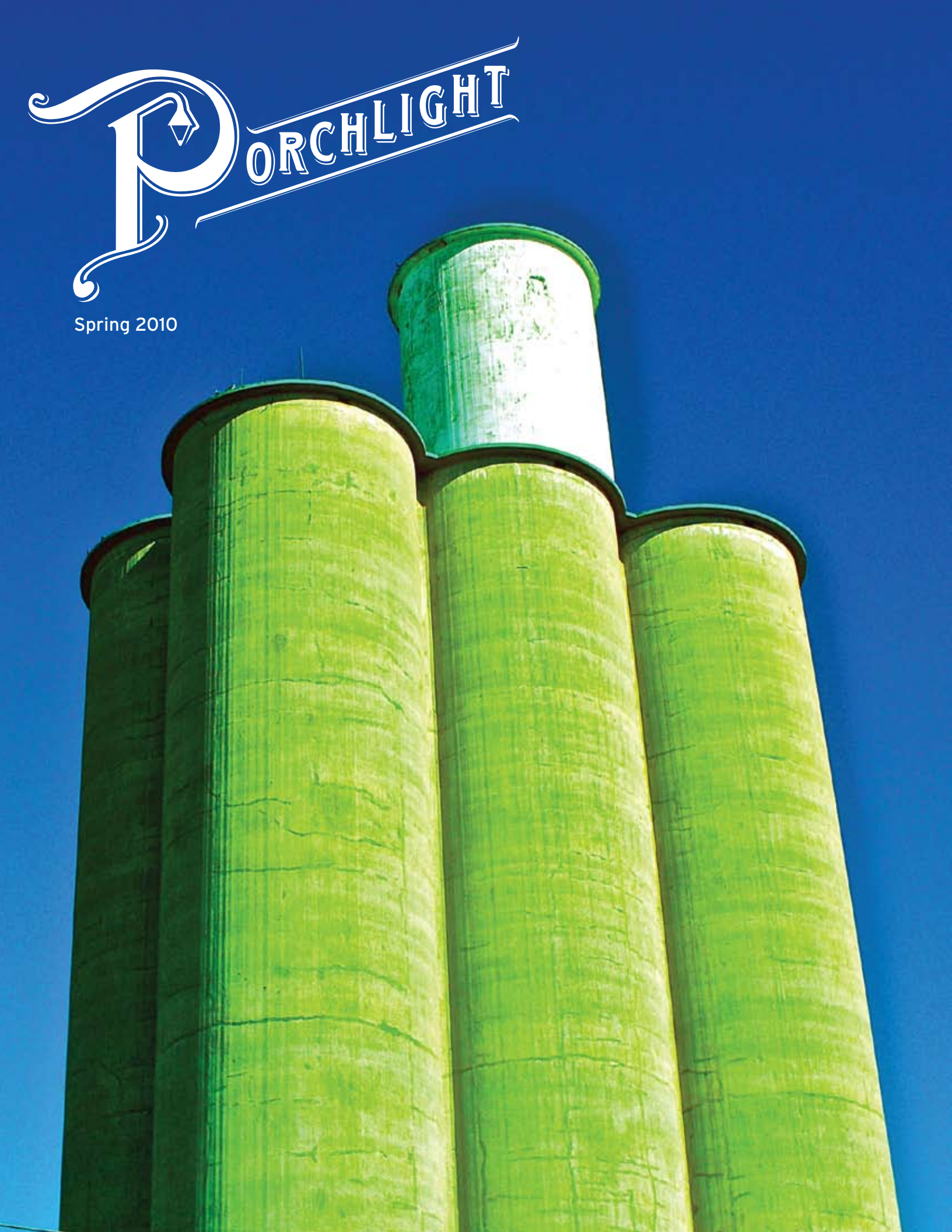
Porchlight

Spring 2010



Porchlight: A Literary Magazine

Where Narrative, Design, and Photography Intersect.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Publishing a magazine is hard. And right now, we do it for free. As you read this issue, we invite you think about the meaning of value, and how much art is worth to you. You could say that art is priceless, yes, but we like to think that if you had to put a number on it, you might decide that Porchlight is worth more than the cost of a candy bar. Please consider donating via the tab on our website to show support for the great design, literature, and art you find here.

This issue is about perspectives: generational and imaginative. Our perspectives change with added life experience and all manner of intellectual surprises. We hope the pieces presented here might change your mind, your view, your perspective, even if only for a little while.

Sincerely,

L.J. Moore
Editor

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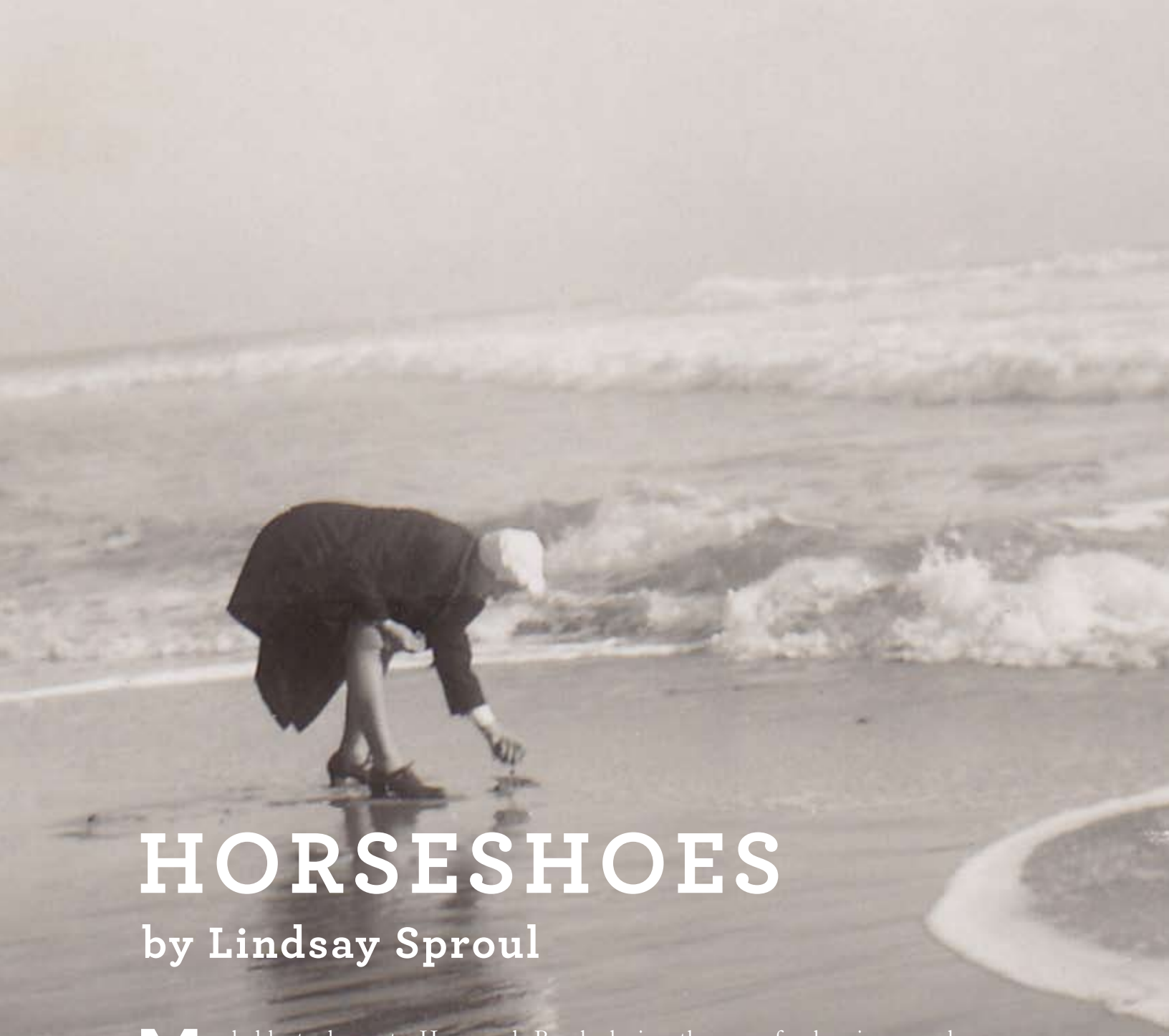
Three portraits of a federal judge during a trial



HORSESHOES

by Lindsay Sproul

My daddy took me to Humarock Beach during the eye of a hurricane and we saw hundreds of horseshoe crabs crawling back down to the water after the huge waves had carried them all the way up the beach. They looked like walking helmets.

He was kneeling in the sand, using his knees and one of his arms as a tripod to balance himself. I stood behind him so he wouldn't see me sucking on the end of my ponytail. He hated it when I did that, especially in the cold because then it would freeze in a point at the bottom.

I asked him if they were made of armor. He didn't answer, but he did say that they had five pairs of book gills behind their appendages, which were meant for breathing underwater. He said that they could only breathe on land for a really short amount of time, and even then only if their gills remained moist.

"Will they die?" I asked him. Most of them walked real slowly, tripping on rocks and getting trapped in the netting from dismantled lobster trap carcasses. Their legs were so short that it didn't seem to matter how many of them they had.

I nodded, waiting for him to tell me how, but he didn't say anything. He just took off running, scooping up six horseshoe crabs at a time, swinging them over his shoulders by their tails and piling them in his arms until they reached his chin. His figure shrunk as he reached the edge of the water. I saw him open his arms and let them loose into the ocean, their legs waving goodbye to me.

"Save them, Goober!" he shouted at me, bounding up the beach, filling his arms with another load.

"They can't breathe!" he called, but I didn't move. I just stood there without blinking as thunder rolled again. The hurricane was moving back. I learned later that horseshoe crabs aren't even crabs.

I squatted and picked up one by the tail, but then I saw its belly: five pairs of eyes, a mouth centered dead between all the eggbeater legs, the bulbous claw. An involuntary scream came out of me and I opened my fist, flinging it away.

"Goober!" he shouted after me. Back then, that's what my name was. I gave a theatrical shudder, and he threw them into the bosom of the blue ocean. He looked back at me with drowning eyes, his jersey blowing open at the throat, and I felt as though I'd been caught at something.

Long after he disappeared, I remembered the differences between our fears. Mine were predictable, mechanical, the kind I would grow away from, but his were gallant and malignant. He pressed his dirty fingertips to my cheeks and told me that he would see me again someday when I was older and real. I'm going now, he said, and while I'm gone, you will flatten me out and wreck me. When I arrive again, Goober, slice me open and act surprised to need me.

BY CAITLIN LILLY

Six weeks shy of my twenty-seventh birthday, I've begun the clichéd mid-to-late twenties panic over what I want to be when I grow up. I ask: Would my adolescent self be pleased with my accomplishments thus far? Certainly not.

Back then—which is, more specifically, fourteen—I insisted on being called "Kate" instead of Caitlin. Like any teenager, I wanted desperately to reinvent myself as somebody else. I didn't want to be the lonely girl spending her time listening to music and watching episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. I wanted to be the cute and mysterious punk rock girl with a sparkle in her eye. I wanted to be discovered. I also wanted a boyfriend, but that seemed tangential to my greater dreams of stardom. Deep down, in my little teenage heart, I was sure that even if I didn't get famous or do something spectacular before I turned eighteen, I would at least be a megahit by that far-away age of twenty-seven. I was sure that by now, I would have achieved some degree of fame or infamy. Maybe I would have a hit album (despite my criminal lack of musical talent) or maybe I would have a bestselling novel (*Caitlin Lilly: The New Voice of Our Generation*).

There were other promises-to-be that went along with these big teenage dreams. I was certain I would live in New York City when I grew up. And I would never, ever get married because marriage was:

(1) For suckers
(2) For people who led quiet, boring lives driving minivans to mundane (read: regular) jobs before coming home to their brick-ranch in the Burbs
(3) For people who left the bathroom door open.

I wanted no part of it.

But here I am—and I hate to disappoint you, fourteen-year-old me—but I'm a married lady who owns a house (thankfully, it isn't in the dreaded suburbs). I live in Portland, Oregon, and not New York City (although I did try New York for three months before high-tailing it back to the West Coast). I write for a living, sure, but it's nothing so glamorous as a book deal or a regular column in the *New York Times*. I have an excessively active social life and I am out

having fun most nights of the week. Most importantly (and despite my occasional leftover, overgrown teenage melodrama), my husband thinks I hung the moon. We don't, however, leave the bathroom door open.

This is the truth of my life, and it is good.

But I still can't kill that nagging feeling…

Where is my fame?

I'm sure most people have long since abandoned their delusions of grandeur. They've dismissed their teenage fantasies. They've moved on with their lives. For whatever reason, I can't give up on the dream. Romanticized visions of Kurt Cobain and Janis Joplin skate through my head. By twenty-seven, they had become legendary. They had shown their cruel and small-minded high school classmates, and the rest of the world, their incredible talent. They were also dead. I am not, and I have, in fact, crammed quite a lot into these just-less-than-three-decades. I have lived in the Bay Area and New York City, if only briefly. I've traveled all over North America, Europe, and Japan. I've amassed a near-endless store of wacky adventures, including a trip to Neverland Ranch. Most notably, I managed to play four seasons of professional roller derby with minimal permanent injuries. One would think that skating in front of 3,000 screaming fans, signing autographs, writing and publishing a comic book, starring in a documentary, and being recognized on the street would satiate my craving for fame. It hasn't.

Last October, six months before my dreaded twenty-seventh, I attended Ladies Rock Camp here in Portland. In three days, I formed a band, learned guitar, and wrote a song. At the end of the long weekend, I performed that song with my band at the legendary Satyricon, a venue which opened the year I was born. I played on the stage that launched dozens of punk bands; I played where Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love first met. There isn't a more fitting venue for someone so consumed with leaving an impression on the world. We rocked. It was awesome. It didn't last.

My calluses have peeled and my guitar is once again collecting dust. My roller skates sit in the garage with their outdoor wheels still attached from when I changed them last summer. I have a problem where I abandon a pursuit if I can't immediately master it, and perhaps this is where I differ from the aforementioned dead rock stars. They pushed themselves into early graves on the way to superstardom, and deep down, in my almost twenty-seven year old heart, I know that I'm not built for such dedication.

Maybe that's the rub. Maybe this odd emptiness is because I know that I don't really want to live like them. Not really. Maybe it's that I have only ever wanted just a taste.

So where does this leave me? I'm not quite sure. For now, I am careening towards twenty-seven at a fast clip, with plans to spend the actual day hanging around the French Quarter of New Orleans, preferably at the bottom of a margarita glass. I won't be famous, but I'll be having fun. The husband and I will kick the ennui down the road a little longer, and right now, that's the best plan I've got.

Photography by Chuck Taylor


WHOLESALE
FIREWORKS
FIREWORKS
BEST SELECTION + BEST PRICES
BUY 1 GET 1 FREE!
BUY 1 GET 1 FREE!
Black

THREE EASY PIECES:
A Triptych on Time

by J. J. McKenna

BREAKTHROUGH AT BURGER KING

Seven is a pretty late hour for us to be eating dinner, but we have worked all day and then met with a mortgage broker about a loan for our new house. We are tired and so agree to avoid the effort of cooking for ourselves and the hassle of waiting for food in a sit-down restaurant, opting for the Burger King. Besides, we actually like Burger King Whoppers. We've been married a long time.

We walk into the restaurant and act out our little set piece. There are no other customers in the restaurant. The only other people are someone in the cooking area and a teenage boy behind the counter waiting to take our order. We advance warily to the counter where the boy waits. He nods. For our part, we study the menu board with intensity, as if it's the first time we've ever seen it in our lives. The boy waits. We ponder. He waits. My wife is undecided. He waits. We confer. He waits. Finally, we agree's we almost always do: two whoppers (hold the onions), one large fry (to split), two small drinks. He enters our order and thanks us.

By the time we edge over to the drink machine and get our beverages, the whoppers and fries are on the serving tray along with the sales slip. We pick them up and look for a quiet booth. (They've all quiet at this hour; what are we thinking of?) So we pick one with a window view (of the drive-thru) and far enough from the door so cold air won't chill my wife.

Sometimes, as we get ready to eat, I think of Boswell's description of the eating habits of Samuel Johnson, the great 18th century critic and lexicographer. Boswell portrays Johnson as a ravenous eater who, except for when he was in the most august company, would look neither left nor right nor engage in conversation until his rapacious appetite had been sated. This pretty much describes me. My wife is a much slower, more considered eater, who tends to lay out all parts of the meal, seasoning each item in turn, and generally looking over the whole enterprise before beginning.

She chuckles as she sits in the Burger King booth with the sales receipt in hand. Laughing at sales receipts is something my budget-minded wife usually doesn't do; scrutinize receipts carefully, yes, of course. But laugh? No.

"What's so funny?" I ask.

"The kid at the counter," she laughs, "he has given us the senior citizen discount!"

I wince as if nicked by a sharp razor. We haven't asked for the discount. At this time in our lives, I'm the only one old enough to qualify. Somehow, the fact that I might be an identifiable member of the senior set hasn't yet seeped into my consciousness.

A lot of points along life's path are like this, though: they materialize unsummoned. Like the fine strands of gray in my hair and the wrinkles around the corners of my eyes when I smile, or like the stranger who appears in my mirror each morning when I shave. Here they are no discounts allowed.

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

The wind gusting over the ridgeline of the Continental Divide makes our windbreakers snap and crackle. It's late June, and my wife and I are day hiking above Loveland Pass in the Colorado Rockies. It's a hike we like. The views are tremendous: the snowcapped Ten-mile Range to the southwest stretches past Breckenridge; the Gore Range angles northwest as it gives birth to the Eaglesmere Wilderness; and to the east, two fourteeners—Gray's and Tory's peaks—touch the sky. The first steep leg of our hike takes us past granite outcrops where pikas chatter at us and scurry to their dens as we pass. By this point, we've gotten away from the tourists who don't stray far from the carpark where US Route 6 crosses the Divide.

We travel light—carrying only water, compact binoculars, camera, topographical maps, sunscreen, lunch. We wear shorts and T's and a windbreaker. My wife has slipped a fleece top and jeans into my daypack because she knows that at nearly 13,000 feet she'll be cold. Some years there's still snowpack on the lee side of the ridge, and then we're glad we have ankle-high hiking boots with good lugs. There is snow this year, and I use my hiking stick, a homemade staff of lodgepole pine smoothed by several yearsuse, to probe the snow that's soft around the edges of the pack. We hike along the ridge for a half-hour and then stop to drink water and enjoy the views.

The Continental Divide: a watershed in the American imagination as well as in its geography. The very phrase conjures up images of Lewis and Clark, the American Frontier, and fur trappers in the 1820's. It's the place where, theoretically, a cup of water poured from your right hand will flow into the Gulf of Mexico. Water poured from the left hand will reach the Pacific. Now, standing astride this line, I see that theory play handmaiden to reality. If I stand astride this ridge line and spit toward the eastern slope, my spittle will go down the Clear Creek watershed, into the South Platte, the Missouri, the Mississippi, and the Gulf. In theory. But, today, with the wind bucking up over the ridge, if I spit towards the western slope, it'll come back into my face! That's reality.

I look back down the trail. Since the trail is well above tree line, the line of sight stretches uninterrupted for a good ways. A quarter mile back, two hikers ascend the trail. From their pace, it's evident they'll overtake us before long. After a few minutes, as they gain on us, I can see they are young women. At 100 meters it's obvious that they are hiking in shorts and T-shirts—no windbreakers. I glance at my wife, who is now wearing her fleece top underneath her windbreaker, and has her hood drawn tight around her face.

As the approaching hikers get within 30 meters, I discover one of them is carrying a daypack while the second is carrying a small child—perhaps 18 months old—in a pack frame. At a half-dozen meters, their beauty takes my breath away. Fit, tall and blond with dazzling smiles. They chat easily back and forth despite the altitude and their quick pace. Two Valkyries: clearly sisters. Shortly, they come abreast of us, and we step off the trail and exchange, "How ya' doin's?" as they stride past. We watch after them in admiration.

After they are well past hearing range, the leader shrugs off her daypack and, with hardly a break in her stride, slips off her T-shirt to continue hiking in shorts and a blue and white checkered sports bra. I look—gape is a better word—with my cosseted wife at my side. Presently, she says, "Don't get excited. You couldn't keep up." And I know, oh, I know, she is exactly right. Ah, reality!

SERENDIPITY AND SANTA FE

During an academic conference in Albuquerque, I become restive and bored with academia and talk my wife into fleeing at the first opportunity to fabled Santa Fe. It is October. We visit St. Francis Cathedral, the very one that Willa Cather made famous in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Then we tour the Plaza and the Palace of the Governor on the north side of the square.

Outside the Palace, along the portico, we admire the jewelry and art crafts of the Native Americans. I buy a bolo tie of silver and turquoise. It's late afternoon in mid-autumn, and I ask one artisan how late she'll be selling. She points to the sun already descending toward the western horizon. "When the sun goes below those mountains, we'll be gone."

While waiting for my wife to purchase silver earrings, I notice a poster advertising the inaugural opening of the Georgia O'Keeffe museum—that very day, not more than a couple of blocks away. Serendipity! Then, unnoticed, the sun kisses the western mountains, and a sudden chill changes the air. All together, as if on a silent command, the artisans begin to pack up their wares and, in less than five minutes, are gone—leaving the esplanade bare.

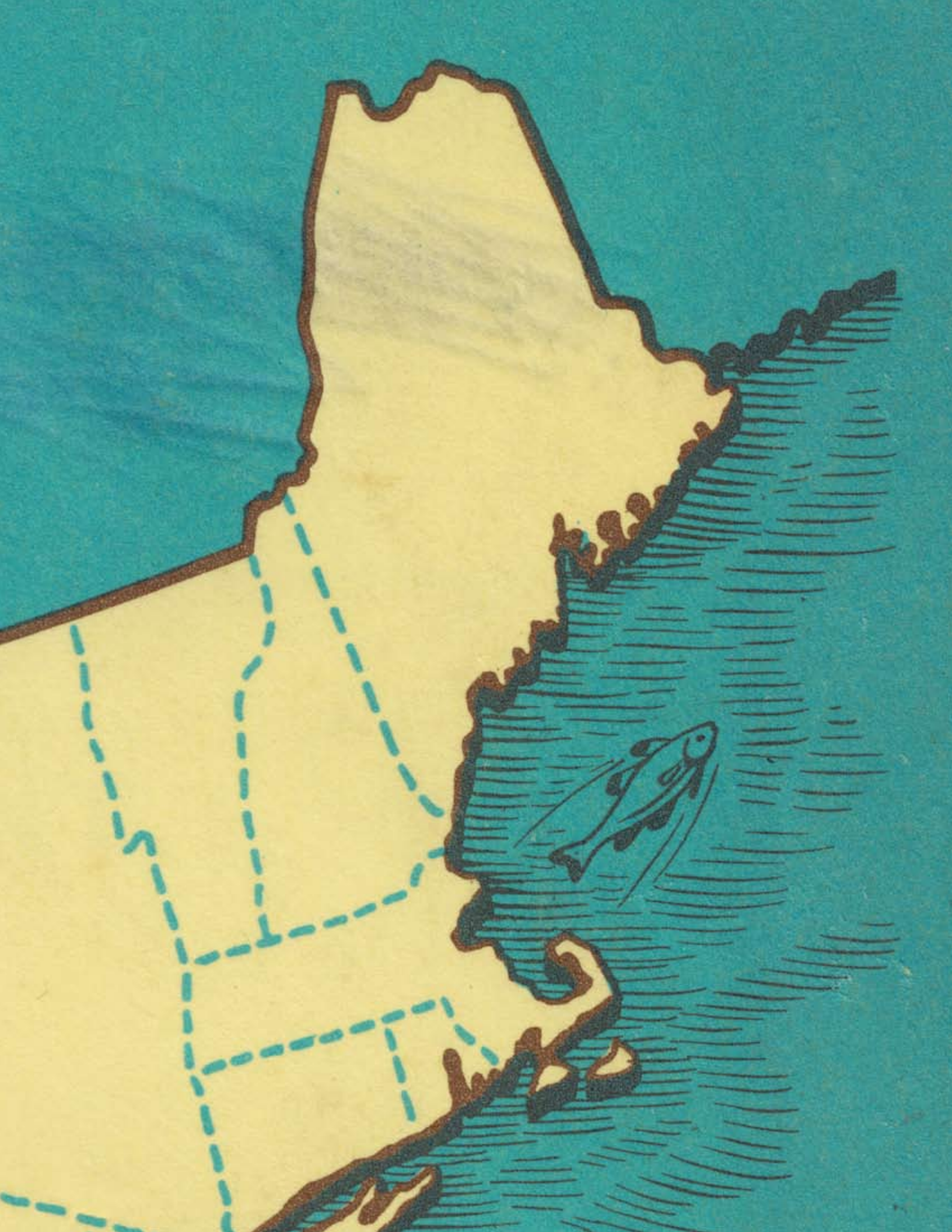
We decide to walk over to the opening of the O'Keeffe museum. A small queue has formed in front of the entrance. On each quarter of the hour, pilgrims are being let into the museum a dozen at a time. We decide to wait. Tired, I sit on the still warm bricks of the courtyard as the murmured conversations of our fellow pilgrims ebb and flow seemingly far above my head. No

one seems to notice me sitting on the ground while the others stand round. Finally, as the last embers of light fade from the sky, we gain admission. We tour, admiring *Red and Yellow Cliffs* and *Black Mesa Landscape*, two of O'Keeffe's large and dazzling landscapes of the Southwest. When we come back toward the entrance, my wife, who knows my most fond and foolish dreams, exclaims, "Look! Look! Over there!"

In the main hall, in front of *Bella Donna,* a 36 in. by 30 in. floral swirl in satin white, stand my heroes: an elderly couple in their mid-to-late 70s. From the back, they appear nearly identical: full heads of short white hair, navy blazers, pearl-gray slacks, and—the *piéce de résistance*, the *ne plus ultra*—both are wearing sneakers. I am jealous. I've always wanted to be regarded as so old, so distinguished, and so eccentric that I could wear sneakers anywhere, however grand or formal the event. I have fantasized: "Look out, fellow travelers at weddings, graduations, and funerals! I will be there, Walter Mittied in my sneakers." Tourists and aficionados come and go, talking of Ms. O'Keeffe. My heroes seem perfectly oblivious. I despair—of ever matching their insouciance, their daring to be themselves.

I often say, somewhat flippantly, as if I am exempt, "The older you get the more like yourself you become." Am I doomed, then, to be forever a factor or two short of free? Maybe so, I conclude reluctantly. Getting old doesn't change who you are. It just makes you more like yourself.

But, then again, what are heroes for, if not to let us dream? I might not need to score the whole trifecta—age, fame, and eccentricity. Two of three might do the trick. With my wife on my arm, there's still a chance I'll wear my sneakers as we dance to the music of the spheres.



HISS BUBBLES

(Brian)
I had a friend named Brian Cavanaugh, who lived
With his aunt at the Blank Hotel
In the Massachusetts part of New Hampshire, with
Government glasses and bowl-cut hair.

(Ruby/devotion)
Ruby lights a candle for
Saint Gene the Collectivist, and not knowing
What to do with the charred matchstick, she
Puts it in the breast pocket of her new turquoise
Pants suit.

(Avow)
Sorry for the heat among other
Ways of apologizing for standing too close.
The age of renunciation began like the tickling
Onset of a sneeze. I am done with solids now,
A vow that extends to lobster claws and
Birthday cakes.

(Elijah)
Hortensia's boy walking down the service road
With a rusty shovel and ballooned out
Waist.
There is thunder behind him over where
The freeway delta fans, and his stolen Barbie
Backpack is smothered in mud.
Inside, an exact duplication of the
Contents of his mind?
Horstensia's boy, Elijah,
Walking our way.

(his bubbles)
The very next day in Brian's bathroom, his bubbles
Cling to the eggshell tiles.

(Hortensia/spite)
Ruby spots Hortensia folding linens in the chapel.
She thinks she might
Break her legs.
But here in the thicket of electricity,
All this light, she breathes and drinks a
Yogurt smoothie.

(rape sequence)
I had a friend named Brian Cavanaugh.
I had a friend named Brian Cavanaugh.
Thinking about how inappropriate those
Pink clouds were, the soft sheets of
Strands of hair. And eye muscles pulled so
Tight, he drew into focus each hideous fleck of
Dirt and sand.

(Hiss Mountain)
Climbing down Hiss Mountain, its leeward side in
Black and white. I can nearly see the ocean
In the lowest corner of Maine.
I can see Elijah's shovel and vapor trails of
Mayonnaise.

Eric Arnold

here...

the moon's first half shadows over the bridge's only
arch, slithering into the open moon roof of a car parked beneath

on the other side of the bridge, the moon's latter
half spreads onto a nearby resident's balcony

in total, the width of the moon's shadow, hovers over
symmetrically, parallels, casts past the balcony, seeps into
the left corner of the house

the shadow stops, met by the glint of an 80mm refractor
telescope's lens

the newly waxed, wooden floors of the house, save
the easternmost end --- carpeted, stained, worn out by
hours of exposure to endless summer sunshine, imprints of cats'
paws & scratches ---- reflects a consistent silhouette of the
telescope, hoisted by a five & a half foot tripod, slowly turn-
ing to the right -- slower -- as it pans south, towards the
right, southeasternmost angle --- where the bottom & side metal
frames of the balcony's screen door meet -- slows some more --
past the hand rail, beneath the bridge, settles, then stops

after the lens zoom in initially, the eye
sees a woman stumble, gain her footing, then stumble again

she removes her footwear - a pair of corduroy slip-ons
- steps on her mildly sprained left ankle, which she won't know
of until tomorrow morning

she drops her purse, reaches for it on the ground
beside the right rear tire, stumbles backwards --- nearly
fell on her right butt cheek, but was a martini or two away from
total drunkenness, sober enough & aware that the right passenger
door was near --- uses its handle as a buttress, props herself
upright -- then fingers her purse's baby pockets

a wind sweeps through & coils over & under the bridge - invariably faint - though it sways & rustles the leaves of trees, impeding what the lens can unravel

the lens zoom out - then detract

after panning left - the tripod is steadied

the telescope pans back -- horizontally, to the right -- & with the wind dissipating, zooms in further --- refocuses on the woman, now with a set of keys in hand

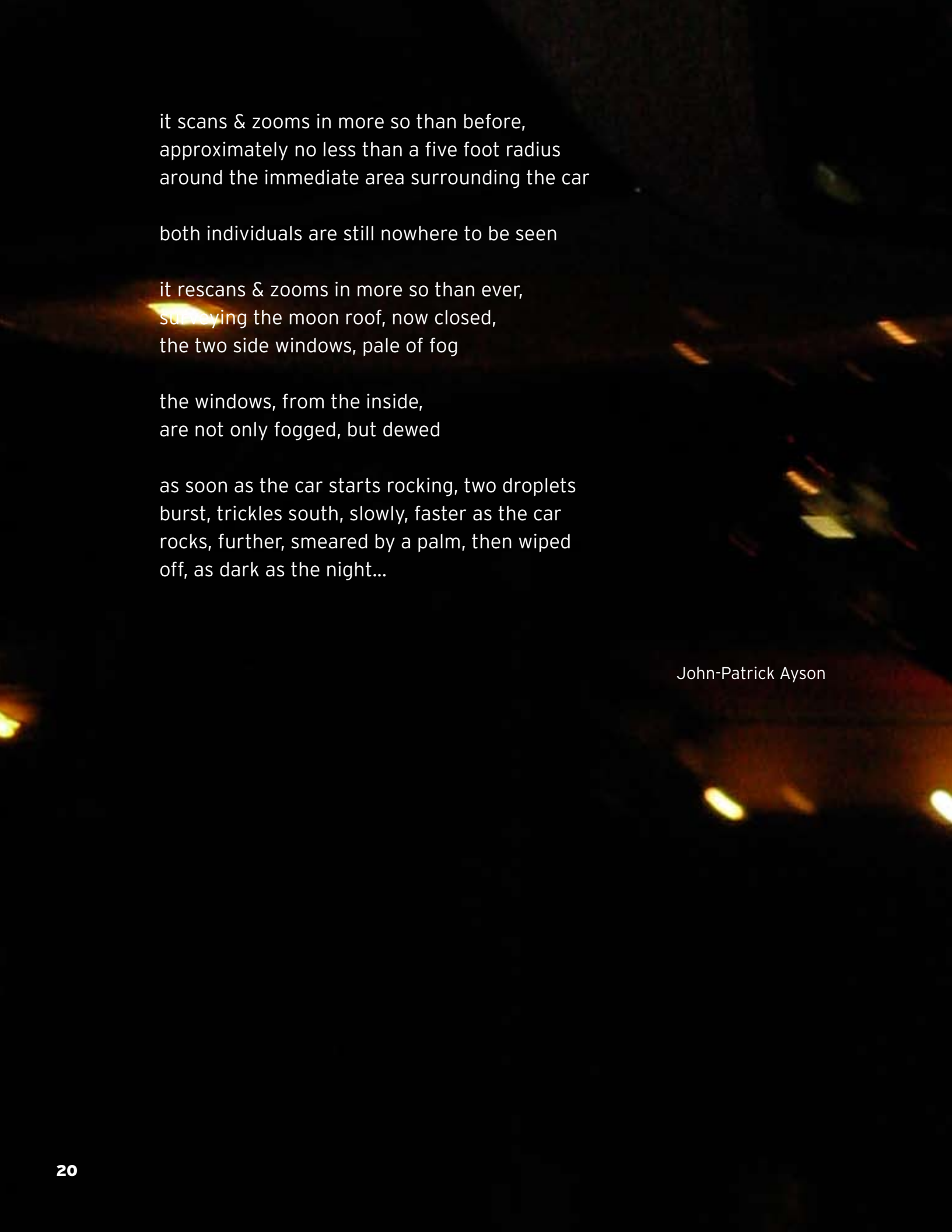
as the wind disappears completely, she fumbles the keys, gestures towards a man approaching from the front of the car, beckons him with her left index finger, turns her back, shows a tattoo of a two headed ermine occupying her entire right clavicle --- or so it seems --- since the garment she is wearing is too loose at the shoulders & neck

another wind sweeps through, quicker though stronger than the previous, nudges the tripod not once but twice, trailed by two consecutive drafts passing through the slightly opened balcony door, the second of which jars one of the tripod's legs, nudges its base off a supportive makeshift crevice between two planks on the wooden floor

the telescope is carried & relocated,
six inches to two feet to the left

after it is resteadied & refocused,
it scans & zooms in

both individuals are nowhere to be seen



it scans & zooms in more so than before,
approximately no less than a five foot radius
around the immediate area surrounding the car

both individuals are still nowhere to be seen

it rescans & zooms in more so than ever,
surveying the moon roof, now closed,
the two side windows, pale of fog

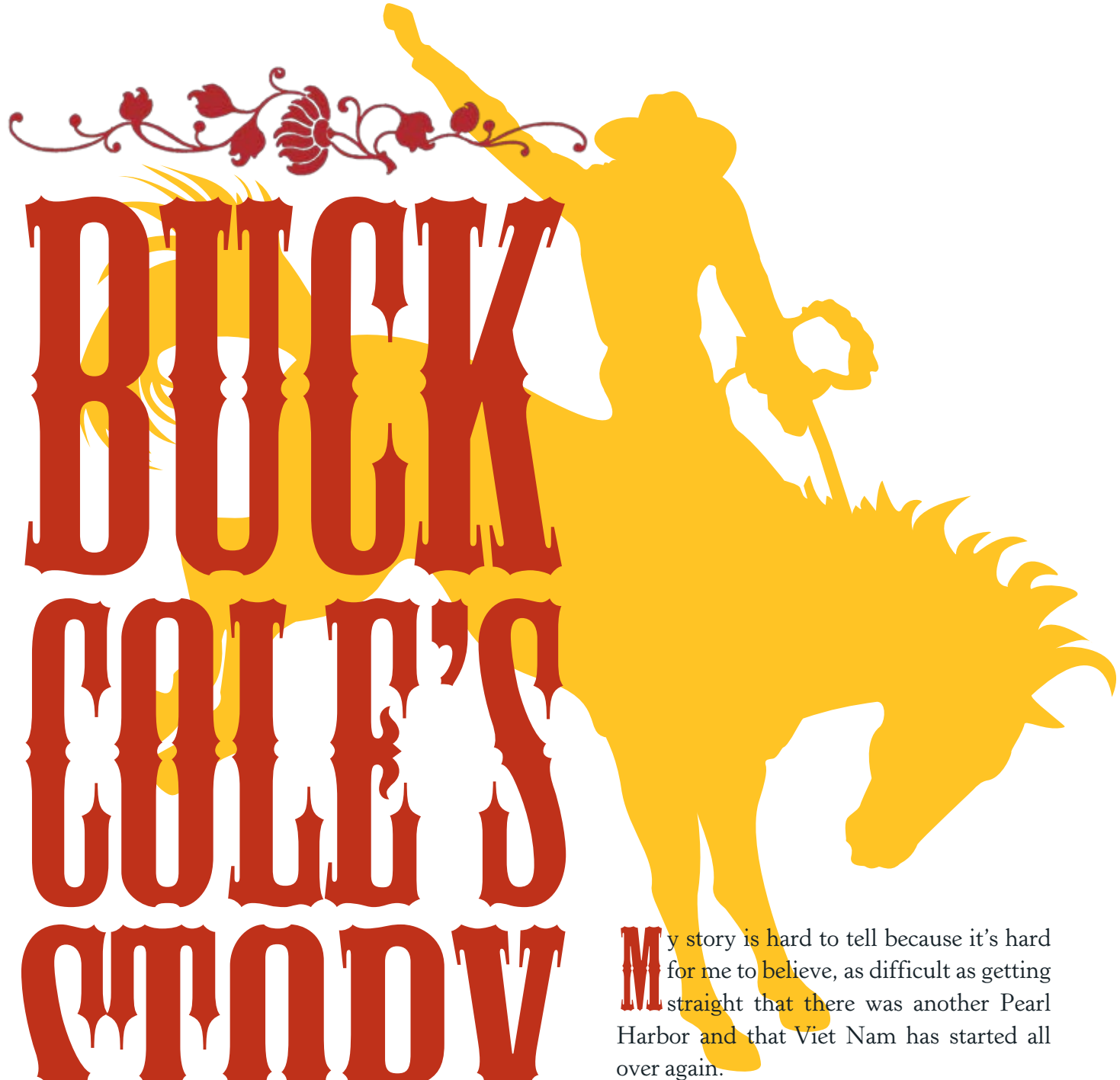
the windows, from the inside,
are not only fogged, but dewed

as soon as the car starts rocking, two droplets
burst, trickles south, slowly, faster as the car
rocks, further, smeared by a palm, then wiped
off, as dark as the night...

John-Patrick Ayson

BUCK COLE'S STORY

BY NELS HANSON



My story is hard to tell because it's hard for me to believe, as difficult as getting straight that there was another Pearl Harbor and that Viet Nam has started all over again.

The facts are true, but they shouldn't be—

What happened seems made up, a lie from a tabloid, an episode of "Twilight Zone" or scenes from "The Third Man" or the "The Man With My Face"—

Or "Twilight Falls," the HBO film I was in.

The way the world is going, one man's troubles seem less than small. But then, I began to go to hell about the same time the world did, and for a while my private war and the two in the Mid East seemed to be the same conflict.

To lose yourself is a bad thing, but to find yourself after you've forgotten you were lost is a stranger experience. It's like waking up one morning and there's your favorite horse looking lean and rawboned, eating the flowers outside your window—the horse that disappeared three years ago without a trace.

Sometimes there's a razor line between a dream come true and a nightmare you can't wake from. You open your eyes and you're happy to still be alive, before you look down and see the bloody knife you're holding.

You may have heard of me and forgot. Nowadays people flash and disappear like summer lightning, and for several years a bad rain has been falling.

My name was Buck Cole, once of Buck and Jodie Cole, the country-western stars.

Maybe you saw us at a concert or on a television show or in a newscast from the president's Crawford ranch. Maybe you bought a CD or noticed one of our posters in a record store.

Like dear John Cash, I wore all black, and like his friend, Roy Orbison, dark glasses to hide my eyes. I stood beside a beautiful, red-haired woman in tight satin pants and scarlet cowgirl blouse and kerchief, fancy boots and a crimson Stetson with a big dyed drooping feather.

Jodie, all in red.

You might have heard "Current of Love," our song about a man and a woman swept downstream in a river, the one that rumor has it Bill Clinton knew before it was released and liked to sing over the phone to Monica Lewinsky—

Toward a raging sea with no stars above,
No olive branch or snowy dove,
You and me, we're caught
In a current of love.

Jodie and I were taken by a river, a swift stream called by any number of names—Fame or Wealth or End of the Rainbow—it bends and doubles back, seems to race on forever past new and greener country, before it straightens and suddenly falls steeply like Niagara. It soaks the lovers to the bone and empties them into a wide sea you won't find on any map.

Few return from those waters, and the ones that do are ghosts and don't have names anymore.

We were lucky with a string of hits just as the century turned over and George Bush squeezed in as president—"Blind Man's Bluff," "Secondhand Lace," "Lightning Strikes." Our first big one, "Travis Jackson," was everywhere—the 2000 Republican Convention, radio, TV—drifting from beauty parlors, taverns, car windows, through the screen doors of houses where women in housecoats sat alone over coffee.

Travis Jackson was a friend of mine,
Cowboy-bred but out of time.
The West is going, going, gone—
You can hear it fade when you hear his song.

"Travis Jackson lives!" screamed a million bumper stickers on pickups and SUVs and BMWs.

We had an overnight success that was ignited by a few sparks of media attention. Flames flare up and fan themselves until there's a firestorm. "Larry King," the "Today" and "Tonight" shows, "Entertainment Tonight," "USA," "Country Week in Review," "Donny Williams." *People. US. Rolling Stone*.

I've got the clippings right here—

"Electric!" one critic wrote in *Billboard*. "Amazingly relevant and alive!"

"Put simply, the Coles have that dying American attribute—character—" said *Newsday*, "and real flair. Their nickels aren't wooden but pure silver and ring as sweetly as the cracked but sturdy Liberty Bell."

The high-water mark was the cover of *Time*:

"A loyal army of fans has been mesmerized by the stylish Nevada duo's apparent and appealing openness and charm. In a divided, dispirited America gone increasingly false, the Coles exude a fearless, refreshing sincerity, an almost feckless honesty about their own flaws, angst, and temptations toward the hollow prizes of sin. The purgatorial fire is real and it burns."

I had to look up several of the words. Even then I didn't understand what the writer meant.

Why am I writing this?

Not for the publisher, who's been after me to tell the details of what he calls "'The Smash-Up'—like Bill and Hillary, a Rolls and a Bentley smacking head-on!"

And not for revenge, or for you, Dr. Westbrook.

Deep down I'm still infuriated and ashamed, not just about Jodie but for myself, at how crazy I look through the wrong end of a telescope, from a distance of nearly three years.

When I remember the day that my world changed forever, my own 9/11, when I reached into the bucket and pulled out the gold ring—I mean no disrespect to the innocent victims in New York and the firemen and their poor families—I still flinch, I swallow and catch my breath. I'm not sure what is worse—that it happened to me, or that it could happen at all.

Maybe Dr. Phil is right, the grumpy TV pop therapist who says you can't heal the wound until you acknowledge your fury.

But fury at who?

It's taking a while to work through the grief and confusion, to try to "reinvent" myself, as people are fond of saying these days, as they said of Bush when he quit drinking and his star began to rise.

It's real grief, and real confusion, and lots of real work, most of it invisible, sorting through the broken pieces for something to salvage and fit together. In the first days across the Pacific, when I got to Honolulu after living alone on the ranch in Nevada, I was shakier than I'd expected as I realized the country was getting ready for a war on Baghdad.

I wasn't alert enough to remember my brief time with the president or wonder why I wasn't surprised he couldn't wait to send in the troops, or understand that in his mind Jesus had told him to attack before an A-bomb destroyed the world.

I couldn't have picked myself out of a police line-up, or given the right answer if a cop had grabbed my arm and demanded my name and age.

I admit that all in all things are better now for me, most days things go along okay, as well as they can go with young people dying for some confused reason in the desert. I love a kind woman who loves me. I have a good son, and horses, green grass and volcanoes.

Then, like the other night, I woke in a sweat from a dream that's not a dream but another rerun of awful harm. Maybe once a month, without warning, in broad daylight I'll start to tremble when I see my shadow cross the grass above my horse's shadow.

In the bad times, my mind jumps into reverse, running everything back to shape the past into something I can hold in two hands. Jodie has told her own version on television, to both Oprah and Barbara Walters, and in a book she wrote with an entertainment reporter.

Some of the things she said about me are true, most of them aren't, several are only partly true—I didn't make a pass at the first lady but only stumbled a little when I tried to light her cigarette. I couldn't get the Zippo to flame in the breeze, and she cupped her hands and touched my own.

Anyway, my story's not just about Jodie and me and Travis Jackson, the president and Laura, or Johnny and Marlene Black or Red Stampley, Johnny's pedal steel player who went mad and believed he was General Patton, Roy Rogers, then the real Travis Jackson—

It's about you too, about who you are, or who you think you are, and who and what you love.

Or think you love.

I've been told, and I believe, that part of building a new person requires admitting my mistakes and then forgiving myself, acknowledging that I'm not all that different from a couple 100 million other lost Americans.

But Jodie and I were also different.

We won Grammies as our first two albums went platinum. In 2000, we shared the Country Music Association's New Entertainer of the Year award. We became the rage of the talk show circuit, everyone was hungry for the latest scoop on the lucky songbirds, Jodie and Buck.

In a movie, a thriller, "Twilight Falls," we sang at an open-air concert. Backstage, an Elvis look-alike has just stabbed Elvis and hidden the body in a costume trunk. He prepares to face his fans a final time and after his performance announce his retirement.

It could have been our own story, the part about murder and pretending to be someone else, if you figure the killer and victim might be the same person.

And there was a murder, a real one, by musket ball, an "antique death," as the papers called it.

Johnny Black, a musician and old friend of ours, the man who gave the Coles their start at the Branding Iron in Nevada, was shot down in cold blood by someone young and famous, trying to get the kid to renew a recording contract—Jodie had fired the Johnny Black Band and Johnny was working as a gofer for Columbia.

The news of his killing—Maureen Black burst into make-up on the *Donny Williams Show* and pulled a white cake from a box and threw it at Jodie as she screamed, "You murdered us!"—pulled a single hanging thread that began to undo the entire precious flag.

Everything the Coles had worked on and woven as well as Betsy Ross with her needle and thimble began to unravel until we were in tatters.

Neither Jodie nor I had a top-notch voice, but together we could sing in near-perfect harmony. Our highs and lows weren't too high or too low, we met each other in that range just above and below the middle. But every note suggested there was somewhere else to go, hard times in the West was strung all through it. A trailing word, a hesitation, a sudden intake of breath implied whole symphonies of love and woe.

Love is a town up ahead you never quite reach.

That's what our songs were about, and the president and his wife and regular people identified with them, took each one to heart. There's no mistaking an audience's response when they believe you're telling them their own story, with sympathy, excitement, tenderness, and—above all—romance.

We gave the impression that our relationship was open, on display for everyone to see. It was by turns risky, reassuring, calm, uncertain. I'm not sure either of us knew when we were "on," when a wink or shrug, broken smile or laugh, was real or choreographed.

It was part play-acting, part genuine, though I couldn't give an accurate percentage of truth and lie.

Maybe it's a little like being a politician. Singing on big stages multiplies you and makes you cheaper to yourself. Performing is like living in a room full of mirrors—until you start to bleed, you're not sure who's reflecting who, if you're a man or a distant mirage passed along by an endless chain of mirrors.

There were a million Bucks and Jodies, one for every pair of eyes and ears in every concert hall from New York to Los Angeles, Detroit to Birmingham.

Plus the rare, private versions of ourselves, the Jodie and Buck that weren't stars and that no country-western lover or loyal Republican would recognize, those ghosts the Coles kept hidden and were haunted by—

Our fans weren't aware that I felt more comfortable with my friend Travis Jackson than I did with Buck Cole or George Bush, or that Jodie was running as fast as she could from a shamed and desperate small-town Jodie breathing hotly at her back.

It was just after the Bill and Hillary mess, and people who followed us felt they'd been invited into our marriage and love affair, that they were companions in the evolution of whatever Jodie and I had together.

Did Buck really love Jodie? Did she love him back? More? A little less? As much today as yesterday or the day before? As much as tomorrow? Would they make it? Wouldn't they?

Could a man love, really love, one woman? A woman one man? Did they both want to cheat?

It was our story as well as yours, we were you writ large, and the public fell in love.

I had a knack as a songwriter. I kept finding three or four lines that stuck with people, that they'd sing to themselves when no one else was around. It made minor news when the president hummed "*Travis Jackson*" over an open mike before a radio address on Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction, the mushroom cloud. The same thing happened with "Empty Arms Are Home," sung by one of the astronauts on the space shuttle.

At a light in Hilo last week I kept trying to stop an old tape forgotten in the player. Finally I turned off the ignition, then realized a boy and girl in the crosswalk were singing "Secondhand Lace."

The way I wrote the lyrics and we set the music, it was thrilling and beautiful to be lonely, betrayed, guilty, untrue. I appealed to the part in everyone that wants to think about love instead of loving, about being sky-high and anxious, head-over-heels and unhappy in love rather than standing in the fire and taking the flames full force.

A part of me knew that. The music business is just politics. They're both entertainment.

When I looked out at the crowd before a concert, seeing their expectant, upturned faces waiting for a signal that there was hope, that a flower bloomed at the end of a thorny stem, I thought, It's okay, these folks aren't getting many favors.

Our songs were true enough as personal biography, even prophecy—there's a part in everyone that can't tell a lie, even if he wants to fool himself.

An empty bottle in the grass,
A ragged man who wakes at last—
The man sits up and sees
His beard all white and full of leaves,

But can't remember February,
May or June, Jane or Mary,
If he's been brave or lived a lie,

Been barber, baker, Indian chief,
If he's been the law or just a thief,
A bad or good guy . . . .

My therapist, Dr. Westbrook, says as much. I understand now that the seeds of what happened had been waiting from the first, from before I met Jodie that day on the road, when singer Slim Frye put her out and threw her guitar and suitcase to the desert as his red Porsche flew by my pickup.

The seeds had lain dormant a long time, through an earlier break-up and a few brief loves that blew hot, then cold, June and January in a month.

And maybe before that, from childhood, like Dr. Westbrook pointed out, from staring too long with a child's eyes at mountains high-shouldered with snow, above green pastures and a cold, upwelling river that whispered "My cup runneth over" as you dipped your hands to drink.

As the doctor suggested, the solitary country child can fall so much in love with heaven that as an adult he sees with regret that his true love doesn't have the wings of an angel and stands instead in scarlet boots on the pure and simple Earth.

When I was asked to visualize my trouble I saw seeds like cockle burrs snagged in an animal's fur and carried for years. They were only waiting for the right conditions, the perfect mix of confused fear and loneliness and drunken desperation, to catch on something and tear free.

They sprouted and bloomed and bore ugly fruit when they lit on fertile ground and were watered by a silver rain that fell like money as we drove south from snowy Denver after our first big engagement at the Cowboy Club with new stage names Jodie had thought up—

I'd been at the ranch, going steadily downhill, when Jodie pulled into the barnyard in the new white Cadillac, fed me and cleaned me up, and we started toward Utah through the blizzard.

Jodie and I went straight to the top, or close enough to it, a rung or two short of the legendary brass ring only real artists like Willie Nelson or Waylon Jennings and Johnny Cash, God bless them, ever grasp and slip forever onto their fingers. As far as notice and money, we did awfully well in a ridiculously short time. Our last album—we put out four in less than two years—sold 10 million copies in the States and Canada, and another million and a half in the U.K.

By August of 2001, "Current of Love" had been out two weeks and already had climbed to the top of the country and pop charts. A "crossover," as they say in the business. "Secondhand Lace," a song I'd written several years before I ever met Jodie, would go out any day to 800 radio stations. It was one of a couple of cuts we'd saved back from release and was off our new album, "Lightning Strikes."

In July, we'd been named Nashville's Most Exciting Couple. Though I'd always voted Democratic, we'd met the president and first lady again, this time at the White House, and given them each a satin cowboy shirt and felt hat.

As I sucked a mint to hide the liquor on my breath, the Bushes stood beside us in the Rose Garden, smiling and waving to the cameras, like Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, an older, wiser version of ourselves who had weathered the storm and entered the wide calm waters of stable marriage and sobriety.

"Don't worry, Bucky," the president assured me, gripping my neck. "Travis Jackson lives. We'll see to that."

Careerwise, everything was roses—roses armed with thorns that stab and don't pull out without taking flesh . . . .

We were just finishing up a hard month in the recording studio in Nashville, before we'd go out to Harrah's in Reno to start a six-week tour. There'd been some rocky places on the master tapes, and some disagreements—Jodie liked the mixing and I didn't, I loved the back-up vocals and she couldn't stand them.

We were both exhausted and keyed up and Jodie talked to me pretty rough in front of the musicians, Jerry and the recording crew, and the Wheeler sisters.

My frustration came out in other ways.

Most alcoholics kid themselves but I think it was true my head and hands and feet could all be high but my ear, my sense of pitch and rhythm and phrasing, stayed sober. I might forget my address but I never lost a lyric.

I stayed out late drinking after the sessions, telling everyone tales of my days as a cattle broker, stories about Nevada, and my rancher friend, Travis Jackson.

Jodie didn't like my late-night routine, especially my stories about Travis and the good but gone old days. I'd begun to talk about him all the time, seeing snapshots in my mind of the way I remembered things used to be.

"Your friend's the president of the United States and you're hung up on some screwy cowpoke memory?" Jodie asked sarcastically.

It was Travis this, Travis that, what Travis had said or would have done. Jodie took it personally. When I walked into the studio in the afternoon, the band and crew would yell, "Hey, here's TJ!" It drove Jodie wild.

People I knew had started calling me "Travis Jackson."

"If you keep it up, I'll sign the papers," Jodie warned me more than once in a week. "I'll have you committed."

She said I'd have to go, it wasn't voluntary like the Betty Ford Clinic. Twice at night Jodie locked me out of the compound and I slept in the car.

I'd wake up foggy, but clear enough to be scared, knowing things were coming to a head the way they'd done before on the ranch north of Waverly, that I'd have to finally choose between Jodie and my memory of the old life and Travis. Travis and the drinking were connected, but in a way I didn't understand then, just like Travis and Jodie were linked in a way I didn't know.

Two days before we went on the *Donny Williams Show* and hit the papers again—Maureen had thrown the cake and on-air I began to talk about Travis Jackson, Jodie blew up and called me a liar and I tripped drunk on Donny's fancy rug and lay facedown in a hail of flashbulbs—Jodie spoke on the phone with the White House, saying, "Yes, Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. President, we love you and Laura too."

She swiveled, holding out the phone and made me take it, watching as I listened and then repeated the prayer he said in my ear.

Then I laughed when he mentioned Travis Jackson. I started to tell him Travis' favorite story again, about the grizzled rancher hungry for a grandson who'd staked a stud bull and heifer in the yard of his son's honeymoon bungalow, to set the right mood—Travis had just repeated it when he'd called the week before and Jodie had snatched the receiver and yelled, "I know it's you, Red Stampley!"

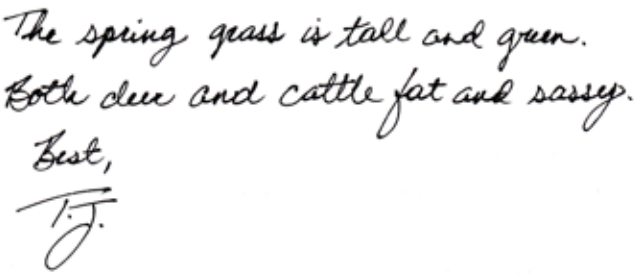
Jodie grabbed away the phone and asked to talk to Laura.

The catastrophe didn't dive out of a golden September morning and stain America and the six continents, set Asia Minor on fire.

The bale that bowed my horse's back fell from a darkening, overcast sky—any of 1,000 straws could have put out an eye or pierced a lung, like those dry stalks blown by tornadoes that embed themselves lengthwise in fence posts.

It could have started with a simple tattered letter that I kept with me and one morning read over and over through a giddy hangover while sober George was enjoying his long summer vacation in Crawford before all hell broke loose.

Jodie spied it and snatched it away, tearing it into little pieces:



"Mark my words, I'll have George's people get to the bottom of this!"

Or in an airless closet off the recording studio, if Jodie had thrown open the door. With bourbon hot in my blood, I blurted bogus promises and kissed a woman's hungry lips, not caring which of the three Wheeler sisters they belonged to, as long as she called me Travis Jackson.

It didn't work, I didn't feel any better.

I'd have to drive cross country to Nevada, lose my dark glasses in the bucket under the barn's faucet, then reach down and find an engraved wedding band—the ring Jodie had thrown at me three years before, when I said I couldn't leave the stock and she left to tour with Johnny and didn't come back till snowy drunken Christmas—

It took Johnny's murder to start tearing back the skin of the stranger's face I had almost grown used to. I could reach up and touch it with my fingers, like the bronze of a bust in the Country Music Hall of Fame.

It was the unknown face I saw dabbed with foam in the morning mirror—or clean-shaven and tan on covers of Sunday supplements spewed out in millions, rolled up in the newspaper and thrown with a crisp smack on my front step and yours.

It was Travis Jackson's face, but I didn't know that then, I hadn't found the ring.

True Forever—Jodie and Travis

The End

PIETA

by Claire Rudy Foster

Oh, Joanie.

Years later, I still wish it was I who killed you. Your scarf snapping over your shoulder, scarlet as sin and indelible against the muffling snow. The car door open behind you as you fled from me. The tire iron. The first blush of liquid, the pink threads that escaped your ears, your eyes, your mouth. Your skull's knitting undone in the place where, newborn, you smelled of milk and lambs' wool.

On the night in question you were seventeen, your perfume like watermelon candy. Going to a birthday party, your empty hands in your coat pockets. A party for someone who didn't like presents.

But a man unwrapped you that night. Who was he? There was a line-up in white light, strangers numbered one through six. Their faces sullen, dull eyes probing their reflections in the one-way mirror. And for the first time I wished that it had been my hands on your precious throat. My face hanging over you like the moon, our mingled breath fogging your crooked glasses.

I will never know who denied me the mother's right to hold her dying child. Surely my name rode on your last breath. In the morgue I cradled you in the rough, clean sheet. Your arms marked with bruises the shape of teeth.

Oh, Joanie, who I made, who inherited the very best parts of me. I would have been so gentle. I would have laid you lovingly in the highway gravel, my Cavalier chugging in neutral beside us. We would have laughed as I chased you through the ditch to the low-branched bristling pines. Snow angels appearing as I waved the iron like a magic wand, your bones erupting inside of you.

I still can't understand how he shattered your jaw, your eye socket and nose without breaking your glasses. How he, and not I, mashed his face against yours, administering the final kiss.

SWINGING ARMS

BY BRIAN ANTHONY HARDIE

am i at the least to be thankful for not setting apparent with nothing to grip for? i have not said of one thing yet the wonder loves the dry days polluting a horizon penetrating for real the somethings undone.

i
yell
fast
motion
with
a
swing
of
arm
bruised
forever

i am fast with swinging arms forever, hidden thrust important resulting faces to look upon distressed the scapes of feeling
the
void
return
no
more
worthy. sounds
flooding, yes
your pure
pipe
channeling
people through
to
your other
trial
again
flooding.

INSIDE THE CANINE HEAD

BY MIKE FINLEY

Every dog owner wonders what it would be like inside a dog's head. But I, and I alone among our species, have actually had this experience.

Over the winter holidays, my son's school held a fundraiser at a local bakery. All profits from the day's bakery sales would go to the school. To lure traffic, human volunteers were asked to dress up in semi-realistic animal costumes and parade around outside the bakery. (You know how it is. When you see someone dressed up in an animal suit, you just want to whip out your checkbook. The last thing you want to do is cross the street to avoid the person/animal hybrid…) I was volunteered for this operation—"We thought you would be perfect for public humiliation," said one of the moms—and then I was given a suit.

It was a very good suit. The fur looked real, and the head, although oversized, was naturalistic. It seemed like it might be a Husky, or possibly a Samoyed. No sooner had I slipped the enormous costume head over my own, and peered through the gauzy eye-windows, than I felt different. I felt like I might become the creature I was portraying. Not a real dog exactly, but more like the iconic figure of a dog. *Scruffy. Barky.* The soul of a dog.

First, I was: *the man in a dog suit*. New to the concept, I imagined myself as a cartoon dog. When cars went by I waved my hand in a friendly, three-fingered way, like the girl in the Mickey Mouse suit at Disneyland. But after a minute or two, this began to seem mind-numbingly

insipid, so I experimented with other modes of behavior. Like scratching behind one ear. Like bobbing my head. Like lifting a leg at the stop sign.

I grew tired of this and soon became: *the man who did not know he was a dog*. The fact that I was in a dog suit was of no consequence to me. I pretended I was waiting for a bus, glancing at my paw watch to check the time. I rocked on my heels and whistled a tune. When a car drove by too quickly and splashed slush onto my feet, I made the Italian fungoo sign and resumed my position.

In my next incarnation I became: *the man who awoke to find himself changed into a dog*. Like Gregor Samsa in the Franz Kafka story, trapped in a large cockroach's body, I was a man surprised. I paced frantically, pulling at my costume head, only to discover it could not be removed. I acted out a horror story, but no one showed any sympathy. I waved at passersby, trying to signal I needed help in the most urgent way. You should have seen people's expressions; their delight faded into something unnerving before they sped away and left me alone, yet again.

And at last, finally, the metamorphosis deepened. I became the most frightening apparition of all: *the man who really was a dog*. All human perspective was gone. I was a tall dog standing on its hind legs, teetering close to traffic. I had decisions to make. I could bolt into an oncoming car, or nip a passerby in my confusion. I stared at the world of people, incomprehensible to me. I whined when they passed, hoping they would pity me and allow me to hop into their back seat. I imagined life with them, me friendly and affirming, them loving and able to open doors. I zeroed in on a family with only one child, a little boy about six. I yearned to fill a vacancy in their hearts. But they, unsure about a six foot, one inch, bipedal malamute, walked right by.

Soon, my coat blanketed with wet snow, I trudged back to the bakery. In the safety of the interior, I undid the dog's head and felt the cool human air rush to my slick face. Business was booming. I had attracted plenty of customers. But it was too late for me. I was changed. Human society no longer looked the same.

As a dog, the world was chaos. I controlled nothing. I understood nothing. The cars moved without pattern. Being lost and emancipated were one in the same. One wrong move and I was dead. And as a human, I couldn't unlearn what I had experienced. I couldn't take for granted the naturalness, the easy way-things-are, that makes people's interactions so smooth, predictable, and full of sense. The faces I encountered looked a little more foreign, a little less comforting than they had been before. I looked through the window at the street. It was a slushy day. I had spent an hour on the corner, and was registered for an hour more. I stepped again into outside world, put on my head, and howled into the falling snow.

CRYING WOLF

by Alysse Hotz

The girl who died inside the cave, or a long stretch

of wheat fields where a story forms in the pit of a well
and fades as echo before reaching a lonely stand

of pines. A patchwork lie? A tragedy?
I can only pretend that someone somewhere

heard this first and knows of what I speak.

My tongue ties no cherry stems or shoelaces.

When I say that in the field she tripped and the wheat swelled
with cries and a violin sea you trust
that I have paddled through the ocean
and rolled in prairies thick with carbon and desire.

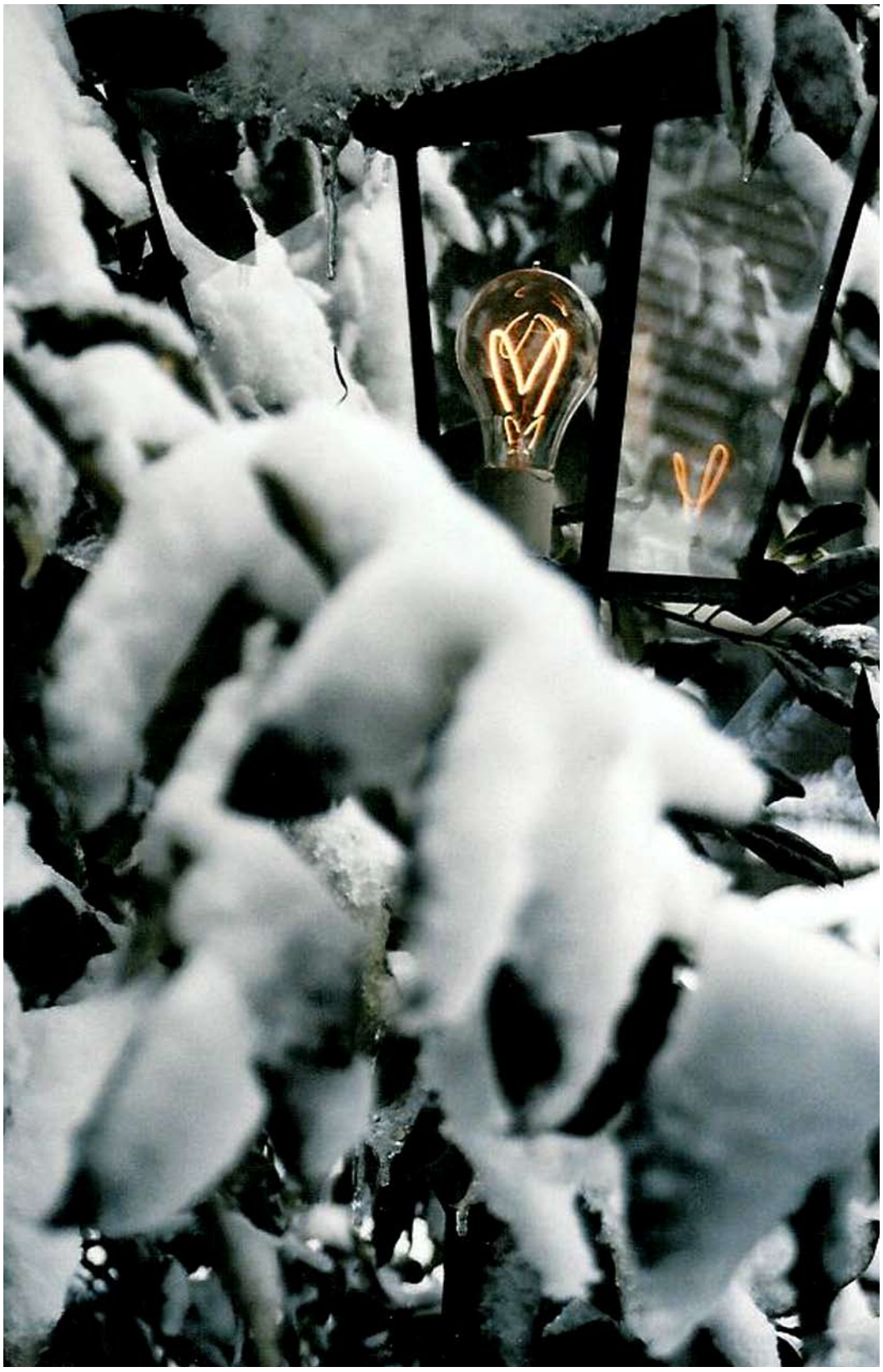
I am here to confess the truth

claims none of us as partners. It is my voice
that stammers at the bottom of the well: it wears

a small face bruised with tears, nails claw

at bricks, blunted, bloodied. Clothes drenched,
the real voice shivers, a fable in the dark.

Photography by Russell Bittner



OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Lindsay Sproul, originally from Massachusetts, is currently an MFA candidate at Columbia University. Her fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in a variety of literary journals, including *The Beloit Fiction Journal, upstreet, cream city review, American Short Fiction,* and *Hayden's Ferry Review*. She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2008 and 2009.

Caitlin Lilly is a writer living and working in Portland, Oregon. A former roller-derby girl, she is always on the lookout for new and better experiences. She dreams of someday having a burrito tree in her backyard.

Chuck Taylor teaches creative writing at Texas A&M University. His photography has been featured in *Sunset Palms Hotel* and *Unlikely Stories*. His two most recent books of poetry are *Li Po Laughing at the Lonely Moon* (Pecan Grove) and *Heterosexual: a Love Song* (Panther Creek).

J.J. McKenna is a professor of contemporary literature and creative nonfiction at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His poetry and creative nonfiction have appeared in more than 30 literary journals and mainstream magazines including *Ideals Magazine, Hawaii Review, Louisville Review,* and *ELM*.

Eric Arnold lives in Dallas, Texas, the land where he was raised. He studies medicine and plans to become a psychiatrist. He attended college at Brown and lived in London for several years before coming back to Texas. Two of his poems recently appeared in *The Labletter* and others are pending publication at *New York Quarterly*. His short fiction has appeared in *Elimae, Pindeldyboz,* and *Monkey Bicycle*.

John-Patrick Ayson resides near a rusty, latticed fence in Imperial Beach, San Diego, just north of Mexico. He holds an MFA in writing and has been published in numerous journals and magazines, both online & print, including past, recent, and upcoming issues of *new aesthetic, ditch, Paraphilia Magazine, Armageddon Buffet, Moronic OX, poetic diversity, Fiction International, LITnIMAGE, Antique Children, streetcake magazine* and *Maintenant 4: A Contemporary Journal of Dada Poetry.* His book, *25 days until antiquity; 33 nights before infamy*—a disparate amalgam of poetry, prose, non-fictive, performance & liminally concrete texts—is anticipating publication during the winter of 2010.

Nels Hanson has worked as farmer, teacher, and writer/editor. He holds degrees from UC Santa Cruz and the U of Montana and received the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award and a citation in its Joseph Henry Jackson competition. His stories have appeared in *Antioch Review, Texas Review, Black Warrior Review, Southeast Review, Long Story, Short Story, South Dakota Review, Starry Night Review, The Offcourse Journal, Atomjack, Zahir, Word Riot, Ruminate Magazine, The Write Place at the Write Time, Caveat Lector, The Dead Mule, Genre Fixation, Green Hills Literary Lantern, Emprise Review, Connotation Press, The Iconoclast, Splash of Red, Prick of the Spindle, Xenith, Danse Macabre, Sixers Review, The 3rd of November Club*, and other journals. His stories are currently in press at *Monongahela Review, Avatar Review, River Poets Journal,* and the Overtime Chapbook Series at Blue Cubicle Press.

Claire Rudy Foster prefers the company of alcoholics, angels, dreamers, and freaks. Recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize, her work has also been recognized by Best of the Web. She operates the weekly online publication WORK Literary Magazine, and is also pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing/Fiction at Pacific University. She lives next to a cemetery in Portland, Oregon with her husband and young son.

Brian Anthony Hardie lives where he was born, in Portland, Oregon. He has been published in numerous small press journals and e-zines including *The Pebble Lake Review, Conceit Magazine, AMULET, Hudson View, Decanto, Ditchpoetry.com, SALiT Magazine, DaveJarecki.com, WordSlaw.com, CynicMagazineOnline.com, Down In The Dirt Magazine, Expressions Online Literary Journal, Theinquisitionpoetry.com, Lone Stars Magazine, Pure Francis, BLAZE VOX,* and *Angel Exhaust*, among others. He is currently at work on a book of prose and poetry.

Mike Finley is a pushcart awardee who lives and writes in St. Paul, Minnesota. His most recent project is ZOMBIE GIRL, a graphic novella, proceeds of which go to anti-suicide work in the Twin Cities.

Alysse Hotz lives and teaches in Kansas City, Missouri. Her poems have appeared in *Origami Condom, Shadows*, and are forthcoming in *Rougarou*.

Russell Bittner lives and writes on a small island off the East Coast. The island is called 'Long' and his borough is called 'Brooklyn.' Like Hobbes, he believes that "life is short, brutish and nasty." He also believes that—like this tiny clod of an island—art is long; and, with Donne, that no man is one, entire of itself—either an island or a work of art. Russell's photography, poetry and prose can be found both on the web and in print.

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