

# Gambling the Aisle

Summer 2013

# Masthead

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To the Reader:

Modern life offers us nearly infinite reading material, so if you've gotten this far with us, we at Gambling the Aisle would sincerely like to thank you. We started this magazine to provide a showcase for artists who are approaching the world in new and strange ways. The only compensation we receive for keeping this project alive is the thought of you, the reader, finding something inside that makes your day more interesting and maybe passing it along to a friend. So thanks, from all of us.

This issue marks the beginning of our grand printing experiment. We will be cranking out as many copies of this issue as our twin printers, Jessica and Olivia, can handle. Each glossy-covered, full-size copy is hand-made and assembled by the editors and staff, because independent lit deserves only the finest craftsmanship, and because we can't afford to pay someone to do it for us. It will be available throughout the Denver area and for order through the website. (If you're holding a print copy, you're welcome in advance for the thousands you'll make on eBay in a few years.)

Our little magazine is picking up steam--in addition to printing, we've launched our first chapbook competition, and we've added two staff writers and a photographer to our ranks. Find their work on the website, and tell a friend. That said, we hope you enjoy this latest installment of Gambling the Aisle.

Yours,

The Editors





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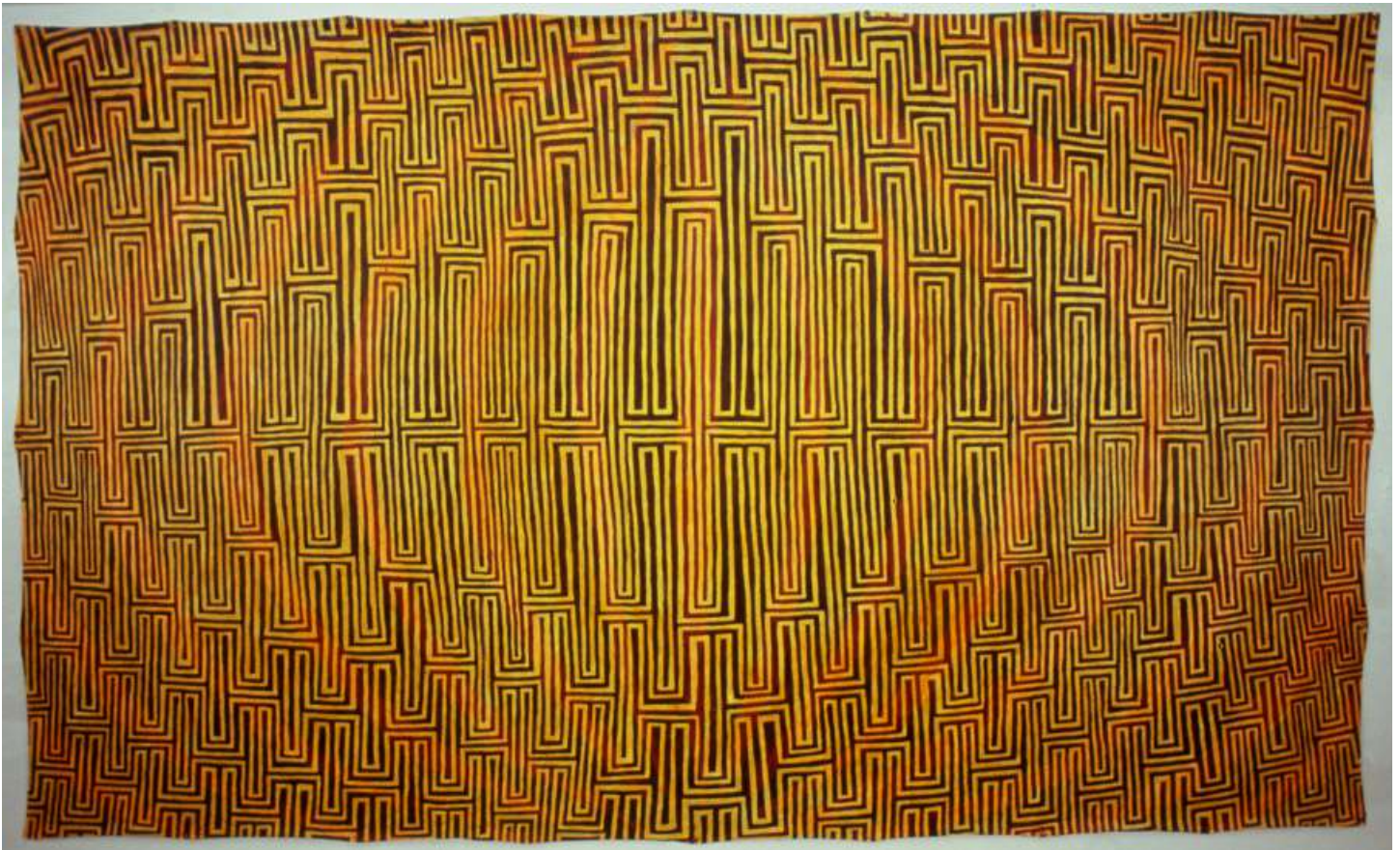
# That We Look Away

*Robert Paul Cesaretti*

the moon would show when the black clouds passed. a cold rain came and went with the wind. this small town next to the sea. three black dogs coming off the beach trotted down the main street, hair salted and matted. heads down, gleaming. strangely, they had gotten hold of a shark, in the shallows of the sea. unbelievable yet true. they tore it up, pulled out its guts along the dark sand, growling and tearing at its flesh. snarling. *incantations*.

there was a young man tough, standing, smoking, hard hands. under the main street light by the bar. his truck with tools, some good, some broken, things taken apart from somewhere else. as we are followed by what is discarded, our lies and truths, singing and crying as they do. so we become what we could never know. but a man can be strong if he leaves some things alone. if he stays with what is needed and not touch weakness. a few people he knew, coming and going from the bar, colored his night. there were thoughts of a journey, traveling far to find a pure and simple thing. a kind of vision, not quite of purpose or reason.

a woman who spoke god walked past the book of life, as it lay there, open on the street. fallen from the sky, angelic as it was. its pages turned with lightning. enchantment and curse, birth and fate, blessing and forgiveness. beginnings and endings stolen from time. she reached down for a page and took it to herself, spirit to spirit. what life she had to give, that there was so much to lose, as love worships, with intimate violence and death has its will in what life takes from us. *that we look away*.



*=2win= by Robert Patrick*



*Charles Rafferty*

## **Art Lover**

The city is circled by highways  
and red ink

in the kitchen of a woman  
far away, planning a visit

to see her favorite painting  
and imagining what

it would be like  
with just air between herself

and the texture of the canvas.  
And then she is on the road,

the map inside of her,  
the painting

ahead and closing in. Her car  
is full of gas,

and the man  
who painted the painting

is dead. These are  
the circumstances

under which all her affairs  
have begun

and flourished and failed.

# Appearing to Disappear

Amanda E. Snyder

## *The Line About the Hummingbird*

He tells you that you laugh like a hummingbird flaps its wings.

He is driving north down a street in San Francisco, a city you have never seen until this week. The road rises before you at such a steep angle that you laugh at the anticipation of the car climbing it, then stop laughing because you don't want him to think you're faking the hummingbird laugh, then get mad for not being yourself. Your fingers tickle your skirt hem.

It is early morning; still dark. He is about to drop you off at your hotel. This is the fourth time you've seen each other in your short week in the city by the Bay, where you are supposedly attending a tourism convention. He is telling you he will fly to Dallas, where you live, but you know you will never see him again.

He is not handsome, yet somehow attractive. He is married with two children, a boy named Rick and a girl named Sam. To be fair, he is separated from the wife, but the way in which he talks about her, the gentleness with which he says her name, "Theresa," makes you feel as if a cold, flat stone is filling up your stomach. Last night, while in bed, he nearly began to cry, saying he loved his children, that he missed them.

"I love them, I do!"

That was after you'd had sex, but before you threw up. You'd never done Ecstasy before and it made everything - the bed, the nightstand, the mini-fridge, the dusty dark curtains - pulse and throb

until the moment you came. Then everything began to rage, he cried and you rushed to the bathroom. Before you knew it, his arm was around your waist so fiercely your toes couldn't touch the ground, your head was hanging over the toilet and it was all coming out: the nervous fear, the expectation, the uncertainty and finally, your dinner of salmon and steamed rice.

He set you on the floor when you were done, then ran a rag under the cool faucet. He placed the cloth on your forehead, but you did not get up, you did not open your eyes. You hoped he thought you were dead. Because he invited you here, he took you to dinner, he gave you the Ecstasy, he brought you to this dark hotel. He lives in L.A. and is some kind of producer and it is then that you realize will never see him after this week and it would serve him right if you died on his hotel room floor.

But you don't die.

He slapped you hard to get you to wake up, smoothed your long

brown hair out of your face, then he put you to bed, naked and sweating. And although you were exhausted, you wanted to climb on his chest, this man old enough to be your father, and shout at him, "But you haven't found me yet! You haven't found me!" You want to tell him that if he waits for it, the uncertainty goes away and you are you, not the nervous bundle of hummingbird laughs, not the homely, ugly girl you seem to be.



*Self Punishment 3* by Julie Struck



The car crests the steep hill and below, you see the bay shimmering like licorice whips, and the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz and Marin twinkling in the distance. It is getting lighter.

This isn't the way it should be, you think. I'm supposed to say witty things or charming things, or you're supposed to see through everything to the quiet brilliance within me. There should be some revelation here, a mystical kinship between the two of you; of this, you are certain. You've had dinner with him a few times, had a few drinks, been to his dark hotel, had sex with him. And it's all about to end. It's all coming down to this and you're not ready to leave, not yet. I am not just anyone, you want to say, I am *not* just another girl.

But you say none of this.

Instead, you let moments slip by, faster than the street signs rushing past the car under the still dying moon.

### *The Bit About Being Normal*

Normal is not a word people use to describe you. Odd, perhaps. Strange, unique, sure. But this may not be altogether warranted. Perhaps chit-chat has never been your strength, maybe your interactions are frequently ringed with awkwardness, but you've been known to appear as a normal human being from time to time.

For the past four years, ever since graduating from college, you have worked in the tourism industry, despite the fact that you - in your words - "don't like people." You live alone in a one bedroom apartment where you have no pets and four dying house plants. You have a gym membership that you never use and consequently, a body that you hope is soft and inviting rather than not. You've had many lovers and (thankfully) even more friends, but few of them know you.

You are 26 years old.

You are as lost as you will ever be.

Your grandmother, back in Illinois, is dying. She's been in bed for four days now after having a stroke, but still your mother - a tiny, quiet, nonsense woman - tells you there's no need to come home yet.

Your mother became acquainted with death after her father died when she was six years old. When

you found this out, at age six yourself, you thought your own father was destined to die before you turned seven. But he didn't actually die until you were 11. From a heart attack.

The older you get the more you realize you didn't know your father at all, you couldn't have known him and he will never know you. Him, the loss of him, it hovers over you, in you, in the deepest part of your belly. It is something you will never quite manage to get over, try as you might.

In those intervening years between 11 and 26, you lost two grandparents, an aunt to cancer, an uncle to alcohol and a young cousin to a hit and run. Death hides in your family tree and rarely takes the oldest branches first.

But losing Grandma Manning - for she is bound to die soon, an 80-year-old woman - that will be difficult. As a child, you thought her immutable, like Christmas or the Grand Canyon. But then people around you began dying, your insides changed, and perhaps that's why you aren't entirely, 100% normal.

### *The Unfortunate Distance*

You didn't sleep a wink last night and suddenly, as the producer turns the shiny black car left then left again, you are hit with a wave of tired. You want sleep like you want happiness.

As he pulls the car into the curving driveway of your hotel, you realize it's become lighter still outside. The day is coming on quick and fast. It won't be long before you'll be at the airport, already travel weary at the journey before you. You'll have no time for sleep.

He looks over at you after he puts the car in park and puts his hand on your bare knee. His fingers are manicured; they are long and thin. You see he is graying at his temples - at least the side you can see - and although you have the urge to touch the thumb-sized spot of gray, you don't. He is smiling, telling you how very happy he's been to spend the week with you, but the air is somehow ringed with distance.

You feel impossibly far away from him, as if you are outside the car, already in your room, on the plane, back in Dallas, home in Illinois to put your soon-to-be-dead grandmother in the ground. You are not in the car, not hearing the words he's saying, the promises he's making. Instead, you are already

burying one more person in your life, burying one more part of you.

He's sitting there, soft and bright-eyed, waiting for you to speak, waiting for a kiss goodbye, and (you are sure), waiting for you to bury the past seven days so he can move on to the next brunette conventioner.

### *The Bar with the Bird Name*

It is your second night in San Francisco and you are in a bar in the East Bay. Its name is that of an obscure bird - Goose, Mallard, Albatross - you're not sure. You are there with your co-worker Brenda - an overweight mother of three who annoys the crap out of you - and several other vendors at the National Convention and Tourism Bureau Expo. The bar carries a tiki theme and the bartenders - both men and women - are so incredibly beautiful, you feel too inadequate to be in their presence. You feel out of place here, like the homemade Jack of Spades in an otherwise pristine deck of cards.

You're obscenely overdressed in a black skirt, an unfortunate ruffled white shirt and painful strappy shoes. You are certain Brenda told you it was an upscale bar just to spite you, not because her guidebook was wrong like she said.

You are competing in a Pac Man tournament in which you, even if you do say so yourself, kick ass. You win the tournament easily, beating a tiny 50-year-old woman and Gene, a portly young man with hands so pudgy you can't believe he doesn't realize they were the reason he lost. You feel a pang of pity for Gene, his too-bright sweater, his sweaty palms and the frequency with which he compliments your joystick maneuvering. Gene, an account executive with "Nashville's largest travel agency," is obviously sweet on you, and you already know you will turn him down for dinner at least twice this week.

It is when you head to the bar for your Pac Man victory cocktail that you see him - the L.A. producer. He is tall and thin and wears horn-rimmed glasses and jeans that were made to look worn-in, as if he'd been riding in a saddle all day. He wears a Pearl Jam T-shirt and while he looks good, you see a little pooch of belly sits above his belt, like an onion. It's only then that you realize he's older than you. At least 40. Maybe 45. He looks cocky standing there,

one elbow leaning on the bar, and you peg him for a hipster asshole. He catches you looking at him and smiles. The corners of his eyes crinkle.

"That's a beautiful necklace," he says, swirling his index finger at your neck.

You touch the necklace, running your fingers over the beads. "Um, thanks. I made it."

He introduces himself and then offers to buy you a drink. You can tell in the way he gives the beautiful brunette bartender his drink order - his ease, his posture, his smile - that this is a man who loves women, a man who cannot say no to them, a man who needs them. And yet in a way, you feel he sees something different in you. He could sweet talk the bartender all night; he could prowl for one of the Berkeley co-eds. Instead, he's bought you a drink, which is refilled a second and third time. He makes you feel less like the homemade Jack of Spades and more like someone who might almost be considered normal. Yes, he likes women and he's quite sure of himself, but he's real, he's nice - not the asshole you feared.

He talks about growing up in Portland and then moving to L.A. after college. "Jesus Christ, it was like selling my soul," he says. "But I just knew, I knew this is what I'm supposed to do." He tells you he's in town to sit in on production of a film his company is producing. His hands move furiously when he talks and you can tell he's enjoying himself. "Don't tell a soul what I'm about to tell you, or you know, I'll have to kill you, but I volunteered to come up here," he whispers. "One of us from the production company had to come up this week and I pretended like I was taking one for the team, you know, like it was such a chore to spend time in hippy-land, when actually, it kind of reminds me of home. I just needed to get out of the...sleekness down there." He looks into his gin and tonic. Cups his long fingers around it. "L.A. isn't as bad as people say, really. But sometimes, the whole city is like one big David Lynch movie."

Before you leave to catch a cab back to the hotel with Brenda, the L.A. producer asks you out for the following night - a Tuesday - and it's that night that you kiss him, your lips slick with vodka. His kisses though are too eager - like he's searching for bits of food - but you don't mind. It is when you are alone with him that he loses completely the cockiness you saw the night before. He is affectionate and



quiet and sometimes not sure of himself or what to say around you - which you find endearing. You like him, and you're surprised by this. You see him again on Thursday night - when you pass out long before he's able to work your top over your shoulders. You remember him telling you, just before you fall asleep in the crook of his arm, that you have eyes like candle flames.

### *Said vs. Unsaid*

You have to think of something to say now, something to close the distance in the car between his body and yours. This could go one of two ways.

You might look at him and unleash everything that hides inside you: the built up fear and uncertainty, everything you want, but are too afraid to ask for. You want to tell him that your name means "life," but really, that's ironic, because you refuse to live yours. You crouch in the corner of life's picture frame, waiting for someone else to paint in the scene. You want to tell him your life has ribboned by you, a series of nods and blinks and mmm-hmmms without you even realizing it. In your effort to squeeze into life, you've filled it with meaningless smiles and useless promises.

You want to say something to him, anything besides goodbye, but can think of nothing.

This is what actually happens: You sit in his car, perched at the door of your hotel. The doorman saunters in your direction but you hold up your palm

to him. He stops.

You turn to the L.A. producer, who is wearing his worry on his face, for he expects you to get out of the car now.

"*City gleaming far away*'..." You pause, looking up at the ceiling to remember. You know you've forgotten something. "*We...we get clean & drink some wine...*" He tilts his head at you, but you continue, blurting out the final lines. "*SAN FRANCISCO, no-*

*body gives a shit man who you are or what's your car - there IS no ninety-nine.*"

You let out a long breath of air. It is a crucial moment. Either he understands your efforts to brand these memories on him, to will him not to forget you - or he doesn't.

"That's...what, from a song or something?" he says in a high-pitched, worrying kind of voice.<sup>1</sup>

You shake your head and smile. "A poem. A beat poem..." but you can see he's not sure why you're saying this. He is still smiling, but you can see the brightness in his eyes extinguish, the color fade.

You're a little disappointed, but you don't feel inadequate like you feared you would. At least you haven't passed these crucial moments by nodding or smiling mechanically at him. Maybe he didn't get it, but still, you've said something. Really said something.

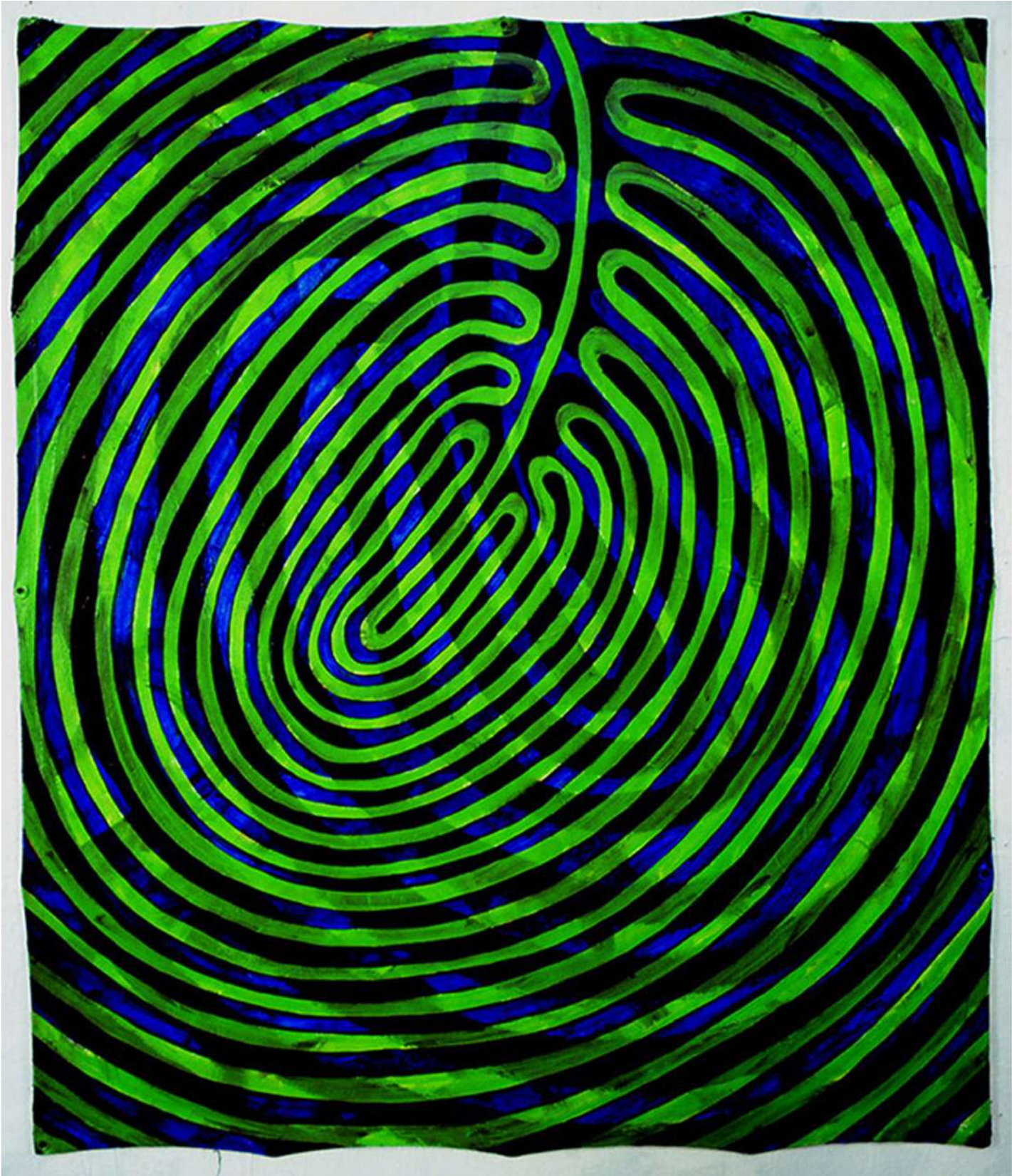
And isn't that all that matters?



*Semesterland 6* by Julie Struck

<sup>1</sup> What he doesn't know, but you do, is that this is from Gary Snyder's "Night Highway 99."





*=echo= by Robert Patrick*





*=coil= by Robert Patrick*



*Darren Demaree*

## Emily as not fate, not lightning

The moon is hungry  
& the tide is the story.  
Emily is a sequence

devoid of any reason,  
a dim light I caught  
growing in an epic sky.

It took a great travel  
for my heart to star  
her context as ultimate.

## Emily as an Event

Great scintillant,  
I have a picture  
of you that will last

as long as the frame  
does. It was a bold,  
tremendous thing

to use any modern  
magic to hold your  
moment. I cheated

to keep you fresh  
in your only triumph.  
I have no regret of this.



*2 by Jill Shoffiett*



## Emily as the Air Trembles With Our Voices

Mostly I failed  
to alter the light  
& the dark

of our considerable,  
tenement sinning,  
our small, wrong

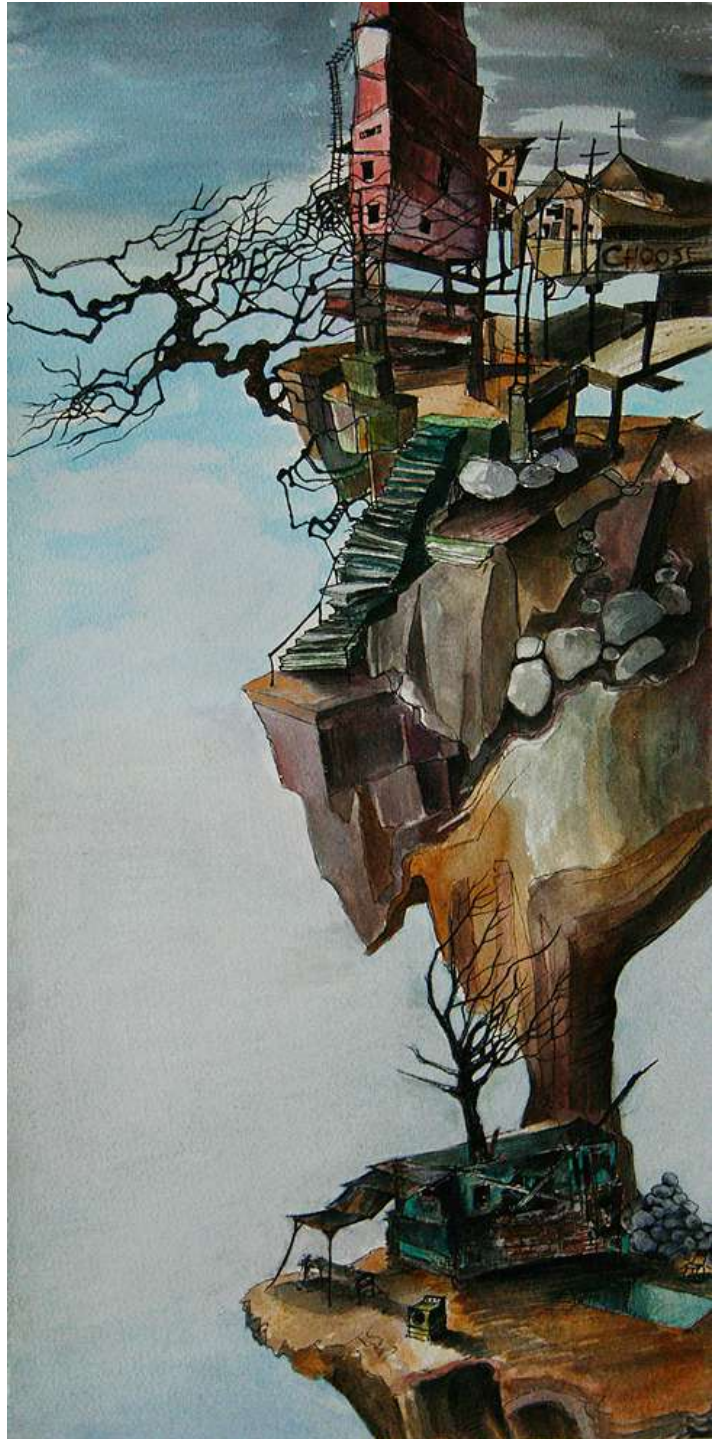
steps we loved  
to take. We have  
both been awful,

but we gave that  
spirit to the sun  
& let it burn

everything we didn't  
want to keep  
as a souvenir

apart from each other.  
Those things we hide  
throughout the house

like they are bottles  
of whiskey. In fact,  
some of them are.



*5 by Jill Shoffiett*

# Quiet Giants and Hidden Faces:

## A discussion on the work of Alex J. Cutler

John Cross

*In an age of ever-decreasing attention spans and an era of art against art I find it refreshing to see paintings and drawings that make me want to stop and really look at them. Such is the case with the work of Alex Cutler. His paintings are lush and full of color that is laid down with an expert's hand, rendering a beautiful surface that respects the artist's craft. Cutler's imagery is engaging without being overpowering. Well aware of his viewer, he creates visual conversations that are meaningful and thought provoking. Alex Cutler's paintings take time to look at, to contemplate, and it is this time, when taken, that rewards the viewer. I recently had an opportunity to talk to Alex about his work.*

**John Cross:** Alex, why do you paint and draw?

**Alex J. Cutler:** It is something that I have always done. Why I do it is always changing and if you were to ask me at different stages in my life the answer would probably vary. As of right now it is the best form of expressing myself and my views of the world.

**JC:** Most of your work involves the figure, or a better way to put it would be to say that the main subject in your work involves the human form.

**AJC:** Yes that is true.

**JC:** Why people?

**AJC:** Because they fascinate me and I have found that they are the perfect medium to convey a message or emotion. People associate with people and when they see them in artwork they try and make sense of the situation or mood. I find that painting people is like painting a puzzle that is impossible to figure out, yet the viewer cannot resist trying.

**JC:** You tend to deny the viewer some aspect of the people you paint, missing limbs, or they are positioned in a way that blocks the complete view of the face, or there is an object blocking the face. Is this part of the puzzle you are setting up for the viewer?

**AJC:** Yeah that definitely contributes to it. The whole missing limb thing was more of a statement to challenge the viewer and whether or not their idea of beauty was superficial or not. As far as blocking the faces of my models I choose to do this for myself to put more energy into the rest of the painting. I am naturally drawn to the face first therefore it ends up being painted more than the rest of the body. If I eliminate it from the painting (or in some cases paint it last) I put just as much attention into the rest of the painting. As far as its contribution to the puzzle I have found that eliminating the face blurs the mood of the piece much more leaving it more open and endless.

Basically the face will almost always be a focal point and by eliminating it I urge the viewer to look elsewhere.

**JC:** There is also a sense of the anonymous to it that makes it easier for viewers to connect. Since we don't immediately recognize the person or even feel we should we are more open to place ourselves in the art?

Meaning that by denying the viewer the face you make it easier for us to see ourselves or our relationship to the painting. We aren't trying to figure out who the model is, we're just trying to figure out who we are in relation to what the model is doing

**AJC:** Yes that is very true. It's more inviting. I am also conscious of this when choosing my models. I hardly ever use beautiful professional models. I often paint the people around me in very ordinary clothes to give it an inviting, relatable and timeless tone.

**JC:** Your drawings seem to follow a different theme, what's with the giants?

**AJC:** Yeah my drawings vary a lot more in direction. The giants series came to me when I was looking at some old war drawings I did when I was 11 or 12. I was living in Virginia and was fascinated with the history and wars fought around the area so I was drawing these battle scenes with these little soldiers all fighting each other. As an adult I found the tiny details fun to look and wanted to do it again but with a new theme. I thought of the discovery of this larger ancient race of people and how it would affect the world we live in. I didn't want them to be threatening or dangerous like a horror movie but more docile and stupid. I figured that eventually man would exploit them and have them building skyscrapers or dams. It was just a thought I ran with.

**JC:** There is a quietness to the drawings as if the giants are resigned to be exploited

**AJC:** That was the idea. Other than the first one

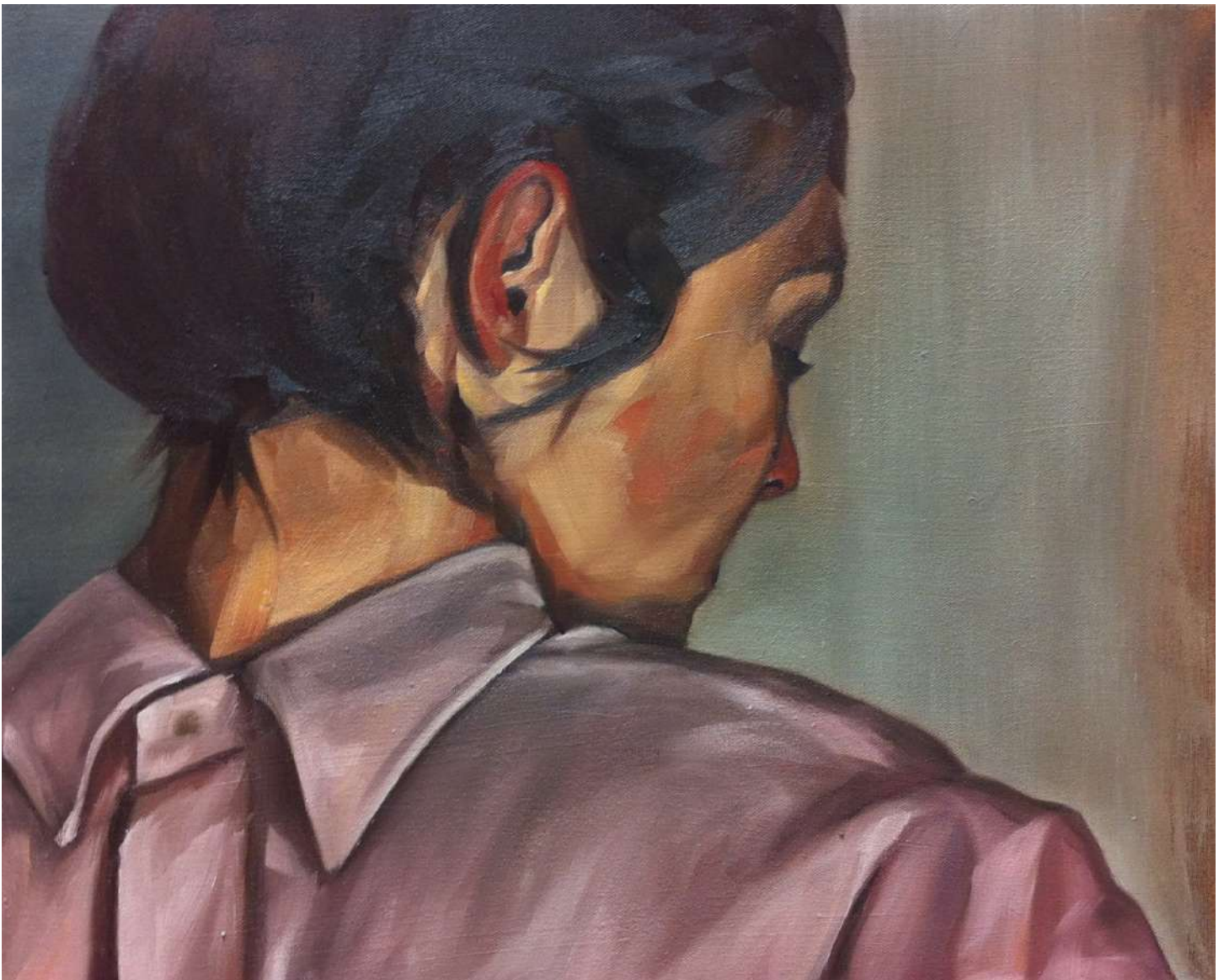
in which everyone is standing around the discovered giant, the rest of them hardly acknowledge that the two are even aware of each other. I wanted it to feel as if the smaller race had been exposed to them for long enough that they were accustomed to their presence.

**JC:** Despite the accuracy of your drawing and painting you have a style in which brushwork is loose and layered, almost constructed. What is the relationship between representational imagery and the looseness of your approach?

**AJC:** Well, I enjoy the painterly look and am influenced by many artists who either have a spontaneous

painterly hand or apply the paint so thick it could be considered sculptural. Other, than that I find that in a time such as this in which digital media and photography can offer so much visually I strive to offer something more in my paintings. I want it to look painted I want my eye and hand to have signed the canvas in so many ways that a piece of my soul has been embedded in the strokes. I believe painting like this gives it a more human quality as if the painting its self were another person in the room.

To see more of Alex's work visit [alexcutlerart.com](http://alexcutlerart.com)



*Study by Alex J. Cutler*





*Tub Scene by Alex J. Cutler*





*Scissors by Alex J. Cutler*



*Oranges by Alex J. Cutler*





*Kids Art by Alex J. Cutler*





*Giant by Alex J. Cutler*



*Amputee by Alex J. Cutler*



# Sixteen Below

*Etanna Zak*

He tells me of the first time he met Allen Ginsberg. He was a young man, an independent reporter from New York come to Boulder Co. to interview Ginsberg about a planned act of civil disobedience. There was a factory there where the triggers for the Atom bomb were being manufactured. Ginsberg planned to sit on the railroad tracks thus preventing the train from reaching the factory.

My friend follows Ginsberg into a house, his mind racing with thoughts about the other man's homosexuality, asking himself if he could really say no if Ginsberg wanted to have sex. The first thing he sees upon entering the house is a woman giving a man a blow job.

Ginsberg is oblivious. It takes him a moment to realize that something is going on. When he does, he merely says, "Oh, lets go upstairs."

Upstairs my friend sits on Ginsberg's bed beside him. His heart is pounding. In addition to concerns over sexuality, his mind is embroiled in the matter of the first question and what his peers at the radio station back in New York will think.

"Mr. Ginsberg," my friend begins.

"Call me Allen."

"How do you reject nuclear madness?"

My friend blurts the question out spasmodically.

"I don't reject anything." Ginsberg tells him. "I've come here to make love to plutonium, to sit on the

railroad tracks and be connected to it, to be connected to everything."

Ginsberg suggests that they do some free associative poetry spinning. Gazing out the window at an empty curbside he lays the moment on my friend. All of this, along with the rest of the conversation, changes my friend's life.

He tells me this, and he tells me that he has never told the story in quite this way to anyone before. He has mentioned interviewing Ginsberg, he has mentioned having the recording in a box somewhere.

He has never had this moment before. This moment is new, unique to us, we two who are reflections of one another, who create with words our identities from the fabric of fear, the fear of being.

We sit in silence and look into one another's eyes, dissolving for a moment our creation, our creation of the world and the other to inhabit it, the other to speak to, the other to wonder at, the other to fear and to love.

We don't know why this is possible, this silence between us. It allows my friend to tell me his story in this particular way for the first time and the only time.

We could try to recreate it, but it will never be the same. We will never be the same two people on the same day in the same place, daring to press against the veil of fear. Daring to speak and be heard. Daring to listen and accept everything.



*Adolph by Kaelen Williams*



*KwonMachai Yearby-Atlas*

## **Ruler**

I got dark skin, something like an ink pen  
And if light is pure then I'm sin  
I was never meant to win  
And you have gold hair  
With your skin so fair and with a life so pure  
You could never be my dear  
Cause guys like me  
Never get with girls like you  
Until we rule the World.



*Mao by Kaelen Williams*

# Ashes

Jay Duret

The foghorns had been sounding for three days and while he liked foghorns – they represented for him much of what he loved about San Francisco – three straight days was a long time for them to be booming and their soundings had begun to take on that quality he occasionally found in a classic film – it was a very hard effect to create, he'd never achieved it in his writing – where an atmospheric condition becomes so pervasively intertwined with the story that it is no longer just an atmospheric but becomes an actual character, as integral to the story as the plot.

He lay in his bed at 3:23 AM with the foghorns booming and tried to think of all the movies he could think of where that had happened. Heat was easiest effect to create. There was that movie set in New Orleans, he couldn't recall whether it was *The Big Easy* or *Body Double* or *DOA*. And then there was the one with the Santa Anna winds. That one was an LA movie and there had been a pipeline to bring water to the city and there had been intrigue. Sometimes cold was the character, but that was best done in a book not a movie – actually in two books – that one by James Dickey called *White* something and then the *Everest* one. He remembered sitting on the beach in Nantucket in the midst of a burning August summer day and shivering, quivering, in his beach chair as he read.

And after he finished thinking about movies he started thinking about the foghorns again and now it seemed that they hadn't just been blowing for three days, they had been blowing forever. If you didn't like the sound of foghorns – there was a certain mournfulness to them – you could go crazy listening to them this time of year. He liked to sleep with the windows open and sometimes in the midst of the night the big basso foghorn rumble carried up the hill from the bridge and came right into his room and loosed its foggy boom right there at the base of his bed like it was a new kind of stink bomb

that used noise rather than stink to cause a room to empty.

He was surprised that he had never thought much about the mournfulness of the foghorns before. He was the kind of man who chewed on a thought like a tough piece of meat and he had chewed on foghorns many times before. But maybe they only started to sound mournful after they had been booming for three days or maybe they were mournful because he had been thinking about funerals.

No one can be buried in San Francisco; the Board of Supervisors had passed a law against that in the early 1900's. Almost all of the cemeteries were evicted from the City thereafter and the bodies dug up and moved to Colma down on the Peninsula. But the Supervisors were powerless to prevent people from dying in San Francisco. And if you died in San Francisco – even if you lived here your entire life – you could not be buried in the ground you had hallowed with your memories. You had to be sent south to Colma or be immolated in a cremation.

He had reached an age where one of the things that he did too frequently was attend funerals, and he supposed he should have gotten good at them by now. But this time he had come home with the cherry box that contained the ashes and he did not know what to do the box. He had left it on a table in his study until he could decide, but it was hard to decide anything while the foghorns were booming.

There were two foghorns actually. The big one on the City side of the bridge loosed a big basso boom every 18 seconds. The other, mid span of the bridge, gave a little two-toned “Ta-Dah” timed to fall in the middle of every other pair of the first foghorn's blows:

*Boom....Boom...Ta-Dah...Boom...Boom...Ta-Dah...Boom...Boom.*



He counted the seconds between booms like counting sheep but he knew it was no good. He wasn't going back to sleep at this moment; he was up and the only question was whether he lay in bed with the booming and chewed the meat of some other topic that bothered him or whether he got up and roamed around his empty house.

There was a line somewhere in the Four Quartets – he couldn't remember if it was the Dry Salvages or Little Gidding, he could never keep them straight – that said that in the period between midnight and dawn time stops and time is never ending. And wondering exactly how Eliot said that made the decision for him.

He got out of bed and went to his study and dragged out the poem so he could check whether he had remembered it right. He'd gotten it correctly and while that might have made him feel better at some other time, now he was too busy thinking about the booming of the foghorns and the funeral to give himself a pat on the back.

He wanted to settle down in the armchair in his study and let the forlornness come over him the way the fog comes over the Golden Gate Bridge some days, but he did not. He walked from his study to the door out onto the deck that looked over the Bay. He opened it and walked outside. The deck was wet and the railing was wet and out here in the

wet windy wild dark the foghorns were even louder than they had been in his bedroom.

He stood in the dripping dark listening to the foghorns blow. There was a mournfulness, a forlornness, no disputing that. But as he chewed on it and chewed on it and chewed on it, he realized there could be some comfort in the cadence, in the measured steadiness of the soundings. Time had not

actually stopped. Even at this dead hour, even on this wild and foggy night, time boomed on.

He stood on the deck for a few more minutes – shivering, quivering – and then he went back inside to see if he could sleep.



*Untitled by Stephanie Petet*



*From Leveling Appalachia by Carrie Grubb*



Brett Jones

## Aesopian Willowwacks

I take pictures of old bedrooms  
like a bread crumb trail back  
to my resting head.

Dirty dishes in the sink  
are an insistent reminder  
of a delicious past.

I used to swallow the Aquafresh,  
now I spit the Crest.

Sometimes, in the morning,  
fried chicken embryo  
tastes like  
a fried chicken embryo.

I let a lady bug walk in circles  
around the rim of my glass  
for good luck.

Before bed, I remove the ashtray  
from the nightstand  
to avoid drinking soot while sleeping.

Drifting off, I imagine rolling over  
to face a gun barrel  
that litters my brain to decorate naked walls.

I dream of solitary confinement,  
everywhere but here,  
and biting my veins  
to bleed out  
into abandoned city streets.

When I wake up, I need to tell her:

I like the way your wet wool dress  
clings  
to your disappearing bird bones.



*Southern-American (and just plain old American) Stories  
by Jill Shoffiett*

# Best of Three

*Dan Corfield*

Ever since I saw him on TV back in 69, I knew I wanted to play him. Something about that smug look on his face as he was being marched through the courtroom with two burly cops by his side and camera bulbs flashing had caught my attention. He had orchestrated the hacking up six people in a two week span and yet there he was, a tiny little man, bearded, long-haired, silk shirt dangling open, acting like he didn't have care in the world.

It was as if he was taunting me, right through the screen, just like he must have taunted those poor innocent folks in Hollywood. I was scared. I mean, here was a crazy man, calling himself Jesus, a man with some kind of power I didn't understand.

But I had my own power. I'd been playing tennis since I was four. I knew how to win, although I wasn't sure I could beat him. For months he haunted my dreams, and while wide awake, I thought of it all the time: getting him out there on the court, one on one, mano to mano. Me and Charlie.

I could beat him; I knew I could beat him. If I just stuck to my game, executed every shot with the same kind of focus and concentration he must have had as he drove that knife into his victims and splattered their flesh on the walls while spelling all that gobble-gook in dripping blood, well, If I applied that, I could beat him.

Year after year I watched and listened for the news of his parole, hoping they'd let him out so we could play our match. But who was I kidding? He'd never see the light of day. Besides, he was way up North, while I was down here in Southern California at my ritzy club in Newport Beach. How was I ever going to get a game with Charlie?

And then one day, out of nowhere, there he was! I'd been alone on the court with my bucket of balls, practicing serves in the hundred-degree heat when I spotted him through the fence in his white tennis shorts and high-top Chuck Taylor's. He was wearing a headband and holding a racket.

"Need a partner?" he said. He was even shorter than I'd imagined

"Sure," I said.

Casually, he strolled over to the bench, set down his racket, and began doing windmills, followed by a dozen or so jumping jacks. Charlie was old school, no doubt about that "Let's play some mother fucking tennis," he said. "I aint got all day here." He spoke with

a white-trash sort of twang, just like in those Geraldo interviews.

It was obvious that he had a nice stroke: both his forehand and backhand were solid and he kept his eye on the ball. He was using a traditional grip, rather than a western, a finesse game, really, mostly drops and shots. But he was keeping up, putting lots of spin on the ball, as I was sweating my ass off sliding cross-court chasing them down. I couldn't help but think that he looked like a great, big cat, with his hair flapping wildly on that side of the net.

First set we swapped game for game; until finally I broke serve, pulling a set victory at seven/five. But then Charlie began staring back at me with that frenzied, psychotic look, the one he'd made famous on the cover of Time. Pretty soon I was hitting shots long, then wide, missing every opportunity to score. The racket grew tight in my grip and my feet fumbled about. I double faulted; whacked turds that floated and died near the net, allowing him to smash the ball down my throat. It was that look. He won the second set six games to two.

By the middle of the third set I had regained my composure, while at the same time he began loosing his. "Fucking game, fucking establishment, this is all just fucking bull-shit," he said. Somehow he'd worked himself into a terrible dither. Rearing back, he blistered a serve that landed long.

"Out," I said.

"Bull-shit! He yelled. "That ball was fucking in!" He raced up to the net and stuck out his racket, pointing as if to whack me upside the head.

"It was out," I said.

"Hey, man, how bout I cut your fucking lungs out!" I shook my head.

"You gonna play that kind of shit, you gonna lie to old Charlie, you gonna take old Charlie for a fool?"

"It was out Charlie, what can I say?" I pointed to the spot.

Turning around, huffing, he stomped back to the base line. "All right, all right," he said. "Charlie, he know how to deal. Yea, Charlie, he been dealing with this kind of shit his whole fucking life."

Somehow I managed to break serve and go ahead five games to three, but he was a tenacious little fucker. He battled back, making the most amazing



shots, getting to balls I never thought he'd get to. We were heading into a seven-point tiebreaker when he called time-out and walked over to the bench in order to towel off. Sitting there, he turned to me and said, "Good playing, man." That's when I realized that this wasn't the same Charles Manson I had seen on TV so many years earlier. Comparatively speaking, this was an old and broken down man. His face was saggy and droopy and when he lifted his headband to wipe the sweat from his eyes I saw that even the swastika on his forehead had faded into the folds. That smug look was gone, replaced by a pathetic sadness, a deep-seeded

loneliness that, well, made me feel as crazy as this sounds, sort of sorry for him. And those eyes... they too had lost all their fire. I guess it had only been my memory of them that had thrown me off.

Back on the court, I moved with new ease. My concentration and focus returned and the ball looked like a giant grapefruit. And then, on that final point, I swung a perfect stroke, my entire body relaxing, just like in the movies, or perhaps on TV, everything slowing and quieting--no sound, no traffic noise--only the thud of a tennis ball plopping inbounds in the far corner.

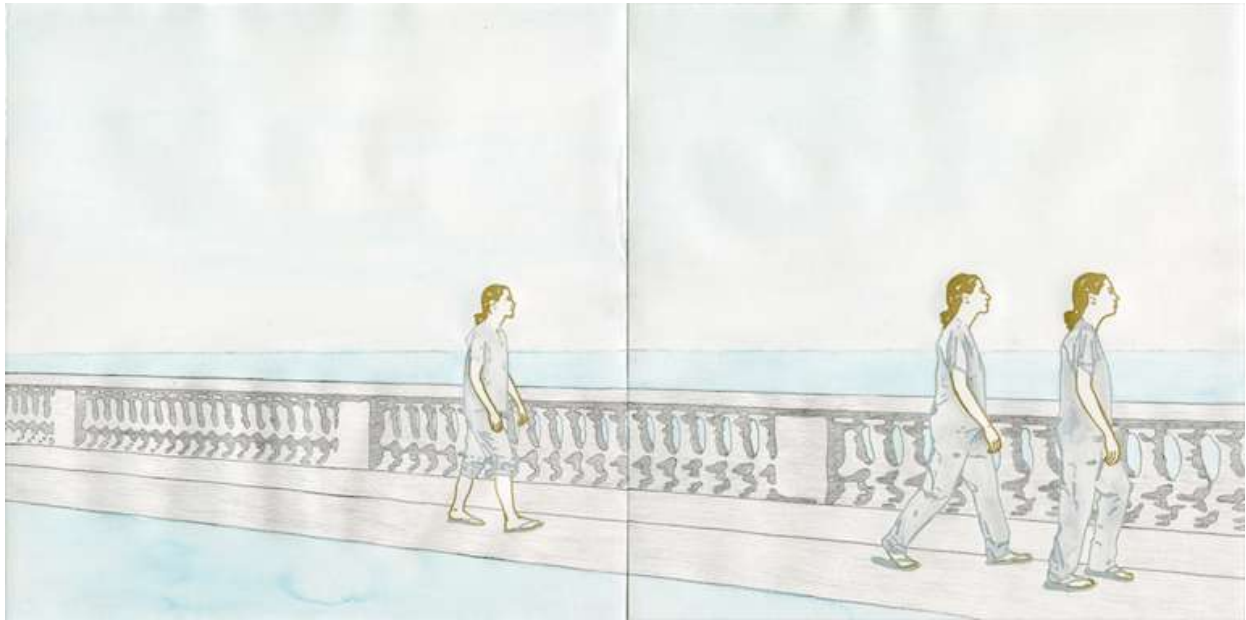


*Fidel by Kaelen Williams*

Ma Schaffner

## Migration

An edifying read, the raptor's beak –  
the original hardware, a fine tool  
for a necessary craft. Now the eye,  
bright as a target, clear as a gun sight:  
the initial communion, lesson learned.  
Who teaches you to climb down trees and run  
free as prey over the dry savannah  
but this and that program, ancient and live?  
It holds out its wings to embrace the air,  
a gesture easily misread, then turns,  
tucks them in, and arrows through urban sky  
to burst a cloud of pigeons or pick off  
a stray small mammal, or a pair of keys  
tossed up as a joke or a distraction  
unappreciated by an intellect  
too acute for irony. Say good-bye then  
to whatever you thought had made you smarter.



*From Erma Series by Ellen Mueller*



*William D. Jackson, III*

## **Summertime for a Butter-fly Knife**

g; and the glittering stars in the night-sky were not stars but lighters flickering from gods hitting their crack-pipe; and beings from another Space another Universe landed and demanded to know where Skidrow or the Tenderloin or any narcopolis was, answering your question because that's where they could get the fuel they needed to travel on inebriated; once home was never a home so why we left it is still a mystery; 11:52pm and a fog has lifted on the city, risen from the soil and sidewalk and pores of our vicious skin, looking for a good time and a slow fix, looking for the wasted and the ruined or the gun, looking for that pink-trap and her open mouth stick your tongue out she says ahhh for the pill follow cum sprt :ejaculating medicine:; the heater's broken the cold is soft and fires have lit your dimension; men with ten souls each like a hurricane rush through scenes of life and your bloodstream like wrathful convictions of Speech; crowned whores suck cock and breast-feed at the same time; red wine streams from the side of a sky-scraper and the fog inserts it cup for the filling; magic happens here, it's just never what you wanted nor asked for; the dead are living in the atmosphere and bones of demigods shine bright from the grave; meticulous answers were questioned while the luminous lynched hints of darkness; she put the gun in her mouth while sirens criticized her posture; we made sure no one saw anything when the police arrived on their reptiles and questioned us about the Sun missing.



*Untitled by Stephanie Petet*





*Untitled by Stephanie Petet*

## Travelogues: Disconnected Points Pt. 1 (and also ‘Of the Misanthropic Adventures’)

Kyle Dudley

I decided to leave on Saturday rather than Friday so that I could catch one last Sharks game. There’s always a difficulty leaving a place on a Friday, since you can be sure there’s always going to be one last hoorah that you might miss, and if you’ve enjoyed a place well enough that’s not how you want to go out. It’s easier to escape on a Saturday morning, running head first into the morning sun, while everyone is writhing and dessicated from the night before. A quiet escape from town usually buys you a few days before your absence is fully realized, which in the short-term can ease the transition. It creates something of a time rift where your actions and those of the inhabitants of your previous world are operating out-of-sync from one another.

I was glad that I stuck around though because it ended up being a terrific game. Handzus and Marleau nabbed the victory by slipping two shootout goals through Nashville’s netminder’s mitt--I don’t remember the goalkeep’s name but it was Polish, I think. The game was tight but somewhat lulzy through the first three periods, but got progressively more exciting in overtime and then finally the shootout. It’s sad to say, but I have arguably seen better semi-pro games before, and this was likely the last Sharks (NHL) game I would catch for a long while, so I appreciated the show they put on. I stuck around for a while after the game for as long as I was legally allowed, being neither a member of a team nor the media, and eventually I was politely escorted to the stairs, the ramp, and to the front steps by some of HP Pav’s finest. It was my estimation at the time that they had perhaps not had the same number of \$7.50, 18oz commemorative cup-fulls from the second bowl as I.

Since it was winter, careful planning to safely reach Denver was necessary. I spent weeks debating whether to go north or south, with both routes having their pros and cons. Aesthetically, I felt the preferred route would have been to go the scenic route north to Tahoe: Sacramento-Reno-SLC-Cheyenne-D. But I-80 is notorious for road closures from ice and snow, and frankly I just didn’t have time for that, nor did I have much in the way of excess money to spend on what could turn out to be several nights holed up in Wyoming or Utah motels. I gritted

my teeth and accepted that going south was the more forethoughtful compromise of safety and economy.

When morning arrived, I caught 101 south out of San Jose and met up with I-5 via Gilroy-San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area. I’m sure there are a handful of CA-HWY enthusiasts who would KO my philistine point-of-view, but I’m fairly confident it’s the consensus op that driving the 5 is dull. There is nothing charming about being reminded every 5 miles by sign posts from distressed agrarians and political dissidents that the Central Valley of California is becoming a Congress-created dustbowl. I feel a desert, a destitution, vapidness and a vacuum within me on the issue, because I simply don’t fully understand what it’s exactly all about. Maybe I need to watch *Chinatown* again. The fact of the matter is, we’re all from somewhere, and every state, city, county, country, solar system, star system, particle system, microcosm, macrocosm, *a caelo usque ad centrum*, everywhere, everywhere, has its own multiplicity of problems, and my emotional economy simply doesn’t have an allotment for concern for the overwhelming issues of CA.

On a lighter note, as the aforementioned downer is mainly encountered on a roughly 225 mi segment of the 5, you can very easily make it from the Bay to Bakersfield on a single tank of gas, which limits the number of stops necessary along the way. That being the case, I held my breath for a few hours, made a few pit stops, and before I knew it I was rounding California City and making my way into Barstow.

From Barstow, I was left to arbitrate between my two options that would bring me east. It was becoming evident that all of my maps were indicating that the fastest way to Denver was through Las Vegas on 15, then to 70, then Grand Junction-Lakewood Springs-Lakewood, and then she would say ‘You have arrived at your destination’. Naturally, passing through Vegas appealed greatly to my more debased side.



You would have to be a crazy son of a bitch to drive directly through the Rockies in the middle of winter- in a 12 year old car- loaded to the brim with a life's worth of belongings: haphazard brakes; pigeontoed wheels; and a drivers-side back window that doesn't shut. Still, the appeal was there and consideration was given. It turns out I'd rather take my chances driving the slow pitches and plateaus of the lower Southwest states and spend the extra 4 hours on the road. Whatever the case, the intervention of nature would have made the decision for me shortly after Vegas had I chosen to take that route. I saddled up, and settled the matter by propelling onward toward Needles, CA, through the quiet expanse of the two-lane highway under the halcyon desert sun of winter.

I decided it would be prudent to set a goal for the evening, so I honed my sights on Flagstaff. I'd been through Flagstaff a time or two around May and August and I remembered the beautiful scenery of the Ponderosa pines lining the strip of I-40 as you pass through, before you reach the endless drylands of eastern AZ-NM-TX.

I reached Needles, CA around 18:05 and the sun was setting. I'd remembered the scenery along off the stretch of road from the CA border to Seligman. The sun-red cliffs alternate from the up close, in-your-face sandstone corridors to the picturesque panorama that gives you the 'boy-we-sure-are-small-in-the-scheme-of-things-ain't-we-paw' conscious experience of countless American families en route to the Grand Canyon. This is an

excellent day-time excursion, but is a far more precarious adventure during the bedtime hours. A slip of the wheel and you'll be sharing your paint job with the side of the cliffs, or perhaps better (since you won't even see your impending death!), you also have the option of plunging down into an R-66, Mojave (eventually Rocky) abyss to



*An arrangement between hirst lalique by C.J. Nye*

meet Will Rogers at the pearly gates. By the time I crossed into AZ, night had descended like sackcloth, and I could not swear under oath that my eyes were consistently open. For some unbeknownst reason, I'm a sucker for any metamorphoses in climate during a drive, and there was a pleasant (and sudden) drop to somewhere in the 30's-40's in Western AZ. It was thirteen hours into the trip and now I had new life breathed in my lungs from the light, cool air, roughly 20 degrees cooler than my humid Bay morning, and I was prepared to push on, despite my digressive visionary prowess. I keyed in and glared blindly into the night, and up ahead I could see the *ignis fatuus* rising and glowing from the highway out into the distance near what might have been Kingman. In

an instant, my eyes regained the alacrity they had eight hours ago near Fresno.

I'd driven the Appalachians many years earlier in winter, with my wife at the time when we were together. I barnstormed our voyage with the dangerous combination of egotism and impetuosity that sadly has resulted in many a crucifix along many of our major U.S. highways. She followed behind me in her car 1200 miles from Detroit down to New Orleans, and I imagine much of the verbiage of the transcripts of those monologues would



have turned a Bible-belt housewife's swear jar into a taxable entity. It was exciting/terrifying for me, but it was something I swore I would not do again, alone or with a fleet of any kind. Those powdery, spiraling roads at only 500ft were quite enough.

From Kingman, despite the dark, the drive seemed to be smooth sailing for the foreseeable future. I stopped to refuel for a few minutes, got some provisions (highly caffeinated!), did a few Eagle Arms, Neck Rolls, and Butterfly Wings and got back in the captain's chair. Delirium was setting in- I was going to make it to Denver by 8:00A. I'd made it this far and I'm not even tired. Once I'd hit Flagstaff

I'd practically already be there, only another 11 hours and by that point, I'd already done 13-15. What was another 11?

Inexperience can be a dangerous aphrodisiac for the traveling senses. The lack of knowledge of the road ahead creates an excitement that can be hard to part with. We dream of alien worlds, of the uncharted, the unfamiliar, the exotic, the unexplored, and justifying and minimizing the risks are all part of the mental gymnastics we perform in satiating these urges. Whether it's the road, the girl, the career, personal edification, we take on challenges that we feel necessary to behoove our desires. Reality becomes the illusion, danger and headway become our providence, and only unmitigated miscarriage of our ambitions can initiate our retreat.



*From Southern-American (and just plain old American) Stories by Jill Shoffiett*





*From the Erma Series by Ellen Mueller*

*Dr. William Miller*

## **Last Sunday**

Last Sunday, in the Treme,  
I was walking past this  
storefront church and heard  
a hymn I hadn't heard  
in years: "Jesus is Calling."

And suddenly I was in  
a Birmingham basement  
church, singing that song,  
believing those simple words.

I felt a longing, a strange  
longing, to answer  
the altar call, confess  
my sins, let the preacher  
dunk me three times.

The song ended,  
and the moment passed;  
I lit a cigarette and walked  
the cracked pavement,  
under the live oak trees.

But I heard those plaintive  
words on and off  
all day, in the bar,  
my girlfriend's creaky bed,  
in my loft reading a novel.

"Softly, tenderly, Jesus  
is calling--" I threw  
the book down  
and stepped out  
into the courtyard.

The moon was up,  
a full moon over the Quarter,  
older than any church  
or Sunday hymn,  
than Jesus himself.

It was a mystery,  
a beautiful mystery I  
always loved to see  
in the day or night sky,  
accept and never doubt.





*Deer Moon 2 by Christopher Leibow*

# I am Hawaii Five-O

*Jeannette Ronson*

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, thirty-eight percent of people living in Hawai'i are Asian, twenty-four percent are white, twenty-three percent of them are two or more races, and ten percent are native Hawaiians. It is the only U.S. state in which Asians, mixed-race Asians, and Polynesians dominate. I'm not sure whether I like watching Hawaii Five-O because I like to watch people who look like me speaking articulately instead of in broken English, gaze at the breathtaking scenery and remember my brief childhood in Oahu, or drool over Alex O'Loughlin, the guy who plays Steve McGarrett. It's probably a little of all these things. Watching that show pulls deep into my DNA strands with a sense of belonging, even though I wasn't born there and don't have any Hawaiian ancestry. I did, however, get to first, second, and half of third grade in that wonderland. My father, who worked as civil engineer for the U.S. military, was stationed at Hickam Air Force Base from the summer of 1964 through the winter of 1966.

Discounting the first two months of my life in Pennsylvania, Hawai'i was my first experience living in the United States surrounded by Americans. In between those two months in the Land of Quakers, my first five years were spent in Tokyo, my mother's hometown, where I fit in like a sandy-haired mongrel in a litter of sleek, black purebred Labrador retrievers. In 1964, Hawai'i was a mish-mash of Hawaiians, U.S. military, and Asians, both pure and mixed-bloods. Sugar cane and pineapple plantations were the dominant enterprises, and American military men under the guise of conquering heroes from WWII swagged everywhere. There were six U.S. military bases on the island of Oahu alone. Mixing in with the natives and Americans, there were thousands of Filipinos, Chinese, and Japanese who'd come to work on the plantations during the first half of the twentieth century.

Thus, by 1964 the streets were filled with American men in military blues, whites, or khaki walking past Chinese restaurants, Japanese kimono stores, and Hawaiian wood shops with carvings of their gods, plants, or women made out of polished driftwood. When we moved to Hawai'i, my dad told me we were now in America. So it's no surprise that I thought America was about military men, rice balls with nori, and the Lono god with his big scary mouth showing his pointed teeth that stood vigil in my living room. America was so sunny and warm that I never wore anything except a t-shirt and shorts even in January. I got as brown as a walnut racing around on

my bike with my older brother who taught me to ride downhill standing on my pedals with my hands in the air. I learned the hard way that it's better to keep my hands on the handlebars. I also eventually learned that Hawai'i was not the REAL America.

It is a fantasyland, a vacation spot, and place of immodesty, decadence, and impropriety. It is the Las Vegas of U.S. states. What happens there doesn't count. The uproar over President Obama's American-ness is rooted in this notion. He was born in fantasyland. Perhaps it's because, unlike the rest of the continental U.S., there are natives still walking around and native culture interwoven into everyday life. Just imagine walking down your favorite street in Manhattan and seeing that one out of every ten people you see were Native Americans. What if about half the people on Fifth Avenue were wearing Native American clothing. In Hawai'i, the native culture still thrives as a dominant force.

Upon leaving Japan, I thought nobody would question my background once I was an American living in America. My dad told me so. My dad was a white American who could trace his roots back to the French Huguenots that settled in the New Jersey area when it was still owned by the Dutch in the 1600s. My mother, born and raised in Japan, spoke broken English since she lived all her life in Japan up till 1964. To this day, she still refuses to learn any more English than is necessary to get by in the grocery store. It's her way of spitting in the face of the enemy that defeated her country in WWII. So, I was half-baked in the English colonies' America and half proud Japanese who spits in Americans' eyes.

With my slanted Japanese eyes and deep brown skin in 1964, I felt right at home in the streets of Honolulu speaking in a mixture of English and Japanese with a sprinkling of Hawaiian. Unlike when I was living in Japan where everybody had straight black hair and a Japanese father, I felt snug as a bug in Hawai'i with my sandy brown hair and very loud American voice that I was supposed to take outside because I was giving my mother a headache. It was not until I met David in first grade whose family had just come from Ohio that I understood what a REAL American was.

David was in my first grade class and begged me to go to his house to watch cartoons afterschool. Walking into David's house, I couldn't help but notice that the inside looked like those pictures in the Dick and Jane books. There was not one piece of Asian or Hawaiian art or furniture in the living room. It was not like my house with a Shinto shrine and incense burner sitting



in a prominent location in the living room next to the wood carving of the scary Lono with his large mouth. No, this was an “American” house.

Shortly after we let the screen door slam behind us, in walked an “American” housewife who looked like June Cleaver’s double. No muumuu or kimono like my mother wore, this woman wore an “American” dress with pleats. I noticed that David’s mother crossed her arms tightly across her chest as if to protect herself from an onslaught of savages.

“David, who is your little friend?” I watched David’s mother look me up and down with a crease deepening between her eyebrows. I tried to cover up a ketchup smear on my dress by twisting the stain with fingers that were dirty from digging for worms in the schoolyard during recess.

“This is Jeannette. We’re going to watch *Gumby*.”

“Well, nice to meet you Jeannette.” David’s mother stuck out her right hand.

My mother had taught me not to touch strangers and to bow to adults. So I bowed.

“Oh, are you a Hawaiian?”

The crease in David’s mother’s head got deeper while she withdrew her hand and tightened both arms across her chest. “Do you speak English?”

My face stung as if she slapped me in the face. I was confused and a little hurt.

When I was in Japan, the kids taunted me by calling me “American.” My mother constantly berated the Americans for all the troubles in the world. My dad often bragged about how the Americans “kicked some ass” in WWII. We pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America every morning in Mrs. Wur-

derman’s first grade class. I was six and had no idea what to think. My head spun with all the conflicting ideas that were too big for my head. One thing I did know was to feel humiliated that this woman didn’t realize that I was an American who could speak English.

I realized much later in life that Hawaii is not the REAL America. The real America in 1964 was Ozzie and Harriet, Dick Van Dyke, and Petticoat Junction. The one popular TV show that had Pacific Islanders was Gillian’s Island, but those clowns in grass skirts don’t count because they were white buffoons in blackface. Today, Asian Americans are typecast in TV

and film as the hot chick, the smart chick, or the nerdy scientist as Kunal Nayyar’s astrophysicist character in *The Big Bang Theory* and Grace Kelly’s hot chick with a gun character in *Hawaii Five-O* represent. Since I’m not the hot chick with the gun type, I’ve strayed more toward the smart Asian chick that drives a little slow stereotype. I’m not sure whether I am naturally smart and drive slow, or whether I am and do be-



*Elements by CJ Nye*

cause it’s expected of me. As a grown adult with grown children, I still feel unattached to the real America as I don’t see myself in *Desperate Housewives* or *Modern Family*. I understand that Asians are just three percent of the population, and we should be happy that we dominate attendance in prestigious universities. I also know I shouldn’t complain because, as my mother always said as she twisted my arm, “You stay quiet and smile in their face.” At least I have my *Hawaii Five-O* even though I’m not a hot chick.



*From Leveling Appalachia by Carrie Grubb*





*From Erma Series by Ellen Mueller*

## Contributor Bios

**Silvana Alfonso** is a writer and moonlighter from New Jersey.

**Robert Paul Cesaretti** has published short fiction in *Plain Brown Wrapper* and poems in various places. He is the founding editor of *Ginosko Literary Journal*, <http://GinoskoLiteraryJournal.com/>. He is a native of the San Francisco Bay Area.

**Dan Corfield** teaches writing at California State University, Long Beach. His fiction appears in various literary journals and his poetry can be found in *Beside the City of Angels: An Anthology of Long Beach Poetry*.

**Alex Cutler** says that people are his primary subject; however, he has no interest in capturing who the people are or even their precise likeness. His purpose is to unsettle and perplex; he finds people are the best vessel to convey these emotions due to how easy it is for the viewer to relate and attempt to make sense of the situations he paints them in. Subject matter varies and he often finds himself painting situations that dance the line between real and surreal with no clear evidence that the situation was invented or actually took place.

**Darren Demaree's** poems have appeared, or are scheduled to appear in numerous magazines/journals, including the *South Carolina Review*, *Meridian*, *The Louisville Review*, *Cottonwood*, *The Tribeca Poetry Review*, and *Whiskey Island*. He is the recipient of two Pushcart Prize nominations. He is the author of "As We Refer To Our Bodies" (2013) and "Not For Art Nor Prayer" (2014). Both are due out from 8th House Publishing House. He is currently living and writing in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

**Kyle Dudley** is a freelance fiction writer from New Orleans.

**Jay Duret** is a San Francisco writer who blogs at [www.jayduret.com](http://www.jayduret.com). His stories have appeared in many online and print journals, including *Stone Path Review*, *Foliage Oak*, *the Citron Review*, *Cigale*, *Outside In*, *Fiction Vortex* and *Work Literary Magazine*. The Committee Room recently selected Jay's story "Ordinary Life," originally published in *The Citron Review*, as the June 2013 "Story of the Month". In October, 2013 *Blue Lake Review* will publish Jay's story "Bicentennial" which was a finalist for Big Fiction's 2013 Knickerbocker Prize. Jay recently completed his

first novel, *Nine Digits*, and is currently working on a book about eavesdropping in San Francisco.

**Carrie Grubb's** artwork shows how Mountaintop Removal mining (MTR) has transformed the Appalachian Mountains over time to flattened rubble and how small rural towns set in the hollows of West Virginia and Kentucky are currently being diminished or have already been reduced to nothing. It shows how a tragic coal mining accident in Southern West Virginia can tear apart a community with grief and rage and the lengths environmental activists are willing to take to stop the destructive environmental degradation that MTR is having on the landscape.

**William Jackson III** was born and raised in Los Angeles, CA. He has given readings around L.A. at places like The Goethe Institut, Lili Bernard's studio in Chinatown, and Lawrence Asher Gallery. He has been published in *Gambling the Aisle*, *Papercuts* (forthcoming), and *RipRap Magazine* (forthcoming). He enjoys cold sake and long walks on the fire.

**Brett Jones** studied Creative Writing at SUNY Fredonia, where he co-founded the Literary Lampoon section of the school newspaper and regularly contributed to *Zinophobia*, a student run 'zine. Most recent work can be found in *Dark Matter* and *Symmetry Pebbles*. Brett currently lives in New York City with his dog.

**Christopher Leibow** is a poet, a visual artist and a performer of small slights of hand. He is an MFA graduate of Antioch and has been published in numerous journals and online, including *Juked*, *Interim*, and *Barrow Street and Cricket Online Review*. He is a two time Pushcart Award nominee and a Utah Book Award Nominee and the winner of the Writers@Work Writers Advocate Award in 2008. He currently lives in Salt Lake City, with his cat El Guapo.

**William Miller** lives and writes in the French Quarter of New Orleans. He has published five collections of poetry, twelve books for children and a mystery novel.

**Ellen Mueller** has exhibited nationally and internationally as an interdisciplinary artist exploring the shared, everyday challenge of resisting change and maintaining control. She received her MFA in Studio Art from University of South Florida. Recent exhibitions span a variety of venues including CNN.com, the Cardiff Story Museum, and the Taubman Museum of Art. Recently, she has been



selected for residencies at Vermont Studio Center, Ucross Foundation, Santa Fe Art Institute, and Nes Artist Residency in Iceland.

**CJ Nye** was born in NYC on December 9th, 1974, and I has been painting in oils for over twenty-five years. In 1998, his senior year at SVA, he was smooched by a taxi and lost the use of his painting hand. Although he muddled through to finish his BFA in 2000 and dabbled a bit afterwards, he had given up hope of making a proper “go” at the art-world. But he couldn’t change his spots and in 2006, as a senior MA candidate in Arts Administration at Teachers College, he took “introduction to painting” as a coast-class while he finished his thesis. He hasn’t left the studio since.

**Robert Patrick’s** reviews of exhibitions and historical images can be found at RobertPatrick.org.

**Stephanie Petet** is interested in the depiction of abstracted landscapes/spaces that are driven by synthetic color palettes and rhythmic arrangements of mark. Initially the environments are naturally derived and then become abstracted through the influence of memory in relation to other prior paintings and source material. Memory can be used literally and/or metaphorically such as: this landscape reminds her of a storm that she experienced being in as a child or flying through the woods on a fore wheeler, or metaphorically; she associates this abstract form with a school of fish, desert heat, or spinning sensation.

**Charles Rafferty** has published poems in *The New Yorker* and *The Southern Review*, as well as stories in *Sonora Review* and *Cortland Review*. In 2009, he received a creative writing fellowship from the NEA. His most recent collection is *Appetites* (Clemson University Press), and *The Unleashable Dog* is forthcoming from Steel Toe Books. Currently, he directs the MFA program at Albertus Magnus College.

**Jeannette Ronson** is an MFA student in Creative and Professional Writing at Western Connecticut State University. She also teaches creative writing and English composition at Southern Connecticut State University.

**M. A. Schaffner** has work recently published or forthcoming in *The Hollins Critic*, *Magma*, *Tulane Review*, *Gargoyle*, and *The Delinquent*. Other writings include the poetry collection *The Good Opinion of Squirrels*, and the novel *War Boys*. Schaffner spends most days in Arlington, Virginia or the 19th century.

**Jill Shoffiett:** Despite years of living in New York, the

cultural and religious landscape of her native Mississippi is forever ingrained in her mind. The gnarled lines and angles in these utopian/dystopian landscapes reflect her longtime interest in tangled shapes and form. But the subject matter is a union of memory and narrative, often revealing piles of seemingly inconsequential junk, as might be seen by passers-by. Spindly, homemade roller coasters, fifth-hand rockets, and refurbished mechanical bulls are just a few of the items that are the raw creative fodder for the dubious characters operating within these worlds.

**Amanda Snyder** is a writer originally from Chicago, currently living in San Francisco. Her fiction and creative non-fiction has been recently published on *Chicago Literati* and *Hypertext Magazine*, and she has performed her writing at *Quiet Lightning (SF)*, *2nd Story (Chicago)*, on *WBEZ Chicago Public Radio*, and is a co-creator and former monthly performer in the monthly Chicago reading series *RUI: Reading Under the Influence*. [www.AmandaE-Snyder.com](http://www.AmandaE-Snyder.com).

**Julie Struck** is a creative writer, visual artist, arts educator and independent scholar. Current projects include occasionally teaching drawing, graphic design, and feminist art history to college students, the creation of unusual text based artworks, completing a memoir about connections between her life in academia and surviving an abusive childhood – and assembling interesting essays from those writings. Recent publications include autobiographical essays in *Still Point Arts Quarterly* and *Line Zero* in Summer 2013, and images in *Vine Leaves Literary Journal*, issue #7.

**Kaelen Williams** painted these portraits on found objects: dirty, cracked boards, pieces of concrete, an axe blade. The materials are utilitarian, used, dirty, flawed, and falling apart. These aspects make the works more human and more emotionally resonant. They don’t idealize; they realize. They remind the viewer that all of these people had a history full of joy and sorrow, pain and misery. For even the most evil and most virtuous among us are still human beings.

**KwonMachai Yearby-Atlas** writes every now and again and really enjoys it. He studies Political Science at Colorado State University.

**Etanna Rene Zak** resides in San Francisco where she dedicates her time to writing, constructing experimental electronic music, and creating graphic art as part of the creative entity *RFCL*. She is co-author of *Dragon Fly*, *Another Myself*, and *Vibration Incorporate* available at [www.fourthwaycomics.com](http://www.fourthwaycomics.com)

