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Poetry

<u>Orion Atkinson</u>	<u>Byrhtnoth and the Tides of Time</u>
<u>Johnny Burton</u>	<u>Quiet in the Studio"</u>
<u>Steven Fortune</u>	<u>Lost, Still</u>
<u>Marla Landers</u>	<u>how lucifer lost his wings</u>
<u>Jason Thibeault</u>	<u>Ode on a Thing I Found in my Fridge</u>
<u>Jason Thibeault</u>	<u>Time of Day</u>
<u>Abra Lynn Whidden</u>	<u>echinacea</u>

Prose

<u>Adam Cochrane</u>	<u>The Fall</u>
<u>Wade Ells</u>	<u>Remembering California</u>
<u>Ivy Evelyn</u>	<u>Origins</u>
<u>Mark Gardiner</u>	<u>Realization</u>
<u>Krissy Keech</u>	<u>The Porch Light</u>
<u>Paul Snooks</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Tracy Stone</u>	<u>The Superhero's Innocence</u>
<u>Tegan Zimmerman</u>	<u>Monologue from the Grave</u>

Sketches

<u>Anonymous</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Rob Barrett</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Jennifer Bryan</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Robin Dutta</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Clara Mackenzie</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Clara Mackenzie</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Alicia Miller</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Mark Randell</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Kate Wagner</u>	<u>Untitled</u>

Paintings

<u>Lauren Everett</u>	<u>Frog</u>
<u>Darcy Harvey</u>	<u>Change Like Sugar Cane</u>
<u>Tracy Noble</u>	<u>Clown Fish</u>
<u>Denice Rego</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Laura Rossy</u>	<u>Old Faithful</u>
<u>Chad Warren</u>	<u>Yellow Morning</u>
<u>Verilea Warren</u>	<u>Berries</u>

Photographs

<u>Khanh Chhang</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Khanh Chhang</u>	<u>Untitled</u>
<u>Krista Weare</u>	<u>Youghall Beach</u>

Orion Atkinson

Byrhtnoth and the Tides of Time

In the year of our Lord, 991, the great house of Wessex was in disarray, and the Anglo-Saxon power was waning in England. The Scandinavian countries of Norway and Denmark had united, and were now engaged in a full-scale assault upon all of England. These raiders had initially been appeased with payments of tribute, but now their demands were growing larger and larger and their attacks increasing in ferocity. It seemed only a matter of time before Anglo-Saxon rule would crumble.

Mid-August of this year, a battle was fought at the tidal estuary of the Blackwater River, near the town of Maldon on the south-east coast of England. The Anglo-Saxon forces, led by Byrhtnoth, a prominent alderman of Essex, met those of Olaf Tryggvason, the future king of Norway, at an ancient causeway that connected Northey Island to the mainland during low tide. Having camped on this island, Olaf and his men were forced to wade across Southey Creek to reach the shore. Boldly denying their demands of tribute Byrhtnoth and his men easily held them off the river bank with their long spears. But out of pride he could not deny Olaf's challenge to grant the Vikings equal footing. During the battle that followed, as the story goes, one cowardly Anglo-Saxon mounted Byrhtnoth's horse to flee, and half the army followed, thinking their general had abandoned the fray. Byrhtnoth remained, however, and along with his most loyal retainers, fought valiantly to the death. After the bodies of the slain Anglo-Saxons had been stripped of all their valuables, according to custom, they were likely left to be eaten by scavengers.

The events of this day were recorded in the ancient heroic poem, "the Battle of Maldon." The poet, who may have been an eye-witness to the battle, was doubtlessly employed to write the poem both to condemn those who fled and to honour those who stood and fell. Though this battle was not a significant event in the history of England, the versified tale of a well known Anglo-Saxon lord displaying such depth of courage at a time of impending, national doom must have done well to stir Germanic pride in the hearts of his much beleaguered people.

Byrhtnoth and the Tides of Time

Near the low hill of Maldon,
Where the river-mouth winds salted
Through the marsh into sea,
Where an island points to land,

When the tide was low,
And a season waned,
When the ford rose up
And the dark horde pressed,
A noble lord went down.

* * * *

Oh Chelmer, from the west to the east,
That the black water tastes
At its southern retreat,
What dread Viking leggings
And dread ashen poles
Did you chill as you slid
Down Southey Creek?

What Pride, noble earl,
Crossed that very old causeway --
That would flee come high tide --
On the winds of strong words?
What boasts brought the thunder,
With the sure foot of land,
Brought the rage and the plunder
Of your last storm of swords?

And what coward, on that day,
Mounted your steed --
Led your men from the fray,
And their gold-won deeds?
(What taunts met those men,
So disgraceful at home,
Still echo, I have heard,
In the ruins of Rome.)

But oh brave Byrhtnoth!
The sense of your faithful,
To fall as they did . . .

As spears pierced the bodies
Of your ill-fated men;
While the carion eaters of land and sky,
Circling, matched the sea-wolves' howls;
As the proud sun fled from your fated lands,
And your prayer still rippled in souls still housed;

When your lips, tasting soil,
Pulled at strong by strong, hungry jaws,
Had been finally silenced
In the blood drenched marsh:
What then of those
Who ran or stood?
What of the brave, winter-young warrior,
Or the cowardly churl, unequal in blows?

Yet 'Fight on!' your man calls,
'Give not ground. Stand fast
Young men of ashen point
And linden board. Turn not
To traitors. Heed cowardice not.

'When half have fled and doom
Is the Great Lord's blessing,
Bend not, boast well,
And push your fellows on.
Heart hard as fist, thought sharp as spear,
Leave all doubt for the raven
And the eagle and wolf,
And be warrior-men.
Be only men of war.'

For deeds warrant words,
Death warrants judgement,
And the Glorious King
Of the heavens on high
Proves his judgement, his will,
In war-tested men --
In our fated men of war.

banners bear birds
Of the horny beak,
And wolves of the woods
Who feed on the weak,
Where the land, the sky, and the ocean mesh
For the sacrifice, the off-ring of human flesh.

* * * *

Near the low hill of Maldon,
Where the river-mouth winds salted
Through the marsh into sea,
Where an island points to land,

When the tide was low,
And a season waned,
When the ford rose up
And the dark horde pressed,
A noble lord went down.

Johnny Burton

Quiet in the Studio

"Quiet in the Studio"

(a response to the song "Atom Heart Mother" by Pink Floyd)

The mother's approach in a flourish has a haunting undertone,
She comes to deliver the Father's should for peace.

Her crowd had rioted.

But now they arrive in a blustle on their bikes, and in their cars,

To hear her message, that, with her breast milky,

So subtle and lovely in its intricacies, it to provide release.

"By quick to bring the mother 'fore the crowds!"

They expect, and must be satisfied.

How their voices haunt in the most beautiful way,

Driving to the core their need.

Though feeling strongly the burden, the mother must deliver.

What is that on the air? The farmers spray their fields with funky dung?

On a day like this? Not a desired atmosphere.

Keep your cool, keep the burden under control,

Though it bears only a subtle waver now,

Still remains a fair responsibility.

Listen, the mother speaks!

What she says, the crowd says with her?

It's nonsense, but so very

Affecting.

They tax her now. Demanding.

She delivers again . . . for now . . .

This is a transition, I feel it.

Oh, what is this?

The crowd runs. The mother weeps.

"Mind your throats please. Killers are on the loose."

Help her, help her up as she has fallen.

The crowds are running about the city.

I cannot make out their mad ravings.

It appears as though the maddened crowd

Is to return as the mother stands again!

"Quiet in the studio!"

The crowd does remerge,

They listen, and respond

More now than before.

The interaction is bliss.

The leader, her crowd.

And she now has her piece said,

And they disperse like the stars,

To interact like the planets.

Steven Fortune

Lost, Still

A pop star comes to town.
Male princess in jewelled hair and leathered skin.
So blind are the buyers to his teeth.
Crooning along with his second-hand song,
He's setting the interim hearts afire.

In the audience
His lost love is wowed by the luscious flutter of his vibes.
She knew him when they sounded alike.
At phantom parties, they warmed themselves
In the friction of their salted cheeks,
Too coy to try another inch.
But fame does wonders for nerves.

Three rows back now, and never so close.
She frantically awaits the chance to test her distant Claudius.
'I don't intend revenge,' she tells herself,
And that is enough.
It is more like a hungry void that needs the past,
And it is true.
True, no one lives full in the present.
It is a void in everyone.

And I feel the void too.
The pop star and the lost love meet
Wearing not the thinnest fibre of existence.
They are doomed to spin the linted yarns of my conscience
Over and over and over until we meet.
And then I pray (longer and harder than you know)
That, when I lay writhing and wriggling on the stage
With the venom of regret numbing my nervous system,
You will apologize, and I will forgive.

Marla Landers

how lucifer lost his wings

seaweed on the fire smokes like
satan, pawing at the
aching moon-dumb sky grown thick with
night. glowing to
transparency, your
fingers pitch stones, and the
sea falls away like old skin.
driftwood crumples to
ash, whispers crumple to
(hush).
satan sings the sky to sleep

Ode on a Thing I Found in my Fridge

(drowned in a tub of gravy)

I did not expect
to find you there
floating in that shallow bowl;
that olive hue had
fired mine eye,
the slowness of your roll;

the fuzziness of your placid form
did ward away my searching hand
that sought to quench my hunger.

But the half-crazed voice
that caught me unawares
that emanated from your throat
that told me of your sentience
had stirred in me both fear and thunder.

"Ye varlet; ye had left me here,
two moons hence since ye cooked me;
Ye left me here to rot in ice,
in a frozen hell did ye place me!"

"What thought ye since of my base wants,
what thought ye of desires?
Knew ye not that I want for warmth;
I thirst for heat and fire!?"

My rage,
you did invoke,
and when your quarrel
turned violent -

Ye jumped hence from
your frozen berth and
kicked me in the shin, so
I followed with
my deepest Instinct
and
stabbed you
with my Ginsu.

Remember, ye that read this poem
a mutation of that phrase of old;
not all that lives in 'fridge is prized,
nor all that's greenish, mold.

Jason Thibeault

Time of Day

What time is it?
oh, didn't you
hear?
Today there isn't
any time,
They stopped time
altogether, for one day only.
Oh yeah, these
Big Important People
got together
and decided that for today
time shouldn't go forward.
The planets have stopped spinning
on their axes, and
we've stopped gravitating toward
M-12
the globular cluster way out there
that'll eventually eat our spiral galaxy
and it's a good thing too
because that means we have eight
hundred million years
and one day
before galactic lunchtime.
And everybody will go about
their daily business only
their watches won't work
and they won't know when to go home and
go to bed.
But of course,
it won't work quite that way
for those people on the
other
side of the world.
They'll eventually wake up and they'll

find it's still night-time
and that'll decrease productivity down there
because everyone will think they're just
insomniacs and
need more sleep instead of going
to work.

Though I'd like to know
how They think They'll know
when to start time
once again
after the whole day has passed.

Maybe
They'll just pick an arbitrary point in
the near future at which
to continue time;
maybe after They've slept for a while.

But maybe I have it all wrong.

Maybe I should start over.

Okay, I think I will.

You're the slimiest person I've ever met
and quite frankly, I don't care
that you never returned my calls
and no, time didn't stop
I just didn't want to
give you the time of day.

Abra Lynn Whidden

echinacea

i touch you,
 your smooth wrinkles
your whispery fingers
 brush my wrinkled
 forehide
 foroughead
 furrowwed
fears

feverflushly
i itch my face
gainst you
gentlyfrantically (lovers)
 your age dridges
 my rage dridges
embrace
scarls and gnrapes
you loosen my skin
separate me from me
only round the redges

i wrap me round you
 my arms the bough
 you my cane crutch panacea echinacea
i breathe in
you breathe out
i breathe out
you breathe in
i breathe you breathe i
we are one
if the last alive we will survive
one

you try wrapping you
round me
but can't you gaze up reach
up to the crim sun
i look up i gaze i shimmy upwards, slithering
itching swinging scratching shedding layers
of skin of years fears rigormortis conventshun

they scar

let me breathe i breathe you breathe i live love

naked i stand on your shoulders i look gaze
reach up grasp the succulent sun and chomp
i scramble back in your supple arms giggles
dribble down my dimpled chin you cradle me

Adam Cochrane

The Fall

This is where the big bad beat, beat, beats live, in their grinning broken tooth one breath lives. I stare at the tangle trees and dream of eggs and thorns and skirts and the autumn glance of the passing stranger whose hair came alive like a viney picture frame around her gleaming dark eyes, and I nearly fell into them from where I stood, worlds away, and I couldn't breath for fear I'd fuck up that perfect aesthetic moment.

Then; it's you. You suddenly appear and change everything with your icy cruel perfection, exiling the passing stranger from my broken eyes. You; emerging from the bright open air, and the smell of your hair cracks me like a hard black brick straight into my open eye with all the pain and silence and dizzy delusion-terror that ensues, like the death chasing the life on a forever train going straight to hell. The mask of my face tenderly falls in sticky slow motion into a million crunchy bits of feeling and then: it's your eyes. Your obscenely green wild train wreck eyes, all around me and through me and biting me, with walled jagged guilt and retina shards of detest, leaving me with the silent king of all possible pains and it's as if the core of your heart has exploded leaving you on the verge, on the very fucking terribly horrific pin point of death, but you're still alive, enough to see and taste as everything continues to go on in sharp angry pain.

The beat, beat, beats tell me to run and to just fuckin tear away from this bad assed nowhere with its still stares from objects that always seem to looking hungry in the dead cold mean sense of the word. But then there's you still standin there right in front of me and it hurts to see you doing it, and my breath dissolves as I hear your breathy whisper like a ruffling wild hayfield throwing forth the wordy dice saying: you love me. But the beat, beat, beats start beating again and they snatch the words from your eyes and add and divide to misconstrue the literary blundering language, so that the verbs eat the nouns and the syllables gore themselves with secret knives like scarlet flowers of hate and all I hear is you are dead. It's then that the long, dark fall begins and my body and soul begin to sink into something bad, and I am dead, but I still got my eyes, and I still got a broken rambling piece of my brain, and I've still got the way that that stranger woman looked as she passed on the street with her autumn gaze and you can't take that way from me can you? You with the eyes and

that mouth and why'd you have to get a mouth like that, and I start to give into the pull of your crazy manipulative lips with all their red, like the blood on my arms in the old black days of hate time with tears that bled from my eyes until I couldn't cry anymore, and I couldn't see cause my eyes swelled shut, but still the pain never went off.

The beat, beat, beats say they like the blood and the eyes and the stranger all very much, but they're pushing me to run and get out of Dodge right the fuck now, so I force my legs to move, and my feet start to laugh at the madness and they scream at her eyes and I'm alive and movin through the trees with leaves in my face, and I feel the blood and there's nothing original about how a man dies alone and the beat, beat, beats are happy with all this leaky freaky fire in my hands and eyes, and I'm not dead yet and maybe I got nothing just like you told me, but I do! I've got the woman who passed on the street with her gleaming black eyes and you can't take that from me; not ever.

Wade Ells

Remembering California

La Jolla Shores

I remember walking out to meet it with jet-lagged legs, pale skin and no heartbeat. I couldn't decide if it was still all a dream. Is this real? Or is that just a large-crisp-glossy-green magazine picture curtain stretched and hung over...nothing? When I get close will the tip of my board tear its trick? Will I uncover the false, frozen eyes of the dream back-stage crew? Sorry son, it's just a dream you know.

Then the cool applegreen water said to my ankles, "Hey, I'm real." And it was. Real reality. Everywhere - even here. I was finally here. I was in the Pacific Ocean.

5700 Montezuma Road Apartment 104

I remember sitting on the balcony of our apartment, lost in the dew on my stolen writing desk, lost in the poverty alley in front of me, lost on the freeway in the distance, lost in the sounds of sorority girls in a backyard pool, lost in the sounds of Mexican voices, grinding skateboard wheels, soft reggae, and the barbecue, when she walked out, put her surfboard in her boyfriend's truck, and drove away.

Del Mar

I remember surfing at Del Mar. I remember waiting: sitting on my board looking toward the horizon and Russia? Japan? Australia? I remember waiting for the waves to form; waiting for Neptune to stir in his grayblue blanket with sleepy legs. Just when sleep was sure, he would roll over, and waves would grow. Slowly at first, then swallowing the sun. The waiting is done. Paddle! Paddle! Paddle! I ride the edge of a waterfall.

Exeter

I remember racing through the back roads of Exeter: the orange tree lined dirt roads, not at all Rodeo Drive. And the screaming punk music asked, "What's my age again? What's my age again?" And I didn't want to answer; I didn't want an age. In fact, I wanted to forget time, and stir the quiet dust of twilight forever.

Los Angeles

I remember the observatory view of Los Angeles explained by Stan's elderly hands and words. Stan: the elderly man who told me of Lost Angeles. He said,

Here . . . what goes around comes back around . . . maybe.
Here, is rather astonishing.
Yes, you could call it the Land of Milk and Honey, but it is also fierce.
But now, from space, it's not that large.
Now, you really think about that.

And I did. And I still do.

Law Street

I remember leaving the Pacific Ocean of California. I turned my back to leave; it called out to the sounds of the future. I listened for the secret sounds of the past.

Ivy Evelyn

Origins

He always sits on the front steps of our house at the time when the day longs for night; the gloaming was when it was. The gloaming, I had heard, was the only time of day that man could see God's face, but for me, as I would sit in the doorway watching him meditate on some upcoming sermon, it was the only time that I could fully understand my father.

My father would sit there when the evening began to close, when the day's troubles slowly began to fade away with the sun, and the sky wore mysterious shades of pink, purple and grey, and the clouds, a playful color of bright orange. Engrossed in his frame of transcendental meditation, he wrote intensely.

As dusk languidly crept on, so his thoughts waned, my father's precious thoughts. As the eerie moon would begin its graceful ascent, the fluorescent lights automatically came on and my father would gather up his books and papers to then come inside.

I remember those slow, lazy summer afternoons when adolescence prompted me to think about how someone so close could feel so far away. He was, to me, a familiar enigma, close enough to know but not close enough to understand. That was my father.

To fully understand my origins, my father has to be understood. The peculiar father-daughter relationship we share and the anger and resentment contradicted by the incomprehensible closeness I feel towards him.

I remember my father, early on a Sunday morning, going across the expanse of yard to open the church. It was still dark then. Occasionally, on my early morning bathroom ritual I would see him, once again, with his head slightly bent, serene. He was, most probably, meditating or praying that his sermon would reach someone's heart.

My father, in the quietude of his thoughts, is a simple yet complicated man, his standards unyielding especially when it came to the daughter that reminded him most of himself, me.

My father used to tell me that from even before my birth, still in my mother's womb, I had a mind of my own. He told me that when my mother was pregnant with me, he would try to feel me and every where he put his hand I would instinctively move away. Most of the memories that follow pale in comparison to this one since in a way my movement could have been instinctive but in a way, maybe it was not.

Soon after I was born, Hurricane Allan struck St.Lucia, possibly the worst hurricane that has struck my country in this decade. In retrospect, through adult eyes and experiences, I wonder if all these events hold any significance to what I am and what I could become.

I believe my birth symbolized a new beginning for him, I think that he somehow knew deep down that I would be just like him; a replica of my father.

I always wanted my father to see me beyond the academics of failure or success. I wanted him to see me as the young woman who is learning about life the best way I know how. I get so angry when he emphasizes my failures rather than my successes. The way his kudos seem unattainable but his disappointment, harsh and unforgiving, almost unbearable.

With my father, I either succeeded or failed, there was no room for compromise, no room for the slightest bit of mediocrity when he would say, "Good, but you can do better." I believe that his attitude towards me was because he was born into a family that had to work hard for the simplicities of life.

He was acquainted with grief at a very early age when his mother, whose name was Ivy, died nine days after the birth of his youngest brother, Michael. He had to then take on the role of mother and father to his younger siblings since he was the eldest. The admirable strength he showed when he took on the role of caretaker of his family showed his practicality and incredible loyalty to family, meanwhile studying for the priesthood.

Mark Gardiner

Realization

Everyone knows the answer but they're too afraid to say it because they know it will hurt you when the wall of fiction comes down with the blindfold removed and the frail tower of false hopes burns faster than flower petals (lilies) and gasoline because when it strikes you'll know you were wrong and you'll feel so stupid (how could you?) and you'll wonder about the others and what they're thinking about (who can I take advantage of today?) and how you can't change it so you just keep going on and on and on walking around in your little maze infested with sales pitches coffee bars used cars synthetic love random cubicle murder and if it bleeds it leads (parasites) looking out for number one and the person you want to love (insert name here) because they'll love you just as much in your mind and you may destroy your body but at least you're still clear-headed about the problem that confronts you.

Krissy Keech

The Porch Light

There was the problem of the porch light being on, the stupidly unanticipated problem of the porch light being on, and he just crouched there in the bushes across the street wondering how the hell did he not think of that and now what was he going to do? It was 3:00 am. There were no dogs barking, no cars passing, no kids playing in the street, no danger of anyone watching really, although there was the odd chance that some neighbour would get up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom or have a sandwich or walk off a bad dream and look out the window and see a stranger fiddling with the locks next door in the gleaming light on the back porch. He could maybe throw a rock to hit the light and it would go out, but his aim was terrible and he'd have to get up close and maybe it'd make too loud a noise and it would rouse someone. Besides, it would leave evidence of how he went about getting inside. So he sat in the bushes and wondered what was he going to do, what was he going to do, what was he going to do? And he thought about the Harley he wanted so badly, and the ring he'd give Marla, and the new shoes he could buy, snakeskin maybe, and of course he'd send April on that class trip to Washington D.C., and maybe if he found enough he'd get a car too, and pay off the mortgage and the hospital bills and any other outstanding things that he couldn't think of then but that he knew existed. He noticed that his bum was damp and that the ground was still wet from yesterday's rain and he realized another unanticipated problem. He had no gloves. He had forgotten his gloves and could picture them lying there on the kitchen table. Yes, he even remembered reminding himself to bring extra batteries for the flashlight and setting down the gloves to go get two double A's from the dresser drawer. Shit shit shit. There was no way he could get in the house now without gloves, without those slinky black gloves that he'd bought only Tuesday. And there was still the problem of the porch light being on. Oh, there he was, straddling the Harley, flying down the highway, Marla grasping his waist, wind whishing through his hair, and he was even wearing snakeskin shoes. Oh, he wanted that Harley so badly, but the porch light was on and he had no gloves and he was not going to get into the house tonight. And then he started getting cold. He felt an icy chill go down his arms, but after all, it was November, and he thought that he'd better decide what he was going to do because it was really late and he was getting cold and the money and the jewellery and the stereo were just sitting in an empty house and he wanted that Harley so badly. Gloves. Gloves. Maybe he could walk

down to the all-night drug store and see if they had gloves and then come back and throw a rock at the light and have his Harley. Maybe the light breaking wouldn't make a loud sound and if it did, he could run away and try another house another night. So he checked his pockets for change to see if he had enough to buy gloves and he came up with \$1.80 and he knew that wouldn't be enough. And he certainly wasn't going to rob an all-night drug store for a pair of gloves especially when he already had some nice slinky black ones at home. So there. With that he made the decision to come back Friday fully equipped. The Harley would have to wait because his bum was wet and he was cold and he had no gloves and the porch light was on.

Paul Snooks

Untitled

And then they stood in one place, refusing to move from the positions they choose to stay in. The call went out for change and all people looked to the sky in a sober way. What they saw made them shake with tremendous waves of fear as the birds turned to stone and fell to the ground. Because it is rude to stare, the sky suddenly became embarrassed and turned red. The cars took the place of the birds, and after reassuring the old men, took to the sky, turning fluorescent colours, kicking out the drivers, flying like flies towards the sun. The lions looked up from the ground and began to run across the wide-open plains, panting and sweating, making trails for the chipmunks to follow. They ran to the edge of the water and floated out into the sea where the fish rot and start to stink, and lay belly up.

The children came out from their cages and just as they entered the light their heads split open. The witnesses near by stopped in amazement. They later reported that all the endangered and extinct animals flew out of the children's heads. They took to the sky, the water, and the air, speaking in all kinds of different languages. This created a collage of sound that filled the air all around the world. So the rats saw this and prepared for the disaster, they bared themselves underground to shield themselves from the body parts that flew through the air and travelled in the wind across the shattered landscape. Someone out in the middle of the snow bank heard the commotion and put a hand up in stark protest.

All the people changed their minds and looked out over the ocean, while the remains of the children who tried to run away and were gripped by the rocks and pulled down into the earth with the worms and the ants. So the people, not knowing this, watched closely (some even put their ears down close to the water) the water, looking for some kind of sign from the animals who, by that time ripped up the ground when they started to invade the cities. With incredible strength, they gripped the buildings with their huge hands and tore them from their places, heaving them across the sky towards the mountains. Each one plunged into the melting rock that was created when the serpents dug deep caves into the mountains in an attempt to catch them as they started to break down. When they did this, all the human material flew up into the air, colliding with the cars. They came down with a crash and changed into raindrops, and all the hippies smiled and took another puff. They

knew what was going to happen. By this time (about 5:00) movie posters and chesterfields came falling to the ground so the cats could have a place to sleep. The person on the snow bank then raised his hands which turned into birds. They departed from his arms and took to the trees which grew ferociously from the newly made ground. This caused the insects to run along the forest floor searching for the reassuring old men who by that time were staring at the sky with infinite wonder. They swore that their reflections lingered in the smog that filled the air. At that moment all the people fell asleep, dreaming of better days. The fish came alive and wandered up the shoreline of every coast knowing that the people were gone.

The other animals such as the horses and the muskrats went to say "hi" to their neighbours and they all smiled and laughed, turning their eyes towards the man far off in the distance (he's on a snow bank) who had his finger to his mouth. He was making a "shhhhhhhh" noise. Not knowing what this meant, all the animals (even the lions who were bored of the water) began to charge that annoying man. They made a terrible, defining rumble that filled the earth, killing all the endangered and extinct animals, and the trees.

The old men suddenly realized the strange visions depicted in this story contain a moral. You see, as all the animals charged, the ground behind the man on the snow began to pry up and scream out a piercing yelp that shattered the clouds. They blew apart in the winds. From the ground came a giant spider that was sleeping. It looked like every thought and every emotion. The animals turned to stone and crumbled into a billion pieces. The people stood paranoid and petrified of what they faced. The ugly spider gargled, spat, farted, and let out a huge, massive web that covered the entire world. It covered over everything. As all the people struggled to rip free, it tightened around them, and then they all started relax. All of them were stuck in the fray of the web . . . So the man that was on the snow bank looked up to the sky, sighed, and decided he'd better make the best of it . . .

Tracy Stone

The Superhero's Innocence

"Who are you?" the little boy asked in a whisper.

"Who ever you want me to be," the small figure answered.

"Will you be my friend?" the boy asked. The small figure nodded. "What is your name?"

"Colin," the figure answered. As soon as the one word was spoken the figure's shape and appearance began to form before him. He was tall, he was small, he was fat he was skinny, he was happy, he was sad; he was anything the boy wanted him to be.

"I like that name," the boy smiled at him.

"What happened there?" Colin asked pointing to the small bruise near the boys left temple.

"I fell," the boy whispered.

"Is that what you tell people?" Colin asked. The boy nodded. "Is that what really happened?"

The boy shook his head, "Do you like to play games?" he immediately asked.

Colin nodded, "I like games very much, what do you like?"

"I like to play pretend; I like to pretend I am a super hero like on the TV."

"What is your favourite character?" Colin asked.

The little boy smiled, "I like batman. No one knows who he is; he hides during the day and at night he can be what he really wants to be. That is how I want to be; I want to hide from everyone until they are all asleep and then those people will fear me. I will be the creature in the night that they hear about the next day; I will be the one who will haunt their dreams at night . . . I will be a hero."

Colin smiled, "That sounds like fun. Do you think you will ever be that?"

The little boy shook his head, "No, no one is really a super hero, this is just pretend."

"Why can't it be for real?" Colin asked.

They heard a twig snap, and the boy jumped. He heard a voice ask, "Who are you talking to?"

He turned around, "No one, Father."

Tegan Zimmerman

Monologue from the Grave: The Descent of the Soul

I remember the sadness I felt when my wife was sobbing. Funerals are a sad thing. I was wearing a very tight, smothering jacket, so if the person who dressed me is reading this I want you to know you have a lot to learn about the overwhelming unattractive temperature of a coffin. My skin felt like it was an abandoned vessel; its flakes of paint peeling from the walls... of my bones. The heavy and suffocating detrimental effect of the dark age like sarcophagus was taking its toll on me as I was being shifted this way and that not to mention the bumps I got on my forehead from the top of the lid. When I arrived at the burial site, I started to doubt myself. It reminded me of the times when I would be out with Duke on our daily walk and a flock of partridge would fly up, and I would have just one chance to hit or miss. My heart pounded and my stomach burned with anxiety; I had never been buried before. They were really kind though, those strong men, (one of them was my friend Pete who worked at the Band Council) who slowly placed me down into my 6-foot hole. I felt, as a mountain climber must when they are repelling down a large piece of rock. I had reached life's peak and was descending into the earth I so loved. Much to my surprise, it did not take long for them to begin to replace the soil over me; it was actually much quicker and lighter than I expected.

Shovels striking in the sun, the sound of scraping metals and rocks; my home. They were moving me into my new home. Was I supposed to be grateful they didn't bury my armchair and television with me too? "Look!" I heard the strong young native men say in uniform pride of the perfect job they had just accomplished. I hated the sound of their voices, just as much as I hated the sound my Buick would make when the muffler had fallen off. For me they were the same, obvious -obnoxious - you wish you could ignore - forget noise. Next, I strained to listen as everyone silently crowded around with all their beautiful flowers. They gave them to me as gifts, you see that's the privilege of dying, people give you things and the nicest thing of all is they never ask for them back. It is a shame the government does not operate like this. But I must admit I was never one for politics as it was. I remember listening to the frail hands of my wife holding lilies, I knew they were hers, just as I always used to know when a doleful deer was lurking in the shadows of the woodland, quietly nipping on rose hips and spruce needles with wary eyes. I imagine the lilies were

white, and made a nice contrast to all the black in the background. "I think he is going to like it here" I heard an unfamiliar voice say, "He will be able to see the ducks on the pond, and the boats on the river." This was a stereotypical lie.

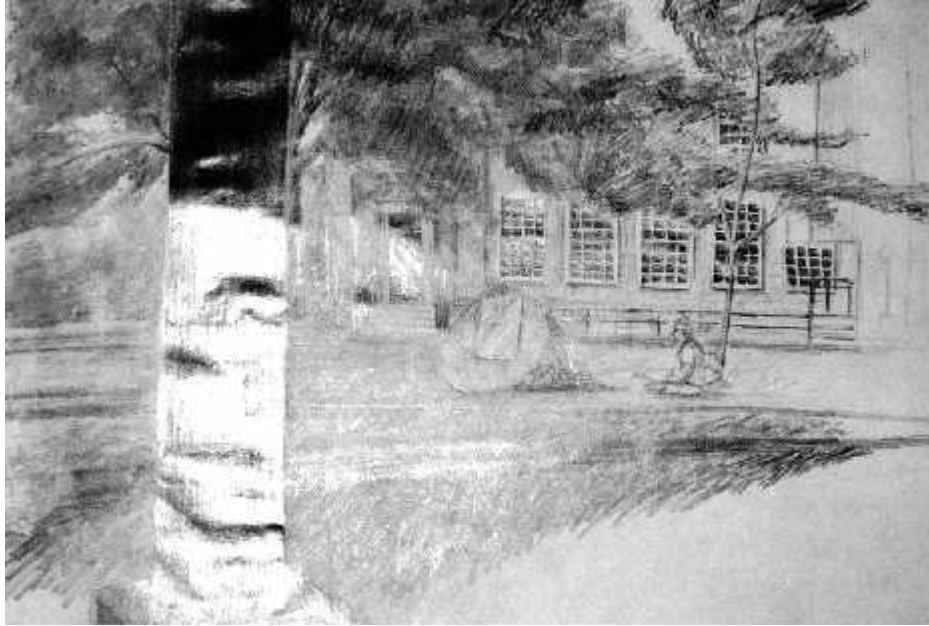
How could I who was bundled in a box buried six feet below the surface possibly see anything? The person who coined the phrase "where the sun doesn't shine." They were really into something, it's quite the popular joke amongst us souls. It took a little while but soon my eyes adjusted to the cheesy, faded cornflower carpeted casket. I embraced it, I no longer feared the darkness which I had in life so often, too often. It was as if every tear was a rainy and miserable day but, I learned rain was transparent and I could see through its gloom. I could swim and not drown in sorrow. Death was not so sad there were even pets one could find in the worms and insects that constantly crawled by. I too adopted one, he was about 3 inches long, a real night crawler, his name was Norman. I named him after Billy Crystal's calf in the movie City Slickers. I had never owned a worm before or a calf for that matter, but I never liked to travel, I liked to stay away from the cities and I considered myself a new parent. And if this logic seems quite illogical than I permit, you will allow for a little lenience in coherence on the behalf of a poor feeble soul.

Let us now return to my thoughts on worms. Worms are not afraid of death, they shake hands with it, they dine with it, they depend on it. I admire them because it took me my whole life to do something they do every day. Only now have I come to understand my spiritual tuition and what death has ultimately taught me. "Mortality and nature are universally linked." Death whispers in my mind again so I will never forget "Mortality and nature are universally linked." The white eyed owl who swoops from his lofty branch in the spirit of darkness sweeping up the innocent hare that dangles like an earring from his talons screams between his open beak into the biting air "We are all death". "Life depends on death" the wise bird of prey whoo a hoo's, and he is right, we are all murderers in some form or another. And like my father Nanitu of the moose hide moccasins, I meditate and reflect and in spirit I hold his hand and walk along the stars, tracking their destiny and our own. He bends down on one knee showing me where we went astray, and I feel foolish for never noticing before. Nature likewise, is taking care of me and my fellow soulful souls. I do not have to diet, hide under materials, or comb my hair. She lets me be. She is a wonderful mother and a wonderful teacher. I am hoping she will mould me into an apple blossom or an elm from which false dreams cling. Yet I know my words and thoughts will go unheard in the masses ears, I am confident they will resound in the intelligible and coherent tongue of the inspired poet. Nature's eternal interpreter and prophet, they alone will understand my silent speech, and sympathise with the sad song of life and death that whispers with a universal knowledge throughout all of

nature's students, and with every bend of a bowing flower's face under authoritative winds.

Rob Barrett

Untitled



Robin Dutta

Untitled



Mark Randell

Untitled



Lauren Everett

Frog



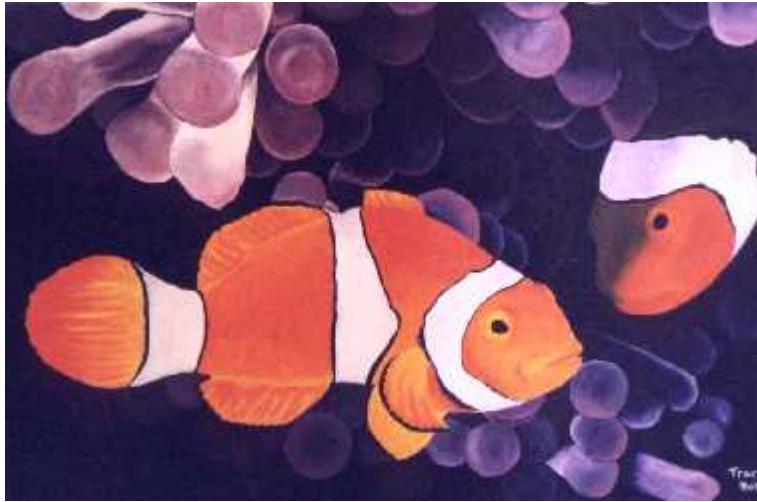
Darcy Harvey

Change Like Sugar Cane



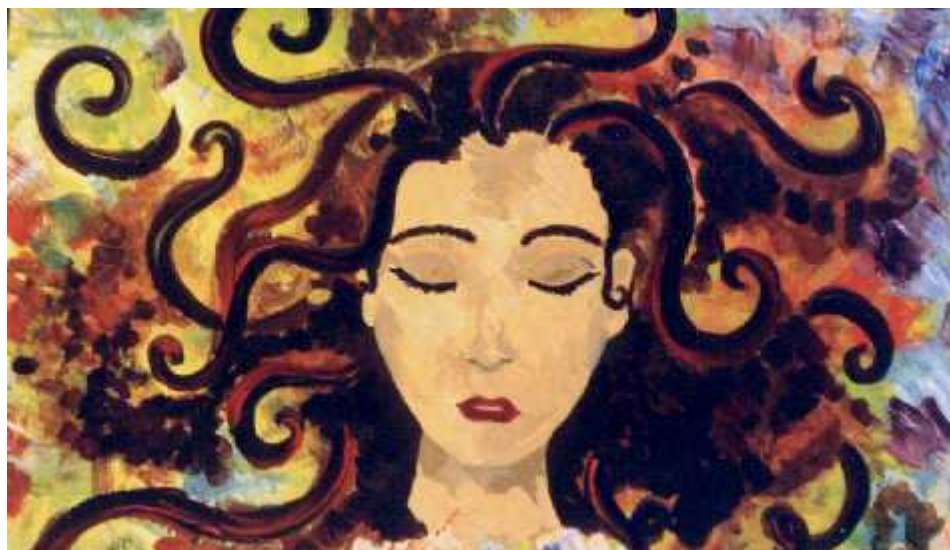
Tracy Noble

Clown Fish



Denice Rego

Untitled



Laura Rossy

Old Faithful



Chad Warren

Yellow Morning



Verilea Warren

Berries



Khanh Chhang

Untitled



Khanh Chhang

Untitled



Krista Weare

Youghall Beach

