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UMBRELLA FACTORY WORKERS

Fiction Editors

Anthony ILacqua

Amanda Bales

Nonfiction Editor/Web Developer

Mark Dragotta

Poetry Editor

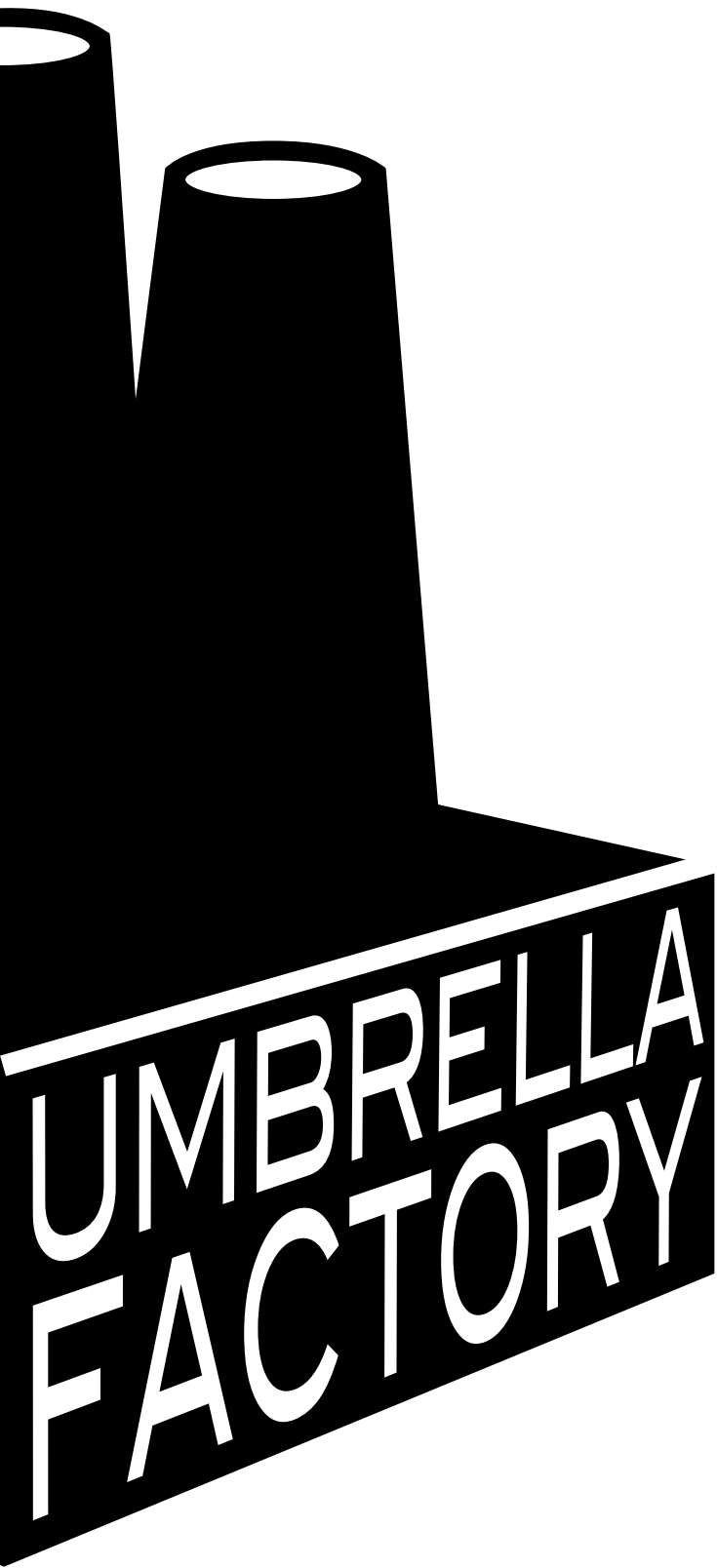
Julie Ewald

Copy Editor

Janice Hampton

Art Editor/Design

Jana Bloomquist





Welcome.

Readers, Writers, Poets, Workers, Artists, and other interested parties, welcome to the December 2011 Issue of Umbrella Factory Magazine. As always, we are pleased and grateful for your support. As close as we can tell, all it really takes to support this small magazine are readers and writers. Although these two populations are often the same, we still take our task of connected, well-developed readers to the best writing the web has to offer. Thank you, and please: subscribe, submit, comment and tell everybody you know.

This eighth issue marks the completion of Umbrella Factory Magazine's second year. As close as I can tell, these first two years and eight issues have brought nothing but good things for all of us here at UFM. I cannot thank everyone enough. This has been a wonderful time and a good experience. So, with all good things, the nature of evolution means change. Our format will remain essentially the same. Anyone can access our site and read what we consider the best poets and writers out there in the world today. Yet, this issue of UFM also sees the first appearance on Issuu. What this means for us is a larger

potential audience and an additional community. What it means for you? You can view our magazine in either our normal layout, or in a more traditional magazine layout via Issuu. Either way, we still offer top drawer content.

I'm continually impressed with the writers and poets we attract at UFM. In this issue, we're delighted with the ball parks of our youth in Lou Gaglia's "The Little Leagues;" and we find ourselves flown from the nest, and in the shadows of what's left behind in Emily O'Neill's "They Get Away." Sy Rosen holds up the standards of altruistic practices in his nonfiction piece, "Looking for a Hero." Our poets round out this winter issue with views out other windows. Sarah Hughes offers us missed contentions, or perhaps misconceptions in her poem "View from a Bench." In Andrea DeAngelis's "Barcelona" we find ourselves far away from home and self. "Ink," by Austin Hackett, is loss and gain, the lost love and the gain of. And the negative space within the poems of Michael Keenan are treat.

Whether this is your first UFM experience, or your eighth, thank you for reading.

Anthony ILacqua, worker

ABOUT US: Umbrella Factory isn't just a magazine, it's a community project that includes writers, readers, poets, essayists, filmmakers and anyone doing something especially cool. The scope is rather large but rather simple. We want to establish a community--virtual and actual--where great readers and writers and artists can come together and do their thing, whatever that thing may be.

Maybe our Mission Statement says it best:

We are a small press determined to connect well-developed readers to intelligent writers and poets through virtual means, printed journals, and books. We believe in making an honest living providing the best writers and poets a forum for their work.

We love what we have here and we want you to love it equally as much. That's why we need your writing, your participation, your involvement and your enthusiasm. We need your voice. Tell everyone you know. Tell everyone who's interested, everyone who's not interested, tell your parents and your kids, your students and your teachers. Tell them the Umbrella Factory is open for business.

Subscribe. Comment. Submit. Tell everyone you know. Stay dry

Submission Guidelines:

Yes, we respond to all submissions. The turn-around takes about three to six weeks. Be patient. We are hardworking people who will get back to you.

On the first page please include: your name, address, phone number and email. Your work has to be previously unpublished. We encourage you to submit your piece everywhere, but please notify Umbrella Factory if your piece gets published elsewhere. We accept submissions online at www.umbrellafactorymagazine.com

Fiction:

Sized between 1,000 and 5,000 words. Any writer wishing to submit fiction in an excess of 5,000 words, please query first.

Please double space. We do not accept multiple submissions, please wait for a reply before submitting your next piece.

On your cover page please include: a short bio□who you are, what you do, hope to be. Include any great life revelations, education and your favorite novel.

Nonfiction:

Nonfiction can vary so dramatically it's hard to make a blanket statement about expectations. The nuts-and-bolts of what we expect from memoir, for example, will vary from what we expect from narrative journalism. However, there are a few universal factors that must be present in all good nonfiction.

1. Between 1,000 and 5,000 words
2. Well researched and reported
3. A distinct and clearly developed voice
4. Command of the language, i.e. excellent prose. A compelling subject needs to be complimented with equally compelling language.
5. No major spelling/punctuation errors
6. A clear focus backed with information/instruction that is supported with insight/reflection
7. Like all good writing, nonfiction needs to connect us to something more universal than one person's experience.
8. Appropriate frame and structure that compliments the subject and keeps the narrative flowing
9. Although interviews will be considered, they need to be timely, informative entertaining and offer a unique perspective on the subject.

Please double space. We do not accept multiple submissions, please wait for a reply before submitting your next piece.

Submit your work online at WWW.UMBRELLAFACTORYMAGAZINE.COM

Poetry:

We accept submissions of three to five poems for shorter works. If submitting longer pieces, please limit your submission to 10 pages. Please submit only previously unpublished work.

We do not accept multiple submissions; please wait to hear back from us regarding your initial submission before sending another. Simultaneous submissions are accepted, but please withdraw your piece immediately if it is accepted elsewhere.

All poetry submissions must be accompanied by a cover letter that includes a two to four sentence bio in the third person. This bio will be used if we accept your work for publication. Please include your name and contact information within the cover letter.

Art:

Accepting submissions for the next cover or featured artwork of Umbrella Factory Magazine. For our cover we would like to incorporate images with the theme of umbrellas, factories and/or workers. Feel free to use one or all of these concepts.

In addition we accept any artwork for consideration in UFM. We archive accepted artwork and may use it with an appropriate story, mood or theme. Our cover is square so please keep that in mind when creating your images. Image size should be a minimum of 700 pixels, .jpeg or .gif file format.

Please include your bio to be published in the magazine. Also let us know if we can alter your work in any way.



LITTLE LEAGUES

LOU GAGLIA

After a two inning sampling of my new Brooklyn neighborhood's little league, my old friend Al, who I was seeing for the first time since our Long Island days, wanted to sit in the bleachers with the rest of the crowd, but I frowned and shook my head, hoping he'd leave it alone, that we'd go over to the basketball courts instead and get into a three-on-three, or watch the old men play Bocce Ball.

It wasn't only the parents yelling for "John-ny! Domin-ic! Sam-my!" and Jo-seph!" or their impassioned entreaties to the umpires to open their eyes, to put their glasses on, to change their contacts, to get into their rocking chairs, to get new wives, to turn to religion: it was the screaming at the coaches to put that kid in or get that kid outta there; and it was the sarcastic comments—the "Good catch kid," or the "Hey, look what I found!" or the "You want my niece's glove, kid?" that made me glare at them all. It was all of that and Al's increasing antsiness to go sit in the bleachers and have fun among those cursing fools that made me blurt out, "I hate this crap." A thick silence for a few pitches, and then Al went into the stands by himself. I didn't follow but turned away, down Smith Street, picking up a coffee at the pizza place and then crossing the basketball courts toward the Bocce court, hating that crap, hating it furiously all the way there.

The men on the Bocce court took turns rolling big balls toward a tiny one, sometimes softly to get close, sometimes hard to knock it or other balls free. They spoke only Italian to each other, and a couple of them nodded to me when I sat at the far end, unlidding my coffee.

Three of them played against another three, one of them immediately reminding me of my Uncle Emilio, five or six years dead now. This man seemed serious but took it well when he made a bad roll and the others razzed him. He played the part of the beleaguered one, shrugging his shoulders and smiling wryly at a particularly bad turn. They rode him, and I smiled, sipping at the coffee. They were all so quiet and serious during someone's turn, but then there was an explosion of kidding and shouting and warnings and advice and boasting, all in rapid Italian.

When I was ten, eleven, and twelve, Uncle Emilio greeted me upstairs whenever we went to my grandparents' two-family house in Queens. He talked to me about the Mets, and we watched baseball together. He spoke some English and some Italian and made jokes, wearing a serious expression, so I had to pay attention to get the humor. He didn't take baseball so seriously, but he loved it, and he knew I loved it too.

The gestures and expressions of that beleaguered Bocce player reminded me of Uncle Emilio, and another man (I peered at him, taking a gulp of coffee) reminded me of someone too. From childhood, maybe. Teen years. Long Island neighbor... Stan Spiezio's father. A certain lost glaze in his eyes just before he rolled a ball clicked the memory into place. Stan's father standing behind the dugout, his fingers gripping the chain link fence, watching with the same lost glaze while Stan dug out his own black shoes buried in the dirt under the bench.

I looked at the sky, at a plane high above. That joke Greg Moran played on Stan. I was twenty-two or so and out with friends—with Steve and maybe Tom and with Al himself, the last time seeing him before now. Pizza. Greg Moran showed up and bought beers to go with the pizza we'd ordered, cancelling the sodas. He told us, slowly leading up to it, the joke he'd played on good old Stan Spiezio. He wore that easy-going sardonic smile, finally getting to it when we were already laughing.

He'd sent a letter to Stan and his father, he told us. Used Yankee letterhead. Really official. Letter invited Stan and his father to spring training in Fort Lauderdale so Stan could try out. They'd heard about his skills, the letter said, and their scouts couldn't wait to see Stan play.

Of course Stan and his father flew down, paying for plane tickets themselves. We all laughed, imagining what their faces looked like when puzzled looks or dismissive replies greeted them. Some secretary giving

the letter right back and sending them on their way. The long walk out of the ballpark. The long drive to the airport. The long plane ride home. Their disappointed, embarrassed faces--especially the lost look on Stan's father's face. My laughter turning into a weak smile.

I sipped the last third of the coffee, not smiling now, watching the men play. It was either a good roll or a bad roll, or a near miss, and all the while they rode each other mercilessly and took it well. The Mr. Spiezio look-a-like, quieter than the rest, smiled slightly at their jokes or at their feigned anger.

Late college, on the way to the train station, I met Stan coming from the library, balancing a stack of eight or nine books in his arms. I glanced at them—books about self-improvement or body-building. And Stan, in his booming voice, suggested I read a few of them. He held one and then another out to me. I could borrow any one of them, he said. Really. But I told him I was late for the train.

Stan in the weight room in high school, pumped up and grunting among other lifters. Friends and I had wandered in from Judo class. Tom elbowing me. Al was there too. Do you believe this guy? Stan nodding an emphatic hello to me and going right back to his weights. Bench pressing, focused. Knew he was being watched.

One of the Bocce players knocked someone else's ball off course or something and there was a shout from the men, half of them cheering and the others roaring no. One of them shook his bent head, and they all walked up the court, pointing at this ball or that one, ribbing each other. I grinned.

It was all playful ribbing, but the boys didn't just rib Stan. The invitation to Yankee training camp was no rib.

Stan's father--I looked at his replica again--had died a few years before, leaving Stan living alone in that big house, his mother having died when he was a toddler. I looked at the chain link fence beyond the court.

Stan's father stood behind the dugout after that game in junior high school. Stan was in 9th grade, and the 8th graders---Hollis and McCabe and Doyle and McCormick and Pops—sat on the bench digging holes with their spikes, gradually merging their holes into one big one. When Stan was in the field, they buried his black shoes.

Stan played second base regularly, and I was a 7th grader, playing the second half of games. I watched them bury the shoes, then quake silently when Stan came into the dugout and looked around, first curiously, then

more urgently. I looked away, back out to the field before I heard Stan scream, “Where are my shoes! Where are they?” And the 8th graders broke out with suppressed laughter, looking out at the field, not at him.

“Where are they,” Stan screamed.

“We don’t know where your stupid shoes are,” one of them said, and they broke up again.

That was no rib. I watched them laugh and hold it back, laugh and hold it back, and I watched Stan grab a bat and stand near the other end of the dugout waving it up and down with one hand, glaring at them.

It was no rib, and Stan could do nothing but scream and take it and wave that bat, then hurry to the on deck circle when the coach yelled at him.

They had no idea where his stupid shoes were, they insisted, angrily sometimes, all the way to the end of the game, saying it to the coach, too, when the coach, laughing, told them to cut it out and give the guy his shoes back.

When the game ended I lingered while Stan looked around furiously, but there was only dirt and a wood bench to search, so I stood next to him and toed the dirt under the bench, seeing the 8th graders look back at me. Stan dug frantically and that’s when I noticed Stan’s father, standing behind the dugout, gripping the chain link fence. He looked on quietly, lost, while Stan dug out his shoes and emptied them of rocks and dirt. Stan paced, his shoes in his hand, and didn’t say anything or look at me.

They were starting a new Bocce game. They were starting a new Bocce game, and it seemed that Uncle Emilio and Stan’s father were on the same team again. They rolled first, determined this time to undo the lousy game they’d just played. The others needled Uncle Emilio playfully, because he was giving some serious advice to Stan’s father, and Stan’s father smirked and rolled. They roared about his good shot or bad shot, I couldn’t tell which.

Yes, Stan’s father, maybe, told Stan to start lifting weights after that. Still, in high school the kids laughed at the bulked-up Stan when he got off the bus because he ran full speed, wearing his black shoes with white socks. He ran awkwardly, all the way down Howard Court, elbows pumping.

Sitting near the front of the bus, I wondered at Stan’s hurrying home. To see his father, maybe, have a catch, or just practice alone. Maybe play a private baseball game in his mind, the way I did then, secretly, as crazy about baseball as Stan was. Quiet about it, though. Not laughed at. Only

secretly loving it, not hurrying to my baseball glove after school but taking my time and reaching for it casually later. Then, stone-faced, throwing the ball off the chimney only when I knew no one was watching. The games inside my head, contests with myself, a whole world inside me, one that I liked.

Stan was crazy about the Yankees and sure he would play second base for them one day. I only hoped silently, but he was sure about it and said so often in his booming voice. So they tortured him—Hollis and McCabe and Doyle and McCormick and Pops.

“Mickey Mantle’s a drunk,” they told him on the way to practice one day, behind the supermarket, clicking through the parking lot in spikes. “The Mick’s a drunk, Stan,” they said, and Stan screamed, “He’s not a drunk! He’s not a drunk!”

They laughed, and laughed harder during practice when I misjudged a fly ball, going back at first and then coming in as Stan ran out from second. The ball dropped in front of me, and I threw wildly to second base to cut off the runner, but Stan couldn’t duck my throw in time and the ball caromed off his head and into left field. The runners circled the bases and the guys in the field fell down laughing. Stan dropped to one knee, holding his head. Sorry, Stan. Sorry, I said, running over to him. He blinked rapidly and nodded. He was all right, he said, and ran back to second, but not in a straight line, weaving everywhere. And in between hoots, one of them, Pops maybe, shouted to Stan that he was running just like his hero, Mick the drunk.

I stood, looking for a garbage can for the coffee cup. One of the Bocce men nodded to me, and I nodded back and threw them a wave. I liked them. I liked the way they played. I knew I’d be back.

Crossing the park, I could still hear the little league game going on, the screaming and the cursing louder and closer before I veered off toward home a block away. Maybe Al was still with them, sitting in the bleachers, enjoying his “study” of them. But I’d studied enough, I was sure.



They Get Away

Emily O'Neill

Tate Dobbs' three sisters had each vanished with the years: Marissa went to graduate school somewhere on the West Coast; Nicole managed a bakery a few hours east, growing fat on cream puffs; Lorelai, the baby, had married a kind, plain army recruiter, gotten pregnant, moved to Virginia. The Dobbs women were perfect examples of one of Serenity's odd traditions: little girls grew from freckle-faced troublemakers into slender swans with high cheekbones and warm smiles, and then disappeared. New England college towns swallowed some; cities were loaned others and never returned them. Most were lured away by a pair of rings and a husband with family hours down the interstate.

Martin Cummings had always mourned these losses most; he found it difficult to grow attached to anyone, especially a woman, forever afraid she might disappear. There was a dearth of pretty faces Martin's age in town. Nadine Reed was the most beautiful girl who hadn't left Serenity behind. But Nadine's beauty was not in her face.

Everything about her was coltish. She had a slight gap between her front teeth and frowned more than most, hiding the imperfection with a tightly closed mouth when not speaking. Her eyes were an unremarkable shade of dark brown, fiery when she was about to cause a scene. They had chemistry, but Nadine's interest in Martin hinged on the fact that when she told him what to do, he rarely put up a fight. She'd shown up to "bother him" on his lunch break earlier that day; they fooled around in his car, his sandwich left uneaten on the dashboard. She demanded he meet her at the bar later, her lips brushing his ear, ever the expert on securing her ideal answer. He had not been in any position to tell her no.

Without fail, when Nadine told Martin he was taking her out, he did so. This originated with Martin's senior prom; he had not planned on going, but sophomore Nadine got into his car (back then, a monstrous steel-framed Cutlass inherited from his great aunt), and refused to get out. He started driving while she performed a charming speech about how she'd had her eye on him all year and had nearly died when she found out he had no prom date and could he please please pretty please find it in his heart to make a lowly underclassman's dream night come true. He was flattered enough to buy tickets. And when he became aware that he'd been had (she spent the bulk of the night smoking shoplifted cigarettes in the bathroom, commiserating with the other female guests about the untalented DJ), he did not care. She danced with her eyes closed. She was a con, but she was his con.

Martin rushed through the dinner dishes. He gave himself a quick shave and traded work uniform for a fresh shirt and jeans. Once that small effort was made, Martin eased his Mustang out of the garage and towards The Office, Serenity's lone bar. Cal Jockel had named it such because he wanted to feel more like a businessman than a drunk. Over the years, Cal's body swelled as his liver failed, and most nights he left care of the bar to Tate Dobbs. When Martin arrived, Tate and Nadine were two steps through a pair of tequila shots, about to bite into the limes wedges.

Nadine smiled with the rind in her teeth. It unnerved Martin to see her with Tate; he felt uncharacteristically protective of her. When Tate talked to women, Nadine especially, he had the unfortunate habit of standing too close.

"Marty!" Tate exclaimed. Martin flinched at the nickname. The two men shook hands across the bar. Nadine's pressed her palm into the small of Martin's back.

"Hi," she said, a whisper away from his ear. "We were wondering when you'd show." When finished speaking, she slouched back down to her natural height. Looking at her, Martin was struck by how she'd had to prop herself up on the edge of the bar to reach his ear. She rarely seemed smaller than when they were drinking.

Martin took a seat and observed Nadine: it was abundantly clear she'd had a few. He glanced over at Tate, already fixing her another. Martin entertained the idea of confronting Tate about feeding the girl free drinks. Some nights Nadine fell asleep right there, head propped on the heel of her hand. Martin did not know how to speak to anyone about it.

Tate interrupted Martin's thoughts with a beer. He sipped, and Tate launched into one of his famous tales of overheard scandal.

Tate was a star storyteller. He spent all of his nights honing his craft, telling and re-telling the same yarns until every detail was perfect. He retired perfected stories, bringing them back only once all accurate recollections had dissolved. Nadine was the only one who ever called him out on his system. When he got to the place in his county fair story where one of the drivers in the demolition derby was wrested from his car fully on fire, she interrupted, "You mean he scalded his hand making coffee that afternoon," laughing at her own joke.

The Office was a bar of only regulars. Tate kept loose hours. The same group of working men turned up for a drink on their way home. In the lull after happy hour, Tate smoked sticky joints with the teenaged day waitress and the greasy line cook whose burgers were passable at best. Once the trio was good and stoned, the night crowd trickled in. These were the baseball fans, Cal's favorite kind of people. In his opinion, a bar could be judged by its baseball fans—any sucker could pick a team, but the real fans debated the necessity of the designated hitter.

The only feature of the bar not busted up, secondhand, or generally sub-par was a massive flat screen television that hung angled above the door to the kitchen, enshrined by neon beer signs. Serenity's men ran up long Budweiser tabs and talked shit as if in the announcer's booth themselves.

There was no game that night, but the men still gathered around their altar, piles of peanut shells gathering on the floor. Martin watched the many-headed monster, clapping itself on the back, leaning its heads together to discuss theories on whose pitching staff would get the overhaul it needed at the end of the season.

Nadine talked for the sake of talking. After a few more drinks, she was annoyed that Martin wasn't hanging on her every word. She nursed a whiskey rocks and offered stories whenever Tate walked away to referee an argument. These were not bad stories—to be fair, the patrons of the truck stop diner where she worked were colorful characters—but they were off-putting to Martin.

Nadine prattled on about inconvenient road construction. Martin nodded occasionally, but instead of on her story, he focused past her left shoulder on the man who did not belong. Alexander Vasilewicz sat at the edge of the usual cluster. Renters rarely wandered in, so any stranger was especially noticeable. For some reason, no one but Martin seemed to bristle at Alexander's presence.

Vasilewicz had the heel of one black boot hooked on the rung of his barstool, a highball glass of cool, clear vodka in his hand. The glass was just starting to cloud with condensation when Tate returned.

"You see that guy?" Tate asked, following Martin's stare. Nadine swiveled unsteadily.

"Who drinks that shit?" she asked, referring to his small glass of

vodka, no ice.

"Yeah, I think I know him," Martin offered absently. The cigarettes rolled up in his sleeve, the hard line of his jaw: there was no mistaking him.

Tate and Nadine both laughed. Sure, Martin saw a lot of people come through the service station, even talked to a handful of them. But by his own admission, Martin was more comfortable speaking to cars than he was with people.

When the man left his glass on the bar to smoke, Martin followed him. Neither said anything to the other, just stood alongside the dumpster breathing the same air. The two stood beneath a deflated moon. An air conditioner dripped Freon down the side of the building in perforated silence.

The stranger ground out his cigarette first, returning inside with a slight nod to Martin. Nadine stopped briefly on her way back from the bathroom, laughed enough to toss her hair off her shoulders. Alexander sipped his drink with a smile as she spoke to him. He caught Martin's eye and raised his glass slightly. Nadine touched his forearm and let her hand linger, laughed again, then continued her walk back to her seat.

While Tate was at the other end of bar Nadine grabbed the whiskey bottle and poured another drink. Martin was unsure whether he wanted Nadine or wanted to keep her safe. He finished his beer and walked over to the jukebox.

Tate took the whiskey back and cut Nadine off for the night, but did not make her pay for the drink. Martin watched the brief conversation, waiting for Tate to say they were worried about her drinking, but his friend just laughed. Disappointed, Martin dropped a quarter into the machine and punched in the code for "The Low Spark of High-Heeled Boys." It was the longest song available.

Nadine snaked both arms around Martin's waist. Nuzzling his back, she cooed, "I love this one." They had been known each other seven years. In those seven years, she'd never had any boyfriend. On the one hand, she flirted with anyone who would speak to her. On the other, she clung to his side. Martin wanted to believe that she loved him. If he had ever loved anyone, it was surely her. He just couldn't stand when she was drunk.

Nadine pulled away when he didn't answer her. Martin turned and saw her retreat had led to a dance. She was the only one dancing; The Office was not that kind of place. The regulars discussed the on base percentage of recent trades, presided over by a rare visit from Cal. Alexander had gone, his vodka foggy and unfinished on the bar. Tate nodded to Cal, cracked a beer for himself, and raised his eyebrows at Martin as if to say, "What are you going to do about this mess?"

Martin would not call it a mess. Seeing Nadine dancing, he forgot all about how unattractive she'd been beside the jukebox. It was easy to call her beautiful when she didn't care. Recklessness attracted the world to her.

As she wound her hips, stepped and turned only partially in time with the music, Martin noticed a bead of sweat run down her neck and fall from her shoulder blade. He felt a lifetime pass with that a small amount of perspiration; by the time he'd finished watching it, the song had ended. So he paid again and again, working his way through the longest songs on the jukebox in descending order. Nadine kept dancing; no one moved to join her.

The last regulars settled their tabs, were clearing out. Tate caught Martin's eye, winked, then trained his gaze on Nadine and applauded. "Well, aren't you just a sight to behold Little Miss Reed! Who-wee! I tell you—you damn near gave old Mr. Frakes a heart attack." Martin was annoyed. It was completely within Tate's power to make her drinks weaker or deny them to her at all, but he never did.

"That's right Marty: your boss stopped in for a beer and you didn't even notice." Martin strode over to the bar and asked for another round.

"Last call was over an hour ago." Tate crossed his arms, still laughing, and they watched Nadine waver into the ladies room, steadying herself with the doorframe. Martin reached out slightly when he saw her falter; Tate just grinned.

"You gonna take her home, or what?" Martin shrugged. It was always the same. Nadine's car slumbered out back. Martin dropped her off in the morning before work.

After peeling Nadine from the passenger seat of his Mustang and pouring her into his bed, Martin lit a cigarette and sat down facing

the Morris house. All of the lights were already off.

—

Martin had fallen asleep at his window again. He was jolted awake by a fall from the sill, the third time in as many weeks since the strange women had arrived next door. He'd been dreaming of the Suds and Spin parking lot, of fucking Nadine in her car while her laundry dried. He had never done this, would probably never do this, but the image was clear as anything he could see through the milky dark from his watching post. He was both inside her and watching it, the split consciousness of dreams letting him see everything. The car smelled of soap and sweat. Nadine was noisier than usual, bucked like a spooked pony, her hand around the base of his neck, fingernails digging in hard enough to break skin. He rubbed the place and felt his pulse racing. His movements had been unrecognizable.

Across town, Nadine was fucking in her car, with Alexander. She moaned his name; he clapped a hand over her mouth. Inside the Suds and Spin, sheets, seersucker and mismatched socks turned behind the dryers' moony faces. The sound reminded Alexander of freight trains speeding through the shipyards near Newark airport.

Nadine had dropped quarters all over the floor. When she bent to pick them up, one shoulder of her sweater had fallen to reveal a garden of bright purple bruises along her collarbone that Martin planted on his lunch break. He and Nadine had been fighting furiously the past handful of days; the more angrily they argued, the more urgent the make-up sex. Alexander smiled at the bruises; that was all it took.

Martin knew none of this. The floor caught him, smacked him out of the backseat of Nadine's car. When he'd fallen asleep, he'd been waiting for something out of the ordinary to happen. The two women at the Morris place were without shame—either they did not know what happened on the property or they did not give death the same distance Serenity afforded it. Martin spent most of his nights wishing he had any reason to introduce himself. He longed for the days when a ball gone astray was all he needed for such an encounter.

"Knock, knock," came a voice from the stairs. "Anybody home?" Martin rose to his feet and turned on the floor lamp next the couch's

duct-taped arm.

“That you Tate?” Martin called out.

Instead of answering, Tate strode in, two fat convenience store cigars in hand.

“It’s time that we celebrated,” he said, lighting one. Martin crossed his arms.

“Not in here,” he said firmly.

Tate laughed and made his way back downstairs. Martin followed, groggy, dragging his heels.

“What are we celebrating?” asked Martin. He wasn’t expecting an answer, thought instead about Nadine. It was a Thursday night. Most Thursdays she picked up a co-worker’s late shift, not punching out until around four AM. She crawled into his bed a short while later. Even on the hottest nights, it was a comfort to turn over and find her, damp with sweat, curled around a pillow. She left his sheets smelling like stale coffee and grill grease, sleeping in her uniform and apron, hands unwashed. Martin unpinned her hair and she would stir slightly, opening and closing her mouth as if she wanted to speak. Those moments when no word bubbled to the surface, Martin loved her without question.

Beside Martin’s garage apartment, Nate Cummings’ tree house glowed with the light of a camping lantern. Two shadows danced on the wall and voices floated down, one of them Nate’s and the other Willy Randolph’s, the girl from down the block. They were conspiring. Martin smiled, sinking his hands deep into pockets. Tate went back to lighting his cigar.

“Fresh meat,” he said between short puffs. It took Martin a moment to remember that Tate was answering a question. “Women are falling from the sky around here,” he said somewhat sarcastically.

“I hadn’t noticed,” Martin lied with a short, frightened laugh.

“Living next door, they must be pretty tough to spot.” Tate lit the second cigar and handed it to Martin. “There’s no way you haven’t noticed.”

Martin was torn—he desperately needed to share the sightings with someone who remembered what happened at the Morris house all of those summers ago, but Tate was hardly the kind of friend Martin could confide in.

“I’ve seen them,” he conceded, hoping that small admission was enough.

There were nights when music spilled from every window of the Morris house, a kind of noise the neighborhood did not know to expect. Martin watched the women move past parted curtains. They washed dishes, talked with their hands, wandered from room to room picking things up and setting them down. They moved so differently. Cecelia seemed to hover, tense but poised. Each gesture was carefully planned. Kissimmee walked looser, more comfortable in her skin.

If the wind was right, sometimes a dry Riesling scent floated through the bushes. Martin assigned the smell to the former ballerina, Cecelia. Cecelia’s stories were slow; she had trouble remembering details. Her friend interrupted her constantly, but Cecelia was never discouraged, continued telling until she was satisfied. She laughed most at the end of the night, a sign wine agreed with her.

The other woman, Kissimmee, seemed more of a whiskey type, like Nadine. She was louder, punctuated details with a different, sharper laugh. Kissimmee spoke often and at great length about the highway; she’d spent a lot of time traveling. Martin labeled her a runaway. Her mimicry of truck drivers and descriptions of the seedy parts of cities had shades of Nadine’s stories to them. The details fascinated him: he’d not met the world beyond Serenity. It was strange to imagine lives that would never touch the town. The women next door made him notice the smallness of his world more each night he eavesdropped.

Martin shared none of this with Tate. This world of watching was Martin’s; he wanted it as quiet and contained as the fist in his pocket. While Tate rambled, Martin focused on the soft sound of conversation coming from the other side of the hedge.

NONFICTION

LOOKING FOR A HERO

Sy Rosen

Mr. King is a hero; there's no doubt about it. Nadia Bloom, an 11 year old girl with Asperger's syndrome, was missing for 4 days. Mr. King, a volunteer searcher, went into an alligator infested swamp by himself and came out with Nadia. The chief of police said James King was an absolute hero, and he wanted to shake his hand. Yes, Mr. King is a hero and I hate to admit it, but at first I didn't believe him.

I thought evidence would be revealed, and we would discover that this volunteer actually put the girl in the woods so he could "rescue" her. I'm embarrassed, ashamed and an idiot, and I have a feeling I'm not the only person who had those creepy thoughts. Yes, the belief in heroes, if not completely gone, is certainly on life support .

As I've gotten older I've become more and more cynical. Maybe it's one of those ailments that effect seniors like liver spots and wearing suspenders. Or maybe it's because as

I get older, more and more people are trying to scam me. I've been bombarded by e-mails from Nigeria requesting money, and when my air-conditioner just needed some Freon, I was told to replace the whole unit. And then, of course, there was the crying phone call from my "grandchildren" desperately asking for money. Luckily, my real grandchildren were in my living room at the time.

Whatever the reason, when someone is on TV talking, often weeping, about some traumatic or heroic moment in their life my first thought is, to paraphrase Al Franken, he's a big, fat liar.

There have been many events that have justified this feeling. About a year ago there was Balloon Boy. I remember even when I was rooting for Balloon Boy's rescue, there was a voice in the back of my head saying, "something's not right here." And I was only mildly surprised when I found out that Balloon Boy's

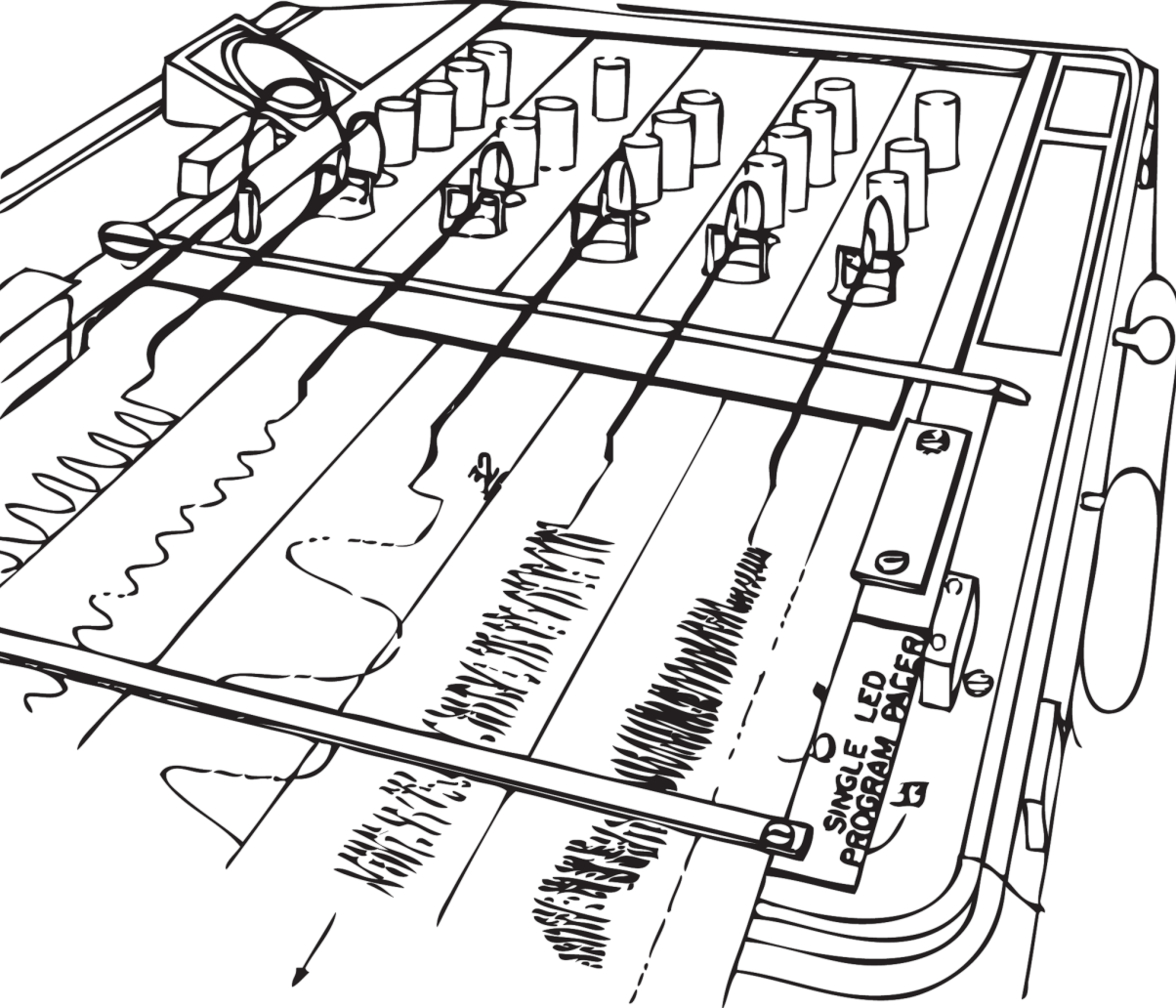
father was a big fat liar.

I also have to mention the Governor of South Carolina, who went missing for 6 days while supposedly hiking in the Appalachians. Later we found out he was really meeting his mistress in Argentina. The Governor was a big fat lustful liar.

And then there was the lady who claimed that an Obama supporter carved a B on her cheek. Unfortunately for her, the B was carved backwards because she probably did it to herself while looking in a mirror. Not only was she a big fat liar, but she was a big fat stupid liar.

And who can forget "the runaway bride?" She claimed she was kidnapped just to get out of marrying some guy. Couldn't she just have said she had a cold?

Recently there was the guy who claimed he couldn't slow down his speeding Prius as it bar-



reled down the highway. When he was on TV being interviewed about his harrowing event, I couldn't help thinking "something's wrong here." And now he's under investigation – it's quite possible the reason he couldn't slow down was because he wouldn't take his foot off the accelerator. He was a big fat speeding insurance fraud liar.

On a much more tragic note, a man from Coral Springs, Florida, Munawar Toha, wept uncontrollably during a TV interview about his missing wife. "We miss you... we love you... Please come back, Surya." Soon after, he was arrested for Surya's murder. Apparently a surveillance video caught him dumping his car, with his wife in it, into Crystal Lake. Yes, Mr. Toha is a big, fat vicious liar.

Munawar Toha brings back memories of tearful interviews by Scott Peterson, Susan Smith and Charles Stuart (the Massachusetts man who, while in his car, killed his wife and

then shot himself to avoid suspicion).

All these public lies have transferred into my cynicism towards heroes, and unfortunately I haven't been disappointed. I'm not sure why the army felt they had to lie about Pat Tillman and Jessica Lynch. These two soldiers were heroes without the fabricated stories. Unfortunately, the military, in their quest to either cover-up or glorify these two incidents, became big fat khaki faced liars.

Yes, these cases can certainly lead to and justify suspicion and skepticism. However, now I have a really embarrassing admission-- the ultimate confession. I originally didn't believe Captain Sully. That's right, I admit it; I thought America's hero was a big fat liar. That he really just made some kind of mistake which forced him to land the plane in the Hudson, and to save face, he fabricated the story about the birds. And maybe when no one was looking, he threw a bucket of Kentucky Fried chicken wings into the propellers to corroborate his story. In

the deepest recesses of my cynical mind I also thought that his perfect mustache was a fake, a Hollywood prop that he put on every morning.

My thoughts about Captain Sully were only for a fleeting moment, but it's still despicable. The sad thing is there have been many more incidents of actual heroism than deceit. There are many true news stories of strangers who ran into a burning apartment to save a child, or pulled an unconscious driver out of a wrecked car, or told off a telemarketer (okay, that's not heroic, but it would make me feel really good). So it's not the heroes who have disappeared, but rather my belief in them.

I know I sound hokey, but I would love to believe in heroes again without any reservations or nagging doubts. I wish there was some kind of Believe in Heroes Rehab that I could go to. Dr. Drew or Dr. Phil would humiliate me on TV until my optimism and trust in mankind was restored.

POETRY

The Fifth Maestro

This should be the end of the crescendo.
We've been in the minor key too long.
Everyone's shifting in their seats, gripping their purses.

Some have covered their ears. We need release, resolution.

But the pianist keeps hammering the keys.
He's bent over now, crying all over the piano.
Red-faced and pained, he's shaking, but still accelerating.

The chandelier crystals
shimmer as they vibrate.

A second pianist comes in and
stands beside the bench.
He starts slamming low octaves in the same
maddening minor progression. He leans his whole weight

into the keys, almost hitting his face each time he comes down.

People are sweating, looking around nervously, grinding their
teeth.
Somebody finally breaks and screams,
but her scream just serves as a dissonant harmony
and now she's part of the piece, another brick in the buildup.

I look back from the front row and I see terrified eyes,
open wide and watering at the rims. As the volume rises
some people start passing themselves out to escape the strain.

The doors are locked, the exits blocked.

The man behind me has his head in his hands,
eyes shut tight, shaking his head back and forth
yelling no, no, no, no, shit shit,

shitshitshitshitshit.

And now a third pianist runs out and starts jumping on the
keys.

Austin Rory Hackett

He smashes the fingers of
the first two

who keep playing with
broken, disfigured digits,

sometimes slipping off the bloody ivory.

A fourth comes in with a hammer, rips the lid off the
piano

and smashes a high f-sharp string over and over

and over and over and over and over

and over

until the final maestro takes the stage,

walks to the front,

and explodes in a hot, bright, searing light,

consuming us all.

A PICTURE

There is a photograph of a girl in an old German dress watching birds fly in a field. Their wings are blurred because they are moving, but their bodies, going dead-straight ahead, are clear.

The girl is not blurred because she is standing still. She is going nowhere. She is alone and clear.

She wears old German dresses, watches birds fly in fields, and imagines she is being hugged, tightly, by someone from long ago.

INK

She sat in my chair and said she wanted a tattoo on her heart. Simple cursive script across her right ventricle that says, “because it is bitter” then across the left, “because it is my heart.” She asked had I read that poem and I said no I dropped out of high school to open this shop. She took off her shirt and I said this must be a joke. She leaned the chair back and said just do your best I don’t care how much it hurts.

THE PHONE CALL

I enjoy you more than you know, he said
after I'd described my cotton bra and panties.

He was driving along some dark curve
of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the moon
was so bright he'd turned off his headlights.

Promise you'll never try this, he said.

I promised. Keep talking, he said, so I talked
about kissing boys at school in the closet
behind the stage, their tongues lapping my ear.

Like puppies, I said.

What else? he said.

I said it was his turn, so he talked about his wife,
pregnant with twins, her disgusting body.

The stretch marks, he said, looked like earthworms
clinging to her sides, and her breasts,
like awful beige eggplants, just sagging there.

What he wanted, he said, was what
she looked like in high school.

She won't always be fat, I said.

She won't ever be new again, he said.

Now tell me, he said, what you whisper
to the boys when they kiss and touch you.

Sara Hughes

VIEW FROM A BENCH IN FEBRUARY

I wanted the stranger in the park.

He drifted in his solitude
like a pinecone on a pond.

I watched him scratch his beard,
kick gravel, crunch a pear.

He sat on a bench across from me.

Without speaking, he twisted
a paper napkin into a knot
then dropped it on the grass.

I removed my coat, wanting him
to see. He tugged at his pocket watch.
Its chain glinted in his chapped hand.

He looked at me holding my coat
on my lap and nodded, as if to say

I could follow him home. I pictured him
pressing me against a dresser,
his fingers tangled in my hair.

Like a damp leaf stuck
to the bench, I remained until
dark clouds bloomed in the sky.

I slipped into my red wool coat
and shuffled toward my car,
begging the wind to make me new.

Snowflakes fell on my shoulders

ABOUT MEN

When I try to give my younger sister advice about men, I'm embarrassed of how little I know, how my only advice is the color red. Find a red dress, I say, clingy not tight, one that grazes your legs just above the knees. Pair it with cherry lip gloss and strappy heels so that when you walk along the university halls the boys will say damn, and your gray-haired professor will pause, spill coffee from his styrofoam cup.

Maybe you will remind him of a girl he knew back when he was a boy in skinny jeans, a girl in a low-lit bar who slid into his booth and breathed in his ear, *you look like a guy who knows his way around*, then took his hand and placed it on her knee. When that professor smiles at you, I tell my sister, think of all those boys who will be men in thirty years, who will remember you every single time they see some girl in red.



Cecilia

Manuel and I had to drag that bitch ass home
 a one-room womb of tossed scarves
 and lava lamp nausea
 after losing three meals of sickly blue milk flakes.
 And I, bleary eyed and watered down hips
 pull myself over to the telephone
 to make sure she hasn't died
 going off to that mind-numbing nirvana
 she's always mumbling `bout
 after some crackle-jack crack brain pops.

Hey,

yeah,

sure,

man.

Throw that shit off to one side

and take a disco nap
 drown in z's before all-night dancing
 and man, I'll be back
 as soon as I see
 how her collapsed and wayshted bod
 is recuperating to be abused again.

Andrea DeAngelis

Barcelona

the band is playing
 while a withered drag queen
 ingests a funnel drink
 into his spilt-end ribs
 and a sophisticated rasta man
 is twanging a Jew harp
 the swinging singer croons
 out of a one-sided, stroke-affected mouth
 John doesn't want to leave Barcelona
 because of having to face
 kissing a man he couldn't taste
 he wanted to show much love
 but loveless, John cannot leave Barcelona
 until he's cured loneliness
 this is the party I never made
 some autumn twilight
 but could recite the details all night
 because of feeling
 I'm missing
 something I might.

Michael Keenan

SOME FORBIDDEN GARDEN

I try to paint her as she walks by—

John lies down in the snow,

Stealing crosses for

love, I guess.

Blonde Oak, I've lost one life.

THE MILKY WAY

Cigarette song,

rising

from the window, I

never would have known if

it weren't for the moon. I

would

make a record, and

this would be in it. Railways

burning her lips

THE FIRST AUTUMN

When Smokey and The Bandit 2 is

all that's on at 3

in the morning, and

you're excited

about

it, is there something

wrong or

something right about

a hidden staircase, another yellow

moon, mindlessly

reading the phonebook

to the stars.

BIOS

Sy Rosen was a TV writer for over 30 years, writing for The Bob Newhart Show, Taxi, MASH, Maude, Sanford, Rhoda, The Jeffersons, Northern Exposure, The Wonder Years, Frasier, and dozens of other shows best left unmentioned. He also has had six of his plays produced and has recently started writing essays for magazines and newspapers that have appeared in The Writer, Written By Magazine, Obit Magazine, The Writing Disorder, BRICKrhetoric, and the Los Angeles Times. When Sy was young America was a forest.

Emily O’Neill is a proud Jersey girl who tells loud stories in her inside voice because she wants you to come closer. Her favorite things to whisper through are disappearance documentaries and long night drives in her ‘92 Oldsmobile Cutlass Ciera Supreme. Her work has appeared previously or is forthcoming in The Pedestal, Side B, Pank, Neon, and Nap Magazine, among others. It has also seen stages from Portland to Orlando. She has a degree in the synesthesia of storytelling from Hampshire College and splits her time between Somerville, MA and Providence, RI.

Lou Gaglia’s short stories have appeared recently in Breakwater Review, Rose & Thorn Journal, and Bartleby Snopes, among others, and are forthcoming in Spilling Ink Review and Sheepshead Review. One of his short stories was nominated for storySouth’s 2011 Million Writers Award. It didn’t win, though. He teaches in upstate New York.

Austin Rory Hackett is a medical student and writer. He interrupts people too much and should eat less saturated fat. We all probably should. His work has appeared in The Potomac Review, Swink, Monkeybicycle, Dark Sky Magazine, and, most recently, Nanoism. He edits Columbia Medical Center’s literary magazine, Reflexions, and knows it’s a real bad name for a journal, so don’t bother reminding him.

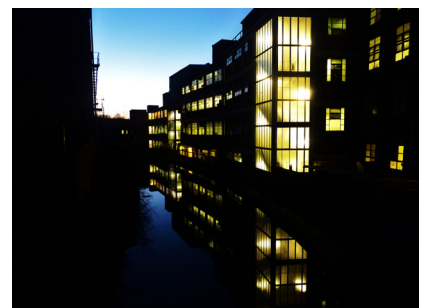
Sara Hughes is a graduate student at Georgia State University, where she is pursuing a PhD in English with a concentration in Poetry. She is an assistant editor for Five Points. Her poems and reviews have been published in Rattle, Rosebud, Ouroboros Review, Burnt Bridge, Red Clay Review, Old Red Kimono, and Arts and Letters, among others.

Michael Keenan received his MFA in Literary Arts from Brown University. His first chapbook, TWO GIRLS, was published by Say No Press in 2009. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in Poetry International, Fence, Arsenic Lobster, A Minor and Paul Revere*fs Horse, among others. He currently works in a rock n roll superstore in Northern Florida.

Andrea DeAngelis is at times a poet, writer, shutterbug and musician living in New York City. Her writing has appeared in Ditch Poetry, Heavy Bear, Clockwise Cat, The Blue Jew Yorker, Word Riot, Denver Syntax, and Writers Bloc. Andrea also sings and plays guitar in an indie rock band called MAKAR (www.makarmusic.com).

Eleanor Leonne Bennett is a 15 year photographer and artist who has won contests with National Geographic, The Woodland Trust, The World Photography Organisation, Winstons Wish, Papworth Trust, Mencap, Big Issue, Wrexham science, Fennel and Fern and Nature’s Best Photography. She has had her photographs published in exhibitions and magazines across the world including the Guardian, RSPB Birds, RSPB Bird Life, Dot Dot Dash, Alabama Coast, Alabama Seaport and NG Kids Magazine (the most popular kids magazine in the world). She was also the only person from the UK to have her work displayed in the National Geographic and Airbus run See The Bigger Picture global exhibition tour with the United Nations International Year Of Biodiversity 2010. Only visual artist published in the Taj Mahal Review June 2011. Youngest artist to be displayed in Charnwood Art’s Vision 09 Exhibition and New Mill’s Artlounge Dark Colours Exhibition.

Eleanor.ellieonline@gmail.com
www.eleanorleonnebennett.zenfolio.com



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