doing is kind of awareness, and a lot of what I'm doing is just processing. Maybe all I can do is start with this image of violence as a starting point, and I can't approach it any other way. It's hard because there are people like Flannery O'Connor, who talks about the grotesque and the violent, and she doesn't want it to [get to] the point of becoming graphic. I don't want my poetry to be like this bloodbath of images. I want it to have a purpose; I want it to be measured; I want to recreate an experience for a purpose, for a direction. Violence is one of those things that's difficult to navigate. It's also intense for readers. When I'm reading these poems, I feel this acute sense of heaviness. I'm almost kind of comfortable – maybe I'm desensitized, which is a scary thing. I feel when I read these heavy things, I'm like, "Oh gosh, can people go with me? Do you want to go with me there? Do I even want to go there?" It's something to think about that I don't have an answer for.

ER: Do you try to capture those things which are difficult to speak about in your poetry – things that I heard you mention such as violence, identity, a sense of belonging?

AB: I talked about poetry's failure, but maybe poetry's strength is to talk about those difficult things – those distilled, focused experiences as a means of processing them. I think poetry is able to blend beauty with the profane and the violent and the darkness. It's able to rescue it in some ways, and there's always been a connection between poetry and suffering. There's always been a connection with poetry and trauma, poetry and processing and journeying through some difficult experience – to the point where Christian Wiman, that poet I mentioned as being a big influence, says something to the effect of "suffering produces great poetry" or "all poets must suffer in some way, shape, or form." Then he backs off of that statement, because that's like, "oh wait, what does that mean? If I want to be a poet that means I have to put myself in the way of suffering? No, no, no, don't try this at home." We have to back off of that comment a little bit, but I think there's some truth to it – not that you should go in search of suffering and not that you should

put yourself in harm's way, but you should write about those things that you can't get beyond, those moments of friction that often involve suffering or difficulty. We resonate with that. We have this almost sadistic nature as human beings where we would much rather read a story or read a poem about someone suffering than the opposite, than a story or poem about somebody who is having the time of their lives. Dostoevsky writes *Crime and Punishment*, which is about a person committing a crime and being punished and really unravelling, and he says, towards the end, that "yes, there's a story of redemption here, but a more talented author than me can write that story. I can't do it." Even for Dostoevsky to say that even *he*, the best novelist of all time, can't even write a story about redemption and positive things and good things, that's really fascinating to me.

ER: Is there anything you have been dying to add or say?

AB: It's exciting to be here at Bethel, and I'm grateful to Bethel for having me. It's cool to see a lot of people care about poetry. Today, I talked to a lot of people who aren't English majors, and while they don't read a lot of poetry, they're curious about it and they have a lot of questions, and they want to go find the answers. There's a really strong sense of community here, and it's exciting to get a taste of it. Kudos to you, guys!

Let's Go

by Heather Chaney

let's go boys. It's typed almost every game, but what about you? Do you not belong? Are you in the wrong place? It feels that way. This is the boys' world and the boys' game. It's in the usernames of my teammates "Lord-Dominator" and "Partyboy69." It is the typed out, repercussions of those go-make-me-a-sandwich jokes, the get-back-in-the-kitchen jokes. In a place where you can't see each other's faces, your voice is just pixels on a screen. Your hand moves off the keyboard to push your hair out of your face. It keeps your hands busy so you won't type: *and girls*. That would expose that you are not of the kind that is allowed to participate in such activities. So you sit there and play the game in silence.

Solitary Sapling. Photography. Jordan Singh.

The following two pieces, each entitled "Tube Top," grew out of an in-class writing assignment in Dr. Scarry's Fall 2017 Fiction Writing Workshop (English 312). After reading Lydia Davis' short-short story "A Mown Lawn" – a genre-bending piece that explores issues of conformity, gender, and the Vietnam War in one packed paragraph, all through linguistic play around the phrase "a mown lawn" – students chose a phrase in common on which to base their own short pieces. The class voted "tube top" as our writing prompt; these are two successes from that writing experiment.

Lydia Davis' "A Mown Lawn" can be found in her collection *Samuel Johnson Is Indignant* (Picador 2002).

Tube Top

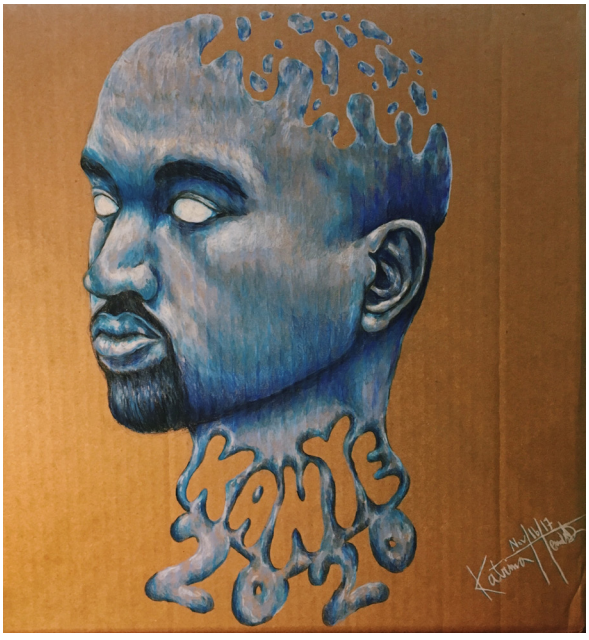
by Katie Schmidt

Tube top: what my wife wears when she goes to the city with Sherline. Her *top flops*. She thinks I like to stay home, thinks I don't know where she goes. To the *pot shop;* I smell it on her. Probably makes her feel young, like a *sex pot, hot-to-trot*. Reminds her of the old times.

I'm clean, fat but clean, and I don't start because I could *not stop* – could *not stop* and *not stop* until the *world pops*, oozes rainbows and *pukes rocks,* until my *ears pop* or my *heart stops*. Cracked open from *its top*, arctic ice sizzles into mantle, into veins, *cold shock*. *Clock stop*.

She thinks I like to stay home.

Sherline wears *flip flops*, *clip clops* up to our house, cigarette *drip drops* ashes on the porch as she waits, the *cock block*, for my wife to squeeze into her extra-stretch air-tight *boob lock*, *lewd frock*, her *tube top*.



Kanye 2020. Colored Pencil. Katrina Heinrichs.

Tube Top

by Marjean Harris

White tube top plus drainage tube, a boob tube sock solo, no longer a duet. Too tight post-op tube top. Lopside, topside. Soft top two-seater with headlight dimmed.

Lump it or leave it, is that the question? To be or not to be, *that* is the question.

Et tu, brute' tuber! Et tu!

My full moon orb with pink protuberance atop, held high on silver platter is carried away post-op. Horrors and scopes abound, leaving a more tubular torso and a boob untethered.

Burned my bra! Et tu? Me, one.

Celestial crab chest tattoo. Amazon in hot pink tulle tube tunic. And post-op pot. Fuck the pink platitudes.

Colored in Red. Colored Pencils. Akiyaa Hagen-Depusoir.

Quaking

by Tara Schwartz

Tara is currently an Erasmus student in Wuppertal, Germany for an academic year through an exchange program between Bethel College and Bergische Universität, Wuppertal. She is in the process of acquiring a German minor. In her submission note, Tara writes, "language is affixed to the very core of my being here, and from it my experience is inseparable, in more ways than one."

I, eye, aye

To traverse the world
brings too a passion
a drive, a thirst,
a quaking.

None of these are new.
They have merely resurfaced
from moments – no,
sessions – no, too formal,
spans, perhaps of emotions
I have previously felt but never
had heightened to a temperature
akin to when I touched the hot plate
(my ~~soul~~ sole source for cooking).

I question my use of words
now more than ever.

Take *quaking*, for instance.
This is no light word.
This requires a shaking or trembling
of our very being.
It has two synonyms, also,
with definitions that I like,
particularly in the way their meanings all relate,
but in different facets.

(See, there's another beautiful aspect of language.
We each have our own preferences
and this affects the way
we wield our language.)

Convulsion and *instability* are the synonyms.
The former is quite potent, I think.
Just saying it has power
in my eyes.
The latter also has inherent power
because the meaning is clearer.

Just one word, *quaking*,
can bring on a whole world of possibility.

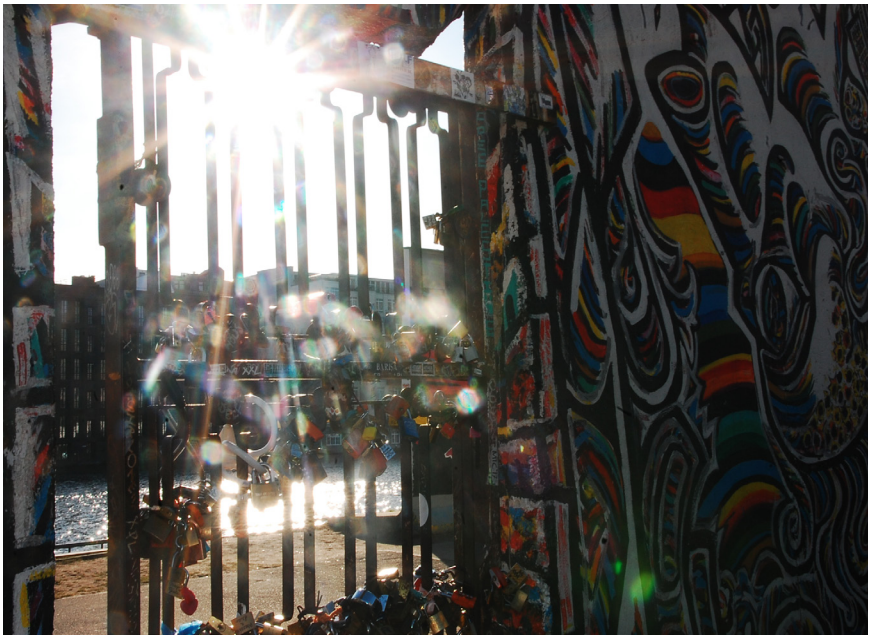
The world brings on many possibilities.

Having the opportunity to
unlimited access of another language
leaves an immense impact
on the use of my mother tongue.

Language is my love,
and it causes me to ponder
every word I speak.

Even a word as simple as
I can bring speculation.

I, eye, aye



Sonnenschein nach dem Mauerfall (Sunshine After the Fall of the Berlin Wall). Photography. Tara Schwartz.

Flock of Gulls. Photography. Jordan Singh.