

# Trillium

Spring 2006

*Twenty-eighth Annual Publication Funded by the  
Associated Students of Tacoma Community College  
and the Tacoma Community College Foundation*

*Editors*

*Diana Gaidies  
Amber Gershman  
Ian Greenfield  
Dejnaba Irving  
Nicholas Shine*

*Advisory Editor*

*Linda Ford*

*With special thanks to Allen Braden of the  
TCC English Department and the TCC Art  
Department for advice and assistance.*

*cover art:*

*Larry Bullis*

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*Rae Kiick*  
**Crazy**

Drown.  
Drown.  
Drown me in a water so deep,  
where blackness grows  
and lonely widows weep.

Lose.  
Lose.  
Lose me now;  
submerge my sadness  
in waters of your brow.

Wipe.  
Wipe.  
Wipe away the angry eyes,  
the darkened pupils  
like summer's flies.

And let.  
Let.  
Just let it in.  
Open the doors,  
Let crazy take a spin.



*Amber Gershman*

**God's Country**

photograph

*Linden Klawitter*  
**Paperclip Girl**

Sometimes she holds life together.  
Usually, she lets it fall apart.

Outside, all smooth fluid edges,  
rounded, but never mistaken for soft,  
hide destructive ends,  
twisted, and eclipsed within.

Malleable, recastable, contorting herself,  
into what she thinks you want her to be.

So brittle, so tiny, so thin,  
fits right into your hand,  
before she wrenches away.

Pointed ends of bone stretch skin tight.  
Bend her too much and she breaks,  
shows just cracks at first glance,  
then she snaps, defiance in pieces,  
exposing more sharp, broken ends.



## Terrain

Sticky vinyl car seats, kaleidoscope views,  
spilled soda and cracked sunglasses.  
Simon sings with Garfunkel about America  
and the miles stretch out before us.

Sunlight beams through the windshield  
untinted, AC's broken again, corn fields  
transcend into empty blue skies.  
Rocky Mountain passes and cowboys  
become the characters of our stories.  
Clouds on the horizon play at mountains,  
until the real ones appear ahead.

Nights spent in hotel rooms, siblings  
tangled together, youth a maze of maps  
truck stop matchbooks and motel soap.  
Denny's breakfasts and rest stop dinners,  
and we remembered the towns  
for which ones had the best playgrounds.

A childhood documented by memories still  
echoing, yellowed summer photographs;  
days we naively thought would always  
be spent this way, drive on forever.

And from the back seat, hear that  
tiny voice wake up again. My sister:  
"Are we there yet?"

Almost there, kid, just this last stretch  
of road to go.

*Andy Campbell*  
FCC as my witness

To those who shelter me from war:

Don't show me  
a presidential seal or a limo sporting the  
Stars and Stripes. I don't want to see a government  
official  
lecturing ME on "moral high ground." Don't let me  
hear news ticker phrases like "freedom," "democracy"  
or "peace." Don't broadcast photo ops  
while you launch Tritons worth 5 years  
of AIDS medication. Don't show me cowboy boots  
and mission accomplished--  
*that* is not war.

Show me a girl seared beyond recognition, a boy  
missing limbs. Show me a mother wailing at the sight  
of her children in pieces. Show me heads without  
bodies, babies without parents; show me death  
without reason. Make an icon of a man  
writhing in agony on ground soaked  
with coal black blood. Show me the chaplain's visit  
to a military wife--  
*that* is war.

I cry for peace--I beg and plead; I feel the blasts  
in my bones, the shock collapsing my lungs.  
I hear my voice echo through the chambers  
of hollow hearts while you sit at your ranch,  
Constitution in one hand, gun in the other.

*Wendy Faker*

**Teatime in the Sitting Room**

She wants to wade into the mud  
And ruin her petticoats forever.  
She wants to swim out into the river  
With only her shimmy on,  
To feel the cool water gently caress her.  
Yet instead she sits politely, .  
Fingers folded neatly in her lap  
Or perhaps around a delicate china cup.  
Discussing the discourse.  
The other ladies sipping their tea.  
But no,  
No, not she.  
Sipping bourbon from her fine Wedgwood.  
And when the conversation wanes  
Her eyes drift to the window  
And her thoughts float down the river.

*Dejnaba Irving*  
**Where I'm From**

I'm black and Proud; no I'm not ashamed  
Because I know exactly from where I came

I'm not talkin' about the Suburbs or Ghettos or  
Burroughs or Projects  
full of poverty and crime and vermin and insects  
Not the west coast or east coast, or anywhere in  
between

I'm talkin' about where I'm REALLY from; let me tell  
you what I mean

I mean way back, before I was a seed in the womb;  
Before our ancestors were slaves, jumping the broom;  
Before Malcolm, and Medgar, and Rosa, and Martin;  
Before "separate but equal" restrooms & drinking  
fountains;  
Before "free Slaves" were promised 40 acres and a  
mule;  
Before it was legal for us to get educated in public  
school;  
Before uprisings, civil war, emancipations and  
declarations;  
Before we were sold away separately from our own  
relations;

Before we were taken from our own rich land;  
With shackles on our feet and necks and hands;  
Before Columbus tried to sail around the world and  
back  
To prove to them that is wasn't flat;

Before the pyramids were occupied by kings and

pharaohs;  
Before my sistas' Cleopatra & Nefertiti, wore braids  
and cornrows.

When I talk about where I'm from, I mean way back  
before then  
Where my Father, The Ruler, had woolen hair &  
golden brown skin;

Where my Mother Earth fed & nurtured me  
From the soil of my deep roots, through every branch  
and leaf of my life's tree.

Your mind's eye visualizes me as dirty cause of this  
brown skin I'm in;  
don't you know a hand full of rich brown soil is how it  
all began?

My heritage goes all the way back to the beginning.  
If you're reading between the lines, your head should  
be spinning.

I can not ever forget where I came from,  
And I won't be afraid when it's time to go home.

*Joji W. Kohjima*  
**Barbarians at the Gates**

There are men in strange clothing  
with strange manners: ever probing,  
ever accosting,  
ever assaulting,  
ever impeding,  
ever halting  
the day-to-day rhythms of public space  
Like beasts,  
they pace.

Under the watch of these men  
who know not what they seek,  
The youth grow conniving  
While their fathers become meek.  
Reality is only relative  
when the strongest men are forced  
To play at being unable  
to chart their nation's course;  
the bravest of the village  
are the first to disappear.  
Each disappearance sends a message,  
and the message rings clear

You are occupied by infidels  
Who know nothing of you at all.  
Vain posturing is their religion,  
Fear is their only law.  
They silence men of logic;  
they don't try to understand.  
Their fallen are few when compared  
to the blood spilt at their hands.

Yet they fear every shadow,  
and they cry at every crow;  
they spit in unknown tongues  
the words of which you do not know.  
In the cutting sound of their curses  
you hear their redneck rage:  
"This ain't no democracy motherf--"  
Is not confined to Abu Ghraib.

Suspect is any man  
organizing his community.  
Labor unions, religious groups  
Are molested with impunity.  
Men with families to live for  
Can swallow a lot of pride,  
But with the death of self-respect,  
Morality also dies.  
Most men will stay low key;  
Some men may take to drink;  
To the level of the patsy,  
Forward thinking men will sink.  
In these years of down-pression,  
Young men have come of age  
To see their fathers' waning strength,  
Their own hearts waxing rage  
With which are fueled the flames  
of cyclic violence  
inspired by the occupation  
plotted by Western tyrants.

Meanwhile in far off suburbs  
Dotted with SUVs,  
people worry for their soldiers  
and sit glued to their TVs,  
which remind them that their husbands,

Their sons, brothers, fathers  
are out there saving the world  
from medieval Ali Babas,  
And this image is enforced by sorts  
of pundits and professors  
who draw conclusions predetermined  
by dictates of the oppressor,  
Like "Colonialism is over.  
Every country is responsible  
for the welfare of its people"  
even if that's made impossible  
By the economic systems  
that the international monetary fund  
inherited from European Kingdoms--  
Yesterday's barbarians.  
There can be no responsibility  
on the oppressor. By his logic,  
reactionary wars  
become internal tribal conflicts  
under the watch of these destroyers  
who know not what they hate;  
Cautious men are in their cellars  
For the barbarians are at the gates





*Alice di Certo*

**Virtual Woman**

mixed media

*Ian Greenfield*  
**Gregory's Star**

Gregory's Star was shining in the frosty November sky. It was the white star two and a half inches below the moon and one inch to the left, right under the little purple spot you can only see in July and August and only far away from the city lights. I didn't look for the purple spot, no matter the time or place. Gregory had pointed the star out to me so many times I could point to it in broad daylight without error. His son had bought the right to name it for forty dollars from the National Star Registry, and so it was named, for all eternity, Gregory's Star. Tonight, it shone with striking brilliance as I locked the door to the restaurant and started the walk home.

Gregory Brooks and I had co-owned the restaurant, Kiernan and Brooks' Restaurant and Bar, for twenty years before he died. I suppose it should just be Kiernan's Restaurant and Bar now, but I kept the name in Gregory's memory. I don't think that I could have lived with myself if I had taken it down, as his wife had wanted.

It had been two years ago, give or take, that he had disappeared without a trace. A week later the police found his body lying in a circle of birch trees, in a gully two miles from his house. A few months later, his son supposedly set his own house on fire. They never found the body. After the fire, Gregory's wife moved back with her family in California, and I haven't heard from her since. Those days had left a void inside of me that I tried to fill with work and a few more beers than was healthy.

I stopped on the corner by the restaurant, waiting for the light even though there wasn't a soul in

sight, and closed my eyes. It had been so sudden and shocking that sometimes I still couldn't quite accept that any of it had happened. The last time Gregory and I had spoken had been the night before he disappeared. It was painful to think about.

He had been holding my knife. We were standing in the parking lot of the restaurant, talking about Gregory's plan for a deck addition to the building. It was very cold, and his breath frosted on the blade of the knife. It was a hunting blade that he had asked to borrow, and he stood admiring the ivory handle and smooth edge as we talked about the future. He seemed distracted, but then Gregory was always thinking about a million things at once. Eventually, we shook hands and parted ways, he promising to return the knife at the first opportunity following his "hunting trip." I never learned where he was going to hunt; his wife didn't even know he was planning a trip. I suppose it's silly to remember the knife, but it has occurred to me that of all the issues, fights, plans, and ideas we had had together, his promise to return the knife — which no one had ever found — was the only unfinished business between us. I'd even had the deck built, last year.

I opened my eyes. Gregory's star stared back at me. To the millimeter... I heard a sound behind me, and looked over my shoulder to see a man walking behind me, in the same direction I was going. His face was hidden in the shadows (I realized that some of the streetlights were out), and the swift purpose of his stride made me nervous. I faced forward again, trying to mind my own business, and saw that the light had been changed for some time. I crossed the street just as it turned yellow and was pleased to see that the man stayed on the other side.

It was a very eerie night. For some reason, even



*Julie Rivera*

digital photograph

though the sky was crystal clear, the shadows were very dark. The wind was blowing steadily, and the things that it moved in the alleys and bushes held my imagination captive. The patches of darkness where the streetlights had died seemed to swim with indistinct moving shapes, and I crossed the street more than once to stay in the light.

Ahead of me was the worst part of my walk home. The street turned into a bridge across the gully where they had found Gregory's body. The circle of birch trees was scarcely two hundred feet up the gully, and in the late autumn you could see the white bark through the forest of dead branches. I never liked this part; the gully was a strange and menacing place even without the memory of Gregory's death hanging over it like a black fog.

I took a deep breath and stepped onto the bridge. Usually, I preferred to stay in the middle of the bridge so as to avoid looking over the side, but I could hear the man behind me again and didn't want to act strange in front of a stranger, so I stayed on the sidewalk. The gully was a blot of darkness at the edge of my vision that felt to me almost like a blind spot. The blot, along with the approaching footsteps of the man, became so distracting that I looked up at the sky to clear my head.

The first thing that I saw was Gregory's Star, and the second was the moon. It occurred to me, strangely, that you could draw a straight line through the two. I followed the line to the ground with my eyes. I found myself staring into a mass of light and shadow, as the moon illuminated countless branches swaying in the wind. The motions of the lower branches made it seem as if things were running under the trees, toward the point where the line through the moon touched the ground... in a circle of white trees

that seemed almost corpse-like in the pale light.

It was a disgusting thought, drawing a line from Gregory's Star to the place he had died. I stood still for a moment, watching the shadows run to the circle of death as I tried to force the thought out of my head. Suddenly, it seemed to me as though I could see the star staring back at me from inside the circle. I turned away quickly.

The man was standing next to me, staring out over the gully. I took a step back in surprise, and realized that his head, while bare, was obscured from vision. A shadow was falling over the entire bridge, and I looked into the sky to see a cloud passing over the face of the moon. It was just large enough to obscure everything but the bright white birch trees that mocked me with the death of my best friend.

Then the man stepped up to the edge of the bridge, gripped the guardrail... and jumped into the darkness.

I stood still for a moment, trying to absorb what had happened, then ran to the edge and looked. All I saw were the seductively swaying arms of the trees, and the shifting shadows cast by the moon. I ran back to the end of the bridge and climbed down into the gully.

Close up, the waving trees weren't so bad, but the shadows were deeper and the sense of unseen motion was stronger. I ran to the place where the man must have fallen, jarring my knees on the frozen ground. I couldn't find any signs of his fall in the place I thought he had landed, or anywhere close by. Desperate to find him, and utterly perplexed, I climbed up a tree and looked out across the gully.

From my vantage point, I could clearly see into the circle of birch trees. He was standing in the center, facing straight toward me. Though the cloud had

moved on, he was too far away for me to see his face.

We faced each other for a long time, and then I climbed down and walked to the circle of birch trees. When I arrived, the man had moved to the opposite side of the circle, into the shadows. I stopped at the edge of the circle and stared straight at him.

The man seemed to ignore me. The shadowed face seemed to be staring down at the center of the circle. I followed his gaze to a patch of black dirt in the thick, frost-stiffened grass of the circle. It dawned on me that the patch looked like a man lying on the ground, with his arms partially extended. I felt a cold creeping terror that I would equate to realizing that the noise that woke you hadn't been a dream, but an intruder, and that he was in the room, standing over your bed in the darkness...

As I stared unthinking at the shape, strange man forgotten, a point of light stabbed me in the eye, shocking me awake. At the right hand of the shadow, Gregory's Star stared up at me from the dirt.

I stepped forward into the circle, feeling a pressure in my ears, as if I were descending into deep water. I knelt in the grass, feeling my heartbeat all the way into my toes, and lifted up the object that I found in the dirt.

I felt the pressure fade as I stood up, holding the ivory-handled knife. That was it, then, the last unfinished business settled. It was oddly peaceful.

"Thank you, Gregory," I murmured.

"You're welcome," said the man. I turned around, but there was nothing there except softly swaying trees and the deep shadow of a chill autumn night.

*Jessica Harpe*  
**combobulated**

tissle tossle  
toodling along  
twind and tumble  
floating beyond

adjacently accented  
astoundingly astute  
amounting to anything  
anything to boot

middle, moodle  
mdium, and meeker  
mounting mountains  
and startling the speaker

clight, clout  
climb beyond  
courage confided  
and courage beyond





*Kyle Dillehay*

**Fugi**

bronze

*Matt Enloe*

**The Personification of the Heart**

I hear people say  
*My heart feels for you*  
*Or, my heart goes out to you.*

I've seen a heart smile  
A heart jump and skip a beat,  
But I have yet to see  
A heart serve a pot of coffee,  
Throw a curve ball,  
Or play the violin.

People tell me their hearts guide them,  
Navigating them through life  
Like GPS telling them:  
*Take a right at the next light*  
*And, find a parking space because*  
*You are in walking distance.*

Others claim home is where  
The heart is.  
And yet on certain days when  
I return home after work  
In the first downpour of fall,  
He is not there.

Leaving only the smell of the soup  
He made for lunch behind.

## **The Abundant Crop**

In the Southern heat, I harvest pain.  
Stalks bow to burnt wind, rows mourn loss.  
I kneel in the loveless soil and cry for rain.  
To find North, search the stump for moss.

Stalks bow to burnt wind, rows mourn loss.  
I'm the burdened slave, shackles and all.  
To find North, search the stump for moss.  
Golden bales wound tight--a sign of fall.

I'm the burdened slave, shackles and all,  
Reaping a crop I'm forbidden to eat.  
Golden bales wound tight--a sign of fall.  
The tools of my trade, calloused hands and feet,

Reaping a crop I'm forbidden to eat.  
I kneel in the loveless soil and cry for rain.  
The tools of my trade, calloused hands and feet.  
In the Southern heat, I harvest pain.

*Amber Gershman*

**i won't tell you stop asking**

i won't tell you what this poem is about  
(a boy who speaks with chocolate words that  
wrap around my eyes and my lungs)

i won't spell out the meaning of these lines  
(it's just a little crush, not like i faint every time  
we touch)

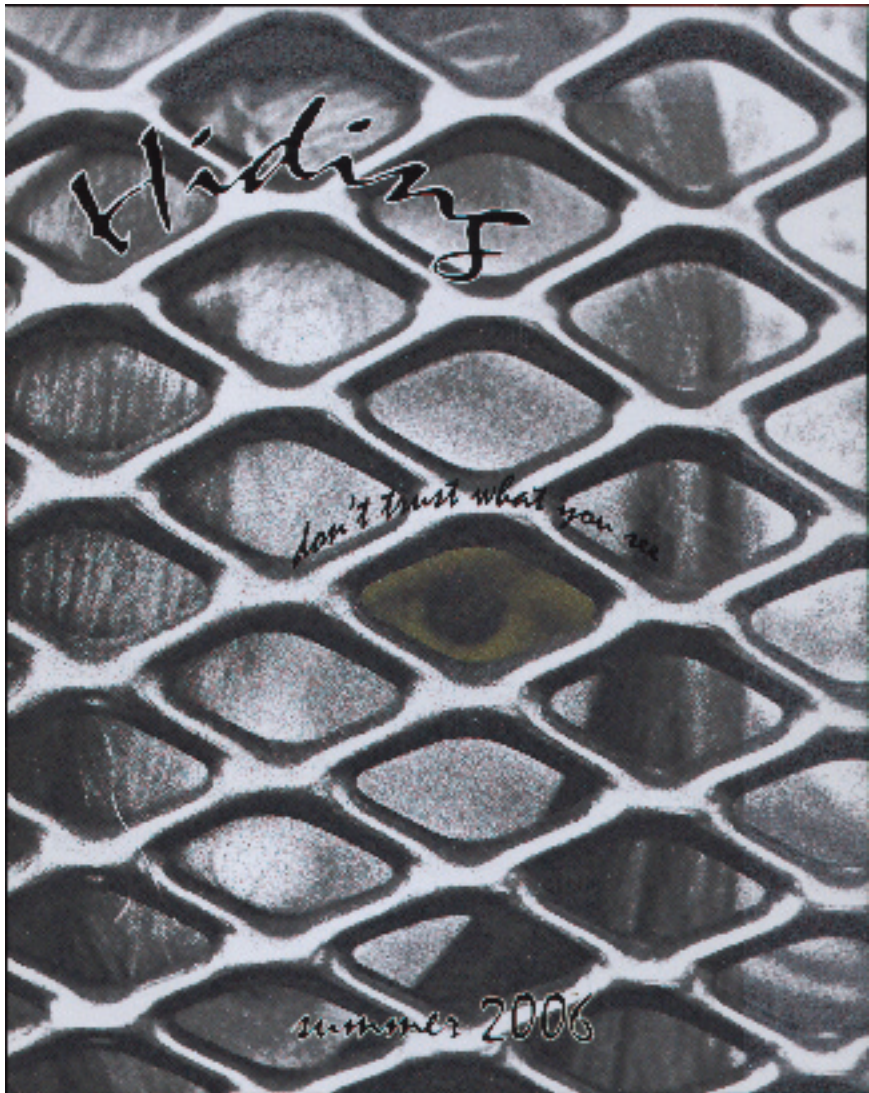
i won't let you in on how he makes me feel  
(like a little girl all wide eyed and dizzy who  
can fend off an army with her words)

i won't repeat how he said my name  
(and how it slipped through his lips and  
bounced around inside my ears like an amber  
sunbeam)

i won't describe what he looks like  
(or how his wire glasses frame his green eyes  
and his ruddy stubble makes him look older  
and wiser)

i won't describe how he tastes  
(and how the air is salty when he walks by with  
a sweet creative aftertaste)

i won't tell you what this poem is about  
i won't.



*Julia Snare*

digital media

*Linda Ford*

## **The City Breathes Fire**

The city breathes fire –  
a choking blaze singes the air.

The absence of human remains  
in the minutes after impact.

No warning of danger  
unwinding with  
the explosive force of  
1000 tons of TNT,

Not a single cloud  
in the blue sky, no foreshadowing  
of the warhead hurtling to its destination,

or the sanitized hands of the pilot  
who takes careful aim at his target.

Only a few glance up, take note  
at the sound of engines.  
1000 offices echo in empty towers,  
and far from the center of the city,  
factories and industrial smokestacks  
blot the skyline.

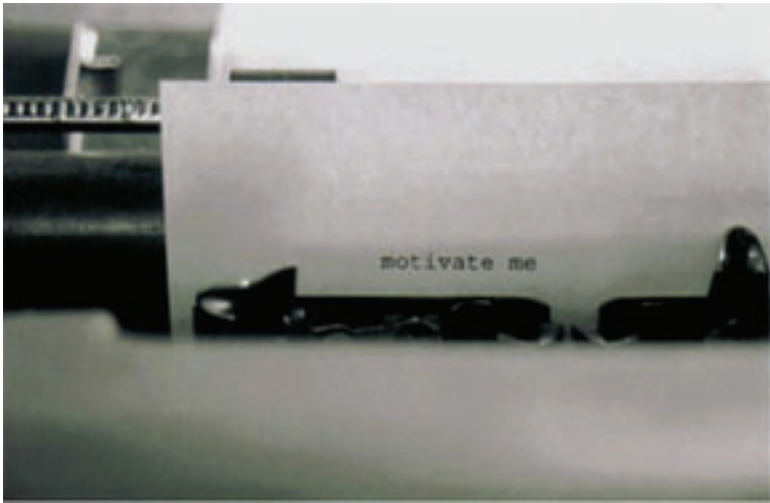
A deep shadow passes over the fields  
following the direction of the wind.

The pilot checks the time and  
begins his descent, plotting an  
unbending course  
determined weeks and days

before take-off, years even--  
strategic flights  
that wind back through the chain of command :

A general's signature;  
An official document that authorizes action.

The president plays golf.  
An aide whispers in his ear.  
In the voting booth,  
1000 citizens push the button.



*Amber Gershman*

digital photograph





*Joseph E. Hill, III*

**heart-shaped prism**

digital photograph



*Ryan Becker*  
**City Glow**

From the distant countryside, the city seemed to flicker  
on and off  
As the ice swirled across the sky and distorted its  
towering masses.  
Most rushed home on foot,  
Icy roads have a way of scaring people away.  
The cracking, crunching, crushing of snow echoed  
Throughout the empty alleys from the streets beside.  
The radio on a nearby news stand hissed with static  
And warnings of an approaching storm.  
Signs light up their blazing, blistering, blinding letters  
In fiery hue to warn oncoming vehicles.  
The dark sedan was a bullet in the darkness,  
One woman's muffled cry was barely audible  
In the relentless glow of the city.

*Elena Catron-Hoesch*  
**As Clear As The Photograph That's Held Underwater**

The drops that cling to the pane make for a languid  
start,  
lazily creeping along,  
but with each cohort that shadows, each becomes that  
much stronger, and quickly picks up pace, weaving a  
web of Mails  
as the history of its travels--distorting the  
ever-changing picture passing by the window.

*Brandi Cantu*  
**Agony's Perfume**  
(Caption)

*The bitterness of salt and lime*  
Under the blanket you whimper, sheltered be-  
neath your cloak of despair

*I drank your words and swallow still*  
You wipe away your tears as they soak in through  
your hair

*I'll taste again a second time*  
You force your head into a pillow so your sobs do  
not make a sound

*Like an anchor of flesh the urge to submerge in words*  
As you nearly suffocate, in short breaths you fall  
to the ground

*These flowers all look dead to me*  
As your eyes search frantically, circling the room

*The smell of death in potpourri*  
Smelling your lover on your covers, agony's  
perfume.



*Sarah Ristine*

digital media

*Kiernan Mayfield*  
**Salt**

My mother had been singing to me again in my dreams, the way she used to when I was little. I suppose it's fitting that I remember her that way, at that age of my life when I was solely dependent on her. I don't want to have to remember her though. If I have to remember her it means she's not here any more. If I have to remember her it means she's just a memory.

The pillow was damp as I lifted my head and rubbed my stinging, dry eyes. Sometime during the night I'd run out of tears. I shifted my weight around and swung my feet down onto the cold hardwood floor. Mechanically, I went through my morning routine--showering, brushing my teeth, putting on deodorant, and running my hand through my hair a couple times. I threw on some clothes and moved out into the upstairs hallway. The bathroom door creaked loudly as I closed it.

Each step squeaked seemingly loud in the silence of the house as I made my way down the stairs. It was quiet in our home now, not like it had been a few days ago. I could no longer hear pitiful wailing from my little sister's room, nor could I hear my brother's half-choked, broken sobs drifting from the coat closet. Father was no longer getting dead drunk at ungodly hours and screaming at the night sky. Raw grief was exchanged with empty sorrow, and so it was quiet.

Father had made scrambled eggs and bacon for breakfast, and no one pointed out that the bacon was too black or the eggs too mushy. In silence we ate our meal, forks scraping across plates emphasizing the dead air around the table. I avoided salting my eggs.

I'd had enough salt in my tears; I didn't need it in my eggs as well.

My brother and sister ate quickly and asked to be excused before slipping off. I was beginning to realize more and more that we were avoiding each other. It brought to mind a cardboard puzzle missing a piece. The absence is most felt when all the other pieces are joined, and there is just this big gaping hole where the missing piece should be, and so we avoided each other. It was probably unhealthy, but no one had really made that first step toward comforting one another. At first, I kept expecting father to do it, but as the days wore on, I realized he probably wasn't sure how.

I look up from my eggs to see father gazing at me. He looked as if he wanted to say something but seemed at a loss as to what.

"Thomas" he said finally, in a small voice. I felt my body tense.

"I just--I just wanted to say..." The words came out haltingly. For a moment, I knew he would finally speak. He would speak, and we would tear down these walls of silence that separated us and begin to grieve together, as a family. .

"That is--I wanted to ask if you would pass the salt."

I gave a curt nod and slid the bitter spice down the table towards him. I finished my eggs and excused myself.

It would have to be me then. I would have to reach out first. I wasn't my father and I wasn't a grown up, but I was the only one who would.

*Nicholas Shine*

**Tick Tock**

Tick Tock, Tick Tock goes the clock;  
Seconds into minutes into hours don't stop.  
Granted time ticks on the sick and the healthy,  
the poor and the wealthy,  
the clean and the filthy.

Tick Tock, Tick Tock goes the clock,  
In the form of a heart beat, a beat that don't stop.  
Minutes into hours into days into weeks--  
Years sneak up and knock you back on your cheeks.

Tick Tock, Tick Tock goes the clock,  
Starting new days when the hour hits top.  
Tick Tock, Tick Tock goes the clock;  
Seconds into minutes into hours on my watch.

## Private Paradise

The sunshine so sublime like sub lime on my bottle--  
Beaches just preaching peaceful pieces of paradise.  
Blue and whites painting landscapes on horizons,  
Sails set on wistful currents deterrent to outside nature,  
Mammal and fish swim in harmony upon waves so  
willing.

Wind blows the sands which topple upon each other;  
Palm trees sway with resistant ease through forceful  
fate.

Lights become night as sparks turn to dark.  
Crickets and violins play scales of sunset melodies.  
The moon reflects an always moving path to its surface;  
The stars glisten upon blistered grounds.  
Scallops and mussels hang tough with masculine  
silence.

Seagulls sleep and creep through dreams of bass and  
stuff.

School is out of session while the rigid snore in caverns;  
Temperature prepares for the awakening from its short  
hibernation;

Night becomes light's dark, turns to sparks, revealing a  
private paradise.

*Natasha Lemke*

**Boys Lie, So I Prefer Packing Peanuts**

It might be fragile, but at least it's honest.  
I have more sympathy for every breaking piece of  
    this packing peanut  
Than I will ever have for any  
tears you've ever shed.  
At least it won't lie to me.  
If it's pushed hard enough it will break right in front of  
    me.  
It doesn't wait for another day to finally fall apart.  
If you open it, it's the same on the inside;  
It doesn't change.

Oh, if only you'd shared that same quality.  
It's fragile and sensitive to human touch.  
You lied while you tried to play that route.  
But in the end you ended up no different than any  
    before.

Like a packing peanut your presence is undeniable.  
And the harder I try to clean things up,  
The messier things get.



*Constantin I Korff*  
**Anticipation**

Early morning, when  
a woman washes dishware,

when  
silence  
is split  
by the splash of water,

then  
the last night's  
garbage  
whispers  
of the sprouting apple-core in the waste-bin.

Every morning,  
when  
the woman washes dishware,

when  
the silence  
is split  
by the splash of water,

both,  
the woman and the silence  
wait for the apple-tree  
to grow from the trash.

## White

*Life is all the hues of white:  
From red to purple...*

C.K.

A newborn is placed on a white cotton sheet.

The red apple comes rolling from the horizon.  
Close your eyes for what it seems to be a moment,  
And the apple turns into an orange.  
Its golden light makes you laugh.  
You take the first step. Later you plant a seed:  
A tiny green sprout shoots from underneath.  
Watering the tree, you notice how tired you are. You  
look up just as the blue sky darkens.  
Slowly the strength leaves your body.  
Your eyes stare at the purple sky:  
Is that all?

A white shroud is placed on a lifeless face.



*Julie Rivera*

**Untitled**

digital photograph

*Diana Gaidies*

**She had some Bibles**

She had Bibles lying on tables used as coasters.

She had Bibles sitting on shelves collecting dust.

She had Bibles containing tribes written from the  
ancient past.

She had Bibles filled with names of relatives' births,  
weddings, baptisms, and deaths.

She had Bibles with dried flowers pressed between the  
thin tissue pages.

She had some Bibles.

She had Bibles with black gold embossed writing.

She had Bibles with red edged pages.

She had Bibles with tom out pages.

She had Bibles with photos of friends.

She had Bibles with neutered males, instead of  
silenced females.

She had Bibles with Old English written words.

She had Bibles with pictures of cartoons.

She had some Bibles.

She had Bibles that based on a Jewish superstition  
completely took out God's personal name.

She had Bibles who put the word trinity in to continue  
pagan tradition of triune Gods.

She had Bibles that only contained what people  
wanted to hear, so they could live  
without regard to one set of Godly appointed  
spiritual standards.

She had Bibles that some took to mean at death that

it is your time to go preset by God.  
She had Bibles that some took to mean that God does  
not predestine anyone.  
She had Bibles that some burned others for reading or  
wanting to read.  
She had Bibles that some take and create without  
context of the book as a whole anything  
that will give them power over the masses of  
people to control.

She had some Bibles.

She had Bibles that covered the earth.  
She had Bibles that organized others to form a church.  
She had Bibles that caused others to sing.  
She had Bibles that caused people to do everything  
and anything;  
She had Bibles that beat the minds and hearts of  
everyone over anything.  
She had Bibles that blessed wars, killing thy neighbor;  
She had Bibles that cursed wars, make peace with thy  
neighbor.  
She had Bibles that explained humankind's beginning,  
a world of sinning.  
She had Bibles that gave hope with a Savior Christ, a  
new beginning.

She had some Bibles.

She had some Bibles brought to her door, taking in  
knowledge--an open mind.  
The truth she did find.

*Diane Toft-Knowles*  
**On Sunday**

On Sunday I stumbled into the immaculate little birdhouse that belonged to God, breathing the smell of cleaners. My sneakers scuffed the vacuumed carpets; my gum was glued under waxed wooden benches. I tore the onionskin thin pages of hymnbooks lined up like birds on a telephone line. I made the bookmarked, underlined, and highlighted passages of their well-worn dogma dirty with my fingers feverishly tracing them. But, most of all:  
I listened.

The pastor's three-piece suit was charcoal gray and he wore the grayest of blue ties. His sponge-soft hand gripped mine the way an insect grabs its meal. He stood behind the podium that rose up to his chest, and when he spoke,  
I listened.

I listened:

*If you're going steady with someone, don't even think about holding their hand. No skin on skin, no lips to lips, and especially no lips to skin. It's just a slippery slope of sin from that point on. Don't date someone who doesn't believe the same things you and I believe. If they don't, they shouldn't be someone you want to be with in the first place.*

I listened:

*Don't spend time with people who use dirty language. Dirty language comes from a dirty mind and a dirty heart. Keep yourself clean: Spend time with clean, honest people and you'll find yourself acting more and more like them.*

I listened:

*Nothing of this world matters. It is all base, corrupt, and vulgar. It is all worthless. No one can love you as much as God does. You shouldn't love anyone as much as you love God.*

I listened:

*The best thing that any man can hope for is a seat among the stars, to watch the worn, tattered scroll of the universe get rolled up by the omnipotent hand of God.*

I saw a magpie fly across the window.  
The sun caught and bleached it a  
bursting melon yellow.

I stopped listening.

*Jerrie L. Meyer*  
**Hershey's Kisses**

Hershey's kisses,  
Murky wishes,  
Leave it where it lies.

Something better?  
Sometimes, never...  
Money cannot buy

Kinship, friendship,  
Star-struck, moonlit,  
Lovers 'til the end...

Of life or love,  
Of things above,  
The young, the old can send

A thought, or two,  
A kindness through  
A simple act, and then

One does respond  
Above, beyond,  
Send it back again.

A little laughter  
Mixed with, after--  
Is the stuff of giving...

Mentor, lover,  
Friend forever,  
Sharing love is living.