THE SAND CANYON REVIEW

Crafton Hills College's Art & Literary Magazine

Contraction (CAN)

Dear Reader,

The Sand Canyon Review has returned for its tenth edition and a delve into the roiling controversy that dominates our time. Since its first edition to its latest and greatest, The Sand Canyon Review has been a place for artists and authors to explore themes and ideas in a place they can be heard. These incredible discussions come together at Crafton Hills College from across the community, country and the world for everyone to be a part of. This year's hardworking team of authors, visionaries and poets invite you to come in and explore their work and discover the questions gnawing at their minds. Controversy is an ever present force in today's society, from International politics to day to day interactions. The artists represented in this magazine have taken that struggle and expressed it in a way that will inspire discussion and engender debates that we hope will act as a force for change. This is why Controversy was chosen as the theme for this year's edition and why the team at The Sand Canyon Review has strove to ensure that every piece embodied that theme and pushed at the edges of the envelope.

Sincerely,

Zachary Hill, Managing Editor

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POETRY

Maybe She's Born With It, Maybe It's Maybelline, But Most Likely It's Her Complete Dissatisfaction With Life and the General Malaise She Feels At 3am When She Can't Sleep and She Revisits Her Life Choices Kassandra Zamanis

ICEBREAKERS:

Name your favorite pet! Where's your ideal vacation spot! What's a fun fact about you! You wanna know a fun fact about me?

I pant like a dying animal after walking up more than two flights of stairs and then use that as an excuse to not go to the gym.

I once ate a dog treat—not on a dare, not because I was tricked into it, but because I was genuinely curious about why my dog was fascinated by Milk Bones.

Since we're on the subject of dogs: while my friends were daring each other to kiss boys and rolling glitter onto their collar bones, I put a blue blanket on our Rottweiler,

pretended he was George Washington, and followed him around for an afternoon in a rousing game of Revolutionary War.

More on dogs: I let my ex boyfriend throw beer bottles at my head and still slept with him that night.

I have learned the hard way that there is a difference between fucking someone and loving someone.

(Mostly I learned this by sleeping with a married man, and then sleeping with a man who wanted to marry me.)

The problem with being a misanthropic hopeless romantic is that you desperately hate everyone you fall in love with.

And I'd like to warn you, now, before we get too serious,

In the storybook of my life I am not the princess and I am not the knight in clanking armor and I am not even the sexy, evil stepmother out to ruin your life

(my cheekbones aren't sharp enough for that, let's be honest).

If I had to pick (and I know you didn't ask, but bear with me here) I would say that I am the dragon.

Anyway, my favorite vacation spot is, like, a beach or something.

I Don't Care What You Think (As Long As It's About Me) Kassandra Zamanis

"The world is run by sex," you say. I would agree with you, but I can't because, of course, your dick is in my mouth and I'm a little preoccupied. Last night, in a black cocktail dress and a bracelet depicting the universe in miniature, I was compelled to set the house on fire. You see, my problem is that I am a raging jealous hell-demon; Naturally, this blow job is revenge for the way you made feel. (That'll teach you, won't it?) I certainly hope one of us is learning something here because Honey, this is dirty work.

Ukiah Haiku Kassandra Zamanis

I moved to Ukiah, California fresh out of college to work on a vineyard for a year--How romantic.

This was a small town full of farmers and they had never seen a girl like me before.

"Mouthy," according to the cashier at the feed store.

"Mysterious, more like," said the married man who I was sleeping with, stroking my cheek with his brown thumb.

In the winter when the languid nights would wail past my windows

I would huddle next to the space heater in my one bedroom apartment and cry into the walls.

My salt would run down the cheap paint and collect in crusty pools on the baseboards.

When the married man told me he wanted to leave his wife for me I ran so fast and hard down the street a heel broke off my shoe.

In the coffee shop around the corner the baristas knew my name, knew my order.

The boys promised me free drinks if I kissed them,

But it was always the married man who always ended up in my twin sized bed.

In the end, on my way out of town I gave the married man a charred cactus I had named Gatsby and kissed him goodbye and never looked back.

Kassandra Zamanis enjoys poetry, postmodernism, petting dogs, and grilled cheeses by the bushel.

O Sacred Grove Nhat Tran

O Sacred Grove, A poem, I write of thee. Here I Stand Warm. In Reverence, Beholding the sights that gleam, From these blessed eyes, Which you have seen fit to Gift. And from them, I see life, Triumphant, in its splendid beauty. For there, rooted in you Are vegetation, Plants yielding seed, and trees bearing fruit. For there, living through you Are swarms of living creatures, flying birds, livestock, and creeping things and beasts. Yet... None here are gleaming, None here are blessed, And None here are splendid. For there also, standing upon you, Are the Artists, deceiving; The Warriors, slaying; And the Kings, scorning.

For there also, lying on you, Are the innocent, lost; The righteous, dead; And the gentle, dying. Still, Here I stand, Neither Reverent, Nor Gifted, Nor Triumphant. Only cold For our Mistakes have hurt you. My memory of A Sacred Grove, A poem, I write of thee.

Nhat Tran is a 20-year-old student at Crafton Hills College. His passions include politics, men's fashion, and the natural sciences. His love for service and children have inspireed him to pursue acareer in the medical field as a pediatrician.

A Sultry Night Robert W Norman

The first time I saw her Something did ignite A rush of excitement Dreaming of her on a sultry night She sparks a fire in me I smolder night and day I'm having naughty thoughts Concerning the way we could play We could find a quiet place Sometime we could share I'm burning with desire To stroke her skin so fair The first time I saw her Something did ignite A rush of excitement Dreaming of her on a sultry night She stirs desires in me Other thoughts fade away I've got a yearning for her On her every curve I want to play She's got that feline purr As my lips brush her skin When she feels my warm breath She starts to melt within The first time I saw her Something did ignite Dreaming her on a honeymoon night A whisper and a murmur, As her fancies we do try Feeling her start to tremble As my kisses run up her thighs A rush of desire

To stir passion in her Exploring every hill and dale I want to tease her epicenter Make her shutter and wail The first time I saw her Something did ignite Dreaming of that first night Touches and caresses Her sexy movement of desire I slowly undress her Raveling treasures that light my fire So many naughty thoughts Daring her to partake To see her smiling indulgence To feel her whole body quake The first time I saw her Something did ignite Dreaming her daring delight The feel of her caress The way she strokes me Sending me into ecstasy A rush of desire A rush of desire Her sensual lips Such a sexy touch An amazing sight I want to be her every pleasure Fulfill her every delight Oh yeah, the first time that I saw her Something did ignite Dreaming her on a sultry night A world of desire

Pop Icons *Robert W Norman*

Oh... look at them up on the screen The center of attention, living the dream Spoiled and pampered, they think they'll go far There go the Pop-Icons aren't they cute So tweaked-e- tweaked, so full of toot Stumbling in the street by the dawns first light Such an illusion of what they are Shining bright at clubs every night Their entourage, part of the scene Tweeting night and day exposing every little thing On probation, stoned and crashing cars Paparazzi eye candy, big tears behind jail bars Once upon a time they graced the screen Now filled with vanity they're losing the dream With ugly candid pictures for the gossip Colum Like blind little moths they rush the arc-light of fame A flash of brilliance as they go down in flames No self control, living the life it would seem Their life unraveling on the TMZ screen So called friends betraying them Rushing about dodging paparazzi Starved for attention a video tragedy Lost in their selves they do what they want Their legacy nothing but tabloid newspaper font There they go the little celebrity treats Like yesterdays trash they litter the streets Oh so special, or to them it did seem Now there's nothing left but crumbled little dream

Robert W. Norman is a Hemet High School graduate, attended college. US Navy veteran. Retired from Lake Hemet Municipal Water District.Married, no kids. Enjoys traveling, writing, painting and photography.Currently struggling to learn to play the guitar.

Les enfants / The Children Ivan de Monbrison

Le soleil essuie l'ombre, dans un univers emmuré par la lumière, nous offrons nos corps de pierre à l'atrophie du monde, le rêve se révéle dans sa parois de sang.

Le temps issue de l'orgasme d'une femme sans ovaires la rend imperméable à notre satiété. Nous fécondons ainsi les choses les plus banales sans le savoir.

A l'orée de ce bois encerclé de tombeaux. Nous marchons sous d'épais feuillages transi toires sans avoir conscience de mourir.

Nous écartons de nos doigts lumineux le mur des ténèbres angoissées par l'arrivée d'un jour nou veau.

Les angles n'existent pas en ce lieu naturel, où les cadavres en pourrissant sont seuls à savoir se multiplier dans leurs minérales sépultures.

A l'orée de ce bois encerclé de tombeaux...

Comme des êtres recouverts de feuillages pour passer inaperçus, nous sommes nous mêmes devenus végétaux et, bien que masculins, nous avons donnés naissances à de beaux enfants.

Les femmes étaient devenues arborescence de cette forêt pleine de désirs.

Entrant peu à peu dans nos corps nous nous sommes retrouvés seuls à seuls et nous n'avons su que penser à nos malheurs, ce n'est au retour vers la maison qui nous servait de refuge que l'hori zon s'offrit à nous comme un corps étendu dans le ciel crépusculaire et poussiéreux.

Nous avons joui de notre vanité un instant avant de perdre à nouveau tout espoir.

As the sun is cleaning up the shade, in a world walled up by light, we give away our bodies of stone to the atrophy of the world, the dream being disclosed in the partition of the blood.

Time coming out of the orgasm of a woman with no ovaries makes her immune to our repletion. We thus fertilize the most mundane things by acci dent.

By the edge of this wood circled by graves.. We walk under thick transitional foliage unaware of our own dying.

We split open, with our fingers made of light, the wall of darkness excruciated by the coming up of a new born day.

There are no angles to be found in this natural place, where decaying corpses are the only ones which know how to multiply in their mineral sepulchers.

By the edge of this wood circled by graves...

As being covered with foliage in order to go by unnoticed, we ourselves have turned into plants and, although being male, we have given birth to beautiful children.

Women had been turning arborescents of this forest full of desires.

Little by little, as we were left alone in our own bodies, we could only think but of our woes, it was only on the way back to the house, which we used as a shelter, that the horizon was given to us as a body lying in a dusty and crepuscular sky.

We enjoyed our vanity for a moment before losing all hope again.

Le seuil de la maison laisse apparaître la tête d'un enfant au visage surmodelé sur un crâne de pa pier, il est le gardien de ces lieux où la mémoire passe comme un souffle, et ne laisse que des mi ettes de temps à ceux qui restent échoués ici-bas.

« Enfant! innocent comme les sureaux, toi seul donne encore un sens à ces choses que tu caress es du regard.. .»

Alors en nous couchant dans nos lits de pous sière nous avons fantasmé notre démence et le monde; et d'un seul coup, la venue de la nuit devint possible à son tour.

La lumière glanée tantôt par nos yeux éblouis de soleil nous rendit nyctalopes, tandis que notre soif de savoir effaça notre colère et nos soupçons.

A l'orée de ce bois encerclés de tombeaux.

Nous, les humains, dépouilles vivantes de nos propres ancêtres, nous veillons jour et nuit sur l'enfant qui dort en nous-mêmes, tandis qu'in sensiblement, dans le temps, nous nous effaçons. The head of a child appears on the threshold, his face over-plastered with clay is set on a skull of paper, he is the guardian of these places where memory passes like a breath, and leaves only but crumbs of time to those who are still stranded on earth.

"Child! innocent as the elderberries, you alone still gives a meaning to these things that you stroke but only with your eyes..."

Then going in our beds of dust we have fantasized our dementia and the world; and thus the very coming of the night.

The light, gleaned earlier by our dazzled eyes, turned us into nyctalopes, while our thirst for knowledge did erase our anger and our suspicions.

By the edge of this wood circled by graves...

We, human beings, by night and day, like the remains of our sole ancestors, stay by the side of the child who sleeps within ourselves, while imperceptibly, with time, we slowly fade away.

Inquisitio Haereticae Pravitatis (Spoken by Inquisitors, Of the Homosexuals Who Were Among the Last Heretics Burned: Spain, 1819) Susan McCraw Helms

Inquisition into practice Of heretical depravity: That's our charge, and how we love it, Established by the Holy See.

Be found by us and we will burn you, On a spit is where we'll turn you. Now we have the brands alight, Let's go fry a sodomite.

To show God's law its due respect, Every arsehole we inspect. We purify with fire and rope, We are the Holy Proctoscope.

Sinners we most love to griddle: Men who with each other fiddle.

After Zika: The Aborted Fetus Comforts Her Grieving Mother Susan McCraw Helms

You were broken and sore afraid At what a tiny virus made.

I had a shrunken, unfinished brain, And would have lived in daily pain,

But briefly, then rent your heart anew Even more than now.

To keep me from that pain, You gave me to Heaven again.

You took on the agony That would have come to me.

I thank you for your sacrifice. Knowing you loved me Enough to end me Will suffice.

Masturbation Susan McCraw Helms

Think back, think back: Can you recall when it Was you first surmised, amazed, that you could Place your hand upon a source of perfect Joy, your very own, always smiling there;

That you could freely summon this brilliance At will, and with—O my!—a most finely Fitted palm or merely single finger? Marvelous adolescent discovery,

When even extremities could be made To sing and tingle, toes to thrill (fizz) and Sizzle from a rush of lovely dopamine. (Yes, lucky youth may spend with feet as well.)

Better still, that priests and parents darkly Disapproved with grimmest helplessness.

Francis Dreams an Encyclical Susan McCraw Helms

The Pope had a dream and awoke, smiling. His innocent rest had silently Composed a prophetic song in the Spirit of his sainted namesake.

"Let all mothers elect to birth, and when. Let queerdom wed, and priests and bishops too. Pray patriarchs, popes, and all imams kiss Each other's feet, and beg undeserved Forgiveness. Let us beatify Mohammad, And Luther and Darwin, Socrates, The Buddha and every pagan sage Who spoke for love. Let all the prisoners Go free, and whores and poets gather Grace unearned. Let eternity lose Its terrors, the fires of Hell quenched With Charity. Let Satan be forever Forgotten. Let the undeserving be Fed and shod, and loved as they deserve. Drain the Church's treasuries, and make A foundation for the poor. See each Frightened refugee as the leper Francis Kissed, as bloodied Jesus standing, Knocking, at your door. Hoot All haters from every high place And let the nuns run things awhile."

Susan McCraw Helms is retired from the English Dept. at Arizona State University, where she taught classes in the Romantic poets, and the Bible as literature. Writing poems is her lifelong avocation.

Declarations of War *Jennifer Engel*

I. Ambassador of Hate

I am better than you. My face is a perfect ivory. Not too dark. Not too white. Without blemish. I'm better because I am a sunny day brown, luscious and sleek. I'm better than you because my God spoke it so, passed down His message through mortal scribes. I've declared your holy writings Satanic, therefore I hate you. I'm better because I'm right and you're wrong. Your politics are far too bleeding heart left, and fanatical corporate right, depending on the day. I'm better than you, because I only make love with the opposite sex, but not too much, because that's a sin. I'm better because I'm a man. My dick is bigger and so is my gun. I'm better because I'm the woman controlling you with beauty that is unobtainable. For you who are small, I have a rocket fueled fist. For you who are big, my grappling hook will topple you. I'm better because I own the land and the people on it, because your pile of stuff is smaller than my pile, because you sleep in doorways and tent cities, because you dress funny, because you smell different. I hate you because your pile is bigger than mine. Yours is the gleaming castle on the hill. You own it all and I want it. I am better than you because you're a tiny speck in a monstrous corporation. You fire fighters, you teachers, you civil servants you steal my profits with your pensions. You over-paid soldiers are just as bad. I hate you because of the actions of your forefathers. I hate you because my parents told me to hate you. I hate you because I hate myself. I hate you because you hate me. I hate you because my fear is a raging fireball. I have better bombs that can burn us all to Hell. This is only just, because I'm better than you.

II. Soldier of Peace

I love beautiful skins of ivory and those in luscious shades of brown. I love faces that are smooth as unwritten tablets, and those with imperfections that map journeys taken. I honor your holy words, though they are not mine. All religions lead to God's love. And if you have no God, I love the light that shines through your being. I am a champion for the people. I am a champion for free enterprise. I relish the banter and the argument, because your politics make me think. I respect your choice in lovers. Love is love, and love is good. I love because I am man born in strength. I love because I am woman born in beauty. Without one there would be no human existence. For you who are small, I offer an open hand. For you who are big, I look up in wonder. Though life is not equal and my pile of stuff is bigger than yours, I will still love you. If you sleep in doorways or in tent cities I will still love you. If you dress differently, or smell funny, I will still love you. If your home is a castle on the hill, and your pile of stuff is higher than mine, I will still love you. You may own it all, but you don't own me. I love this land of corporations and civil servants, of teachers, fire fighters, realists and dreamers. I seek to learn from the painful truths of history and to take only the best of my parents' teachings. I walk my own path. I will not fear your arsenals of hate and greed, but persuade with weapons of compassion and communication. I love myself and I love you. My bombs will not explode with Hell's fire, but with love for all of humanity.

Starbucks' Satanic Red Cup Jennifer Engel

Melusine's twin tails warm frosty hands from a sea of devilish red. I share snowmen cookies with my inner child and my grown daughter, while the siren swims a passionate ocean circling steamy mint tea. Who needs snowflakes or reindeer. with this tale hot on my lips and love for three girls, in a pocket of heaven on a chilly winter night.

Jennifer Engel studied art and poetry at Scripps College in Claremont. For nearly thirty years, she's been an art teacher at Redlands High School. Every year, she encourages students to submit their work tothe RHS Literary Journal.She has a passion for poetry and recently completed her seventh book, *Onion Night*.

Poetry Diss Track Jeffrey H. MacLachlan

You can't touch this poem and you can't write this poem and you can't even fucking read. I bet you're the type who worships Wallace Stevens even though he's a racist geezer. If I see Wallace Stevens in the afterlife, I'm coming for you motherfucker and the blackbirds. If you think this fiction, I dare any poet to swing on me — fist, pen, paper, bat, verse. I'm like Satan if he burst from an alien's pudgy gut. I'd piledrive Robert Frost through a dairy cart if I got the chance because I'm like poetry's Mount Rushmore if every face was mine, big and wide and spitting hellfire on your fertilizer rhymes. What I'm saying is what I read in anthologies would be better off as twitching cockroach braille than printed lines. End of story.

Jeffrey H. MacLachlan has recent or forthcoming work in *The William & Mary Review*, *Exit 7, Clay Bird Review*, among others. He teaches literature at Georgia College and State University. He can be followed on Twitter @jeffmack.

Exploring Mythology and Science Through Poetry: An Interview with Julie Sophia Paegle



Julie S. Paegle lives in the San Bernardino Mountains with her husband Stephen Lehigh, their two sons Jan Connor and George Quinn, their menagerie, and her four current book projects, which the humans will all be glad to see completed (or at least off to college). She is the author of the poetry collection *torch song tango choir* (2010) and the book length poem *Twelve Clocks* (2014), both published by University of Arizona Press, which nominated *Twelve Clocks* for the Pulitzer Prize. Excerpts from current projects (*Sky Island, How We Die in the North, flash mob*, and *Afterthoughts for Thanatos*) have appeared or are forthcoming in journals and anthologies including *No Place for a Puritan, The Giant Book of Poetry, The Kenyon Review, Cincinnati Review, Apercus, Dogwood, Epoch, New Madrid*, and elsewhere. She teaches at California State University San Bernardino, where she has served as Director of the Master of Fine Arts of Creative Writing; she is excited to be teaching at CSUSB's Palm Desert campus in the 2016/2017 academic year.

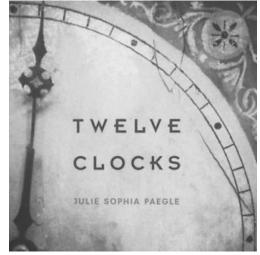
Q: What impelled your use of Greek and Roman mythology whilst writing *Twelve Clocks*?

A: *This is a terrific question, close to my heart* because those myths and stories, while (or be*cause)? thousands of years removed, feel ever* more relevant and prophetic. In my own very lucky, relatively sheltered life, wars and violence have always lurked just beyond the peace my *immigrant parents wanted to give their children.* I wish it were not true, but war seems a defining aspect of humanity unless we all consciously work to prevent it—and that "all" is the seem*ingly insurmountable qualifier.* And the epics credited to Homer, The Iliad and The Odyssey, brutally beautifully illuminate the terrible marriage between individual desires and communal *hierarchies—and the monstrous offspring of this* marriage: war. Both epics show how Ares and *Aphrodite (the gods of war and love) are literally* always in bed together.

To come at the question another way, I was pregnant with our first child Connor while I was studying for my Ph.D. exams. The exam material consisted of hundreds of books, clus*tered around the theme of epic or long narrative* forms in poetry, beginning with Homer. There is a famous scene in The Iliad when Prince Hektor, the defending champion of Troy (under a decade-long siege by the Greeks), returns from his day of fighting to his wife Andromache and his baby son Astyanax. All the Trojan people understand that if Hektor dies, Troy will fall; Andromache and the surviving Trojan women will be given as war prizes to the victors in sex slavery; and baby Astyanax will be thrown from Troy's tower in spectacular proof that the royal Trojan *family has fallen. In a famous scene, Hektor* wants to embrace his son, who cries inconsolably at the sight of his father, presumably because he can not recognize his peaceful and civilized father in the fully armored warrior before him. The scene is heartbreaking even if you are not pregnant with your first child, but I could not get it out of my head through my whole pregnancy. And it hit me with visceral force: Astyanax, who can not even speak yet, cries because he sees his

own future, his family's future, humanity's future, at that moment: war, waste, senseless suffering. Is this why all babies cry when they are born?

It's a commonplace that becoming a parent forces on one this nightmare paradox: all humans are so terribly vulnerable; all begin as utterly dependent infants, AND all humans are capable of atrocity beyond imagination. Somehow, this watershed realization, common to I imagine most or all parents, told me that Astyanax would be at the center, at the heart of the book.



Q: Which authors—if any—directly influenced your specific writing style when you were writing your newest book?

On one level, anything good in the book A: comes from my teachers (especially to Karen Brennan, Jacqueline Osherow, Katharine Coles, Agha Shahid Ali, Donald Revell, Mark Doty, Barry Weller, Tom Stillinger and Disa Gambera), and also from those hundreds of poets I was consuming so voraciously while studying for the exams! While revising, I turned for instruction, for rescue, and for inspiration to Jorge Luis Borges, Keri Hulme, Pablo Neruda, Heather McHugh, Italo Calvino and John Ashbery. I'd had this vision of the book neatly divided up like nesting Russian Dolls and then I read David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas and actually gave up on the whole* idea for a while—I was mired in that all too common despondency of: he's done what I want*ed to do and a zillion times better than I ever* could! And of course that's true. Influence is a

bit...chilling. But neither the dissertation requirement nor Astyanax would go away and so I did what I could with the first complete draft, to finish my doctorate, so I could move here to California to teach at Cal State San Bernardino.

Q: When did you decide to write *Twelve Clocks*, and at what point did you decide it was finished?

The answer to the first question is: when A: I was in transition labor with Connor. My first bachelor's degree is in Environmental Earth Science, through Geology and Geophysics, and *I specialized in dating rocks (trying scry their* ages, not so much dinner and a movie). Also I never have enough time, no matter how hard *I try I seem to be perpetually running late. So* I'd had time of all sizes on the brain for ever. *Also, as a lifelong insomniac, I knew how early* morning hours crawled unless I was reading or writing, in which case they flew by. But when *I hit transition, after hours of already thinking* I could not handle natural childbirth, when would it be over. I'd died a thousand times and was cruelly still alive, yap yap yap, I literally experienced time stopping. I think that transition lasted maybe 4 minutes, but for those 4 minutes the clock on the hospital wall was not moving. I swore vengeance on that clock, on all clocks, on time itself. At least I wasn't swearing at Steve, nor do I recall how I emerged from that eternity, though clearly I have.

The answer to the second question: I still don't think it's totally finished, but I did at some point have to abandon it to the wonderful (infinitely patient) folks at University of Arizona Press. It seems fitting that Connor is now 12 himself.

Q: Did you already have an idea in mind before sitting down to write your book, or did Twelve Clocks naturally coalesce into a book of poetry?

A: However I got out of transition labor, that mystery insisted that I write about time in the first place how different measured time and

experienced time are, or how identical, depending on your point of view. How much becoming a mother changed time for me, forever. The book's first full set of drafts was finished by June 2006, and sections of it appeared in lit mags over almost a decade, but I did not turn over the published book length version until January 2014; it was "out" about 9 months later. The book kept rearranging itself, adding and deleting huge chunks of itself, past and right up through three different deadlines. In retrospect, it was natural; but like one's first natural childbirth the process had its excruciating moments and its deep dark pits of doubt about whether anyone would survive the experience.



Q: What is your creative writing process; when do you write poetry? E.g. Transcribing what's already written in your mind, or sitting down at a keyboard—blank slate—with a general idea and a glass of wine?

I have, since this April, misplaced my A: insomnia, perhaps for good. Those hours between 2 and 6 am used to be my writing time (when they weren't taken with grading papers, prepping for class, etc.). But now that I'm no longer a night writer, I try to think of the process as (to borrow a phrase from Andrea Camilleri's first Inspector Montalbano mystery) taking "the shape of water"-morphing to whatever context presents itself. In any of the I.E.'s endless lines (DMV, Urgent Care, Von's), I'll draft poems on the iPhone Prof. Ashley Hayes talked me into getting (she slyly promised, there're poetry apps!). I'm learning that iPhones are almost as potent as sonnets for reigning in my rambling tangents! Waiting for my boys at the bus top, or

VI. Years Fly from *Twelve Clocks* by Julie Sophia Paegle

"In the same breath, shining Hektor reached down / for his son—but when the boy recoiled, / cringing against his nurse's full breast, / screaming out at the sight of his own father, terrified by the flashing bronze, / the horsehair crest, / the great ridge of the helmet nodding, bristling terror—so it struck his eyes." *—The Iliad*, Homer

for Astyanax: his nurse's song

Lord of the City Hektor's son still lives long before words *What did you see at Troy's tower today?* Unfathomable some flyway locked in the bodies of birds

> sleep just there then as now but the prince preferred to turn his eyes wide away fixed fast after some still wider orbit of blue before words

so still you were in my arms today the air barely stirred around your mouth each breath weighing in my arms with a weight warm as the bodies of birds

> when your father back from the battle on Troy's tower recurred his armament pure metallic intent splendor errant and at play you cried with terror purest before words

parents hard or bright with laughter the evident inferred your father showed his face to emrace you but he couldn't touch fear hollow as bones in the bodies of birds

> so you saw it some thing slipping in a helmet mirrored now slip after the dark the world can mislay sleep is a thing spinning into silence the guess before words you are yet just a guest a gust a rushing hushed into the bodies of birds

sitting in traffic, I'll litter the car with post-it's. I should buy stock in 3M. But I am trying to discipline myself to write as soon as I wake up since that shore of half remembered dreams still feels the most promising.

Q: Did you feel inspired by any external source of art when coming up with your content: visual art pieces, music, and philosophy; perhaps, written mythological works or recent science articles?

Absolutely! I was lucky, as an undergrad-A: uate, to have a Sedimentary Petrology class with Marjorie Chan, T.A.d by Todd Elhers, who first took me to see the tidal rhythmites up Little Cottonwood Canyon; so I learned under *the authors of that article. The citation about* the nuee ardent that destroyed an entire city in Martinique is from one of my undergrad Igneous Petrology texts. And (besides the treacherous hospital clock) the first conventional clock *in the book, which I call "Atlassa," is a real clock* that has been handed down through generations of my Argentine and Spanish relatives; we will inherit it though Connor and Quinn really have done a number on it over the years—the clock now has a broken wing and has lost its moon/ *clock face/pendulum bob. But the biggest single* intellectual and artistic influence on the book is my husband Stephen Lehigh, who majored *in philosophy in college; so I hope philosophy* osmosed its way via Steve into the book.

Q: The theme for the 2016 edition of *The Sand Canyon Review* is "controversy." Do you consider your book to be controversial in a face-value sense, or contrasting itself within the book itself?

A: What a timely theme! Well, I can't resist pointing out that "controversy" has at its heart "verse," a term for lineated poetry that in turn reflects how line breaks themselves should "turn." That any line break should somehow register surprise, or shift, or change; just as any meter should help mark a poem's occupation of time. In the book I wanted to turn or to spin the

conventional classical heroic code (typified in *Achilles's famous choice), that warriors exchange* their lives in spectacular battle for literary immortality. Achilles chooses to go to war in Troy, even though it will mean an early and unnatural death, because the heroic manner of his death will ensure his name lives forever. So in conventional epic economies, martial, masculine sacrifice is explicitly compensated. But what of all the women, children, animals, other life forms, wilds and wildernesses, whose lives and freedoms are sacrificed at the altars of dominion and greed? What is their compensation? I wanted to explore the unsung victims of hu*manity's worse impulses—greed, fear, power—to* show that if we are to bequeath our children futures worth having, we must not squander their futures during our collective present. Can we turn from the apocalypses we have set in motion? Can we reign in our excesses? Can we face our own fears, our own nightmares? Can we reject fear-based war-mongering? It saddens me to reflect that the following question remains so controversial in 2016, but I hope that reflects its ultimate importance and its (one can dream) proximity: Can we, the wealthiest nation in the world, for once in our blood soaked history affirm and nurture the delicate arts of peace?



Thank you, Julie for your deeply clever rebirthing of ancient verses! We wish you the best well wishes as you contiue to capture the words of our world's timeless clocks!

The Timber Wolf Daniel Barbare

The timber wolf's howl Cannot be contained In a fence. It fills the streets With a timberland so far away, You can almost hear The Sadness In each drop of rain— And the growl And teeth That belong.

Danny P. Barbare has been writing poetry off and on for 35 years. His poetry has appeared locally, nationally, and abroad. He attended Greenville Technical College, where his poetry won The Jim Gitting's Award and has been nominated for Best of the Net.

Blue Paint: How to write a poem when the land is barren Dylan Freude

Watch your step And take inspiration where you can get it For example: The light switch in the library that is painted over The blue painters tape under the table A color wheel under a stack of essays to read The use of color is a motif here Use selective diction And listen for the right words because there are the right words For example: "It might rain at track practice" Practice "Contrary to popular belief" Contrary and belief "I'm trying hard enough not to be a dick." Trying and to be Let the message create the form The medium is the message For example: The coffee maker labeled on green paper in black lettering: "Turn me off!" The portrait of a snow-laiden tree labeled in black lettering on white lettering: "Ansel Adams" Or the red and white lettering on orange paper below well-dressed students awkwardly smiling on a bus: "Classics [red] live [white]." Remember to take criticism Though often it is reducing your and their meaning For example: Be Exasperated Be Slightly Apathetic Know that Criticism is Optional And know that the field is barren Because you asked how to write poetry

An Irregular Haiku, Because I Am Over Weight And Not Very Good At Many Things Dylan Freude

I never told you That the stain on my blanket Was from where I whipped My mouth after you started Your period last night. "You" and "I" are Interchangeable How sweet the long word

Dylan Freude is a teacher at Damien High School. He teaches courses in American Literature, AP English Language and Composition, and Journalism.

@DOLF Jacob Edwards

imagine hitler on twitter
let loose with a goosestep and nazi salutes
trending #imreich
#finalsolution
in virtual jackboots and rabid attacks
the vile going viral, he'd rant and he'd rave
#lookwhoikilledtoday
flame fanning fame fanning flame
in a most vicious cycle

imagine hitler on twitter
new recruits rallied to carry the torch
the embers of nuremberg
world wide web ii
#raciallypure #burnyou @jew
his squawking retweeted @goring @goebbels
heil! swastikas turning
his followers march, thumbs up
spittle and blood through the hourglass poured

imagine hitler on twitter bitterly blogging and flogging mein kampf #aryanrule #shaveforacure picture: red and black banners unfurled from above caption: meet me @auschwitz and #niceovens smouldering vitriol words for a new world, new war burning tweets #bigotedfools

imagine hitler on twitter? no need to suppose, he's all over the feeds #trolls #flamers a nameless clone army avatars bristling and vouchsafed by godwin's law crouched in their bunkers, their thick concrete firewalls bulletproof fascists, no room @thehague #toothbrushmoustaches @dolf @large openly spreading the hate

Victoria Falls Jacob Edwards

Mugabe's Zimbabwe, Rhodesia in seizures dismissive, permissive decrees for amnesia take back what's black rename reclaim flea-bitten, re-written, de-britainized: the streets take arms no farms long rule the fool irrational, pro-national, most fashionable conceit Zimbabwe's Mugabe, disease of Rhodesia protected, no sex ed., just screens for anaemia inoculate depopulate aids-stricken, grave-ridden, spade-given patriarch entitlement enlightenment elemental king, hell-bent on bling, sent to bring back the dark Grimbabwe Mugabe, Rhodesia's Dim Reaper Victoria fallen, New Eden's zoo-keeper give me the key hand out the clout motorcades, open graves, vote afraid: Robert M respite next fight brain swell pray tell:

croak and hiss, won't we miss Goat Piss & Clobber Man?

Jacob Edwards writes non-fiction, short stories, reviews and poetry, with work appearing in Australia, New Zealand, England, Canada and the US. His reviews may be found at derelictspacesheep.com. Find him on Twitter @ToastyVogon, and facebook.com/JacobEdwardsWriter.

You Don't Need a Man Fior Plasencia

"Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size."

-Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own

I clearly told her- you don't need a man look at me, I do the opposite. I am the awful example to follow she doesn't identify I try to make suppose I don't call for a male's terms to figure how to warfare a storm and that I am a Statue of Liberty owning Queens and its soul equipage with artillery on my petite but sturdy foot macho-women sabelo-todo never a give-me-a-call please never a-needy, like the novela of Univision not me nope I speculate if she can dig under these history books brown-dark- caña eyes the fortitude that is creating in me a monstrous I don't want to deem exits. The one who waits for his calls at the same time slowly cries under skilled cloths she stills don't know

I am this nowhere to be found road, but I

told her one more time

I repeated myself like the chorus of the meregue:

"You don't need him,

you don't need one."

You Are a G Fior Plasencia

You are an underdog. clearly, digging your new IPhone 5, timberlands and fresh cut you are making your stamentent the thug life is yours not so called-ghetto not so called-projects inferno not so called-low income/ dirty walls/out reach next to the bridge/ riverside/ bay and hyper forgotten streets and garbage dealing buildings that proclaim your destiny to get stuck in the pile of misery. No! no, no and NO. Never those you said I will never live in those but again, you are a G representing the hustle and the game the struggle of being pushed away just because just because, your address clearly said; Name: Hispanic (must be Mexican and illegal) Address: they all measure they same. You don't understand that kind of struggle still, you're at the top most real shit. Have you ever woken up in the social security line asking when your lips don't want to beg

asking when your lips don't want to beg for another help for your monthly bread for another defeat translating the american dream? "You earn too much!" when there's not enough family to help you breath.

Just because you follow the song of those with similar call doesn't make you a lord another testimony to look for because when you still can't tolerate those with the address mentioned on top of their ids, you are still a privileged kid.

Not a Gringa Fior Plasencia

This is a reminder: If some *criolla* words are starting to fly across this paper, don't blame me the time or the modern trends of *cursileria*. I apologize if this is your motherland you didn't plan to run by a *campesina extrajera la indigina en confusión*.

Trust me, I did not see myself walking with a jacket on burning with your bipolar weather being stuck in the S Subway line with little air to hug or just simply having a neighbor that only knocks on my door to complain about the; *tipico* the smell of *carne asada con arroz* or simply because we are " screaming" when it's all love, really. It's love. Love.

Oh! Pardon me, so you are from Europe... then, sorry honey, but this has became your parking lot for you too you don't move your feet to another station just to land it on another *extranjero* with dreams as us. But your forget that your first day in Time Square you got lost in the crowd cried even if the native New Yorkers were watching they already blend, they already assimilated, so at this point you were the; immigrants the alien the wet-back and you got extremely mad

MAD!

Encojonada con todos los poderes!

MAD! Mad as fuck! Mad, at the super powers that retain the prosperity like there is not a rest of humanity living in the same sphere mad at the Great Wars *Vichy* "Liberty, equality and fraternity" mad at Napoleon. Mad, that you were here trying to become someone you didn't intent to be. And now you are the "American dream". Welcome. *Bienvenida*.

Fior Plasencia was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to New York City at a young age. She is a recent graduate from Brooklyn College with a B.S. in History, with a passion for reading poetry and writing about the Latino struggles in the U.S. Currently, she lives in Connecticut, pursuing a career as a teacher.

The Monsters We Marry Lisa Anina Berman

To my sons, Jacob and Matthew

I resisted it with all of me; going back to that place; the place where I slammed the door to the past, to memories of that time.

Even when I dug my heels deeper, you prodded me on. Knowing, that despite my middle aged exterior, the little girl inside still needs her hand held when walking through dark spaces.

Together, we sifted through the blackness and pulled out gems of joy. Your eyes, the mirror, of a new light you see in me.

Lisa Anina Berman earned her master's in English with a concentration in Creative Writing in 2013. She teaches academic writing and advanced grammar at Butte College and writes to international students through the Chico State Research Foundation. She published her first book of poetry, *SaltWild* in 2014, and is currently working on her second book, tentatively named *WetWings*.

Digitalization Nathaniel Goens

Trapped in the digital age where texts replace voices and photo shop replaces faces.

Friends side by side l.o.l and instant message rather than face one another and conversant.

The new terror is no longer the goblins whom prowl are city's streets at night but rather that of the faceless nameless that stalks are children though cyberspace.

Names, dates and locations, schools, interests and friends.

connected to a world more dangerous than the innocent can comprehend, lack of experience exploited.

Eighty thousand in twenty twelve Hovers boys say and we site by and wander why.

Why are children die.

Nathan Goens is a 26-year-old disabled vet that is currently living in a Salvation Army shelter. Writing helps him with his mental illness which began after his deployment when he was in the Marines. He is currently going to school for psychology. He is homeless.

Young Woman Pepper-Sprayed by Police James Roberts

How easy it is to force Unwanted words back down a hopeful throat. In the space between The next breath and the scream of pain Your gaze narrows to the shiny glare Hiding the face behind the plexi-glass helmet.

Hands conspicuously behind your back, The man next to you with right hand raised in a peace sign, that cloud of spray Is now a part of history, your name A goal for the voices of change.

Will you continue to play your part, Or has the burning led to a lessened silence? Others *will* take up the call, massing In places where authority holds its iron hand. What we are seeing: the last constriction of brute assault become a virtual meme for the future.

Disllusionment at 10:01 P.M. (after Wallace Stevens) James Roberts

The houses are haunted by blue glow from TV screens. None are green or glimmering with black and white test patterns or the numerical countdown indicating the end of the day. None of them are dark with sleeping forms dreaming inviolate scenes. People are not going to bed yet as sex is for baboons in cartoons. Popeye, drunk, with tattooed forearms catches Olive Oyl in her underwear.

James P. Roberts is the author of four poetry collections among his fourteen books in the fields of poetry, science fiction, fantasy, literary biography and baseball history. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin where he is a regional vice-president for the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets and active in the literary community.

Focus Brandon Gnuschke

My Lazy Eye	My Lazy Eye
It creates parallel	It creates parallel
dimensions.	dimensions.
Another world, a better world-	Another world, a better world-
that only Eye can see.	that only I can see.
Only when Eye focus does the	Only when I focus does the
mirrored image	mirrored image
com	verge.
People eye see,	People I see,
Doppelgangers with personalities that eye	Doppelgangers with personalities that I
create.	create.
Eye am welcome here.	I am welcome here.
In your world,	In your world,
Eye have one front tooth.	I have one front tooth.
But in my world,	But in my world,
Eye have two.	I have two.
And eye am normal.	And I am normal.
Two hands,	Two hands,
become four	become four
And Eye can juggle chainsaws.	And I can juggle chainsaws.

The Obsolete Man Brandon Gnuschke

Counting down... ...until detonation.

No absolution granted, to those who fall prey to the beast known as "Time"

The numbers that built me, The seconds, the minutes, hours, years.

The numbers that created me, are nothing but steps toward the sacrificial alter of inevitability.

My purpose is obsolete.

The world will march forward, as my body stands still.

I will fade away, just another deposit into the mass grave of yesterday.

I am obsolete today...

...but you will be tomorrow.

That Little Voice... Brandon Gnuschke

I am the cumbersome manifestation

of a failed life.

CHICKEN SHIT. Fear induced, Lifestyle of the poor and forgotten. Is this the best I can do?!

Awaking from a nightmare. A young man grabbing my throat. Why is he so angry? Because the reflection he sees

is me.

I. AM. DISAPPOINTMENT. PERSONIFIED.

The only thing I have wonis always coming in last. The only accomplishment I haveis that I have none at all.

You will fail. You will die. You won't matter. The End.

Brandon Gnuschke is a writer and student at Cal State University, San Bernardino where he is in pursuit of a BA in English. His current ambition is adapting his short story, "The Unfinished Works of Jackson Tate," into a novel. Previous work can be found in the 2013 edition of *The Sand Canyon Review*.

Callgirls on the Corner Mercedes Webb-Pullman

You see them on city corners, skimpy coats and curls, chins lifted defiantly like children.

Their makeup covers chains, chilblains, coloured by yellow chits from chemists.

They carry: chaos, cosmography, frozen clocks, cords gathered at a centre where a canker waits.

Men empty their milky trails into the narrow courses; centuries vanish, lift like clouds from the comma of a crotch.

They are channels through which their customers gush, each seeking the entrance to a lost and half-forgotten kingdom.

Here they wait, emptied of choice, these girls who glitter like sunset canals, your sisters.

Mercedes Webb-Pullman has an MA in Creative Writing from Victoria University Wellington. Her poems and short stories have appeared in *Turbine, 4th Floor, Swamp, Reconfigurations, The Electronic Bridge, Otoliths, Connotations, The Red Room, Typewriter,* and *Cliterature,* and in her books.

Welcome to Sun City Cynthia Anderson

A haven where mistakes can be forgotten, where no one asks what you used to be or do—

the important thing is, it's your time now just follow the written and unwritten rules,

trim your hedges to regulation height, join at least one of 80 social clubs,

lounge by the pools, eat in the restaurants, play shamrock-green fairways that drain

the desert dry—it's true, you need never leave this outpost of the Borg, with 4,999 homes exactly

like yours—beige stucco and covered patios, rats in the ceilings and snakes in the grass—

all within view of the San Andreas Fault. There's no better enclave to perfect your

isolation—security guards will save you from everything but yourself. Don't even think

about painting the walls purple. That kind of troublemaker doesn't belong here.

Judas Speaks Cynthia Anderson

My story is nearly the oldest ever told: loyal friend turned sacrificial lamb.

My parents gave me the name of praise. Call me what you will—dagger-man, deliverer—it does not change a thing.

I am no worse than anyone else.

What use would I have for 30 pieces of silver? A pittance, the price of a slave gored by an ox.

No, it was never about money. As for the rest, you decide.

Did he say my star was the brightest? Did he ask me to betray him? Did I take his secrets to the grave?

Or was my love a sham?

Beware of gospels. There's one for every sinner—

Blame-mongers, scapegoats, Sunday school ciphers salt rubbed in their wounds.

This above all: I am no traitor to myself.

Cynthia Anderson lives in the Mojave Desert near Joshua Tree National Park.Her poetry collections include: In the Mojave, Desert Dweller, Shared Visions I and II,
and Mythic Rockscapes. She co-edited the anthology A Bird Black As the Sun:
California Poets on Crows & Ravens.

Berating into Gray Timothy Yzaguirre

Again before I dressed I dawned my crimson band The red caress In the wakes of Relief Seams where I'm alive Yet... well I know I'm not alone This vastness that I live amongst Even though it's known It's not lonesome Living Just adds to it Lest I take matters Into My minds brand Of such is frowned upon So I'll continually mend Crimson to the Palette in front of me While I wait out The fumes Something take me before the Gray consumes me Or Let the spilled relief Stick To see.. I'm in control Of everything Cept Anything That matters Living in the Gray Shades of it But Gray Nonetheless Peering through it In hopes Any kind of fantasy Gray

You'll see the Vibrancy Amongst us Focus on it Don't go and dig Thus My new lead Where I've failed for Myself I'm here to constantly Sharpen your pencils And replace Broken crayons Until The Gray has come Brooding The ever pending Nothingness Radiating A certain fail You're Gonna grow to acknowledge Then try to ignore Welcome to the ledge The edge of treason Where color fades Along with recognition Of night and day The impending evade Of wading through the gray Till the haze goes Dark And I can no longer Remark with my heart "Such an abrasive Outlet to leave Weaved in attendance"

Tim Yzaguirre has always written shit poetry up until he started actually letting people read his written words. He's a father, a husband, a beer guzzler and plenty of other things he could mention, but really it all depends on who you're asking.

Making Headlines Robert Moreland

Van T Barfoot versus Sussex Square Homeowner Association over 21' flag pole*

Please don't lecture me on flying the flag;
a neighborhood association complains
then it makes the national news. I served.
Regular Army, Italy, 44.
I did my job (*Congressional Medal*of Honor). Korea and Viet Nam.
That never made news. It's about free speech.

Oh, just take down the flag pole. What's the big deal? Really? He signed the same agreement I did.

Perhaps they were the greatest generation.About sixty years ago. This is now.Remember Fallujah, the surge? My son died.I don't need a red, white and blue reminder ofa past administration's failed policies.He can go claim his free speech somewhere else.

Fourth of July Robert Moreland

They hung yellow ribbons with hope tried to be brave, their only son. The news there is bleak, mother cries; son goes, a battle to be won.

Heartland summer, asphalt simmers ship of state, who is in command? Economy flounders, we watch helpless while greed sets the demand.

Hope began to tarnish with fear, her husband laid off, lost his job. Hard workers always, he swept floors while retirement accounts were robbed.

June twentieth, the phone call came her knees went weak, he held her near. Flag draped casket, life changes now. Did it matter? Intern one dear.

Heartland summer, asphalt simmers while retirement accounts were robbed. Flag draped casket, life changes now; tried to be brave, their only son.

Bob (Robert) B. Moreland has a doctorate in biochemistry and works in biomedical/clinical research. He has published poems in Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review, Penwood Review, Red Cedar, the South Dakota Review, several anthologies, and he has coauthored two books of poems.

Delta Town Larry Rogers

I stand under a streetlamp, collar turned up against the wind that isn't blowing, conversing with myself in a whisper perfected while homeless and hanging out in a public library.

Across the street swinging doors open in a one hundred year old saloon like dark curtains being parted in a condemned building by dark children who still live there.

Larry Rogers mostly grew up in the piney woods of west central Arkansas. But when he was a child, he lived for a while in Berkeley and Compton, California. Larry is a professional singer-songwriter. His poems have appeared in *Pearl, Rattle, The Denver Post,* and the *New York Quarterly.*

Ten — to the Slaughterhouse They Go *Kjartan Lindsted*

One brown cow moos mournfully as it meanders Two frowning cows march madly along the path Three thirsty old cows think troubled thoughts Four heated white heifers argue amongst themselves Five fat bulls fight furiously, refusing to fall in line Six sickly calves sadly sing their last songs Seven sorrowful shorthorns see the end of the line Eight endangered oxen amble aimlessly Nine nonchalant new stock move meekly to their doom Ten – to the slaughterhouse they go

Kjartan (KJ) Lindsted is a 28-year-old, non-traditional college student, pursuing a BA in English (with a focus in linguistics). In his free time, KJ enjoys riding motorcycles, reading, and listening to music. He attended Crafton Hills College for several years, and is excited to be given a spot in the 2016 edition of the *Sand Canyon Review*.

Motorcycle Crash with My Father and Bone Ryan Mattern

When a motorcycle splits traffic the memory grips me:

You lay in the angles of the road, T-shirt flagged over your head. Motorcycle idling, handlebars bent skyward by your side.

The skin of your back rubbed quartz-smooth by the gravel in the asphalt. The truck that left you, on the freeway by now.

Your jeans torn off, wrapped around the exhaust, twine around a finger. And your leg: a textbook image of a compound fracture.

I watched you then--a concentric circle inside your lover's stomach, and octave too low to be heard---

the opened bones of your leg, a femur listing fantastically, split like forceps and reaching.

Coda soliloquy Ryan Mattern

It's 10pm and I'm wondering where my children are.

Their breath sweet like new carpet, unlit cigarettes.

Their voices phoning through the walls. Singing made up songs---

the mountain lion's mustache and bushes blooming owl eyes---

into Dixie cups and dental floss. It's 10pm

and I'm wondering when I'll be a father again, alive in some blinking-eyed dream.

Ryan Mattern holds a B.A. in Creative Writing from California State University, San Bernardino and M.A. in English from the University of California, Davis. He is the recipient of the Felix Valdez Award for Short Fiction. His work has been published in *Ghost Town*, *THE2NDHAND*, *Poetry Quarterly*, and others.

Vektor 2/8/16 Timothy Dodd

The desert brings us her alien with speedy little fingers plucking strings; down in our abandoned factories the shriek is heard: move and fly, or dissolve into a parasitic plastic whose tiny buttons latch meaningless voids that never die.

Outside, every car lights up as spaceship, carrying frenzied cerebro-matter and automaton eyes poking at creation with crisscrossed circuitry, fretting under a skyline ironed in madness, midnight lit for a belly of decaying bridges and wasted wires softened only by darkness.

But inside, cosmic cortex kicks our accelerating universe. Asteroids land on exploding brains, crafting a crooked chaos for smoke-filled lives; today's tomorrow finally worth our outer isolation.

Timothy B. Dodd is from Mink Shoals, WV. His poetry has appeared in *The RoanokeReview, William & Mary Review, Big River Poetry Review, Crannog, Two Thirds North*, and
elsewhere. He is currently in the MFA program at the University of Texas El Paso.

Martyrs Cecilia Rodriguez

Feather crosses Born upon Unburdened shoulders Sacrifices Of lies And false Promises Lie upon The alter To appease Their guilt And vanity A fellowship of Ignorance And Pride That glorifies Complacency.

Cecilia Rodriguez is a graduate of California State University, Long Beach, with a BA in Theater Arts. She has taken Child Development classes at Crafton Hills College and received a Teacher's Certificate in 2010. She has previously been published in the *Press Enterprise* for a movie review of *The Watchmen*.

Women's Liberation, 1974 Barbara Ruth

In the teacher's lunchroom you tell me you met a woman who was defensive about Women's Lib. She was hostile to you and you want me to tell you why.

You say you like Women Like Me. It's those others you have no use for.

I am silent for longer than is courteous.

Finally I tell you it's not important how she treated you. What's important is how women treat women.

That's not what either of us had expected me to say. You say you'll have to think about it get back to me tomorrow.

The next day on the volley-ball court you crash into me and knock me down. Crouched like a cougar I ask you the name of the game you think you're playing.

The children watch and giggle.

Barbara Ruth writes at the intersection of Potowatomee and Ashkenazi, disabled and neuroqueer, fat and yogi, not this and not that. Her photography, memoirs, poetry, and fiction appear in numerous lesbian, queer, feminist, disability, literary anthologies, and journals. She lives with her beloved in San Jose.

My Daughter is 17 Months Old Steve Shilling

and when people ask, I say a year-and-a-half, never quite sure when the statute of limitations runs out on month or if you can round up.

Recently I turned 439 months old, which would be 3,073 if this were dog years, or seasons, paints drying, lawns browning, playgrounds once shiny turning to rust.

If I am lucky enough to see 1,000 of them, April 30th of my 83rd year, I'll throw a party, invite you and the remaining members of our kindergarten class, when we were relatively on our 60th month and our hips lifted us up on the jungle gym. Unlike now, the same metal working inside them.

Steve Shilling has been published in numerous journals, including: *DASH Journal, Reed Magazine, Crannóg*, and *Flint Hills Review.* When not teaching or writing, he enjoys gardening and bicycle riding and dreams of riding up the Tour de France's famed Mont Ventoux climb one day.

Drained *Kathren Gauthier*

See accompanying art piece on page 94

I don't mind if you don't. I'm patriotically impartial for now, wouldn't want to start something disconcerting between us and our contenders though I feel like a cat in water

Listening to the suits sensibly spout liquid gold while careful not to giveaway all, simulating open air discussion with non-descript words

trying to reside adjacent the sun while kicking away the podium to displace others in deep shadow

Ads, polls and social smear taps are on full pressure disturbing our thinning concentration with hyper-text and undertones that scald the senses while democracy eddies on in fluid controversy

Alien tribes rally for power

banners rustle and candidates sweat over heat of the moment stuff aired on talk shows, orchestrated suds in the bowl stuff spinning their wheels to escape showing shady tints of true color while leaking the other's hue with a slur Blue or Red is draining through household pipes with seeping and polemic supporters, funneling a load through the tributaries while equally perplexing primary results sit in the basin of the country and clog the sink with debate

To the unpleasantly appealing and ripe for exposition confabs and sermons heard, some are mystified, justified and disoriented.

All of us, while ready to feel superior not with what we've lost, are saturated with what we'll gain. Some presidential, supreme and chief-like candidate to name but who really wins?

Karen Boissonneault-Gauthier is a photographer, writer, and poet. She has shot cover art for *Crack the Spine*, *Vine Leaves Literary Journal* and has been published in *The Scarborough Big Art Book* and *Lucid Moose Lit*. Her poetry has been featured in *Calliope Magazine* (winner of the National Poetry Awards).

The Boulevard Voltaire Janet Reed

"Écrasez l'Infâme! If we believe absurdities, we commit atrocities." Voltaire

Silver moonlight flickers through branches waltzing with the breeze of a cooling November night. A star or two two-steps behind the trees and curtsies to the darkening street corners as café lights rise in welcome to the symphony of sounds - the chatter of workers shedding their clocks, tools stowed and files stacked, the tremulous sighs of lovers rolling fortune's wheel Lady Luck in jolly roulette. Over the babble, the deep bass of a band riffs its grit and backs the swelling vibes of the avenue with raucous joie de vivre, a chemical soup du jour of color and creed, class and culture simmering on the low heat of liberté, egalité, and fraternité. A young man like all the rest joins in taking a seat at the crowded Café Voltaire, placing an order for a croque monsieur, perhaps, an Orangina, s'il vous plait. In the yellowing haze of the terrace lights, he sits in silence absorbing a laugh, a whisper, a slap on the back, two beers slammed in salute to soaring spirits. Later, a survivor said he lightly rubbed his belly like a man savoring his pleasure, releasing his device of hate in darkness on a street named for tolerance. the bête noire on the Boulevard Voltaire.

Janet Reed earned her Master's Degree in English/Literature from Pittsburg State University. Currently, she teaches writing, literature, and theater at Crowder College in Missouri. In her spare time, she allows the voices in her head to emerge; that these voices have found homes in several journals is a bonus she enjoys.

Cabin Fever Judith Skillman

It's not the barest part of herself that bothers her most. Rather this changing flesh that seems no longer her best feature. At the juncture of nerve pain a ship might balk, refuse the invitation of an open span, water ultramarine, bridge raised so the sail can safely travel through. What lies beneath the desire to leave one's home? Linens folded, dishes washed and put away. Children raised and gone. It's not the lack of trauma when trauma ruled the roost for so long. What chafes at her is Paris. The Paris that was then, not the one besieged. Ateliers, shops, bookstores—the little man who saved her from Moroccans when she ducked in. The train always waiting to take her back to a place where the veal would be seasoned by an uncle, cooked in pure butter just until. There the mussels waiting on a white table cloth in blue shells for her reluctance, and the usual coaxing, followed by a hard swallow and more Beaujolais. The colorless aunt who somehow owned this uncle. The drama of their child being closeted again to scream its head off. No one to rescue and nothing to be done.

Judith Skillman's recent book is House of Burnt Offerings, Pleasure Boat Studio. Her work has appeared in Cimarron Review, J Journal, Seneca Review, Tampa Review, Prairie Schooner, FIELD, The Iowa Review, Poetry, and elsewhere. Awards include an Eric Mathieu King Fund grant.

Grind *Meghan McCarthy*

Death isn't what I'm afraid of. The final moment, when Samsara wheel stops turning, if only for a moment I will be released. No, death is not what is alarming— I won't see the look on my mother's face as people I know speak about the good woman I was, am. Will always be. To be dead means I leave others to sift through my jewelry boxes, attach significance to the belongings I wore once, twice. Gifts I didn't part with out of guilt. These trinkets will be passed down to my grand daughter on her 16th birthday to denote her origins. Strangers will say what a beautiful piece, where did you get it? inquire She will respond with pride It was my grandmother's

No, death isn't frightening, a release like an orgasm. All of this day in, clock in, tune in, wake, be still, wake, sleep wake up, be alert, more coffee, more awake, more, more and—done. In a breath, a tidal wave hits the shore, and like the wave, I retreat back into the whole ocean, watching without eyes that rake the remnants of my life off broken beach. Limbs and rubble strewn

Death, is not the hard part. It's soft, gentle, holding your breath for minutes, then releasing. Ah, no, I'm not chilled by death I am dismayed by the ephemerality of days. I am afraid of the subtle slip of immeasurable meter. Once, long ago, humans measured it with sand and watched as it dripped poing poing! a facet not closed shut one grain, seventy. We measure to understand what is inconceivable

Yes, what rattles me is how fast my nail polish becomes chipped, how quickly the hair grows from my scalp and my ends are split, we cut and trim and cut cut it again. Yes, what troubles me is the trash that builds eggshells and the wrinkled thick skin of avocados I ate it, I ate it and it's trashed packages cardboard boxes receipts junk mail in my box, I delete mail without envelope and it appears, appears, spam, again

Wasting our time in the waiting line. In the back, how long will I be in the back of this line. The line in the airport, the line I wait in to step out of my sandals, I wait to see my mother's face, wrap my arms around her slim frame, we are both aging, we know this and say nothing. I wait to see them again, I go home though I am a visitor everywhere

Death is not scary, it's the laundry it's washing cycling folding hanging worn sweat wadded and washed dried cleaned folded towered and rubbled, again

we are always cleaning to be dirtied again

No, death is a breeze it's becoming aware of the brevity of love that scares the shit out of me. Love, that cheesy word we tag onto everything we use it like designers who buy their garb from sweat shop and sew a swoosh in

We use that bell to tell that it's god/sunshine/unconditional/puppy/tainted/blind/endearing/attention/likeasisterlikeabrother/ patience/kindness/one/beatleslyrics

lover & lover/ lover to friends/ friends into: don't acknowledge birthdays and weddings. under this one condition lover, we say, as long as I'm the only hand you hold

No, death isn't tormenting but watching love fade is.

I have felt the wane of knot untie, seen people I loved become real to REM

They are animation replaying on repeat that time at lake when the sun set so nice, run palms along the walls,

the inside of the brain. You retrace footsteps, envisioning their routines

She washed the dishes while I dried, in the night I held her and when she dreamed of her father's pass ing I held her, I held her and yet I couldn't say I love you though I felt it. Though I feel you now, more than ever

And now I know what the great songstresses wailed about. There are dreams that never fade, no, not until death

No, death doesn't mystify me as waking from an unpronounced vision, as though I don't have the words for what I saw, I don't speak the language of sleep, no matter how much I try to remember, it's gone. I-cheated-on-my-wife-and-she'll-never-forgive-me gone

It's keeping my bank account above 0 between the bills thrills and The Now. Realizing that at this rate, I'll die middle class and grind for others saying things like I'm doing it for the kids which one—all of them? (all of them) what a thin veil to cover such a dark and thick illusion

Giving up what you yearn for to do what is safe because, like, the system, man it's quitting before you start never feeling adequate for sex for love for work for play for treating yo' damn self looking your lover in the eye and saying sorry for what another lover did to your sex nah, death don't scare me a bit how can we be fearful of what is certain?

to live is a tax

TAX —And I'll have some

For all this grind my money my efforts must be used for some greater good or

some greater profit.

And so I ask the universe

HUMAN

Who is profiting?

I know it's happening but no one says nothing and everything spins right along. Death? Child's play. Given. What's shitty is the thought of wasting "my good years" on Instasnapchatbook reeling in an audience to cheer for my life

No death is not what I fear in this life, it's not doing the things I want because I anticipate it's lightness coming on, swallowing what dim bit we are cultivating, hoping, relentlessly, that our fire for breath will match that of an endless undying sun

Meghan McCarthy graduated from CSUSB with an MFA in creating writing in 2014. She currently resides in San Francisco where she is a middle school language arts and social studies teacher. She is 26, has a cat named Sully, and enjoys writing about people that are much more interesting than she is.









Marie Recio was born and raised in the city. She enjoys driving to nearby mountains to see the city lights, and getting a glimpse of the world beyond that. Her hobbies include: photography, drawing, and dancing.

The Old Ways Lawrence Eby



Bee in Joshua Tree Lawrence Eby





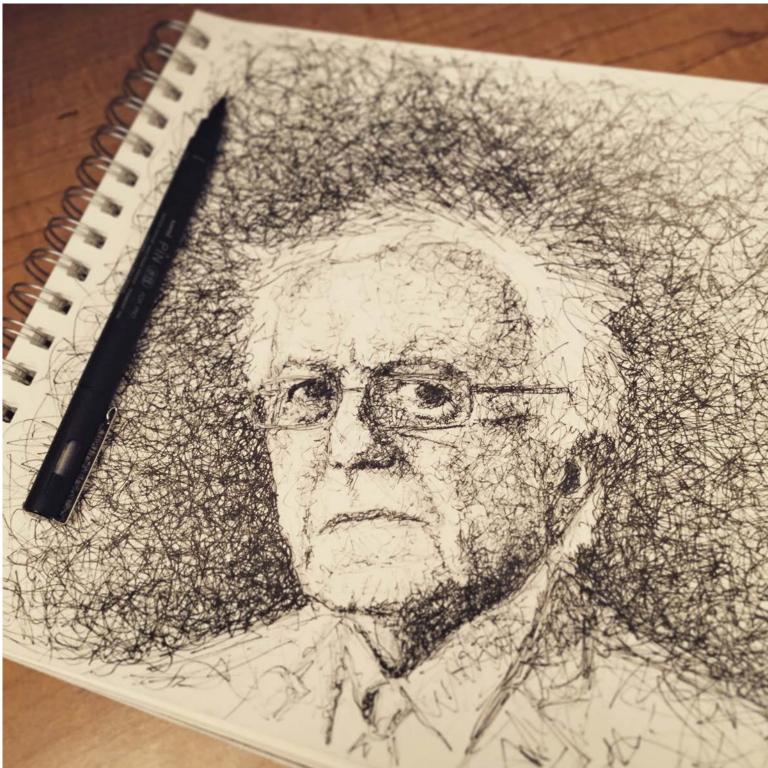
Untitled Patrick Novikov



Untitled

Patrick Novikov

Untitled Patrick Novikov



Patrick Novikov was born and grew up in Minsk, Belarus. After moving to America at the age of 13, he gained interest in art and pursued it as a hobby. Now, as a student at Crafton Hills College, he chose the field as his career path, and will be continuing to grow and evolve as an artist, and in future as a product designer.

Untitled *Martin Salazar*

Martin Salazar is currently majoring in Business Administration at Crafton Hills College and is an aspiring accountant. His hobbies include creating music, reading and writing poetry, and photography.

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Still Wild Enough to Kill You W. Jack Savage



Within Sight of Camp W. Jack Savage

Walter Jack Savage is a retired broadcaster and educator. He is the author of seven books including: *Imagination: The Art of W. Jack Savage*. To date, more than fifty of Jack's short stories and over seven hundred of his artworks have been published worldwide.

Untitled Maddox Buckwalter

Medusa Maddox Buckwalter



Untitled *Maddox Buckwalter*



Untitled Maddox Buckwalter 84

About Our Cover Artist: *Bianca Gomez*



Bianca Gomez is a current student at California State University of San Bernardino. She majors in Psychology and minors in Art. She hopes to become a psychotherapist and use her passion for art to do art therapy. Art has always been there for her when at times she didn't know how to express herself through words. She finds it fascinating how the mind can speak through the hands and create a masterpiece with just a little paint and a simple brush. She hopes one day she can share this form of expression with her clients.

We are in control of our own image Bianca Gomez

"We are in control

of our own image"

La succession

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A REAL PROPERTY OF

THERE IS NO FUTURE IN ANY JOB. THE FUTURE LIES IN THE PERSON WHO HOLDS THE JOB. DR. GEORGE CRANE, columnist

X

There is no future in any job Bianca Gomez

OUR GIRLS NEED POSITIVE ROLE MODELS.

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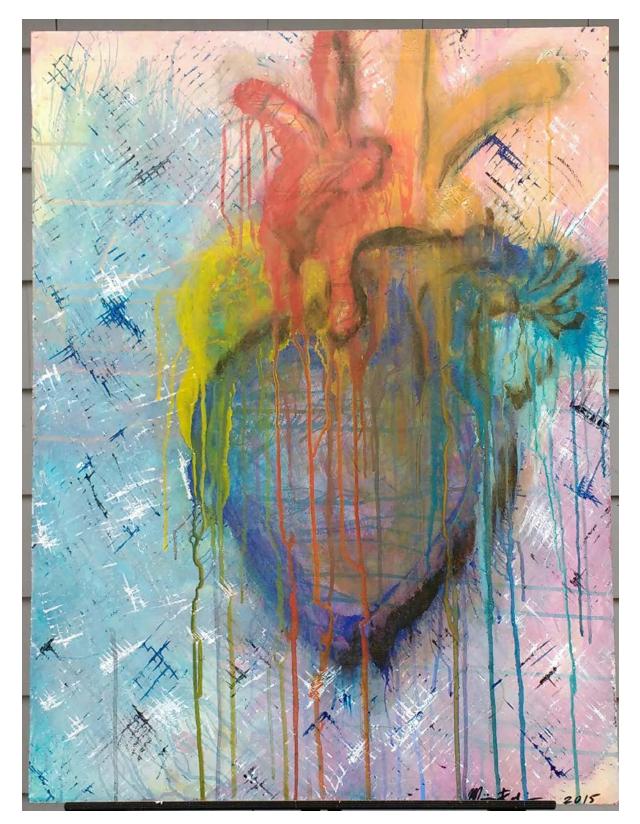
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NOT JUST INSTAGRAM PICTURES.

Not just instagram pictures Bianca Gomez

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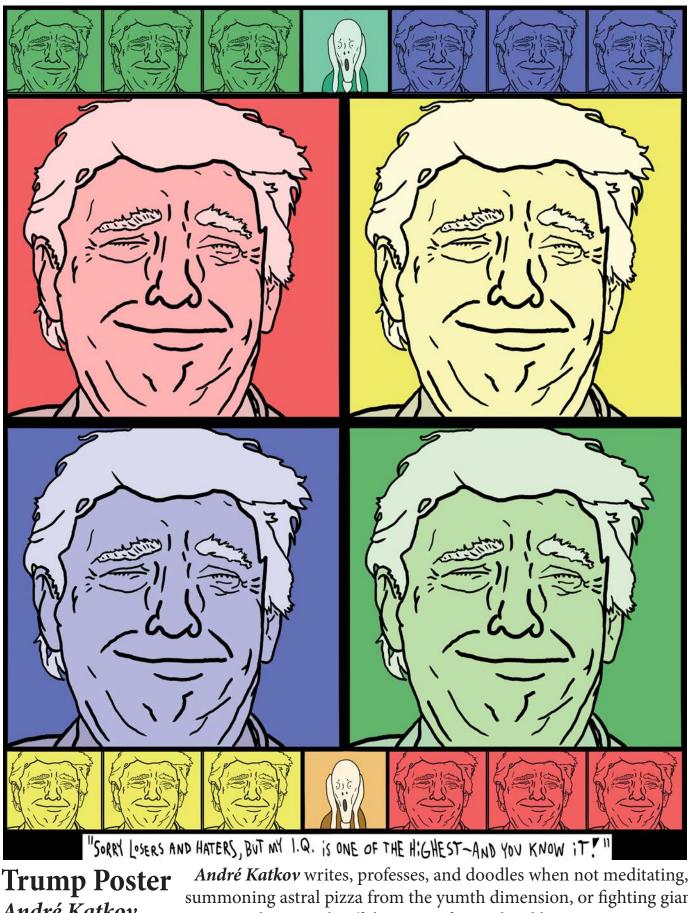
Feels So Miriam P. Robinson



Beams Miriam P. Robinson

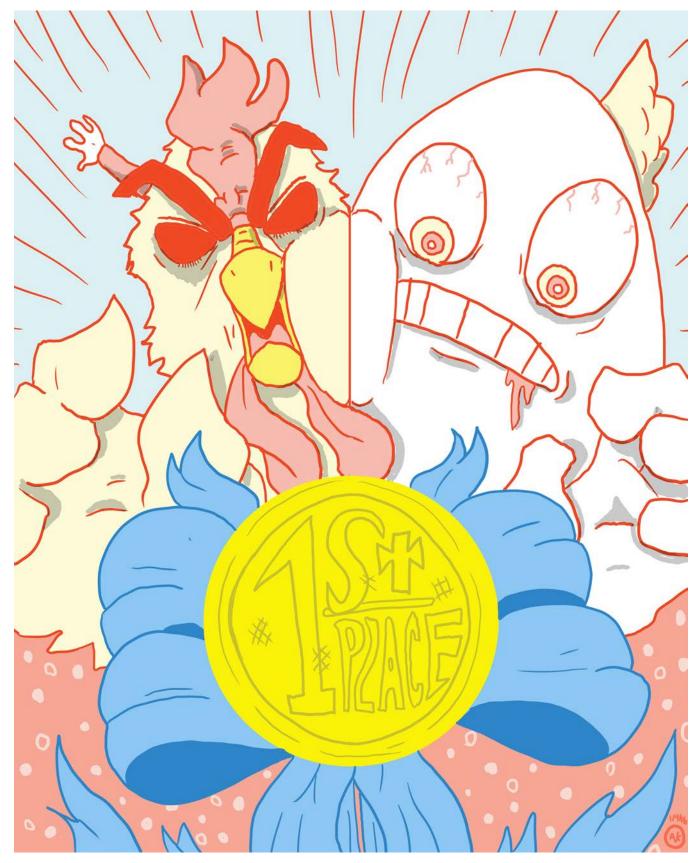


Miriam P. Robinson was born in Cairo, Egypt and grew up in Duluth, Georgia and attended Georgia College and State University. She's now a sculpture fabricator for Formations Studio, located in Atlanta, GA, where she recently assisted in building a 32 foot-tall sculpture. One of her favorite pastimes is to hide free paintings around the city for others to find.



92 André Katkov

André Katkov writes, professes, and doodles when not meditating, summoning astral pizza from the yumth dimension, or fighting giant alien squids off the coast of some local burger joint.



Which Came First André Katkov 93

Draining Democracy Karen Boissonneault-Gauthier

Karen Boissonneault-Gauthier is a photographer, writer and poet. She has shot cover art for Crack the Spine, Vine Leaves Literary Journal and her artwork and poetry have been featured in many publications as well. Follow Karen @KBG_Tweets and see her visual art at www.kcbgphoto.com

Maxies Mark



Occupy Movement David Gerhartz

 David Gerhartz is a local event videographer, editor, and photographer for Alpha Omega Productions.
 He has over 25 years of experience in mainstream Hollywood, including: Tonight Show with Jay Leno, American Dreams, Ultramanrk, MTV's Trippin, Wonder Showzen, and Wild Boyz.

Fish Manifesto John Fisher



John Fisher made his art debut in 1970. He is currently an art teacher who holds an art degree from University of California, Santa Barbara and California State University, San Bernardino.

Hourglass-The short Eternity Italia Ruotolo



Italia Ruotolo was born in Naples, Italy and graduated at the Fine Arts Academy of Naples. For many years, she worked as goldsmith and jewel designer. Ruotolo's work is a broad range of pop art and art nouveau.



Steven and Jay Dunes Terry Hastings

Captain Animal Ol'Weather Dakota Stack

Death Before Dishonor *Emmanuel De Leon*



Emmanuel De Leon is an intuitive painter who enjoys letting the layers build and freestyling the entire process. Each layer is unexpected and keeps art-making fresh. He is heavily influenced by melody and rhythm and translates onto canvas by how the viewer's eye moves around the painting. He always discovers something new whether it be beautiful, painful or controversial.

Psalm 23:4 Emmanuel De Leon

Expanding the Color Palette, the Knife and the Imagination: An Interview with Leonid Afremov



Leonid Afremov (born 12 July 1955 in Vitebsk, Belarus) is a Russian–Israeli modern impressionistic artist who works mainly with a palette knife and oils. He developed his own unique technique and style which is unmistakable and cannot be confused with other artists. Afremov is mainly known as being a self-representing artist who promotes and sells his work exclusively over the internet with very little exhibitions and involvement of dealers and galleries.

Before the advancement of online sales and eBay, Afremov was a struggling artist. He was born in Vitebsk, Belarus, and lived there until 1990. Between 1990 and 2002, he lived in Israel, and from 2002 to 2010 in Boca Raton, Florida. Afremov currently resides in the popular resort town Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico, near Cancun. He paints mainly landscape, city scenes, seascapes, flowers and portraits. Most of his work is considered very colorful and politically neutral. Q: The theme for our magazine this year is "Controversy," and in reading your Biography, we learned that you are a Russian-Israeli. How would you describe your childhood?

A: My childhood was in Vitebsk Belarus in Former USSR. It was like the soviet "baby-boomer" generation. Very poor, no freedom, and false hopes of bright future.

Q: Being an Israeli Citizen, what made you want to reside in Mexico?

A: Israel is not quiet and has lots of security problems. I cannot work in peace there. Playa Del Carmen is a nice resort town. Very quiet and I love it. I think I found my peace there.

Q: Do you plan on doing any traveling soon? If so, where?

A: I will be going to Paris in a few months. I travel every year to Europe and I still have not seen everything in Paris.

Q: Would you ever consider moving to California?

A: Maybe. I have been to Los Angeles and San Francisco. Probably if I move it will be a smaller city. I do not like big places.

Q: What does a typical relaxing day look like for you?

A: Sitting in a pool at my home, reading, and watching moving at night.



The Gateway to Amsterdam

When Dreams Come True



Q: How many children do you have and do any of them aspire to be like you?

A: I have 2 adult sons, 31 and 38 years old. They help me out with the commercial and the logistical part of my business.

Q: Has your background ever hindered you personally? If so, how?

A: I'm proud of who I am, but I have been a victim of anti-Semitism.

Q: How would you encourage someone who was being negatively singled out for his or her heritage?

A: Prove them wrong by being the best at whatever you wish to pursue.

Q: We know that you like to keep your paintings politically neutral. Is there a reason for that?

A: Besides an artist, I'm also a businessman. It's bad for business to be taking sides or making a certain group upset.

Q: Do you find the terms "Whimsical and Romantic" a good description of your artwork? Why or why not?

A: I think my work is romantic. I, myself, am a romantic person. Q: If given the opportunity, would you or have you taught your methods to art students?

A: I have a few very advanced students in Playa Del Carmen and I give seminars and workshops sometimes. Not to sound cocky, but my style is not easy to teach or to learn. It's very technical and requires lots of time and practice.

Q: What is your normal routine for beginning a new painting?

A: I will first make a drawing with a pencil on the canvas of the composition, the objects, and all specific items that need to be in the painting, like a plan. Then I proceed with the palette knifes to make the painting.

Q: What inspired you to use such unique methods of using a palette knife for your paintings?

A: I was looking for clean colors. The brush is never 100% clean and the hairs always carry residue of previously used colors. The palette knife can be wiped crystal clean with one tissue and have the color true and vivid.

Q: Which artist, living or dead, do you admire or aspire to be like?

A: I really admire March Chagall. I grew up with his art. I was born in the same town.

Q: Which of your paintings would you say was the most challenging for you?

A: Paintings with faces and lots of details. Buildings are the most time consuming.



Q: If you had to choose just one painting of your own, which would be your most treasured?



A: Alley by the Lake.



Cafe in the Old City



Q: Your works are so wonderfully colorful. Do you have a favorite color that suits you the most?

A: Orange and Yellow. They are very vivid and strong with emotions.

Q: We know that you suffer from various health

issues, which in our opinion makes your artwork even more extraordinary. How does it feel knowing that your artwork has touched and inspired many people including many of our students?

A: It makes my heart cry with joy. I love the fact that I'm an inspiration. I have had health problems since my adolescence years. It never stopped me. I will create as long as I can.



Thank you, Leonid for the exceptional honor of glimpsing the world through your vivaciously romantic eyes.

I Arrived Just After Dark W. Jack Savage

After Hours Joint W. Jack Savage

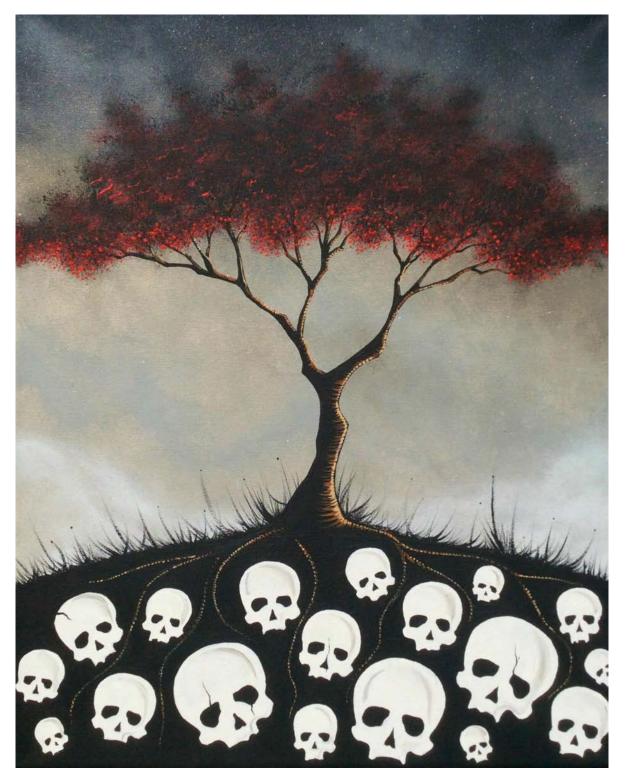




Sunset Over Crafton Hills Lawrence Eby

Lawrence Eby is a poet mainly and is the author of two books of poetry. He lives in Seattle with his wonderful fiancée and their ferocious panther cat, Junebug.

Freedom Has Been Paved Owen Klaas



Owen Klaas is a self-taught career artist. He is a multi-faceted artist who has been featured on the cover of the Sand Canyon Review, in radio interviews, online magazines, and local news spotlights. His art has been used as album artwork, illustrations, photography sets, and tattoo designs.

Alan Fire Terry Hastings

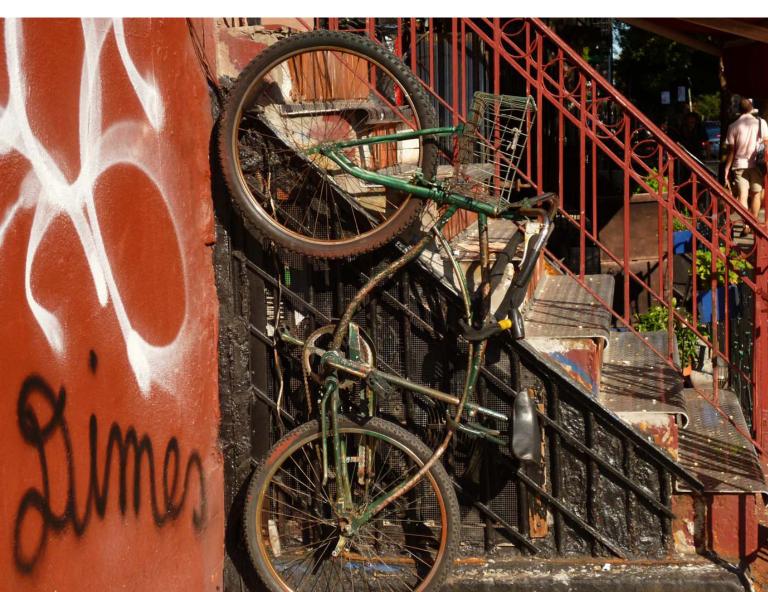


Terry Hastings, Palm Springs art photographer is thrilled to be included once again in the SCR. Terry continues to push the boundaries of art and photography. "Controversy" is no stranger to Terry as his work has been censored in many shows. Art shouldn't be just "pretty." Art is at its best when thought provoking. www.TheHastingsGallery.com



Fences Kyle Hemmings

Hung Up Kyle Hemmings



Kyle Hemmings has art work in *The Stray Branch, Euphenism, Uppagus, The Bitchin' Kitsch,* Black Market Lit, Snapping Twigs, Convergence, and elsewhere. He loves pre-punk garage bands of the 60s, Manga comics, Impressionism, and urban photography/art.







The Ambush Robert W Norman

One of the most terrifying ambushes of my life time took place in my own living room. It happened while I was watching late night TV on a sofa bed. I had an ashtray resting on my chest with both hands tucked behind my head for comfort, and a cigarette dangling between my lips.

I was tall enough... or the bed was short enough, whatever proportional reasoning you cater to... anyway my feet dangled over the end of the bed with my shoes off and socks still on.

I lie there chuckling at the joking commentary of the late night host. My feet wiggling from side to side in no apparent rhythm.

You may think, as I did, that all was bliss... which it was... but lurking nearby was terror. Terror can come in many forms, some obvious, some not so obvious. In this instance terror was disguised as an eight pound ball of feline fur that answered to the name of Cato.

The name Cato had come from a character in a series of comical movies involving a French Police Inspector. The Inspectors' butler was named Cato and always snuck around the house popping out and attacking the Inspector.

In the movie Cato did this to keep the Inspectors' self defenses always on the ready. My Cato has no such duties. Her actions were purely sardonic.

That night I was oblivious of her presence as my feet innocently dangled over the edge of the sofa. I hadn't noticed her coiled tightly up, hunched down and advancing across the carpet ever so slowly.

She moved in silence, making her way to the end of the couch, getting within striking

distance. Then, with blinding speed, she leapt up at my feet.

Cato's claws were fully extended. All four paws closed around my right foot. All of the claws, in those paws, pushed right threw the sock and sank deeply into my foot. She had no intention of letting her prey escape.

The sudden pain was excruciating. I opened my mouth, gasping for breath to use in a scream... I had forgot the lit cigarette dangling between my lips. I inhaled it in a flash. In subconscious reflex I swallowed the cigarette. The cherry red tip of it slid down my throat. I coughed and howled.

Cato instantly came out of her attack mode retracting her claws to make an escape. In that same instant my foot jerked up, Cato was launched off my foot straight up amongst the blades of the overhead ceiling fan, which luckily wasn't running.

I rolled off the couch choking and gagging in pain. I knocked a lamp off the small table next to the sofa. As the lamp hit the floor the filament broke, casting the room into darkness.

Gasping for breath I propped myself against the wall. On TV the audience was laughing hysterically. The host was looking into the camera with a shit-eating grin... he seemed to be looking right at me!

I wanted to throw something at him, but I couldn't see a thing in the dark. Feeling along the wall I touched the light switch and flipped it on. It was the switch for the overhead fan and light. As the light came on the fan started to turn.

There was a loud meow from overhead. I looked up to see Cato clinging to a fan blade as it started to move. She was frantically looking for a place to jump.

I was leaning against the wall. I was the tallest thing in the room, the nearest thing to her and she knew, from sitting in my lap, that I was soft. Her meow escalated to a howl as she started spinning around faster and faster.

Despite being frightened by the motion Cato still managed to time her leap and twist her body around enough to land, with all four paws, on my head.

Of course to ensure she would not bounce off me she had every claw on every toe extended to its fullest. Actually, it wasn't so much a landing as it was a plop and hop to a better landing place.

Cato was on and off my head in a millisecond. She went from my head to the sofa and then out of the room and down the hallway. All of this before I could reach up to protect myself.

I fell to the sofa in agony. I wasn't sure what to grab first, my seared throat, my bleeding foot or my punctured head. It took a minute of whining in agony to gather my composure.

I staggered into the kitchen for a glass of water to soothe my throat. With that done I looked at my foot. The sock seemed to have absorbed most of the blood. I turned my attention to my head. When I rubbed the top of my head, with my fingers, they came away bloody.

I stomped down the hall to the bathroom. In the bathroom I toweled off the top of my head and my damaged foot and treated the cuts and punctures with antiseptic. I used the medicine cabinet mirror to look down my throat and swore I could see blisters. I tried drinking some bourbon as anesthetic but that stung so bad I had to stop.

Finally settled down, I went back to the living room. I straightened up the lamp and folded the bed back into the sofa. I tried to go back to watching TV but couldn't. I was very conscious of keeping my feet still and my eyes kept jutting around the room looking for Cato.

I usually smoke to relax but my throat hurt so much I didn't want to light another cigarette. I'm not sure when I finally fell asleep. When I woke it was morning. I was still sitting on the couch with my feet flat on the floor.

Cato was in the doorway to the hall, purring. She had her feet under her and her tail twitching as she watched me. There is no doubt in my mind she was planning another attack.

I haven't pulled the bed out of the sofa or had a cigarette while watching TV since that night. However, it has not been an entirely one sided battle.

I too have had my moments of glee. Whenever I see Cato trying to sneak into the room, I reach up and flip the wall switch. As the light comes on and the fan starts to spin she hunches down... gives me a hiss and flees the room. I'll take any moment of victory I can get. Then it's back to vigilantly watching for her next sneak attack.

The Magic Serpent and Karma of Doom Robert W Norman

It all started with a small group of pranksters who decided they would work together, they thought they had a wonderful idea of great potential. They would buy Styrofoam blocks from a local home improvement center, then cut and glue the blocks into the rough shape of a sea serpent floating in the water. Finalizing the project, they would sculpt it into its finished shape with an electric carving knife. Painting it would allow them to create even more detail.

The serpent would consist of four or five sculptured pieces. They could string the pieces out in the water giving the serpent the look of great length while being partially submerged. The serpent would have a head atop a long neck, a couple of humps trailing behind with the last piece being flipped tail at the end. Each piece would be mounted on a plywood base, counter balanced underneath so they would float upright without capsizing.

The pranksters knew just the place for displaying it... a local spot. There was a scenic little lake along a highway that ran down out of the mountains. Anyone on the highway passing by the lake would see the huge serpent with its head & neck sticking up out of the water fifteen feet with two humps and a tail trailing out behind.

The pranksters worked on their sea serpent in a garage after work and on weekends for over a month. The head & neck were designed in three pieces; there was a hole drilled through the center of them so they could be stacked and held in place by a wooden dowel. When all the pieces were broken down for transporting, the whole creature fit in the beds of three pickups.

They dubbed the project "Operation Cecil".

They were very serious and meticulous in planning their mission. They consulted a calendar and scheduled the setup on a moonlit night.

The lake had no public access. It was owned by a water district and used strictly for irrigation. Fortunately, the pranksters worked for the water district and had a key for the gate. They were sure they could assemble their handy work by moonlight, doing the work at the waters' edge without flashlights to avoid drawing attention. A small inflatable boat was used to tow the serpent out onto the lake. They placed an anchor line at the front and the back of the serpent to keep the various sculptured pieces properly strung out in position.

The pranksters finished their work an hour before dawn. No one had shown up asking questions. Once finished they moved their trucks to a dirt road across the highway from the lake where they watched from behind a stand of trees to see what would happen.

Passing motorists only get a clear view of the lake for a few seconds along a sweeping turn of the highway as they pass a wide pullout. The pranksters were disappointed when the first three cars passed by without any kind of a reaction.

The fourth vehicle, an old truck, braked quickly as it passed the view point. It pulled to the shoulder of the road, letting an SUV pass by.

Then the truck backed up to the pullout where the view of the lake is and parked. A short pudgy guy smoking a cigarette got out of the old truck while hitching his pants up and looking at the lake with the serpent sitting in the middle of it. He scratched his head looking around, not noticing the three pickups sitting a few hundred yards away under the trees. The driver reached back into the truck cab and brought out a phone and took a couple of pictures.

He shook his head and got back into the truck. He began fussing over his phone, trying to post pictures on the internet and sending them to a few friends while, at the same time, pulling erratically back onto the highway.

Seconds later another car braked hard and pulled over. Sunlight was starting to spill over the hills and fill the canyon with light. People were starting to notice the creature on the lake.

Before long there were vehicles stopped on both sides of the road. Word was getting out. A wildfire was spreading on the social media network; several web sites had posted pictures of the creature displayed and text messages were going out describing where to find the creature. The lake was becoming a destination point for people. By afternoon several Network News Trucks, with talking heads onboard, had made ventures out to stop for a few seconds of eye candy and a quick sound bite.

By the next day the highway at the lake was becoming congested and dangerous. Commuter traffic racing by twice a day was no mood for lookie-loos cluttering up the road. The commuters had already seen the serpent... they wanted people out of their way so they could get to work.

The lookie-loos had no idea about the early morning and late afternoon traffic. They were too busy looking at the serpent to watch the road.

The inevitable happened. A gawking lookie-loo making a U-turn on the big sweeping curve was T-boned by a hurried commuter coming down off the mountain. The commuter had been distracted while sending a text message to work indicating he would be running a few minutes late.

There were injuries in both vehicles. Fortunately no one was killed. At least it seemed fortunate... at first. That is until Biff le' Bowski, an ambulance chasing slime ball of a lawyer got involved.

No one would ever call Biff, Buff. Biff was 5 foot 7 and 3/4" inches tall and tipped the scales at 250 ½ pounds. He waddled with an air of confidence only the truly obnoxious can master.

Biff was renowned for hustling injury litigation. He saw the incident with the serpent as a spectacular opportunity. The lookie-loo making the U-turn felt awful about the accident. The Lookie-loos' insurance company was willing to settle up... within reason... almost immediately or... if need be, drag out the claim for years!

Being a lawyer extraordinaire, Biff settled with the Lookie-Loos' insurance company quickly. Biff saw the settlement as seed money to carry him and his client through the lean times as they went for the deep pockets of the water district who owned the reservoir.

Biff and his client; "Little Donny" were the perfect couple from hell. Biff could manipulate Donny with ease. Nothing seemed to low, to contrived, to humiliating for Little Donny, as long as there was the pot of gold at the end of the line.

When Biff talked about the case Donny envisioned the life of riches and leisure awaiting him. Donny felt the world had given him a sour deal. He had a small place in a small mountain community. His lack of character and ambition fit well with his tiny station in life.

Biff and Donny could have been twins. They were riding piggy back on a dark cloud of contempt they both felt for the world. They were striving, by any means necessary, to find that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

At the same time the water district had gone into a proactive defense mode. A few days after the accident, the serpent disappeared from the reservoir.

This didn't phase Biff le' Bowski in the least. If anything such action by the district would work in his behalf. If he put the right spin on it... and Biff was a spit-ball pro when it came to putting spin on things, he could make it look conspiratorial.

Donny was a dream comes true for a lawyer like Biff. Little Donny was a wholly selfcentered twit. When his family and the few friends he had realized what Donny was up to... with his neck brace, cane, and other injury paraphernalia, they started putting distance between themselves and Donny.

This didn't seem to bother Donny at all. Donny saw it as jealousy on their part. Biff was talking millions! Millions for all the suffering he had endured... endured because of the districts' negligence.

As Biff had explained it to Donny, if the district had done its job the serpent would never have been there. Donny's digression into texting while driving would never have been an issue. The person crossing the double yellow line to see the serpent would never have done that. If the district had done its job! Biff made it oh so simple and Donny wolfed it down like gospel pie.

However... there was a fly in the pie; the water district and its legal counsel saw things quite differently than Biff did. Still Biff pressed on, releasing scathing statements concerning the suffering his client was enduring all because of the districts callous disregard for the safety and welfare of the public.

Meanwhile, the pranksters were very grateful there hadn't been interest expressed in who had put the serpent in the lake to start with. Biff wasn't interested in the pranksters at the moment. Biff would go after them... later. They would be the dessert after the main course which was the district.

The pranksters couldn't believe how something intended as a humorous exposé on a creature of legend could be turned into such a sleazy expose' of litigation exploitation.

Officially, on record the district was looking into the identity of the pranksters. Unofficially... the district knew who the pranksters were. And unofficially, the pranksters knew the district would give the m up in a heartbeat, if need be.

Now, my dear reader, the world is a curious place, filled with all sorts of people and all sorts of beliefs. For instance, there are those who believe, with a depth of faith that is hard for many of us to understand, that bad people will come to bad ends.

There are those who say a persons' karma, good or bad, will eventually overwhelm them... for good or bad. Biffs' very, very bad karma had festered for years.

On the other hand, there were people who had fallen victim to Biffs' judicial skullduggery, people whose patience for Biffs' demise had given out. They had come to believe that his dastardly karma would never catch up to him. "Oh ye of little faith!" Granted it was a long time in coming. Yet when it did arrive ... it was devastating beyond comprehension.

Biffs' day of reckoning started at the water districts monthly board meeting. He had made sure to be on the agenda. He was only given a few short minutes to speak as is the custom for public remarks at such meetings. However, he was convinced he used his time masterfully; he spoke of his clients' horrible injuries and sufferings, and the districts shameful disregard of responsibility.

Many of those in attendance shook their

heads in disgust at the drama Biff worked into his presentation. Biff didn't care what they thought. He knew every word he spoke would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

His personal dramatics may be lost in the secretaries' transcription but the litany of his clients' woes and the districts responsibility for them would forever be a part of the official record of the minutes of the meeting. And he may want to reference back to those official records later... in court.

Once Biff had finished his damning remarks, he was ready to leave. He didn't give a rats' ass about what else was on the agenda. He walked out of the chamber room as conversations continued, got into his dilapidated little convertible and headed downtown.

Biff was supposed to meet Little Donny at the courthouse in half an hour. "Yeah, yeah right! Cozy up to that loser" Biff thought. At heart Biff had nothing but contempt for his client. Donny was a key to a great deal of money and nothing more.

Poor Little Donny would wait. Sitting uncomfortably in the courthouse lobby with his braces, cane, and a pitiful look on his face. More people to bear witness to the misfortune his poor client endured.

Biff had stopped for a red light at the intersection with the highway. He waited to make a left hand turn onto the Highway and drive five miles downtown to the courthouse. Biff planned on making a stop at his favorite bar for a brace of bourbon before finishing the drive to the courthouse.

When the light flashed green Biff jumped out into the intersection to make his turn. He should have looked both ways first... at least looked right... but his mind was preoccupied on which brand of bourbon he'd guzzle today...

Biff heard the screeching sound of brakes. At that point the world became, for him, a blurred

mess... a confusing kaleidoscope of color, sound and the sensation of movement...

A witness at the intersection would later say the light had turned green for Biff. Biff pulled into the intersection. At the same instant a large pickup truck came screeching into the intersection from out of the east... its tires were smoking as it tried to stop. The big jacked up 4X4 slammed right into the side of the worn out little convertible.

Biff wasn't wearing his seat belt. He popped right out of the car as the truck crunched over the top of it. As the truck straddled the convertible one of its enormous, knobby, front tires came down right on top of Biff as he bounced out of his car. Both vehicles continued screeching down the road for several yards with Biff trapped under the front tire of the bright red truck.

The driver of the truck had his foot down hard on the brake pedal. The tires wouldn't spin allowing Biff to squirt out from under it. The tire just stayed perfectly still... right on top of Biff pressing him down as he slid across the asphalt...

Biff was sure he felt bones breaking as the tire landed on him. As he slid across the intersection the asphalt acted like a big belt grinder on Biffs flesh. The damage to his body was so traumatic that his shocked nerves weren't sending signals of the excruciating pain to his brain...not right away anyhow.

Finally Biff felt all the motion around him coming to a stop. Dumbfounded he looked at the big tire sitting on top of him.

"Traumatic injuries", he thought... he'd used that term numerous times in court. Now he was getting firsthand experience with it.

It was truly a surreal moment, pinned to the ground, the grill work of a massive truck towering over him. He could smell hot brakes, burned rubber and... anti freeze...? Anti freeze? Shit! He'd just paid big bucks to have the radiator fixed on his car, his car now crushed under the truck.

Biff wrinkled his brow, things were starting to get really weird. The color was starting to drain out of everything and he was losing his peripheral vision. It was as if he was looking down a tunnel.

Everything had a muffled sound to it... like there was cotton stuffed in his ears and he couldn't seem to move his legs or his arms to get the damn tire off of him.

Things were much worse than he knew. His life was flowing out of him on a river of blood. He had become a leaky bucket. His bodily fluids pooled around him on the hot asphalt of the highway.

Everything seemed to be slowing down. Biff turned his head looking around. His eyes scanned the side of the road. He blinked. He couldn't believe what he saw. The damned serpent! The serpent was alongside the road looking at him.

How the hell did it get there? How could it be there? He must be hallucinating. Yeah, yeah, that had to be it. Jesus he was feeling tired, too tired to focus on much of anything for more than a second or two.

Then he heard a voice... a voice he recognized. His client? It was Little Donny's voice. It was all becoming very confusing for Biff.

What the hell was Donny's voice doing here? And what was the serpent doing here? Damn... what was he doing here? Wherever here was. And why did he hurt so much? God he was tired... he could never remember being so tired... He was feeling horrible.

And that voice... the voice of Donny. The voice was getting closer, he didn't want to deal with that twit right now... not right now.

Then through the haze of shock Biff

rationalized what must have happened. He had been in his car headed for the courthouse to meet with Little Donny who lived up on the mountain. Donny would have been coming down the mountain... in his new truck! Donny had told him about the new truck last night when Biff had called him to set up the meeting at the court house. The idiot had just bought a new truck while in the middle of the lawsuit concerning how bad off he was. Biff had given him shit about that!

As Biffs brain started misfiring Biff thought... well hell... yeah, yeah... that's got to be it! Donny had just run him over on his way to the courthouse. Biff had been T-boned and dragged along the street by the very moron he had been grooming for the biggest case of his life.

Hmmm... Biff wondered... would wearing my seat belt have helped? Was I so upset about the lack of concern the water district was showing for my clients suffering at their hands... that I had forgotten to fasten my seat belt. Could that too be the water districts fault? Biff was now starting to feel the pain of his injuries. It hurt too much at the moment to think about it Donny anymore.

Biff looked up trying to scream and saw his clients' puffy face looking down at him. Donny was on his knees. Donny was breathing hard. Biff could smell stale cigarette smoke on his breath.

Little Donny kept repeating "Oh man, oh shit, oh man..."

Biff coughed and could taste blood. Well, that's not a good sign he thought as he licked his lips.

Donny's voice raised an octave as he became aware of all the blood and visceral fluid he was kneeling down in "Oh shit! Get help, get help, somebody get help!"

Biff turned his head to the left, trying to

avoid his clients' foul breath. An anguished, questioning look formed on Biffs' face. There was the serpent again. It had that same stupid look on its face.

What was that look on the serpents face? Was it a look of humor... humor at seeing him trapped under the tire of the truck?

Biff wanted to scream something at the stupid serpent, but he couldn't get his breath... well at least he wasn't a hallucinating. Biff wanted to ask Donny if he saw the serpent but every time Biff tried to speak all he did was blow bubbles of blood.

Well crap! Biff thought, everything is starting to spin... and it's getting darker, and darker and... was the sky clouding up... he couldn't see the sky. All he could see was Donny's face... and it was getting really white... it had been such a bright and clear day earlier.

Donny heard the sirens coming as he thought to himself... this really isn't his fault. He'd been sending a really short text message to Biff. He was telling Biff he was going to be running a little late... he'd planned on stopping for a beer or two before the meeting. Biff always made him feel nervous, he just needed a beer or two before dealing with Biff.

Donny hadn't seen the red light until the last second... the damn key board on the new phone was so frickin' small... he'd had to look at it just a little too long.

And when he looked up the little car was right in front of him... it had come out of nowhere... why hadn't Biff looked before pulling out in front of him? Why hadn't he seen the big shiny truck coming?

Donny glanced down to ask Biff about this and saw the lawyers' eyes glaze over... he wasn't breathing bubbles of blood anymore.

"Well mother f......" Donny whispered. He grunted and thought for a moment. Maybe Biff had a partner who could continue with the case. How else was he going to pay for the big ass truck he had just bought? He was injured, out of work. It all hinged on the millions from the court case. The mountain of cash Biff had promised was on the way.

"Ah geez, this was awful" Dopy Donny whinnied. He was pretty sure Biff was dead. After all, guys blowing bubbles of blood always died in the movies.

Through the tears that were starting to flow, Donny noticed the look on Biffs face. It was creepy the way Biffs' eyes stayed open and stared with that really weird look on his face.

What had Biff been looking at those last few seconds? What had he been thinking? Donny looked over in the direction Biff had been looking. Then, he saw it too...

When the District first got a hint of a lawsuit it had quickly contacted three local scrappies for quick bids to remove the serpent from the reservoir and scrap it out.

The scrappie who got job was very much aware of all the publicity around the serpent. His name was Evert and he was no fool. Evert intended to use the critter to draw more attention to his business.

Evert's scrap yard sat along the highway, near the intersection where the accident had taken place. Just that morning Evert put the serpent on top of a pile of scrap near the highway. The head & neck peered over the top of the fence at the intersection.

Evert knew it would draw attention to his yard. If he was really lucky he'd sell it to someone who thought it should be saved. That would bring in more money than scrapping it.

The water district probably wouldn't like that, but there had been no stipulation in the bid concerning the scrapping of the serpent, once removed from the reservoir, other than, "in a timely manner". And as far as Evert was concerned his "timely manner" maybe a little more timelier than the water districts'.

Donny was sitting on his haunches, in shock, when the first officer arrived. A Le Baron convertible with faded paint was squashed under a big pickup that was so new it didn't have license plates yet.

There were two men at the front of the truck. One was sitting on the ground grunting incoherently. The other man was pinned to the ground by one of the trucks' massive tires. The officer could tell immediately the man was dead.

Both men seemed to be looking off to the side of the road. The officer followed their gaze... then he grunted "Well I'll be damned". Over the top of a green slatted chain link fence. The officer could see the serpent everyone had been talking about just the other day.

The serpents' head was cocked at an angle. It reminded the officer of the way his dog would cock its head sometime trying to understand something.

The officer appreciated good art work. He was known to visit museums and art galleries from time to time. He couldn't help notice how well defined the head of the serpent appeared.

The brow of the serpent face was arched up... ever so slightly... the eyes and elongated snout seemed to have the same kind of whimsical smile the Mona Lisa is known for.

As he stood there admiring the sea serpents' head the officer couldn't help but wonder if ether one of these guys had any idea of what they were looking at.

Robert Norman is a Hemet High School graduate who attended a few classes at Mount San Jacinto JC many years ago. He is a US Navy veteran and is retired from Lake Hemet Municipal Water District. He is married with no kids. He enjoys traveling, writing, painting and photography, and he is currently struggling to learn to play the guitar.

Wondering Jeffrey Zable

It's around 7:30 p.m. and I'm walking along New Montgomery Street on my way to the streetcar station when I see this woman crouched in the doorway of a store that's now closed. I notice immediately that she has a knife in her hand and is holding it to her left arm. I stop at a reasonable distance and observe her as she starts to make a cut. I realize she has several dried cuts as well as fresh ones from the top of her arm to the bottom. She has no expression on her somewhat attractive face, but she's at least 80 to 100 pounds overweight, dressed in clothes I would easily call rags. I'm feeling sad watching her and at the same time feeling helpless. For a moment I think of trying to stop her, but ultimately decide it's none of my business what she does with her life. On the streetcar I look at the many tired and sad faces of people returning home, thinking that most don't care for their jobs and feel dissatisfied with their lives. I try to make eye contact with a few of the faces to give nods of commiseration, but as no one responds I just think about the woman–wondering how she got that way. . .whether at some point she was no different than the rest of us. . .

Jeffrey Zable is a teacher and conga drummer who plays Afro-Cuban folkloric music for dance classes and Rumbas around the San Francisco Bay Area. He's published poetry, fiction, and non-fiction in hundreds of literary magazine and anthologies. Recent writing in *Serving House Journal, Revolution John, Dead King, DogPlotz, Ink In Thirds, Flint Hills Review, Mocking Heart Review* and many others.

Rising the Darkness Through Writing: An Interview with Michael Koryta



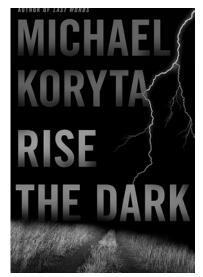
Michael Koryta is the New York Times-bestselling author of 12 suspense novels. His work has been praised by Stephen King, Michael Connelly, Lee Child, Dean Koontz, James Patterson, Dennis Lehane, Daniel Woodrell, Ron Rash, and Scott Smith among many others, and has been translated into more than 20 languages. His books have won or been nominated for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, Edgar[®] Award, Shamus Award, Barry Award, Quill Award, International Thriller Writers Award, and the Golden Dagger. They've been selected as "best books of the year" by publications as diverse as the *New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Amazon. com, O the Oprah Magazine, Entertainment Weekly, People, Reader's Digest, iBooks*, and *Kirkus Reviews*. His 2014 thriller *Those Who Wish Me Dead* was named the summer's best thriller by both Amazon and Entertainment Weekly, and was selected as one of the year's best books by more than 10 publications. Michael is currently adapting the novel for screen, with rights sold to 20th Century Fox.

Q: Our theme for this year's edition of *The Sand Canyon Review* is "controversy." Do you consider yourself to be a controversial author? Why or why not? What are some aspects of your novel(s) that really seem controversial to you?

This is a really timely question, as I **A**: would have said no until this year's pending publication, Rise The Dark, which dives into ideas of terrorism and the way our fractured media world enables people to hear what they want to hear, to cloak themselves in their own *beliefs so easily. That's probably ascontroversial* as I've gotten in a "traditional" sense. Now, on a micro level within my industry I would say that I'm a slightly controversial author because I *alternate between styles more than most –* detective novels to ghost stories to family drama *to thrillers may not seem like a big deal (it never has to me) but it's really been remarkable for* me to see the pushback from some readers on that, and some people in the publishing world. *There are a lot of people who want a writer to be* "consistent" and I am very fortunate not to have a publisher who agrees with that.

Q: A part of the theme for this year's edition of *The Sand Canyon Review* is conflict. In your novel, *The Prophet*, there is a major conflict between the two main characters, Adam and Kent Austin, what inspired you to write a story about the two contrasting brothers?

A: I'm fascinated with the idea of how grief and guilt work on people emotionally, and, most importantly, how silence does. The idea that became The Prophet was one I'd been imagining for about ten years – one brother who has sought to overcome grief through religion and order and control, and another who has drifted toward a darker side because of it. That central conflict when they are brought back together seemed to hold a lot of potential to me. Originally Kent was going to be a minister but that felt too heavy-handed, and so I kept holding off on the book. I understood Adam but I did not understand Kent back then. Once I saw him as the football coach, and saw that additional layer of history and bond between them, it all began to pop. Conflict is the essence of drama. Without it, you simply don't have a story. The more the reader can relate to that conflict, the more emotion it stirs within them, the better.



Q: Your upcoming novel, *Rise The Dark*, is set to release August of 2016. What should potential readers be looking forward to in your newest work?

A: It's the biggest thing I've written in terms of scope, and has a story within a story that our protagonist is a little late in figuring out. He has a very simple mission: find his wife's killer. What that intersects with in terms of a national plot, and his family history, is much bigger than he'd anticipated. I always like the idea of a character believing that he understands a situation only to have to be infinitely more complex than anticipated. Markus Novak became a good fit in that regard, because he's spent so much of his *life running away from his past. He believes he understands his past, and wants nothing to do* with it, but because he has kept it at a distance, he's never fully understood it. I love books where the past impacts the present.

Q: You've been on the New York Times bestsellers list multiple times, received or been nominated for awards, and been spoken

highly of by many authors, such as Stephen King and Dean Koontz too name a few. How has it felt to have been thought of so highly?

A: *To realize that this is my 12th novel and to* think of the really good fortune I've had in the business, all of those things you mention, is a little jarring to me, a little surreal, because I feel like I just started out not that long ago. The thing that has meant the most to me, by far, is the support from other writers, from the people who inspired me. That just hits home in a different way. All of those moments are wonderful, but I *have to confess that I struggle* to enjoy them a little bit. I am so focused on what I am writing next, and generally so insecure about how it's going, whether it's any good, etc. that I probably do a poor job of stepping back to really appreciate those moments. There's a sense with each new book that I need to prove myself all over again. The truth is that I really love the writing process more than the publishing process.

Q: Are there any specific things you like to do before starting a novel or while working on a current project?

A: I listen to music while I write, and create soundtracks for different storylines and different characters. That is very important to me. I also hike a lot. That is probably the best way for me to get through plot problems, to see where I went wrong, or find a better approach. There's something about being in motion – hikes or long drives – that always helps. I struggle with being too connected, so I'll disable wifi when I write, turn off the phones, anything that might intrude needs to be shut down for a few hours at least.

Q: When you complete a novel, is there any specific thing you like to do as a way to celebrate?

A: You know what, I never really have come up with a tradition on that, and I should. The only thing I do right away is e-mail a copy to myself for backup, and in the body of the message I write "thank you." I'm not sure who I'm thanking. In that moment it almost feels like I'm thanking the story itself, the characters. By then I have spent a lot of time with them! I've never developed a tradition for seeing the first finished copy of the book. That is something I ought to do.

Q: Which author, if any, has been the most influential on you personally and your writing career? Are there any novels that are near and dear to your heart that you draw inspiration from, whether in your personal life or for your writing?

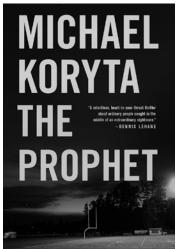
This list would go on for pages if I start A: talking about inspiration, so I will try to limit it *to those who have had the most influence both* on and off the page. That list always starts with Michael Connelly, who is both a great writer and a one-of-a-kind man. I'd say there are five writers who were first inspirations because I loved their work, and then later became even more important to me because I got the chance to know them and they've offered insight and perspective and in some cases have become really dear friends. So, while this is by no means an exhaustive list and I already feel guilty for *leaving people off, I'd say that Michael Connelly,* Dennis Lehane, Dean Koontz, Stewart O'Nan and Stephen King are the writers who have had the most impact. I actually took classes with Lehane even after I'd started publishing. His classes were incredibly important to me as a writer, and I met my wife in one of them. So, in large-scale impact, I'd say nobody is going to touch that one!

Q: If you were had to switch lives with any character from one of your novels, which character would you live as, and why?

A: This is one of the most interesting questions I've ever been asked. Hmm. Considering I'm putting most of my characters through some seriously bad stuff, it is hard to envy any of them! I like Anne McKinney from So Cold the River. The way she looks at her relationship with the town, the weather, her aging, all of that. Anne was a favorite. Ethan Serbin in Those Who Wish Me Dead, the survival school instructor in the Beartooth Mountains of Montana seemed to have an enviable existence until I sent the Blackwell Brothers his way. Those would be the first characters to come to mind. Great question.

Q: Out of all of your novels, which do you personally enjoy the most? Are there any characters that you relate to or that feel as if they are a version of yourself?

A: The Cypress House is a sentimental favorite because it is the first book I wrote as a full-time writer. Up until then I was always working another job and dreaming of being able to just do this for a living. I actually quit when I sold So Cold the River but Cypress was the first one that was conceived and written as a fulltime writer. My personal favorites are probably The Prophet and Those Who Wish Me Dead. The character I felt the deepest emotional tie to, the one who I seemed to understand as if he was flesh and blood, was Adam Austin in The Prophet. I just knew him. I miss him, as strange as that sounds. I really do miss him.



Q: What was it like to work with big cats while preparing to write the novel, *The Ridge*? Did you have any interesting experiences?

A: Without question that was one of the most rewarding things I've ever been involved with.

I continue to work with the rescue center, too. Their mission is something that I really admire. The idea that we allow private ownership of these animals and don't really do a damn thing to ensure quality lives for them is staggering to me. If you wanted a tiger cub right now, you could acquire one in most states. Easily. And nobody would be checking on the cat. Then when that animal ends up living in total abuse in someone's garage or shed, who takes him? There aren't many good sanctuaries. I had the privilege of being around one. Going on rescues has been a fascinating, infuriating, humbling and awesome experience all rolled into one.

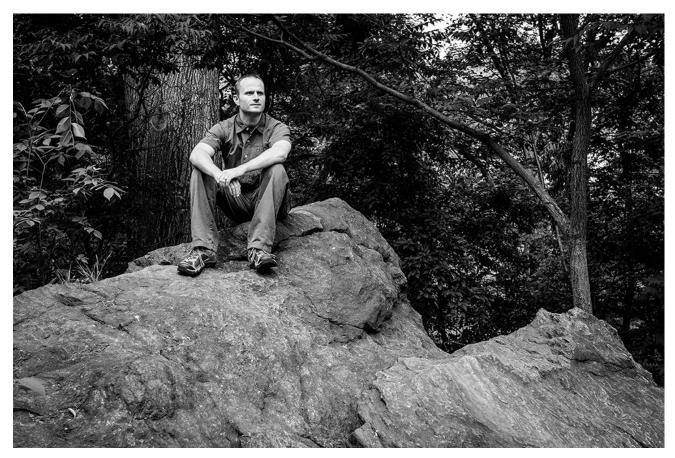
Q: What are some of the best and worst memories you've had, that your willing to share, that have come about because of your choice to pursue a career in writing? Have you had to make many sacrifices to follow your dream?

Best memories: learning that my first book A: was going to be published, and then sharing that news with my writing mentor in his basement office of the newspaper where I worked. Seeing the first edition of my work published in another language – that was special. My first dinner in New York with the publishing team at *Little, Brown and Co. after they'd picked up So Cold the River in a three-book deal and I knew* I'd be able to write full-time. That feels like a long time ago now, and there aren't many people left in place from that dinner, but it hasn't been all that long, really. Things just change fast. And one more – learning that Stephen King had recommended The Cypress House in Entertainment Weekly. I had to sit down in an *airport and just think about that for a few* minutes. Stephen King had read my book? And liked it? I can't overstate how important On *Writing was to me, so that moment was* extremely special. I've had plenty of bad memories along the way, too, but why share those, or dwell on them. Overall I've been incredibly fortunate. More so than I deserve, certainly.

I'd love to claim that I made great sacrifices in pursuit of the dream, but really all I gave was a whole lot of time and effort to something I loved. It's probably all the other people around me who sacrificed. When you're giving your work additional time, it means you are subtracting it from other things, other people. The only thing that writing has cost me is a good night's sleep. In a really odd twist, I have terrible insomnia when I'm working on a book. When I am not, I sleep just fine. But I'll take that trade!

Q: Do you have any advice for young, aspiring writers in hopes of becoming a well-known author like yourself?

A: Read books about writing. Read interviews with writers. I think studying the craft and being as curious as possible about how other people approach it is a wise move. You've got to fall in love with the craft. Not just the easy parts to love – character, plot, setting – those are things than fans love, too. You've got to care about the granular level. In the end, what separates the young writer who makes it from the young writer who doesn't has almost nothing to do with talent. It's all about discipline – can you work on something in isolation for a year, or two, or three, to see the story home? And then when it doesn't sell, can you do that again? Because you're going to need to be able to. I'm regarded as writer who published almost easily, because I published so young. What's missing from that narrative is the knowledge that my first published book was the fourth novel I'd finished. Each one took about a year to write. My advice is to learn to love the process.



Thank you, Michael Koryta for such a thoughtful look into your writings! We wish you clear (and thrilling) trails as you continue on your path of success!

The Dawn Won't Come René Sumrex

First Day...September 21st – two years after the "Great Flash"

I opened my eyes, and I was alone in a large darkened room, holding my rifle and the tags of my fallen comrades. I didn't understand what was going on but I didn't have time to try to figure it out, because behind me was another one of those damn cloven Pariah monsters. My fear turned to anger, and I raised my rifle, more than ready to put as much lead into the scum as I could. I didn't even notice it make a strange garbled noise and raise its hands as if surrendering. I simply did what the commander told me...I fired continually until I had nothing left, screaming at the top of my lungs. "Die you murdering shit!" Each shot pushed it back and cracked its body, until I finally made it hit the wall. It lay lifeless on the floor, and I was breathing harshly from screaming bloody murder. I walked up to the monster, pulled out the sidearm I still had and took steady aim between its eyes. "Go to hell," I said as I was about to pull the trigger. But a loud noise startled me and I backed away from the monster, expecting a surprise attack. Instead the center of its body opened up like a cockpit...and then I saw what was inside. Lying with its arms crossed and eyes closed was what must've been the pilot of the machine I mistook for a monster. I looked at the "Pariah" and found myself confused as I stared at the thing lying before me. Before I could take it all in the creature's eyes opened and I backed away as it moved slowly out of the machine. Thinking I must've been mistaken, I now confirmed what I saw. As the being walked out, I saw that the creature was a strangely clothed human-like woman. It was obvious she wasn't

human, but the similarities and differences were amazing. Her form was close to a young adult woman with metallic looking silver skin. Her arms and legs were slender, but she had naturally cloven hands and fingers. Her face was shaped normally enough but her eyes were milky white and her lips black. Her hair was thick long curls of glowing blue lights, but she possessed no visible ears. The clothing she wore was quite...bizarre, like her. It seemed like a tight dress-toga hybrid that appeared to float around and encircle her. The alien woman took a step towards me and I snapped out of my gaze, and held my pistol at her. She looked at me with a strange intention, and suddenly a harsh noise entered the back of my mind. I grabbed my head in pain, and screamed "Stop it!" The pain ended as she complied, agreeing to not do whatever she was doing, and I swore she turned her head and lifted an eyebrow (or whatever it was) as if she were confused. She walked slowly over to me, despite still having a gun pointed at her head. I may have been angry but I was confused by the humanness of her appearance. I froze and before I knew it, one of her fingers touched my forehead. I couldn't move. I was stuck like this for a few seconds until she put her finger down.

I was going to ask what she did to me but then I heard from her lips: "This is your language, correct?" She spoke in a voice that was very smooth and soft but at the same time it carried a bizarre and subtle echo.

I was a little taken aback, but I replied to her, "Yeah."

She put her hand up to her chin with an inquisitive look. "I see, you still speak verbally rather than using wavelengths. Interesting, yet

primitive." Despite what she said, it wasn't a demeaning tone; if anything, it was innocent curiosity.

"Well then why can you speak then if you and your race are too good for talking?"

She looked back at me and answered. "I didn't intend to imply pretentiousness on the part of my people. I apologize. We simply don't use vocal communication in most social circumstances. We find it best to communicate to others using empathy of the mind rather than words, which often lose meaning in translation."

I chuckled at her statement; in fact I had to control myself from laughing at such an infuriating, ironic statement. "Empathy? Yeah, your race does a very good job of that. I mean look at what you did to our world!" I pointed my gun back at her.

"I'm sensing hostility from your actions, am I right?" She asked in an almost nonchalant way.

I walked toward her, weapon still ready. "You're damn straight I'm hostile! Does empathy mean destroying our cities!? Does empathy mean killing people we love, left and right? Killing innocents who've never done anything to you without so much as a word, just coldly watching from your damn machines! Screw your empathy!" By the time I finished, I had the gun pointed to her head, point-blank...but even if she didn't answer me, I don't think I could've shot her.

"I see...I'm sorry," she stated as plainly as ever. The simplicity of those words set me off.

"I don't want your damn 'sorry,' I want my family and friends back! Maybe you should watch as I kill yours in front of you! Make you see them go without a word or reason for why it happened and then say sorry!" At this point I was just venting. I was starting to cry again because I knew that even if I were cruel enough to do what I had said, there'd be no point.

"You could kill me if you want, but I don't think it would bring your family back, or mine if I did the same."

I hated those words, because I couldn't do it and she was right. Then I caught something she had said: 'bring mine back if I did the same.'

That's when she spoke up again. "I guess in the lack of those we love...we've something in common." She said those words and then turned from me. She walked over to a strange console with its unique hologram interface and started typing some odd symbols in. "It seems I mistook you for one of my comrades in the relay tower. I had spotted only one living thing inside when I brought you through the spacetime port. I suppose that means you killed him then."

When she said that, I detected a hint of sadness that she tried to cover up. I felt guilty but justifiably mad all at once. "Yeah well, he killed my friend."

She looked at me for a second with a blank stare and then back at the console. "I understand. It's how it always is, I suppose. If one kills, then another must kill. Sadly, that is how the world works...and ends."

I didn't know what she was implying but I didn't care at the moment. "Where am I?" I demanded.

"You are in a vessel I was sent to watch over to make preparations." She didn't answer my question quite how I wanted it.

"A vessel for what?"

She stayed quiet for a second. "Leaving the planet," she said hesitantly.

I didn't understand why they were leaving; perhaps they had given enough or just had enough fun? "Well you're gonna have to cancel because you aren't leaving to space with me. You're taking me down back to where I was and then you're coming with me."

"Going with you?" She said, sounding interested.

"Consider yourself a prisoner of war," I said, but I think in reality it was an alternative to killing. After the first time...I never wanted to do it again.

"Well I'm sorry to say that there is no way out of the ship. All of the ship's teleportation sequences locked down after you came through."

"Bullshit! You expect me to believe that the ship can take me here but will shut down afterwards!?"

She shook her head at me. "I had brought you here by mistake, but the ship sensors know you're human now. I'm sorry, but the lockdown won't go down."

So now I was stuck on the enemy ship, with no way out. "Well...dammit." I couldn't do much now. I could try to destroy the ship but I doubted I'd succeed, and I couldn't bring myself to kill the Pariah woman.

"I suppose you can wait with me. There's not much else to do before the ship is ready," she stated stoically as she shut down the hologram interface.

"And how long will that take?" I asked.

"It depends. It's estimated the time could be as long as a year."

My eyes widened. "A year!? Why would it take that long!?"

She started walking away, toward a metallic panel that opened like a door, and then looked back at me. "It's not how long before the ship itself is ready...it's how long we can afford to remain. We aren't above the planet yet. However, the ship is dormant within a mountain side. Waiting..."

> "What is it waiting for?" She turned back and snapped her

fingers, and the lights turned off. "You'll see when the time comes. For now, waiting is all we can do."

I got in front of her, stood straight, and looked at her with as intimidating a glare as I could. "Fine, but if you try anything suspicious or try to, I don't know, 'experiment' on me, I will shoot you. Understand?"

She looked at me blankly without a word for about a second. "If that's what you think you must do. I don't understand the part about 'experimenting', however." She said this so matter-of-fact like.

"Just...don't try anything. I'm watching you." She nodded her head and walked over and sat on one of the outer benches around the room. I sat down on the floor and kept vigilant.

3 hours later...

I was tired, but as I was fighting my head nodding off, I noticed the Pariah woman get up and go through one of the metal panels that acted like a door. I hurried over and pointed the gun to her back, making sure she heard the sound of the gun's click. In reality I was just scared and didn't know what else to do, but I always had my eye on her, for fear of being betrayed.

"Oh? Come to keep an eye on me?" She said almost curiously without even looking back at me.

"You thought I was bluffing?" I retorted.

"Very well." I followed behind her, feeling more like a cruel captor than a cautious warden, but I saw no choice other than to police her moves. She walked into a small room and pressed a button, and some kind of small drops of glowing water started falling continuously from the other side, as if it manifested through the ceiling.

"Ummm...what are you doing?" I asked, half-knowing the answer.

"Bathing," she said with the same stoic face.

"Oh...umm I guess I'll make an exception...sort of, I'll just stand out here not watching. I mean I'm watching, but not watching. Like without just my eyes just with uhh...I'll be outside." I kept stumbling over my words in embarrassment. I simply nodded as I walked outside and closed the panel. "She got me."

The next day...September 22nd

I woke up and saw the alien woman looking at me – observing me. Her expression of curiosity almost made me let my guard down. But I had to remember where I was. "Why are you looking at me?" I asked warily.

"You are rather young for a human, why are you fighting as a soldier?"

"Well when you have a survivor population of about 200, you have to fight. Besides, I volunteered."

She seemed even more interested and came closer to me. "You volunteered? Is there a reason?"

I looked at her with a glare and didn't bother sugar coating my answers. "Because I wanted to stop you and your murderous people."

She stared at me for a second, silently, and then turned away from me. "I see. You hate us that much?"

I thought the question was so dumb, she had to be taunting me. What reason would I have not to hate them? "What? Should I just forget that you Pariah destroyed our cities? That you kidnapped our people and other living things to do God knows what to them? Of course I hate you. What reason should I not!?" I yelled. She stayed silent, not moving. "Answer me, Alien!"

She was still silent, but she eventually

turned and looked at me again. "There's a lot you don't understand."

"I only need to know what I saw that day, two years ago." I turned my face away in anger, tired of listening to her explanations in that uncaring voice.

"Well, perhaps as a start I could tell you my name, if you wish to call me such instead of 'Alien."

I looked back at her, still seeing that almost blank expression. "What is it?" I gave in.

"My name is Eos. If you need to talk, you can call me as such." I sighed, then nodded in acknowledgment. She returned the nod and left the room, back to the hallway. I stayed on the floor, dozing off to sleep again.

Day after...September 23rd

I woke up on the hard floor, and I felt my stomach aching loudly enough to get the attention of the Pariah woman. I played it off, despite the fact that I had very little supplies in the bag I brought. I sat there trying to keep my mind off the pain. Suddenly in front of me, the girl was holding something that resembled a loaf of bread, but was white and cream colored. I looked at her suspiciously; she looked at me with curious concern. As if seeing my mistrust, she took a small bite of the bread herself and then offered it to me. Based on how hungry I was, I guessed I would have to die eating if I must. I took the bread and slowly took a bite. It was actually quite nice - the texture of bread but with a taste similar to a caramel treat. I practically chomped it down in seconds, and my stomach felt tamed again. I looked up at her, not sure if I should thank her since I wasn't sure if I'd die yet. She waited for me to finish, and then I spoke up, feeling bad about yelling at her for some reason. "My name is Lucian; most people just call me Luke." I wanted to

return the courtesy of names. At least we could be civil enough to know each other's names, I supposed.

"Lucian...a meaningful name."

"Ummm, I think it was just a name my mom liked."

She nodded in understanding. "There is food in one of the rooms in the hall...and if you need relief from that, the next room over will help."

"Oh...thanks." I felt really at her mercy because I wouldn't have known that, and I was supposed to survive almost a year.

"Luke, I realize your anger towards us. However, we are stuck together and I bare you no ill will...I'm here to help." For once I swore there was a tone of genuine kindness in her words.

I wanted to believe her - after all I can't keep up my guard like this...I'm at a disadvantage. "I don't fully trust you...but for now I'll cooperate," I said. "That's all I ask for."

A month later...October 20th

I had taken a permanent place on the Computer Room floor. My sleeping bag from my pack and the small tent I had made became my residence inside the large vessel. I left to get food and returned to eat. I avoided Eos somewhat, but I wasn't hostile towards her, and I was rather fine with that. After I ate, I grabbed a large clump of dog tags from a small pocket. I had gotten used to looking at them every other day. I wanted never to forget. Turrel Simmons - dog tag of another rebel I had patrolled with. He was shot through the stomach...nothing left in his middle but a flaming, cauterized hole. Serah Moire. Abel Wilson. I only saw a volley of energy beams shooting out of an alley. When I ran to help, I found their bodies full of small burning holes, and their cold eyes looking back at me.

Colonel Alex Michael - he was the only one of us that was actual military. He lead the resistance group's scouts...he died holding a grenade pin and jumping into a group of enemies despite his leg being blown off. Gabriel Jaeger - my one friend, Gabe. He and I were the last to reach the construct that had the teleporter to the ship I was now on. He gave his life, taking a large robotic arm through the chest for me. In anger I threw the armored suit into a generator and electrocuted it. Gabe gave me the dog tags. He told me, "Keep the memory alive. We will live on with you." That's when I found myself on the ship. No matter how painful it was to see them die, I would honor their memory solemnly.

November 9th

I had been keeping track of the days by scratching marks into floor under my sleeping bag. The days passed so slowly and the loneliness was almost unbearable. I had only Eos to keep me company, but I couldn't bring myself to try and talk casually with her. I wasn't sure if it was awkwardness from her being a Pariah, or just because I was never good at talking to people. I looked at her, wondering whether or not to strike up a conversation with her to pass the time. However, she did it first as she looked over and spoke plainly. "What are those tags you keep looking at?"

I frowned and looked over to my makeshift tent, where the dog tags lay in my bag. "They're dog tags. They identify the person they belong to. However, those people are dead. They died fighting to get to where I am now."

She just stared at me for a second. "You want to keep them in your heart?"

"Yeah. They were brave people who fought for what was left of the human race."

She raised her eyebrow at me when I

finished the last sentence. "The rest of the human race?"

"There're almost no more people, just survivors and resistance stragglers in our world now."

She seemed confused by the statement. "I…I see." She turned away, avoiding eye contact with me. What did she know?

December 1st

I looked out the window to see the early snow. It wasn't even winter quite yet, but the icy tears couldn't wait. I walked down the hall to get food (Jeez, it was almost limitless by the way) when I saw Eos in what I presumed was her room, sitting down near a window of her own. I was curious and saw that she was painting an image of the snowy sky. She noticed me watching and looked over with a curious stare. "Did you need something, Luke?"

I was rather surprised to see an alien paint; I guess I never imagined them doing anything like us. "That's a nice painting."

"It passes the time here. Thank you though." I don't know why, but I smiled at her and even stranger, she smiled back, which is the first time I'd ever seen her smile. It was nice, too. I saw next to her another picture... it was like a futuristic photo of her with some others of her kind...she was smiling there, too. Perhaps...she had meant that she lost her family.

December 24th

Christmas Eve...aboard an alien vessel. But I decided that perhaps I could show a bit of kindness to the only other person to celebrate with. It was night time, and before-hand I asked Eos if there was a way to charge the battery on my old music player. She touched it with something and it was full (I need to get me one of those.), and I prepared my only gift to give. I called Eos out at what I assumed was near mid-night. "Hey, Eos. I think I understand what you meant and...I'm sorry you lost your loved ones too. So I wanted to ask, if you wanted to celebrate my family Christmas Eve with me?"

"Celebrate? It's one of your holidays today?"

I was fiddling with the music player. "Well it's actually tomorrow but I had a tradition on Christmas Eve with my family." I put the volume on the highest level and it played an instrumental version of "Fly Me to the Moon." I offered my hand to dance. She was confused at first, but once we started she seemed to understand. "When we were kids, my sister Ariel got sad when a boy was mean to her on Christmas Eve, so I made it up to her by dancing with her. And so every Christmas Eve we'd dance to one of our childhood movie songs. But I thought this song was more appropriate."

Eos and I seemed to be doing okay dancing – in truth she was probably better. "Thank you Luke. Your sister must've been very lucky to have a brother like you." We shared a mutual smile and then we danced through a few more songs, late into the night.

December 25th

The dawn was beautiful as I looked outside the window Eos had shown me a while ago. It was a beautiful sight that I came to appreciate so much more with my current situation. "Lucian." I heard Eos calling to me and turned to her. "I need to show you something." I followed her and she took me to some doors I'd never gone through. They seemed to be locked to all but her. Inside, I couldn't believe what I saw. The room was massive, and it was squeezing in millions of animals from Earth. Before I could ask, Eos answered: "We never intended to hurt humanity or this planet, but now that the end is coming, we want to preserve as many of Earth's creatures as we could. All these ships contain millions of animals and many of my kind in cryo-sleep. When the ships launch, all the overseers, like me, will join cryo-sleep, and we will go and find a new world with what remains of the many lifeforms."

I was still taken aback by the animals but I was listening. "Why not just stop this fight with us and go back to your own world instead?" I asked without hostility.

She turned to me and I saw tears in her eyes. "We are the Deata, Lucian. A race of beings that have always been here on earth. We were at Atlantis when our technology was used irresponsibly by humans. Thousands of years later, we returned to find the planet torn by man and its weapons worse than the one long ago." I couldn't believe it - they weren't aliens? But why were they attacking us from the sky? Why were they called the Pariah if they were really the Deata? As if reading my mind, Eos answered. "When we came back, we tried to offer help for your race, and tried to restore peace. But many of us were captured by America's black operatives more than half a century ago. We were experimented on, and our technology was perverted to serve humanity's own means. I was one of the ones they took...and I saw them murder my brother Mercury and my mother Hera." They'd been here...and yet hidden from us by our own people. We'd been experimenting on them and harming them, and this was the result. "When we found a way to escape, it was too late. Humans had already developed technology even more capable of destroying themselves of destroying the world. Hiroshima, Nagasaki, The Hydrogen Bomb... and these led up to the

creation of the Neutron Rain. This is what you called the "Great Flash" that wiped out organic life in your city."

"But then why did you bomb us!? Was it simply revenge you wanted?"

Eos looked at me with the saddest expression I'd seen, all the time I'd been with her. "No Luke. Humans wanted to do everything to keep us from escaping. They feared what we could do...so when we rose from our prisons...they used our weapon to eliminate us. No matter what the cost. No Luke, Humankind fired upon itself to destroy us...I survived to see humans and Deata alike taken by a great light. And so the blame was put on us as the 'Pariah.' That was when our world began the false war. Never truly telling you that in the West Coast, so much of humanity remained. We fought to survive, to try to leave the planet with as many of our people and other life forms as we could." I didn't want to believe her but...somehow I knew she was right. "Our demise was always destined to be our own undoing...that is the nature of our ill-fated world, Luke."

December 31st....Almost Mid-night

How ironic and fitting... Happy New Years...last new year. Eos and I stood at the window, looking at the sunset, and waited. This was the last day: humanity and Deata-kind would destroy each other. The world wouldn't survive. The Doomsday clock had reached its final stroke. The new year started with a bloody sky. The earth began to shake and a bright redness shot from the sky. Eos took my hand and pulled me into a small room, as I felt the ship finally lift off. Hours later, we looked outside...The sun burnt out and the Earth was charred...and I was the last human alive. I was overwhelmed with loneliness, agony, and self-loathing at how powerless I was. There would be no dawn on the New Year, just a long shadow over what was once humanity. Eos held my shoulder and I looked over at her. "Eos... I'm a sorry excuse for the last human. I should've..."

"Lucian, you carry the memory of others with you, too. You were brought for this reason. Forever you will be the hope and goodness that is human. Be strong, Lucian." She took me to the large room where there was an empty pod. "This was meant for me, but... when we get to our new home, I want you to be there with us, to meet us all, to have our home be yours. So I will watch and wait until..."

I grabbed her hand, and I was too sad and vulnerable for the darkness of a long sleep – only to wake up and maybe not have the one person left who was my friend. "No, you might not be here anymore. Please I don't...I don't want that to happen. The only person in the world I have now..." I trailed off. I was dodging around what I was asking, but she looked at me and understood.

"I suppose...there's room for two."

We laid down, embracing, and in both our hands were the dog tags of my fellow humans. Even if I would never see the morning of the earth...in the dark long years of sleep, she would be right there. "Thank you for being my friend, Eos."

She smiled at me as she put her forehead against mine. "Thank you too, Lucian, bringer of light." And with those words, we fell into the cryo-slumber. We would wait for the new dawn...together.

Ray Stevenson (pen name Rene Rex) is a 23 year old college student originally from Crafton Hills College, but graduated and will start attending Cal Baptist. Ray is a starting author, and this is his first submitted work in his writing career. He hopes to one day be a full-fledged author of fantasy and science fiction novels. Ray would like to thank his peers in *The Sand Canyon Review* and wishes everyone the best as he leaves Crafton Hills.

Dead Town Midnight Nicholas Albrecht

The beast roamed the depressed east end of the boulevard. His non-descript dark colored Plymouth POS crawled along the dimly lit roadway just outside the city limits. Low rent, late night liquor stores; bright neon and bars, pilfered pawn shops; the dead dreams of the downtrodden and seedy strip joints dotted the landscape here. Back alleys and narrow roads covered in filth, empty bottles, chewed up cigarette butts and stained rubbers encrusted with grime and disease. Hopeless drunks stumbled, shouting at shadows. Meth mutants vibrated along the streets. There were needle freaks hunched along the sidewalks, on the nod, dreaming of milky poppy diadems. The beast had been drawn from its cave, by a fierce desire deep within its dark being, all its senses sharpened like canines and claws. It checked its mask, clean cut and trustworthy. A dangerous, disingenuous deacon of virtuous values. The beast's keen eyes darting back and forth at the colorful assortment of sidewalk business women at the peak time of their profession. Their lumpy, scared skin, dripped from ill-fitting garments. Forced to hover the corners in packs, they were not welcomed on even the cheapest or slimiest of stages and poles. These women were fine American capitalists, proponents of pure supply and demand. The greasy hands up their short skirts were definitely not invisible. However, they were also prey. The beast's favorite sanguine flesh, yet tonight, the meat on the street was spoiled. It was of no use to the beast's rising hunger for power, degradation and fulfilled fantasies drenched in blood. The beast shifted in its seat behind the wheel, adjusting the crotch of its pants. Tonight was a failure; the beast would go back to its dwelling unfulfilled. Always an optimist though, this vicious creature knew there would be another nightfall soon.

Nicholas Albrecht can usually be found shuffling and muttering to himself in the cramped aisles of various used book stores, hunting for treasures, and at the very least, scoring a few crusty tomes so satisfy his voracious addiction to dust and old yellowed paper. Currently he is an English major trapped in the body of a History major. It is widely speculated that he is Trans-Major.

Behind a Provocateur's Curtain: An Interview with T. C. Boyle



T. Coraghessan Boyle is the author of twenty-six books of fiction, including, most recently, The *Harder They Come* (2015) and *The Terranauts* (2016). He received a Ph.D. degree in Nineteenth Century British Literature from the University of Iowa in 1977, his M.F.A. from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop in 1974, and his B.A. in English and History from SUNY Potsdam in 1968. He has been a member of the English Department at the University of Southern California since 1978, where he is Distinguished Professor of English. His work has been translated into more than two dozen foreign languages. His stories have appeared in most of the major American magazines, including *The New Yorker, Harper's, Esquire, The Atlantic Monthly, Playboy, The Paris Review, GQ, Antaeus, Granta* and *McSweeney's*, and he has been the recipient of a number of literary awards, including the PEN/Faulkner Prise for best novel of the year (*World's End*, 1988); the PEN/Malamud Prize in the short story (*T.C. Boyle Stories*, 1999); and the Prix Médicis Étranger for best foreign novel in France (*The Tortilla Curtain*, 1997). He currently lives near Santa Barbara with his wife and three children.

Q: Our theme for this year's edition of *The Sand Canyon Review* is "controversy." While many of your works are controversial in nature, do you consider yourself to be a controversial author? Why or why not?

A: I would like to think that I'm something of a provocateur in that I am concerned with social and environmental issues and often write about them in ways that just might happen to get under the skin of certain types of people. Especially when I'm writing in my satiric, wise-guy mode, as, for example, in The Tortilla Curtain (1995), which concerns illegal immigration, or A Friend of the Earth (2000), which focuses on global warming and ecotage.



Q: Much of your writing is thematically controversial, such as *The Harder They Come*, which brings up the issue of gun violence. Can you give any examples of criticism that you have received? How do you negotiate criticism? Has the criticism you have received affected you or your writing?

A: As far as The Harder They Come is concerned, I'm not particularly aware of any backlash, though I suppose the NRA would be unlikely to endorse the book's views. Further, as I publish more and more, reviews seem less significant to me than they were when I was just starting out. In fact, I don't do much more than stuff them into a folder these days, with the exception of the very good ones--i.e., those that are interpretive and seem to be attuned to what I'm portraying. Perhaps the most savage (and idiotic) reviews surrounded The Tortilla Curtain. With regard to that book, the Nunnery of the Politically Correct seemed to think that I had no business writing from the points of view of a Mexican man and woman since I am not Mexican myself. How do I deal with this particular racist and presumptive sort of attack? I ignore it. And then write as story like "Sorry Fugu," which, as it turned out, became my little love letter to the misinformed critics of the world.

Q: How long does it take you, on average, to complete one of your novels, from start to finish?

A: Twelve to fourteen months, exclusive of the research, which might take three months or so, depending on the topic. I should say that those months of writing are rarely consecutive, because I wind up travelling so much on book tours. The last book I was able to write without interruption was Riven Rock, all the way back in 1998.

Q: Which of your novels, if any, would be most well suited to film adaptation, and why?

The Road to Wellville, which was filmed by **A**: Alan Parker in 1994, and starred Anthony Hopkins as Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, inventor of the cornflake. I absolutely love Alan's film, which is so hilarious I wind up suffering oxygen deprivation from laughing so hard every time I see it. As for the others, many are under option and a whole passel of smaller films have been made of various short stories. The Harder They Come would make a killer film--everything's there, structure, dialogue, characters, and it couldn't be more timely--but, as far as I know, no one has yet bitten. Amazon has acquired my second novel, Budding Prospects, to make into a cable series, Conde-Nast wants to do a feature of "The Relive Box" and Robert Marciniak is moving forward with his ambitious project to film Water Music. My job? To make art. And appreciate whatever films may come along.

Q: If you were forced to switch lives with a character from one of your novels, which character would you live as, and why?

A: I'd be Ned Rise, from Water Music. Why? Because he always landed on his feet and he played a mean clarinet, even if, in the end, it was only for the bewildered tribesmen along the Niger River.

Q: A few of the instructors here at Crafton Hills College are using one of your books, *The Tortilla Curtain*, as part of their curriculum; where did you look for inspiration when crafting the contrasting/conflicting characters of Delaney Mossbacher and Candido Rincon?

A: The characters are wholly invented. I did not know anyone like the Mossbachers or the Rincons. People assume that the dedicatees are the models for the Rincons, but that is not the case. The characters for that book came to me in the way that all my characters have come: out of a dream.

Q: Your 2011 book, *When the Killing's Done*, deals with conflict between human-introduced rats and pigs, and indigenous plant and animal life on the California Channel Islands. What draws you toward such moral, ethical, and environmental themes?

A: Living in a free society that has allowed me, all my life, to say, do and think whatever I choose. I am forever trying to answer the essential question of our apish lives: why? Why exist? Why evolution? Why reproduction? Why this planet? As I said above, I am socially and environmentally engaged. That is simply part of my nature--and territory--as an artist.

Q: What is your favorite quote from your own writing or from someone else?

A: A quote from the aforementioned Italo Calvino, I used for the epigraph to If the River Was Whiskey: "You know that the best you can expect is to avoid the worst."

Q: Who is your favorite author and why?

A: Today I'll pick William Faulkner. His Light in August and Sanctuary are two of my touchstone books. He is writing from some deep primitive place in a fluid magical prose that's like improvisatory music. And he reminds me, again and again, of what a true rant is.

Q: If faced with serious writer's block, what are some strategies you might use to deal with the problem?

A: I always keep a loaded .357 magnum pistol on my desk.

Q: In your free time, when not writing or otherwise working, what are some of your favorite pastimes?

A: I am far too crazy to participate in any cooperative activity, such as sports or chess or cards or joining organizations or going to meetings or anything else. I like to be alone in nature, wandering the woods of the Southern Sierras, muttering to myself. Or kayaking out in the Santa Barbara Harbor. Or raking muck out of my pond, while also generously feeding the leeches and mosquitoes.

Q: What advice would you give to young students hoping to become published authors?

A: *My standard advice is to come from a very wealthy family. Barring that, do what I did: read and read and read.*



Thank you, T C. Boyle for your candid and insightful thoughts on your writing process! We wish you the safest of travels on your tour for your new book, *The Terranauts*!

Occupation *Kim Farleigh*

Between Ibrahim Qutub's olive, almond and fig trees, whitish, fist-sized rocks covered his land's dark, red-orange-brown soil, his sheep chewing the white-straw stalks that rose between the rocks, the sheep's musical mastication heightening the silence's tranquillity.

The olive trees, of equal height, with their trunk pillars, formed an auditorium for those rhythmical sheep melodies that deepened the peace by exaggerating the quietude.

The impression of a photographic positive that white against dark red-orange-brown creates increased when the sunlit straw glowed like filaments, the sheep's golden eyes also shining iridescently, just like the straw, the two shining as if attracting each other, enhancing Ibrahim's grove's harmony.

The olive-tree branches contained buds that grew to sustain life. The branches' shining leaves, with their horizontal, dark-replica shadows, suggested symmetrical balance, no need for alterations. Blue, in the boughs' gaps, resembled sapphire cut smooth by a genius of sculpture and placed over the world, like the final touch to a masterpiece of peace.

Standing on a ladder, Ibrahim shook an almond-tree branch. Almonds fell upon a green tarpaulin sheet that Ibrahim had placed under the tree to catch the falling nuts.

He rolled up the tarpaulin sheet before digging a hole that he placed an olive-tree sapling into, stamping the ground around where the sapling now stood, its leaves blissfully jewelled, as if its planting had given it the joy of life. It faced a battleship-grey, concrete lookout tower that stood on the hill beside a new settlement. A chalk road, running into that settlement, resembled bone inserted artificially into a fertile creature.

Fizzing stirred and contracted and erupted in

Ibrahim's temples when military vehicles started coming down the chalk road. Light flashed across an approaching windscreen, like gunfire from a muzzle, pronged brilliance gleaming wildly, as if ferocious thoughts in the shape of light were ripping through the windscreens to supernova with blinding savagery. Dust, flying up from the vehicles' tyres, became illuminated clouds of iridescent powder, the steel beasts inside those gilt mists driving those blinding sparkles on.

Ibrahim felt his identity disappearing before the approaching steel that emitted the primeval amorality of arachnids, Ibrahim's sheep chewing, consumption their only concern, their woolly bodies ringed by light.

The vehicles parked beside the hamlet where Ibrahim left his sheep every night. A stone wall of cellular granite, granite plucked from the land itself, surrounded the hamlet. Following the land's contours, that wall's creators respected the world's shapes. The hamlet, also made from the land's granite, appeared to have risen naturally, like magmatic rock decorated with green shutters.

The settlement's garish regularity opposed the land's contours.

Against the granite constructions' delicate strength, the parked, green military vehicles' cold, reptilian indifference reminded Ibrahim of carnivorous spiders waiting to pounce. Amid the bestial creatures was a bulldozer with twometre-high tyres. Its driver, invisible behind bullet-proof glass, anonymity guaranteed, could destroy in peace.

Pain pierced Ibrahim's intestines. His heart pounded. His hands shook. The feeling that rights were only theoretical abstractions struck like a chilly wind; the stability that makes us feel that justice prevails disappeared before that steel, whose round, glass eyes glared with unpredictable malice.

One of the vehicles' rear doors opened with a metallic sweraaack. Ibrahim felt surprise: an educated-looking person emerged from that bitter thing, difficult to believe that anyone with feelings could have stepped out of that metal hide from which gun barrels were protruding through holes ringed with rubber.

The captain said: "Sorry. We have to do it." "Why?" Ibrahim asked. "I don't disturb anyone."

The captain's black-framed glasses matched his curly, black hair that sat under a helmet whose curving magnitude made his neck look thin. His brown eyes' sensitivity belied the menace created by the steel he represented.

"Sorry," he said. "It's because of the settlement."

"But, there's nothing around here. It's ridiculous."

"I agree, but...."

"Disobey orders!"

"I did yesterday; but the settlers know my commanding officer."

"Kneee-ohhhh!"

Ibrahim's epicentre eyes got engulfed by shock-wave lines.

"I've put all my money into this land," he yelled. "Everything! Thirty years of work!"

The captain studied the ground. His sense of justice was being challenged by idiotic circumstances.

"Sorry," he said. "Really, I am. You can't know how sorry I feel."

"You hate these people, too," Ibrahim said. "Everyone hates them. They're insane!"

The captain avoided commenting on such matters. When he turned around, Ibrahim grabbed him by an arm, saying: "I planted the fig trees a year ago. They've only just started producing fruit-just last week---"

The captain, pulling his arm away, headed towards the vehicles. It was like finishing a relationship with someone whose feelings you don't want to hurt, but much worse because this was a life's destruction, no scope for emotional regeneration and the captain knew it. The sheep continued chewing, consumption their religion.

Two soldiers passed the captain to stop Ibrahim from approaching the vehicles. They pointed their guns at the old farmer who screamed: "Knee-ohhhh! It's ridiculous! You know it is! Knee-ohhhh!"

Ibrahim's voice ricocheted through the valley that the new settlement looked over from the top of the white-chalk road that shone like artificial bone inlaid into an old creature that time had moulded into lovely shapes, shapes now being disturbed by a fantastic perception of history that the settlers had brought with them from elsewhere. Upon that land, the stone walls, following the land's contours, like extensions of the land itself, were being rearranged by a dream of possession so surreal that battleship-grey observation towers, bulldozers and bullets had to be used to sustain that dream's injustices-a dream of eternal recompense built on murder and robbery. And the captain detested it. He had enlisted to defend his country. But where were his country's borders? What was he really defending?

"Jesus!" he muttered, as the bulldozer revved its engines and entered the grove.

"Just because of those freaks up there," he added. "Because of them!"

The two young soldiers he said this to looked as sheepish as the sheep. They just wanted this day finished, to go home and consume, like the sheep. This wasn't their problem, they thought.

"I didn't enlist for this," the captain said, as the bulldozer felled an olive tree, destroying a past and a future simultaneously, scattering the sheep, Ibrahim falling to his knees and 'screaming: "Knee-ohhhh! Knee-ohhhh!" His voice cut into the captain's temples, like a knife.

"This is happening," the captain said, "for people who weren't even born in this country. Incredible."

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The bulldozer reversed and shunted forward and charged, tree roots, like broken wires, now scattered over the grove, the white stones mixed up with the red-brown soil, like bone mixed with blood.

Ibrahim's mouth froze into a rectangular grimace. Shock-wave dimples expanded out from his frozen lips. An unearthly howling, like a bird being tormented by a cat, sang out through the valley from that rectangular opening, the sheep staring confused, their gentle souls shocked by that monster that roared and revved and reversed and advanced, crushing all before it, destroying beauty, roaring like a self-imposed creator of the law, the captain saying: "That's it. I'm out. No more."

He had fought in Lebanon in a conflict that at first had made sense; now he understood why rockets had come over from Lebanon and Gaza. You didn't have to be a genius to understand what occupation causes. But it was surprising just how stupid people were; and even more amazing was how cynical the manipulators of all this were as they made a fortune from selling stolen land while others suffered.

Ibrahim was now on his knees, his face in the land that had once been his love and his life. Tears, mixing with the soil on his face, left red-brown streaks upon his shock-wave lines of despair. Sobbing out cries of disbelief, he clutched the precious soil in both hands, tightening his futile grip on what he had lost. The soil slipped out through his fists like reddish air. He now had no future, just a permanent hollowness of despair, all hope crushed by the Zionist mechanism that detested anything that detested its racist ideas, Ibrahim's life's potential destroyed by a mechanism that could convince itself of anything-absolutely anything-to sustain the dream of omniscient blessing.

Defending what? The captain thought: An entity that continually expands against common sense and justice? How can anyone, thinking reasonably, condone that?

The captain later heard his commanding officer say: "They're now going to put the wall on the other side of the hamlet. We didn't need to destroy the grove."

The commander's lips stretched. He couldn't restrain his smile. Big, white teeth glowed in his face.

"I'm going to the press," the captain said, "and I don't care what happens."

That wiped the smile off the commander's face. One of the commander's hobbies as a junior officer had been beating up Palestinians at checkpoints.

"A wonderful sport," he had once said.

Ibrahim lay in the soil until sunset. His sobs and cries got absorbed into the world's impartial beauty, the world carrying on oblivious, as it always did, the other man who lived in the hamlet with him picking him up and saying: "Ibrahim, oh, Ibrahim....Oh, my God. What pigs! They have no soul!"

Ibrahim heard a voice and nothing else. The liberated wanderings of his consciousness had been violently halted. He gulped, tears mixing with the soil that had given him such hope and dignity.

Kim Farleigh has worked for aid agencies in Kosovo, Iraq and Palestine. He takes risks to get the experience required for writing. He likes fine wine, art, photography and bullfighting, which is why the Australian from Perth lives in Madrid; although he wouldn't say no to a French château.

Linguistiholism DJ Swykert

The party was in full swing. Music played, conversation reigned as singles and couples came and went. Steinberg sat and played Backgammon. He dispatched his opponent deftly, all the while watching the dark haired girl with the brown eyes and dangerous smile sipping a drink on the floor next to the couch.

"Do you play?" he asked her.

"I think you're a bit professional for me." Steinberg rattled the cup with the dice in it. "It's a dice game. Like life, it's a game of chance. In the end, coincidence determines the outcome."

She eyed him carefully, sizing him up, concluded he was sly. "A dice game with many strategies. It would seem the player with the most experience has the advantage."

"Yes, but the one luckiest with the dice always wins. Good strategy can delay the outcome, but over time, coincidence is inevitable."

She slid over and sat in the chair opposite him. She smiled, ran a hand through her hair, picked up the two dice on the coffee table and put them in the shaker. "Once in a while I like taking a risk," she said, then poured a dice out of the shaker onto the board. It was a six.

He rolled a five. "David Steinberg, fellow risk taker, who will be rolling second."

"Dana Sprachter," she said, then put the dice in her cup, shook them, blew on them, and promptly rolled a six and a five. Dana moved her checker eleven points out of his home board and to safety.

"A runner."

"You said it's a dice game. It's a big

number."

Steinberg rolled a three and a one. He closed the twenty point.

"Tell me about yourself."

"Linguist, word researcher, semantics, translator, relationship troubles."

teinberg smiled, the polite kind that is expected when people meet. "Psychiatrist, Sackler School of Medicine 92, biker, divorced. We all experience relationship troubles. It's human nature to have relationship trouble. When there's little, we create it. When there's a lot, we create more."

"Then shouldn't I be laying on your couch instead sitting in a chair rolling dice."

"You've seen too many Woody Allen movies. It's not like that. We both remain upright, sit in chairs, overstuffed, comfortable. I may take a few notes."

"Tonight, though, you're holding just the shaker. No note taking."

Dana tossed the dice, double fives. Steinberg smiled. She's sharp, witty, and lucky with dice. "Okay, no notes. Just conversation. I've always considered backgammon the game of life, replete with risk, and you can't win at either without taking one."

"What am I risking?" Dana asked. "Besides losing the game?"

"You're exposing yourself to a stranger. But, a stranger who might be able to help you, not with the game, with the relationship part of your game of life. But, as with all things, there is risk. It might fail miserably, leave you feeling worse than before."

Dana blinked. "You've failed to discourage me, peeked my interest."

"I just want you to know that everyone,

even psychiatrists, go through marital problems. We all get bad dice sometimes. I'm here to help you, not pass judgment. Have you tried marriage counseling?"

"What makes you think I'm married? Can't single people have relationship troubles?"

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have presumed anything," Steinberg said.

"Just because I'm not twenty doesn't mean I'm married."

She crossed her shapely legs and folded her arms. Dana was now looking directly into his eyes. She was attractive, perhaps a bit obsessive. Or was he becoming obsessed with her? "Let's begin again. It wasn't my intention to label you. You're very good looking, and over thirty, I made an assumption you would be married."

"I'm trying to get that way. But I've developed this problem."

Steinberg didn't say anything, just nodded. He leaned back and waved his hand for her to continue.

"Josh and I have been seeing one another for a year. We both work with language, we write and research. We get along. We're attracted to one another."

"None of this sounds like a problem, it sounds like a good relationship that might lead to matrimony."

"We don't have sex."

We wouldn't have that problem, Steinberg thought. "And this is the relationship trouble?"

"Yes. I'm very sexual. I start to itch if I haven't had an orgasm in a couple of days."

As he leaned toward the backgammon board to throw his dice he noticed her ample cleavage, how they moved when she bent over to get a tissue from her purse. Steinberg felt his interest, and his groin, begin to rise. "So, why don't you have sex with Josh?" "Words."

"Words? You're a linguist. I would think you're language skills would be excellent. His, too."

"I'm obsessive."

"About words?"

"Yes, their meaning."

"Okay, let me try to put together a picture of this. You're in bed. Clothes off. He whispers some sweet nothings. You kiss. Become aroused. But you don't have coitus?"

"That's when the trouble begins. His Sweet nothings. He whispers in my ear, I love you. I imagine what's going through his mind, behind his words. I obsess about their meaning, coitus, intercourse, copulation, insertion, physical union, thrusting, vagina, bats listen to flies having coitus."

"Bats?"

"Yes, they can hear flies having sex. It helps them catch and eat them."

"Interesting."

"I obsess. I can't stop my research into the meaning of words. I lose interest and become cool to his advance and we end up talking. More words. He asks me what's wrong. I'll tell you what's wrong, it's the word wrong, wrong means: injurious, unfair, unjust, bad conduct, inflicting harm, provocation, incorrect, mistaken, erroneous, violation. My linguist brain obsesses, it can't stop."

"And what does he do?"

"He puts his pants back on and leaves, leave: to go, depart, away from, disappearing, ceasing, absence, quit. I wish I could quit. Before I lose him. I'm thirty-eight. My biological clock is expiring, it's going to leave, leave me alone, no husband, no daughter, son, nothing. I need help."

"You have Linguistiholism, you're a raging Linguistiholic. There's been studies done on this obsession with the definition of words, a paper published on it titled Linguistic Etymology Disorder, LED for short."

"LED, light emitting diode, bulbs, light strips, accent lighting, semiconductor diode, light bulb, past participle of lead..."

Steinberg held his hand up. "I get it, I get it."

"Help me. I am not a word, I'm a person."

Steinberg began to tap his foot. He ignored the double sixes he had just rolled. "I can give you something that'll help. It'll cure your linguistic OCD. But I wouldn't want you to take it here, and then have to drive home."

Dana sensed it was decision time. Not what to do with her next roll of the dice, but with her game of life. "Then where should I take it?"

There was an uncomfortable pause while they both evaluated the situation. Steinberg broke the silence with a proposal. "My office. It's not far."

"This wouldn't be a professional visit, would it? I'm not going to get a bill in the mail?"

Steinberg laughed. "No, I'd ask you back to my apartment, but I thought you might think it was just my pick up move."

"Isn't it?"

He reflected. Is she right? Is Freud right? Sex is the motivation underneath all behavior. "I have a nice office, the chairs are really comfortable. And I do have something that will help you."

"Will I be able to drive home from your office?"

"Not right away."

"What do we do in the mean time?"

"You relax and see if it breaks your obsession. If you can converse with me, about your relationship struggle with Josh, with words, without obsessing, then it's a good medicine for you. After a short while you'll be fine and you can drive home."

The office was indeed plush. Dark hardwood floors with Persian carpets, floor lamps in the corners with Craftsman shades. Dana sat in a soft upholstered chair with big arms. Dr. Steinberg opened his desk drawer and handed Dana an egg shaped purple pill. "Here it is."

Dana looked at the pill, questioned what she was doing, as we all do just before we take a leap, then swallowed it dry. "What should I feel?"

"Like you're bones are made of rubber and you have no brain."

It took a few minutes, but the medication worked. Dana slouched in her chair. Her short skirt slid up and exposed her legs.

"The meds will help you relax and enjoy sex. And don't obsess about needing to take a pill to have sex. Chemistry and sex is very natural. If it wasn't for nitrous oxide, also known as laughing gas, a man couldn't orgasm. No orgasm, no sperm swimming to the egg. No human race."

"Where do you guys keep the gas? I've never seen a cylinder and a mask next to the bed?"

There was something sly in the way Steinberg smiled. "No cylinder and mask. The brain is a little pharmaceutical factory. When it's time to orgasm it emits a small charge of nitrous oxide, this enables the man's penis to relax enough to allow it to spasm, ejaculate the sperm. Without chemistry none of us would be here."

"The medication is working. I feel like a jellyfish, no skeleton."

"That's how you should feel, unfettered, free, a bit unhinged, but still in control."

"I feel aroused. And not a bit, a lot, and hot. You didn't give me Spanish fly?"

Steinberg shook his head. "No, it's just you're freed from your obsessive nature. Your core person is back in charge. The real Dana has been let out, turned loose. And you're a very sexy lady."

"That's great. But Josh isn't here."

"This is probably unethical, Steinberg said. "But I'm here."

"You have a bedroom in your office?"

"No, there isn't a bed. Can you walk to the desk?" Steinberg asked.

Dana shook her head. "No, I don't think so. I'm feeling really loose. Looser than Patrick "Eel" O"Brian, you know, Plastic Man, the comic book hero."

"Let me help you."

She smiled, stupefied. "Okay," she drawled.

Steinberg was athletic. He took her hand and helped her out of the chair, navigated her to the desk. With a sweep of his hand he cleared it and helped Dana to climb on top of it. Then he popped one of the purple pills into his mouth.

"Why did you take a pill?"

"Because I need to."

"You're a psychiatrist."

"I'm a psychiatrist with OCD. Wrinkles, can't stand anything with a wrinkle."

"Wrinkles?"

"Yes, wrinkles," Steinberg said, wrinkling up his nose. "I can't get past anything with a wrinkle, not on my pillow, or bed sheets. I'd have to get fresh ones and remake them before I could get an erection. By the time I finished making the bed it was too late to make my wife. She was out of the mood."

"So what did you do?"

"I'd get up and check the mirror, looking for wrinkles under my eyes."

"What did she do?"

"She divorced me."

Steinberg looked at her sprawled across the desktop, skirt up, legs dangling.

"I'm feeling it. I'm free of wrinkles," Steinberg said. "I don't even care that your skirt is wrinkled. I love you."

"That's kind of fast."

"Whoever loved that loved not at first sight?"

"Skip the Marlowe, Steinberg. Skip everything. Maybe it's just your purple pill, but I've got rubber bones, I'm loose, brainless heat. I'm hot. My biological cock... I mean my biological clock, is ticking. Fuck, I don't know what I mean. I don't care what I mean. Let's just ride this wave."

There were no more words. Just sex. Hot, unsaid, no linguistics, sans definition, no clocks ticking. There was orgasm, hard, several, many, lasting.

They were married that next spring. Sprachter and Steinberg united in holy matrimony. The union between Dana and Steinberg, and the ten milligram purple pills was wordless, without wrinkles, blissful and productive. She was pregnant before winter.

Sometimes in backgammon, and the game of life, the dice roll in your favor.

DJ Swykert is a fiction writer living in the Cincinnati area. His work has appeared in The Tampa Review, Detroit News, Coe Review, Monarch Review, the Newer York, Lunch Ticket, Gravel, Zodiac Review, SCR, Barbaric Yawp and Bull. His books include Children of the Enemy, Alpha Wolves, The Pool Boy's Beatitude and The Death of Anyone. You can find him at: www.magicmasterminds.com/djswykert He is a wolf expert.

Lack of Imagination Ira Alighieri

I recall the moments when I was a child, bounding upstairs, bounding downstairs, bounding across the green grass of the front lawn on my bare feet, the thin blades tickling every space between my toes, and the cool dirt underneath cushioning the soles of my feet. The lawn was aesthetically pleasing, just imagine it.

A cool, spacious area, with several houses connected together, sharing one lawn, and some stairs leading up to a neighbor's house, as if we were all cozy roommates in a suburban area. Cement paths led to a large cul de sac, where kids often met up and ventured together, playing make believe and street hockey.

During my childhood, grass and dirt fueled my imagination. Every step conjured a thought process of what I could do on that field. Would I be a mystical nymph or a strong monster hunter? There were no boundaries, but there was always that one tiny pebble. That tiny pebble that crunched the cogs of my mind to a stop, jamming my thoughts to the point that I'd stop leaping... stop dreaming.

Today, I find it amazing that such a tiny thing can ruin a moment filled with such wondrous things. All those tiny blades of grass and the packed mounds of luscious soil amounted to nothing against the sheer pain one tiny pebble could give me. It's exactly like life, now that I think about it.

Joyous moments have always occurred in my life. Joyous moments occurred around the clock constantly.

Some examples would be entirely consistent of my mother. Coming home from a good day of school to find that a warm bowl of food was provided for me ready on the table, knowing my mother was home for me to embrace and speak to about my problems and my day, how I had discovered fire ants under the slide. I find that as a child, I had much to talk about. I never shut up. I always had something to say. And you know what? There was always someone there to tell me to shut up. In this case, it was my sister.

God, my sister. Literally. God. That's all she ever talked about.

All that comes up in my mind are words that only describe her... Disgusting, revolting, bigoted, close-minded, superficial.

She always spouted bible quotes, and always tried to pray the gay away. Tried and tried, to the point that I feel that I have the lack of an identity now. The lack of an imagination to do what I wanted to.

I don't know who I am, I'm not sure I ever will, and I'm scared of what I will find out. I'm frightened of the person I am going to discover in due time. But then again, time is that important.

My sister was that tiny pebble that came up every now and then. Just barely managing to give me that jolt of pain when I'm trying to enjoy the little things in life. When she introduced him to me, I felt that the pebbles in my field of imagination were finally absent. He was kind and he was relatable. My sister stopped being a pebble. I finally had someone to talk to. Little old me was a lone adventurer until he came along.

Finally, my imagination started up again. It was slow at first, but then it went back to normal. I was drawing again. I was playing make-believe again at the age of 10. That's when it slowed back down. I could feel rocks being tossed into my head again. I was assured and reassured and convinced... Convinced that nothing bad was happening, that it wasn't because something was causing my imagination to slow down, but that it was because I'm simply getting rusty.

He ruffled my hair and told me everything would be okay. He smiled and said that I'm a smart little girl who could amount to so much in the future. He complimented me and said I have such a wild imagination that I'm more creative than my own sister, the skilled artist and evangelical nut.

Little did I know that his words contained acid, and I had managed to swallow every calculated dose. Such a disaster escaped my mind simply due to the fact that I was decaying slowly throughout the years, taking little to no regard of the many times I regurgitated and spewed bile from my mouth in burning torrents. All because he told me, "It's okay."

To this day, I still hear those words in my head after every tiny pebble he tossed into the clockworks of my mentality slowly starts to dislodge themselves. To this day, I can sometimes feel the poison rise up in my throat, catching itself in my esophagus. I try desperately to swallow because I'm scared of what may come out. After 8 years, I've allowed myself to let it out sometimes, maybe twice a month, and that same toxic waste rushes forth in a stream of tears and horrid heart palpitations that scream death but actually mean "It's okay".

"It's okay, you're just having anxiety". Should I be reassured that I'm not actually dying when realistically he made me believe that at times I was less than nothing without him? Less than nothing without a guardian angel? Am I honestly only a mortal in his eyes?

Well, my imagination is back now, my "friend". You are a man who speaks of God as if he is your friend and caretaker, but the person you have been praying to this whole time is yourself, because the only conscientious being in this universe that would ever condone what you have done to me is YOU. I have my imagination now, and God is on my side. Despite all the pain I've been feeling these past few years, it is not because I failed to listen to you and stay with you. It is because I allowed myself to be your dancing puppet to touch and to "do with what thou wilt". I have my imagination back now, and I see you sowing the seeds that you reaped back then. I have my imagination back now, and I will now try desperately to soar to new heights while replacing your voice with my own in order to tell myself,

"I will be okay."

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Crafton Hills College's Annual Literary and Art Magazine

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for our "Chaos" themed 2017 issue! Please keep these limits in mind:

10 pages of Fiction, Non-Fiction or Flash Fiction 3-5 pieces of Art and Photography 3-5 pages of Poetry

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