

**Re.Issue.3**

**Winter.21**



**Zig Zag Lit Mag**

**Dear Addison County,**

Thank you.

Thank you for your words, for your pictures, for your stories, for your passion, & for your support. Special thanks to Vermont Book Shop, Vermont Coffee Company, Stonecutter Spirits, the Little Pressroom, the Bixby Memorial Free Library, Ross Sheehan Studio, the Otter Creek Poets, the Bixby Writing Group, *Nodah*, Mt. Abe's Student Literary Magazine, & Chloe Marchand.

We've been growing bit by bit, issue by issue, & we're not done yet, so thank you in advance for your continued support.

We will open the submission window for Issue.4 for the entire month of December, 2017.

To find out more about us, check out our website at [zigzaglitmag.org](http://zigzaglitmag.org), and remember . . .

Read Local. Write Local.

Zig Zag Crew  
Fall.17

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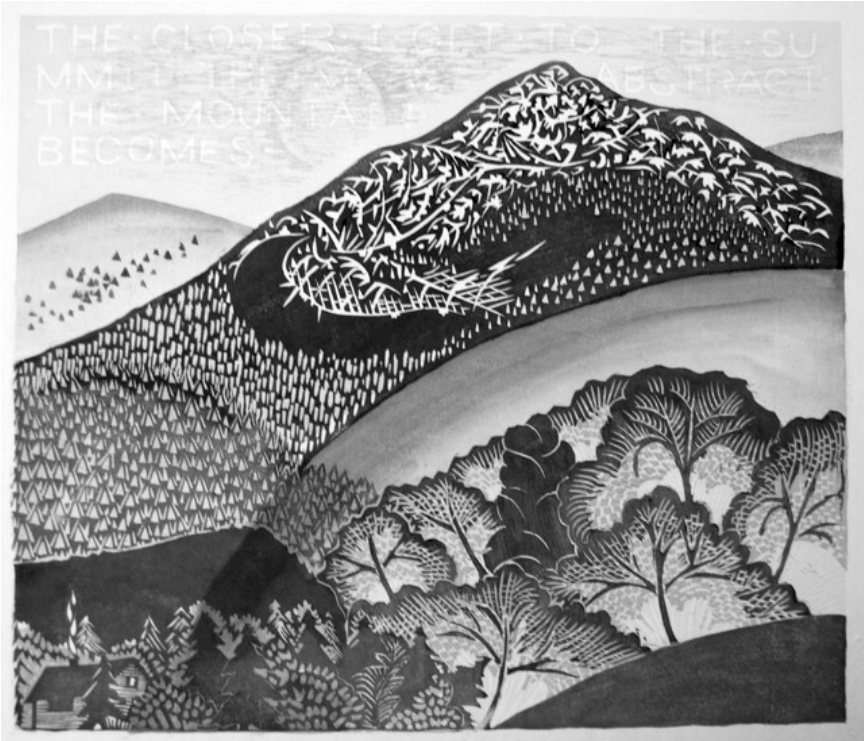
(we do not censor our content, even though we publish all ages; we believe that the written word is sacred & if one should curse or discuss unsavory subjects it is [we hope] for good reason & with good intention)

## At Work in the Library

I love your smoke-blue hat with the red trim.  
I love your silver-gray pencil, how you hold it  
firmly between the index and middle fingers at the ready,  
your typed sheets in both hands. I love how  
your mouth curves down in concentration,  
in utter immersion. Is it like your mother's  
or your father's mouth? Both, I would say,  
although your father always seemed  
to be smiling unless he was crying. Your mother's  
serious mouth, although she always seemed to be talking.  
We would like to listen to them talk.  
The bedclothes are warm, your skin like a silk robe—  
I do not love your swollen leg, how tender  
it is, how purple, rose as if a rose could  
be sad, how sore it is, how tight.  
Let the dark tick its moments, let the snow drip,  
let the radio shout its terrible or its mandolin.  
Let us be alone, near and far, tartine and  
crackers, wood stove heat, seed stitch, V-neck,  
*Don Quixote* on the home stretch.

Margi Rogal  
Hancock

**The Closer I Get to the Summit  
the More Abstract the Mountain Becomes**



Ray Hudson  
Middlebury

## **I Know a Girl**

I know a girl with curly hair. It tumbles from her scalp in lemony curls caressing the blades that have been welded together to form her jaw. I know a girl who is unable to walk through New York City without collecting at least forty catcalls. I know a girl with long skinny fingers. They dance over piano keys like spiders weaving golden thread. I know a girl whose voice, when raised in song, can conjure goosebumps on the arms of statues. I know a girl who can command a room: those around her contorting their spines to bask in her smile like flowers bending towards the sun.

Right now, I sit on the edge of her bed as sobs rack her tiny frame. Her tears are silent, but with every new wave of pain, her body scrunches in and out, a stress ball being repeatedly stomped, perpetually reviving itself. I ask her what's wrong. I know what's wrong, but I ask anyway until the words finally dribble from her shiny lips. "No matter what I do, it's never good enough."

I could correct her. I could tell her the tiny cleft in her chin meshes with her other features making her inhumanly beautiful. I could tell her she is the smartest person I know. I could tell her about how very very bright her future will surely be and about all the lovely little things she will possess. I won't tell her these things though. She already knows them to be true.

There is nothing I can say to cure the creature that shivers and shakes before me. Treat, yes; but, not cure. There is nothing anyone can say. There is no book she can read, no religion she can join, no Ph.D. she can talk to, and no pill she can take. You cannot tell her to slip on rose-colored glasses because it is her corneas that are coated in soot. You cannot tell her she has no reason for pain because she already knows.

Sometimes I reckon that emptiness is the price of knowledge. The price of living in a world where we know so much that we realize we don't know anything at all, except that deep down there is no fate for us following death other than decomposition. The knowledge that we are but useless specks of dust floating through a logic-less universe has taken up a soft and quiet presence in our hearts. Emptiness is the price of living in a world without magic. It's enough to make you wish for plagues, wars, famines, and floods. Anything to knock us from where we lazily lie on the top of the hierarchy of needs and leave us to the sanctity of shallow thought and squirrel-like behavioral patterns.

I sit on the foot of her bed and I think. I need a lie. A new lie she hasn't heard before that will help her drift to sleep. I clear the dust from my throat: "There are moments." She looks up at me, and I down at her. "There is the moment you bring water to parched tongue. There is the moment you find yourself in the arms of someone you never thought you would see again. There is the moment you hear your name called in an auditorium and pride rushes through your veins. There is the moment you realize the troublesome lump on your right breast has disappeared. There is the moment when you are sitting in a car with your friends, and the music and laughter become so loud that your thoughts simply disappear." I stop here, my tongue hanging limp in my mouth. I look into the soft, warm blue of her eyes and I know she understands. I've always been a good liar, and, like most good liars, I've discovered a thing or two about good lies. They all have one thing in common: all the best lies are based in truth.

Estelle Reardon  
Bread Loaf Young Writers' Conference

## Man with a Plan

Seven swans floated above an animated crowd,  
peaceful expectations guided the steps of thousands.  
I felt sorry that they may not ever achieve what united  
them.

But I believed in what they sang, “that they had only  
started”  
and, “that they would not give up the fight.”

In the warm sun, I melted into a granite step  
I listened, I watched, and I wished for a more tranquil  
world.

I found unexpected acceptance trapped in an ageless  
concept.

The day culminated as a frail, elderly man  
calmly worked his way up behind the speakers’ platform.

Smiles accompanied certain awe.

Those close enough were treated to an ephemeral  
moment.

Later, as he spoke, the words blasted out,  
amplified through the many who stood with him.  
He was only one and weak until his message had cleared.

Now the crowd pressed closer and closer  
like they had not done all afternoon.

They wanted to be a part.

Leaving, he passed near, and I had time to thank him.  
I know he heard.



His soft weakened hands I embraced,  
Hands with an influence that few ever gain.  
Go well, old man, and help,  
as Gandhi would, where you can.  
A true pleasure to witness, a man with such a plan.

Norton Latourelle  
Orwell

## The Garden Club

Willow's husband rolled into sight with thunder and a cloud of grass clippings, the smallest, flakiest specks clinging to the sweat in the crease of his neck. She took it all in—the noise, the smell, his smile—and wave, and gratitude washed over her. He was an uncommonly handsome man wearing his most indecent shorts and no shirt. She recognized his mood and laughed to herself as she realized the garden club was screwed.

She's grateful for the laugh. This hadn't been a good morning; it hadn't been a good week really. She hadn't meant to volunteer her house for the garden club meeting, but things had happened, Agnes had happened, and here they were. Or here she was, freaking out about fitting in with these women, with their expectations for normalness, and about complementary colors while her rock just calmly mowed.

He had a grid pattern that had been perfected over the years. His turns were tight and crisp on the rusty old ride-on. It was soothing to watch, and she needed all the soothing she could get, so she stopped and watched for a while. Watched him lean low to the left side as he mowed under the apple-tree branches. Watched him swerve sharply at the blueberries; the snake must have been out enjoying the sun today too. Happy that there wouldn't be blood splattered on the garden shed, she returned to the kitchen.

It was an hour later, and she'd tweaked every tea cake, groped all the cutlery in its cute little basket; an hour later, and time to step away again. The mower roar had been replaced by the string-trimmer whir a while ago but that was gone now too. She listened and heard the swishing of a rake.

He was raking up the little bits that the string trimmer had left behind. Who does that? He was nervous too she realized with a swoop in her stomach. What would happen if they were both

nervous and shy? What would happen if he was too tired to be charming and perfect enough for the both of them?

Willow considered the benefits a quick shot of tequila might have for her. As the owner of the world's most insipid hostas, she deserved it. Everything looked insipid to her now: all square and boring and awful. The tequila wouldn't help her flower beds, but it might help her.

Johnny Deerest appeared around the corner of the house just then. She wanted to ask him if he could fake an illness or injury, just a little something so they could put a note on the door and slip off to the lake instead. She didn't bother because it would get rescheduled anyway. Better to face it now when her lawn had never looked better. It might even be enough to get Agnes to say something nice.

She certainly wouldn't find anything nice to say about the free-for-all happening next to the shed where the hydrangea was trying to get it on with the hollyhocks, or the truly embarrassing but too-late-to-do-anything-about-it-now tractor tire that was regurgitating sedum. She could almost see the little frown Agnes would get when confronted with the tractor tire. "It's a nod to the local vernacular," Willow told herself because she knew she would never have the nerve to make that joke to Agnes.

What Willow needed was a reward. She needed all the tequila in the world as soon as this was over. And maybe she needed a more carnal reward too. Damn JD for knowing just how to distract her with those short shorts.

It was, she realized, pretty darn sexy when someone mows your lawn with military precision. Edges your beds with care and sweeps up the cuttings too. His devotion wasn't for the perennials, it was for her because this was important to her. That love shined brighter than ear protection and a loincloth, and as soon as the garden club mounted their high horses and

skedadddled, she was going to show her cub cadet all of her gratitude.

God, that moment, and the tequila that went with it, couldn't come soon enough. They weren't even here, and she couldn't wait for them to leave.

\*~\*\*~\*

Candace fucking hated being the first one to arrive at these things. She had tried to get Patty to carpool with her, but Patty had bailed at the last minute. The first worst thing about arriving early was that she was never quite sure where to park. If she just pulled into the driveway like a normal person, then people might park behind her and she would be fucking trapped. If she parked on the grass, it might be soggy, and she could get stuck and be trapped. She wished there was just one other car that she could copy. She wished she had bailed with Patty.

Candace slammed the car door extra loud so Willow would know someone had arrived. It was strange to not hear a dog barking. She looked around a little more carefully, but nothing lumbered up to her with a happy tail and a promise to be her friend for the afternoon.

That sucks, she thought to herself, I'm going to have to talk to the people. And thanks to Agnes there would be no alcohol either; Agnes felt they didn't need to make these outings too social. They were there to see gardens and to learn from each other. Agnes liked to throw in a little judging too. Her comments could make a grown woman wilt like impatiens in full sun.

Candace walked purposefully up the driveway and tried to feel out which door she should approach. Not the front one, although sometimes that felt like the better choice compared to climbing through a garage littered with junk. The front door

wasn't too awful for your first visit to someone's house, but this was the garden club and she was here to see the gardens, not the house.

When the club visited Patty's, she had ordered a port-o-john so they wouldn't have an excuse to go inside at all. Patty had explained to her over Bud Lights after everyone else had left (Candace being the last to leave because her car was blocked in); it was fifty dollars to hire someone to clean your house and only thirty-five for the port-o-john. Besides, that fifty didn't help if your stuff was ugly to begin with.

Not for the first time, Candace considered what kind of person joined a garden club, what kind of person spent their summers scratching about in the dirt instead of frolicking around with people. Were the other people also here because it was so much cheaper and quieter to garden? You could visit a few plant swaps and have enough perennials to completely disguise however unfortunate the rest of your house (or life) looked.

Gardens were about control. But they were also about empathy. You had to know where a plant wanted to be, you had to put the right plant in the right place—in its comfort zone. But if you had that empathy and knew what the plants wanted, then you could do so much, you could change the world. Or at least as much of the world as your garden spade could reach.

Candace trudged around to the backyard, and almost pitched herself into the violently purple and orange petunias when she saw Willow's husband. First, she registered the huge rugby-player thighs that were bursting out of his indecently short shorts. His bare shoulders were even bigger than his thighs and, instead of where she was going, she was watching them flex as he raked the immaculate lawn.

He heard her stumble and turned quickly, a big hot hand landing on her arm to help steady her. She could feel it searing her, pulling slightly on the little hairs. She opened her mouth to say whoa, or hi, or something, but absolutely nothing came out. Not even a squeak.

And then, fucking hell, he smiled at her. Slid his hand around to her elbow, gave her a little pat, and maybe said something about Willow being around the corner. Maybe? She nodded and righted herself and looked in the direction he was looking, although it was hard, it was actually hard to make her head turn and stop looking at him. Stop staring at the streaks of grass stuck to his arms, stop trying to devour the dry hot smell of diesel that clung to him.

Jesus Christ, she wished she had dressed up a little more. If someone had given her a little warning, she might have showered and shaved and made an effort. Why had Willow never mentioned that her husband was hot like burning? They were talking about burning bushes a few months ago when someone brought in an exotic catalog, Willow could have mentioned it then. “Speaking of that, my husband is ridiculously handsome . . .” Something.

Willow was pretty too Candace supposed, she was nice enough, whatever, and they had moved here a few years ago, and how had this never come up? And also, why were there never cocktails at these things? Candace’s throat was as dry as cedar mulch in August. She supposed her mouth might still be open.

\*~\*\*~\*

Judith was the last to arrive—last one in and first one out—that was her motto. More than once she had been tempted to leave her car running, especially on a hot day like today. Would it be so evil to leave the air conditioner on high for the

twenty minutes or so she planned to spend tramping around Willow's garden before she could escape?

She shut the car off though because this was Vermont and she expected it was actually illegal to leave your car running. There was a healthy collection of Subarus and battered Volvos parked helter-skelter around her Range Rover, which loomed black and boxy above them all. Looks like the gang's all here, she told herself, and tried to feel a little guilty about being so late but decided it wasn't worth the effort.

Without even glancing towards the front door, which sat pristine and alone, not even a hint of a path leading to it, she headed around the back. She was only about halfway there when a stream of sudsy water cut across her path. Curious, her eyes followed it back and were led to a pair of bare feet standing beneath an outdoor shower. The door of the shower probably went up to Willow's neck, but it didn't cover much of the man beneath it now. His back was turned to her and he probably couldn't hear her pulse-pounding over the sound of the running water. Probably.

It was worth the risk to just stand there for a moment and watch his shoulders move as he shampooed his hair. The soapy water ran down his back, down his undoubtedly firm buttocks, down his naked legs, and over across the grass to her shoe. She felt the warmth of the soapy water seep into her Sperry Top-Siders.

Continuing along the path would take her even closer to the shower. Nothing in her life so far had prepared Judith for this situation. She wanted to slowly walk right past him and get a glimpse through a crack in the door, she wanted to get closer and say something clever so he would startle and turn. She wanted to see more and see it for longer.

Finally, she backed herself up to the beginning of the little path. Nervously she twisted the collection of large bright

diamonds on her left hand so only the gold bands showed, and she called out a much too high and breathy “hello.” She was a decent distance away now and hoped he wasn’t too embarrassed as he turned and greeted her with a smile. He waved at her too and leaned against the door of the shower as friendly as anything. What a gift.

“Hey,” he called out, “everyone’s around back looking at stuff.” He pointed helpfully in a direction that indicated he expected her to follow the path and walk right next to the shower.

Well, okey-doke, if you insist, said Judith to herself and tried to nonchalantly walk down the path and next to the most gorgeous man she had ever seen in real life who was wet and naked and, in a shower, just inches away. Her chest did a weird little seizing thing as she got closer and then passed him. It was as if all of her internal organs were turning around inside her so that they could keep looking at him.

The garden club was strangely hushed and subdued. They were also all clumped up on the shower side of the house, ostensibly checking out a bland little patch of day lilies. Although, to be fair those day lilies were expertly edged.

Willow wasn’t in sight, so she sidled up to Candace, who was probably staring the worst, and bumped her shoulder. “Soon,” said Candace barely glancing at her, “he’s going to shut off the water and towel himself. Then he’s going to walk, in just the towel, to that door there and go inside.”

“This is the greatest garden I have ever seen,” agreed Judith.

“Willow said that she knows we don’t usually have drinks but after she planted mint directly in the ground in the middle of her vegetable garden, her husband became a mojito expert and he wants us to try his secret recipe.”



“What did Agnes say about that?” asked Judith.

“Agnes folded like a peony in a downpour,” replied Candace. “She didn’t even say anything about the mint . . .” Her voice drifted off as the distinctive squeak of an outdoor faucet turning caused complete silence to descend on the garden club. Judith glanced around and saw Agnes at the front of the group looking unnaturally subdued and as pink as the echinacea.

They were like a flock of sunflowers swinging in unison as he moved to wrap the towel and head for the house. The silence continued until the screen on the back door snapped shut. And then it was like a spell had broken. Someone laughed a little awkwardly, someone else shoved someone but not very hard—as if their arm was the soft stem of an oriental poppy.

“I need to sit down,” announced Patty, “my knees are weak.” Patty had changed her mind about blowing off Willow’s garden when Candace sent her a picture of Willow’s husband drinking from the hose; she had arrived just before Judith. In fact, every member of the garden club was there. Like one big ball of dandelion fluff, they drifted over to Willow’s little patio and arranged themselves facing the back door. Soon he would come out again, in a fresh pair of shorts, maybe without a shirt. And he would feed them white rum and mint and smile at them. Someone sighed, or maybe it was all of them. They were never leaving this place.

Trish Dougherty  
Orwell

## Wave Back

waiting with you in the twilight of not quite here  
and still not there waiting it only just turned  
tomorrow the clock announces faithfully  
the metronome of precious seconds left here with you  
hearing the wind blow the dry winter grasses outside  
I ask please take her take her now while the stars  
are out bright still and shiny I think of summer nights  
when the moon lights her garden and makes the white  
delphinium glow and Shasta's toothy petals bob and bow  
yet this too is a fine night tonight—crisp, still  
on the hem of winter so, I lean in close  
part fear, part disbelief and kiss her forehead  
her sips of air, delicate measured like perfect baby's  
breath so small I know—let's go outside in our nighties  
and run together like fireflies we'll visit the gardens  
and spy on all the flowers to see if their magic still works  
when the world is asleep feel the cool dewy grass  
between our toes we'll go with you for a little while,  
we'll take your hand and we'll outrun our fears together  
race you through the darkness to the orchard gnarled  
trees out where the train will pass us children laugh  
and wave you remember this—it's not so long ago  
you go ahead, Mom we'll wait here till you get on  
and wave back at us

Caroline Slater  
Charlotte

## **Politics II**

*after W.B. Yeats*

I hear that there's trouble in the Ukraine.  
And no doubt this is true and,  
as trouble will be, troubling.

I can recall troubles past  
in Lebanon, Nicaragua, Bosnia.  
But what I really remember from those eras

is how I almost kissed Amy at that party,  
the smart tips of Kim's bobbed hair,  
the Israeli girl I had a crush on at my summer job.

So, I'm not betting on Putin  
and his nouveau Sudetenland  
to be what first comes to mind

twenty years hence.

Chris Lamay-West  
Lincoln

**Hawk & Mouse**



Lea Cassidy  
Addison

## Lithium

I never envy the dead but the mad  
have so much I covet—their crazy  
self-assurance, the manic energy,  
the power of their imaginations,  
their lunatic courage. No wonder then,  
unsupervised, they all go off their meds.  
On my sixty-first birthday, the phone rang.  
A man asked for me. My son said, “Call back,  
please, we are just sitting down to dinner,”  
but he insisted. Joel had been found dead.  
The kitchen floor, Philadelphia,  
mid-July, maybe there since maybe March,  
no one knew for sure; no one was surprised.  
Awful cleanup, autopsy, cremation,  
no Shiva, no funeral.

A dozen files  
from his last computer came to me:  
letters to friends, a job application.  
I will erase them. I will say Kaddish.  
Lithium, the lightest metal, least dense  
solid element, star-made, silver-white,  
the simplest potion, his only chance.

David Weinstock  
Middlebury

## Wallace and His Barn

I was about five years old when I gathered enough bravery to go into my grandmother's barn all by myself. Quiet barn, a sacred space. I liked it in here and it gave me goosebumps just standing in the cool air, a respite from the muggy summer day.

The barn's own fragrance was a special blend of old wood, leaded gasoline, sawdust, and dirt. In here, the sounds of life were so small and far away, just a few guinea hens and chickens pecking in the dirt around the farmyard.

The breeze whispered in through one end of the barn and out the doors behind me. I sensed something else was in the barn with me. There were antique carriages along the outer wall to my left, painted a shiny black lacquer with red trim adorned with polished brass lanterns, one on each side of the driver's seat.

Gram's dark-blue Model-A (a wedding gift) was parked at the far end of the barn in the center aisle, awaiting the next outing. She called it "Gadgets" because it had more of them than her old horse, Bob. It had been over thirty years since Gadgets' engine had last rumbled to life, yet was so well preserved, she appeared road ready.

Outside, the guinea hens were sounding alarmed and making their way up the sand-and-gravel driveway with great purpose when movement caught my attention overhead. Something high above in the rafters was flying directly towards me!

I stood frozen there in the doorway, knowing it was too late to run. Instinctively I ducked as it swooped overhead—OWL!

Wings that reached wider than my arms outstretched silently pumping and carrying him out the door on some invisible lift!

If I had been looking down, I wouldn't have even known he had flown over my head. He was that silent.

I tried to shout to my grandmother out in the garden, but no words came out of my mouth, just a gasp. An adrenaline shiver tingled in my hands and feet as I stood in the massive doorway, realizing only now that the owl had been watching me all along.

That was the first time I was truly awestruck by the presence of something so noble and wild. When I caught my breath, I ran as fast as my legs could go down the hill, back to the garden to tell Grammy. "Oh," she said with a twinkle in her eye, "I see you met Wallace!"

Caroline Slater  
Charlotte

## Alone at the House in a Storm

I want to flash violently like the droplet of water  
on the screen of this device when you stare and tilt it  
back and forth pink green blue ruby

I think about the times I have been alone  
and de-digitized and come not to moralism or happiness  
or, rather . . . I remember the world

allowing me to feel alone  
and my screaming at my own hands  
in a half laughter girls who I loved

appear in my eyelids and the grandfather  
I barely knew I had lost a month before  
shivers down from the quiet sky to spread his shoulders

in my mind—I cry into the pillow  
at the unrealized fact that I am a person  
and people feel deep enough to quiver

like distant light in the stilling mass of the world  
but here I write this calm and well-screened  
and beauty moves beside me like rain on an umbrella.

Henry Sheeran  
Ferrisburgh



## Megalochelys Atlas

*Megalochelys atlas* is the largest known member of *Testudinidae*, with a shell length of about 2.1 m (6.9 ft.), an estimated total length of 2.5–2.7 m (8.2–8.9 ft.), and an approximate total height of 1.8 m (5.9 ft.). Weights based on a volumetric displacement of the skeleton, or inferences based on two-dimensional skeletal drawings, indicate that *M. atlas* was probably closer to 1,000 kg (2,200 lbs.) in mass. *M. atlas* is thus the largest known land tortoise.



During the dry glacial periods, it ranged from western India and Pakistan (possibly even as far west as southern and eastern Europe) to as far east as Sulawesi and Timor in Indonesia. It is estimated to have lived from the Miocene up until its extinction in 10,000 BC.

Andrew Knight  
Mount Abraham Union High School

## **North & South, Black & White**

My father awaited the birth of his third child, smoking cigarette after cigarette while reading a book about the Civil War with ideas that gave him hope that someday Blacks would live better lives.

His father was the US Assistant Attorney General and taught him liberal views of the world. At 6:59 in the morning the doctor told him, “You have a six-pound baby girl.” My father looked up from his book and smiled.

They named me Harriet Earle Fitts after his oldest sister, whom he greatly admired. Twenty minutes later, the doctor found my father again, “You have another girl, identical twin daughters.” They named the second twin

Miriam Baker Fitts after my mother’s youngest sister. We were born on August 27, 1938 in Knoxville, Tennessee, near Mobile, Alabama, where my father was born, and far from my mother’s birthplace in Boston.

My parents already had two sons and must have felt joy and shock now there were four children, and my mother was recovering from polio in her right shoulder. A few days passed with nurses helping my mother breastfeed us.

After success, we drove home, where Miriam and I had a nanny named Fanny, a tall, thin, loving black woman, who would bathe, feed, and cuddle us against her caramel skin.

When we cried, we hoped to be held  
in her loving arms. Fanny took us for walks  
in a large dark-blue carriage  
we felt the heat of the Southern sun on our faces

while she pushed us to a bench under an apple tree.  
My workaholic father was a lawyer for the Tennessee  
Valley Authority.

He felt comfortable in the South, enjoying the warmth,  
the rolling hills, and fishing in the Gulf, but he hated

how the Blacks were treated.

He and my Northern mother knew  
they could not bring up children where Blacks and Whites  
weren't equal,  
where Blacks had to obey signs that said, "Whites Only."

In a few years, we moved north, but I still harbor  
some Southern feelings within me, and even more  
important, the same need as my parents  
for Blacks and Whites to be equal.

Harriet Szanto  
Lincoln

## The Things We Tell Ourselves

I hit a squirrel with my car.  
He was making a break for it across the road.  
These sixty-some ants had been working all their lives  
on an acorn cairn just off Route 113.

It was only two acorns high, but the six-legged  
foreman had big plans. The queen asked her  
if she had the blueprints, but she was turning two soon,  
& it takes an awfully long time

to organize a lifting team, a pencil, & such.  
“&— don’t even get me started  
on sharpening the pencil!” she yelled.  
But the thing is, you shouldn’t yell at a queen.

Maybe just don’t yell at anyone.

So she was on thin ice & she felt her guilt  
in her antennae. She was trying to impress her.  
She aimed to set a new record for first-day construction,  
but in her gumption, erred. The foreman took a shortcut

by the road & that’s where that bushy-tailed bastard  
spotted the ants. He charged in,  
checks a-blazing, & wrestled the acorn free.  
Some of those tiny compound-eyed insects fought back;

some turned thorax & ran. The scheming rodent ripped  
the acorn so aggressively that he popped  
a few of the workers in his mouth with the nut.  
The companions of the black fallen soon darted off,

& that beady-eyed gentrified rat sure as shit followed them

to the beginnings of the cairn.

The 39 pests remaining formed their own Maginot,  
but the ranks broke as soon as Red Rover  
sent Mr. Squirrel on over. The quick-footed

anxious-faced grey behemoth  
trampled the foreman as he grabbed the other oak fruits.  
But the foreman—she only lost her bottom half.  
She opened her mandible until her upper body split

& latched onto the squirrel's tail,  
but that famous appendage  
was as bushy as advertised. Nothing doing.  
Soon the squirrel was back on the side of the road,

three acorns richer. But then I came upon him,

knowing full-well the queen, mad she may be,  
would miss her foreman. &— quite frankly,  
we've already angered the bees,  
a war with the ants is the last thing we need.

So I telepathed my plan to Antyoncé,  
made a beeline for the squirrel, avenged the foreman,  
& had the courtesy to end its suffering in reverse.  
So yeah, I hit a squirrel with my car.

A. Jay Dubberly  
Starksboro

## The Frog Pond

Just before the sun would set on  
Midwestern's autumn, I would set off with  
my thermos of tea to where the water waited.  
Skillfully I would scramble across fallen  
hickory trunks, then ballet-dance about the  
skeletons of their opened, rotting husks.  
Discarded branches from summer's storms  
striped the worn quilted path—around them,  
though, I would tiptoe, skirting, knowing the  
way by heart. And when, at last, I'd reach the  
quiet lonely water's edge and when the sky  
became a sludge of tangy burnt orange, I'd  
drop my robe and set myself free inside the  
long-sought stillness.

Michelle L. Mowery  
Panton

## **The Fairest One of All**

*a one-sentence story*

Perhaps it was only because I was the tallest girl in my class that I was chosen to play the part of the wicked queen in the annual second-grade production of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, so my mother went to our attic closet and brought down an old black-velvet opera cape, but I cried when I looked into the mirror because I wasn't beautiful, and that's when she told me that this was a special cape and that something wonderful would happen to me soon, which I tried hard to believe all that night and again as I answered the doorbell the next morning and, lo and behold, there stood Aunt Bertha, Aunt Margaret, Aunt Flo, Aunt Dorothy, and Grandma, smiling like crazy and telling me that their jewelry cases were just way overflowing and they wondered if I could please take some of their extras, but I would have to try everything on for size first, so they made my mother sit on the couch while they took me to my room and pinned diamonds on my shirt and rubies on my hat, hung pearls around my neck and gold bracelets up my arms, and when I danced down the stairs, my mother saw her magic cape had worked well, so that, two nights later, with my magnificent royal jewels glittering as I threw aside one heavy fold of maroon velvet curtain, stepped out onto the stage of the Valhalla Elementary School, and called in an imperious voice, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, who is the fairest one of all?" and when Karl Johannsson, the voice of the mirror, shouted back at me from behind the curtain saying that Snow White was—I knew he lied.

Barbara Brosnan  
Weybridge

**Alternate**







*Shirley* 1977

## Runaway Grapefruit

In the parking lot of the co-op is one large grapefruit.  
How incongruous it looks, large and plump and yellow  
against the rough, hot blacktop. It looks like it landed  
there, not fallen, not rolled, but materialized  
out of some unexplained event: perhaps it descended  
slowly,  
a grapefruit UFO, out of which tiny signals probe.

The superstition of grapefruit:  
*do not pick up a grapefruit,*  
*do not walk to the right of a grapefruit,*  
*grapefruits do not have shadows.*

I try to think what it looks like. It does not look like  
anything  
but a grapefruit. It makes me laugh.  
Waiting for someone, like a lost penny or a ball, or  
a grapefruit tumbled out of a shopper's bag,  
although how could one not notice dropping a grapefruit?  
I pick it up, and nothing zaps.

I place the grapefruit on a parked shopping cart.  
Elevated grapefruit. Queen of grapefruits  
surveys the lot for its lost owner.  
A woman packs her groceries in her car.

I say: *Did you by any chance drop a grapefruit?*  
She says: *Maybe I did! I bought two.*  
I point to the lone grapefruit looking for her.  
She holds it like a prize,  
says, *I like to peel grapefruit,*  
*and eat them with my hands.*

Margi Rogal  
Hancock

## **By the Waters of Babylon**

Wind-driven flocks of scarlet and yellow foliage soar and dart, come to land, glow lambent in the autumn afternoon. St. Albans's springtime claim to Vermont's Maple Festival is never clearer than when North Main's sugar maples are set ablaze by frost's fire.

Waiting for the traffic light to change between Lower and Upper Newton Streets, I squint slightly from the bright reflection off an electric blue Mitsubishi CG. A throaty rumble, like a powerboat idling on the Bay, or a Harley filtered through fiberglass, rises and lowers as the driver's urge to get goin' finds expression.

My gaze goes to a bumper sticker on the window's lower edge. Partially hidden by a spoiler, the top line is readable. The black-and-yellow text says, "It's Called Tourist Season . . ." I rise up in my seat to see the bottom line; it says, "So, Why Can't We Shoot Them?"

The power car jumps the light and leaves me of mixed mind. I'm mildly amused but immediately ashamed and defensive. "It's Called Tourist Season. So, Why Can't We Shoot Them?" is, of course, just kidding. I excuse my amusement with the observation that teasing and exaggeration are part of Vermont humor.

But, it's also true that humor often hides a serious side, and I suspect this joke is no exception. Anyone that's tried to make time between Middlebury and Bethel on a late-September afternoon surely understands the underlying sentiment. There's another bumper sticker, neither subtle nor cute, that lays the matter out this way: "Welcome To Vermont. Now Go Home!"

The notion that Vermont's been overrun by outlanders, bought by outsiders, is not far wrong. The anger that's bred

can be virulent. (Of course, I wouldn't be here if some of my ancestors hadn't perpetrated some overrunning a few centuries ago, but, here, I'm thinking closer to home, that is, the twentieth century).

Daniel Neary, Jr. helps us understand the results of this more recent displacement with the book *Rage in the Hills*. Sons and daughters may lose sight of their wrathful legacy's source in the noise of mobile-home parks, the depths of rot-gut booze, the passivity of TV, or the nothingness of a bullet in the brain, but, the simple fact is, Vermonters got pushed off their land by the thousands with the advent of the bulk milk tank a few decades ago. What are the numbers—farms dropped from 17,000 to 1,700? And, as the Interstate Defense Highway Network carried milk away to Boston, people from “away” snapped-up those foreclosed lands at bargain-basement prices.

It's not an accident of history that just a few years previous the ski industry had come to Vermont, either. And, while it's eternal to George (“The Governor”) Aiken's credit that he helped block a highway proposed to span the spine of Vermont, his support of agribusiness policies that tolled the family farm's death knell is equally to his discredit. “Sustainable” became an antiestablishment buzzword rather than a self-evident way of life, and latter-day Babbitts promoted tourism and the service industries as a salve for Vermont's wounds with all the vigor of rabbits promoting lettuce gardens. Politicians sold the “whole herd buyout” as a balm for mortally wounded family farms.

So, it's not surprising to find anger directed at the most mobile beneficiaries of this largesse—the tourists. But I suspect the anger goes deeper than slow traffic and lines of peepers at the pumps, and that suspicion prompts a recollection: Back in 1970, a friend in New Haven, Connecticut, a man of African descent, opened my eyes to the larger picture, the primal nature of the friction between “natives” and “outlanders.”

Since moving into New Haven in 1968, I'd been puzzled by the response of people on the street. My mother taught me, back home on the streets of Vermont's Littlest City, to meet the eyes of passersby, to greet them with a smile and a "Hello." This remains my habit. But such forwardness went unrewarded in Connecticut. People averted their eyes, looked puzzled, even threatened. I thought, "Well, we are, after all, right next door to New York."

However, dispositions lightened and brightened with the weather.

Come summertime, folks not only met my gaze but returned smiles and greetings. It seemed a whole new populace had moved into the city overnight. My friend Jerry knew New Haven from ghetto corner to ivied halls. I asked him about this change of heart.

He nodded, chuckled, and said, "The aristocrats left the estate."

I didn't understand.

Jerry explained, gesturing up Grove Street, "The nobility moved to their summer castles. The servants can relax awhile."

His analysis struck home with me then, and I remember it today. The Peace and Justice Center's Job Gap Study says service and retail employment now accounts for nearly sixty percent of Vermont's jobs.

So, the answer to the Mitsubishi driver's question is this: in addition to the moral reasons, there are, literally, millions of reasons not to shoot tourists. Most of them bear presidential faces and the imprimatur of government, government "of the people, by the people." But not necessarily "for the people,"—

at least those preferred by our Mitsubishi driver—and that seems the crux of the matter.

Reflecting on that a bit, I can't help but wonder how the driver of that growly car might respond if our Abenaki friends, agreeing with her/him, said: *Welcome to the Land of the Dawn; Don't Overstay.*

G. Donald Peabody  
Vergennes

## Sulfur

Rotten eggs, we say it all the time,  
but cooking for decades, a dozen dozen dozens,  
I've only cracked open one: tar-black at the yolk,  
smelled like a corpse of hydrogen sulfide, of death.

Sulfur is what children hate about broccoli.  
It is what makes the smog so yellow  
and the museum blacksmith smell of soft coal,  
car batteries' poison white dust.

Joel and I melted sulfur in a spoon,  
then coated the tips of his archery set arrows  
and set them on fire and shot them  
into the night sky backyard. Nobody saw.

And sulfur is brimstone, the true smell of hell,  
But Jews don't believe in that; we are taught  
to be polite when Christians talk about it.  
It is no more our business than Santa Claus.

David Weinstock  
Middlebury



**Another Aspect of Spirit**



Ray Hudson  
Middlebury

## Nocturne, Slapstick

Somedays, I want to write poems  
for all the wrong, dumb reasons.  
This time, I was driving home,  
listening to a R.E.M. song on the radio,  
confusing, as usual, the pleasing slant  
of “bending spoons” and “keeping flowers in full bloom”  
with an image of chrysanthemum and the way  
my grandmother’s arch accent translated

that gold into “Christ’s Anthems,” which, of course,  
I confuse with a sermon from which I remember  
only that inspiration means to be filled with breath  
and the image of Christ suffocating on the cross  
and somehow translating the rising of Son to flower,  
breathing the fumes of a decapitated bloom  
from the grail of a cracked brandy snifter  
in which my mother floated late-summer blossoms

after their weight grew too much  
for their cross to bear.  
I then arrive home, with no notes.  
You glissade down the stairs.  
You swan-settle into the living-room chair,  
your hands unfolding  
like a newborn’s  
from under the startle of your black sleeves.

You begin unyoking  
your face from the dead hand of childhood.  
We have waited, patient as slate  
for the ebb-time. Together,  
we have noticed  
the grace of our elders,  
pared-down, scarce.  
We have agreed, then.

We will peer around the corners together.  
Bored, I cheat. I try to bring everything back.  
We listen to sibilant musics  
somewhere beneath the domestic thrum,  
a comfortable backbeat, a greasy fill,  
the Dionysian moan  
turned down to a lewd whisper,  
a memory of lips moving the hair coiled

behind your ear.  
Here, in a slightly moonlit  
drafty room, the rising,  
the falling of your shoulder—  
a breath-controlled line—  
the poem I'm left with:  
exhausted diction, the murmuring schwa.  
Now sleep comes as gears,

no longer soft bumping and reaching  
into the dark,  
but friction and wear  
measured by mouth in years.

Ed Webbley  
Starksboro

## **Man and Dog in a Van**

His hippie-style beard was what caught my eye. He looked as if he strummed a guitar for a living or was on the verge of opening his own health-food store. Each morning on my way to work, this stranger passed by me in his green-and-white Volkswagen bus.

I was twenty years old.

The first time I waved, I gave a Native American “how” sign. The next day and from then on, we waved as if we were engaged in a modern version of a primal dance. My secret boyfriend.

As a Talbot’s/worn-out-jeans-wearing hybrid, I often felt torn between convention and rebellion. I worked as a legal secretary in a historic building lined with cobblestone sidewalks and old-growth maple trees, yet I loved my progressive rock musicians and blasted their albums in my family’s living room whenever I could. I aligned more with the bra burners than prim college girls wearing matching sweater sets. I appreciated a person who showed up every day, one who worked hard; but I was an idealist to my core.

One morning, as our cars passed each other, my friend, instead of waving, turned his vehicle in a wide arch and began to follow me. Oh, brother, I thought, I asked for it, didn’t I?

I pretended I didn’t notice, stealing glances of him in my rearview as he escorted me all the way to the Stafford post office, where I picked up mail for my employer.

I pulled into a spot in the post office parking lot. He turned his van in next to me. A total klutz, I summoned all the gracefulness I could muster as I stepped out of my Chevy sedan. I had to make a good impression now that I was face-to-face with my hippie.

I couldn't help but smile as he extended his hand. "I'm Fred," he said, grinning. "I've never known anyone so forward she'd wave hi to a stranger. Whatever made you do that?"

I shrugged.

It was early spring, and I could see his breath in the chilled morning air. Tattered jeans hung on his lean frame and he wore a light Army-surplus jacket. He was a head taller than I. He leaned back against his van.

I introduced myself to Fred. We talked about our morning drive, where we had gone to school, and what we'd eaten for breakfast. I had an English muffin. He had Cheerios; he crinkled his nose and said, "Yeah, I eat them every day, but they have a weird aftertaste, don't you think?" I knew exactly what he meant.

"You don't wear gloves. Aren't your fingers freezing?" he exclaimed.

So, he had been noticing—down to the tips of my fingers.

He asked me where I worked. I nodded toward Kings Highway, where the prestigious law office was located. He worked at the Landford Animal Shelter. I typed all day; he took care of animals. I felt an urge to apologize for my ordinariness. Secretly, I thought myself a free spirit despite the fact my livelihood was ruled by daily commerce. Not to mention I was engaged to a young man I had known in high school—a telephone lineman, hunter, fisherman, and not exactly a devoted animal lover since it didn't matter much to him if he shot a deer with his bow and arrow. He was more concerned with getting the deer.

Nevertheless, I was impressed by Fred's line of work. He takes care of animals, I sighed, so he must be a good person.

\*~\*\*~\*

As a high school girl, I fantasized about my future. I would live in New York City in a Greenwich Village walk-up flat with creaky wooden floors and thick-paned windows. I would decorate with antiques, hand-me-downs, and soft colors. I would meet and fall in love with a Paul Simon–type, someone who was sensitive and had a passion for life and the arts—cute but not too cute. We would walk the park each afternoon, and I’d accompany him on his music dates where I’d watch and listen from a table way in the back. Afterward, we would return to my place where we would talk and make love late into the night.

\*~\*\*~\*

Fred seemed as if he might fit into my fantasy. What didn’t fit was me, flirting with him despite my recent engagement.

If only my girlfriends could have seen me in that parking lot, they’d have had a fit. “You’re engaged for God’s sake! How could you?” they’d cry. I could just see them shaking their heads and clucking their tongues as if I was the worst sort of Jezebel.

I could have talked to Fred all day, but I needed to get to work. I wrote my phone number on a scrap of paper and stuffed it into his hand. I arrived at work and dropped my bundle of letters on the mail table, cheeks flushed as I tore off my coat and began sorting the mail. I thought of Fred and hoped I would see him again.

\*~\*\*~\*

A few mornings later when I arrived at the post office, Fred was waiting for me by his van. The back hatch was open, where his Saint Bernard, Wiley, filled the back of the vehicle.

Both dog and man greeted me. I petted Wiley as he slobbered on my jacket, but I didn't mind. Fred seemed so proud to introduce me to "the family." I didn't know what Fred had in mind, but I was glad he had returned. What if he asks me out? I probably shouldn't be talking to him. But do I care? I'm not sure.

Fred grew quiet. He gazed down at my hands. Then he tapped the diamond on the ring of my left hand with his index finger.

"I didn't see this before. I guess we shouldn't see each other, should we?"

Please come see me again. I heard the words in my head, but they didn't come. Instead, I stood there for what seemed like fifteen minutes, the same amount of time it had taken to get to know each other at our first meeting.

I wished I could travel back in time to the day I had gotten engaged. Part of me wanted to undo the ring, the guy, the married life I was headed into. But this was just a silly notion, right?

Fred, my fork in the road; my spirit guide. It took me years before I understood that the young girl, the one who waved to strangers, had always been free to choose.

Eileen Brunetto  
Hinesburg

# Daydream



Doug Mack  
Bristol



## Chainsaw Talk

“The woods don’t ask no favors,” Eugene said.  
“That’s why I like it here. Trees don’t whine, saying,  
point-that-chainsaw-a-different-way. No violence  
required.”

But the stubborn saw would not start. Flooded.

Trees hovered around where we knelt in mulch,  
pulling the cord again and again. Trees bent above  
as if caring enough about our feckless toil  
to watch and listen in. Do they laugh to hear us curse?

The sensibilities of trees turn instead toward earth and  
sky.

They draw morning sunlight through their leaves;  
they wrench water from leaf litter in the soil  
and pump the sap-born syrup root to crown.

When glaciers left this valley, trees launched their  
industry.

They grabbed for sun. Their roots tore water  
from the rock. They spread their warmth from here  
to northern ice. They wove a blanket to shade our toil.

To fit the rolling plane where life can be,  
trees talk endlessly with their tribe, shaping growth  
to fit some larger scheme. We can’t hear their wordless  
talk.

Eugene yanked the cord once more. The chainsaw roared.

John H. Clarke  
Starksboro

## **When You Return**

The days were filled with the green wonders surrounding my everyday life: banana trees in my backyard, guavas hanging by my bedroom window, coconut palms everywhere. It was 1968 and I was working as an English teacher for the Peace Corps in northeast Thailand. All that exotica mixed with the anxiety I felt in this strange geography and culture left me waking every morning with a sense of dread. My students seemed petrified of me. I feared even speaking the language. I was sensitive to the reality if I was a note or two off in their tonal speech or rendered an inflection badly enough it could result in an unintended curse or some horrible linguistic faux pas. A few of the teachers spoke some English, but I still felt close to being a near-mute alien in a verdant paradise.

Adjan Suraporn, my headmaster, strongly suggested I dress as the other teachers did with military-style clothing identifying me as a member of the Ministry of Education, and by extension, a civil servant. Being measured for clothing was a new experience for me and within a surprisingly short period, a local tailor presented me with my uniform. My trim, starched outfit turned out to be my badge of honor, earning me respect and acceptance by the faculty and local villagers. The other single male teachers invited me out to drink Mekhong whiskey and soda water until we dropped. There wasn't much else to do except walk over to the municipal field at night to watch Japanese commercials projected on sheets hung between bamboo poles.

One day in late November, the headmaster, who usually scowled in my direction as if attempting to rectify my very existence, actually smiled, took me aside with an arm over my shoulder, and said the whole school was going on a field trip to a famous Buddhist temple in Lopburi Province, several hours away by bus. He addressed me by my Thai-given name.

“Khun Pandit, I am telling you this because I want to know if you would like to go with the students and the other teachers on this trip?”

“Yes,” I lied, “I would like to go very much.” The ride was long and raucous. The headmaster did not join us, and the other teachers exerted a lot less control on the bus than they did in their rooms. By the time we reached Lopburi, I had a pounding headache from the uneven road and the shrieking of students. Young, novice monks greeted us. They were very calm, with smooth-shaven heads and saffron robes. The students immediately quieted down.

Once the kids were all safely off, I slipped away toward a promising sign in English that read: CHEESEBURGERS. Just what I needed to cheer me up and fix my stomach. When the owner cautiously handed me what I’d ordered, I realized the sign must have been mere decoration because the rancid, fatty, chopped piece of meat on a slice of white bread deserved its own title aside from that of cheeseburger. Sighing, I nibbled on a plate of warmed cashews and sipped from a chilled bottle of excellent Thai beer. I considered the fact it was late November and the time I usually sat down to an enormous Thanksgiving meal and my extended family. Uncle Max often made an appearance with his award-winning nose hair and bald, bullet head. He was a serious glutton, a bully, and there was enough hair on his long arms to weave a small blanket.

During one such meal, when I was quite small, he deigned to notice me and asked, “What did you learn in school today?”

Shaking, I replied, “Columbus discovered America in 1492.”

“Is that right?” He nodded. “Anything else of interest happen during that year?”

What could he possibly mean? I shook my head.

“Nothing about their royal majesties Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain eliminating all the Jews by death or deportation?” he asked, calmly.

“Max, for Christ’s sake, leave the kid alone,” my father spoke up.

Bang! Max’s fist slammed the table and a small container of gravy spilled over onto my mother’s white tablecloth.

“Why should I leave the kid alone?” he screamed. “No one left the Jews alone! Why didn’t his teacher tell him about that?”

He reached over and pinched my ear until I cried out in pain.

My father slowly got to his feet, the women pushed their chairs away from the table, and Max released me and turned to my father.

“This is what they want. Jews against Jews,” he whispered. “I’m sorry. I am sorry, everyone. Forgive me and return to this wonderful meal.”

Then, not even waiting to gauge the response of his position, he began to randomly scoop massive amounts of food onto his plate and then stuff his mouth until sauce trickled down his chin and his cheeks bulged. All the while, he stared at me with his large eyes, the pupils of which seemed to shimmer and change from brown to green in a white sea surrounded by broken capillaries. I always avoided him after that, until at my bar mitzvah when he painfully squeezed my shoulder and said, “Welcome to the tribe!”

I hated him with the seething hatred a powerless child could only feel toward someone who was supposed to be a protector.

Once the beer was gone and the nut plate empty, I left the entrée for the flies and walked back to the temple. A plaque on

a nearby wall stated I had arrived at Prang Sam Yod, which translated as the Holy Three Prangs. Prangs are cylindrical religious monuments made of sandstone. The structures were not of Thai origin. They dated back to the ancient Khmers who were Buddhists heavily influenced by Hindus. The largest central Khmer temple at Angkor Wat is Hindu, with the three central prangs representing the gods Siva, Vishnu, and Brahma. The temple before me of Prang Sam Yod had a smaller version of the same three structures, but it turned out the main tourist attraction was an encampment of Macaque monkeys who had apparent control of the entire area and were untouchable because, legend had it, they were the descendants of Hindu gods.

Further along the wall was another plaque that explained Lopburi is even older than the Thai holy city of Ayutthaya, dating back to the Mon Kingdom that had links to India. I had trouble reading the rest of the plaque because it was stained with monkey feces. Just before the entrance was a large colored billboard proclaiming the date of our arrival matched The Lopburi Monkey Festival.

“My teacher, do you have this in America?” one of my students asked.

“No,” I said. “We do not have this in America. I think all the monkeys we have are in zoos.”

“That is because your monkeys are not holy like here,” he explained. “We have to hurry inside the gate because they are going to start the party.”

“What party?”

“A party for the monkeys,” he laughed. “Everyone can help putting out food they like such as bananas, cucumbers, and eggs. Maybe even ice cream!”

“Ice cream? For monkey?”

“Yes, it is very fun. Come on. We must hurry. The more we can thank the monkeys, the more the monkeys will thank us and give us a good year ahead.”

As I trailed after Wirarat through the gate, I saw a small group of our students attack a sick and mangy dog. The dog was too weak to put up much resistance and the boys poked and hit it mercilessly. I didn't pay much attention to where I was walking and ended up bumping into one of the other teachers, Mr. Somboon.

“This is very fun!” he cried, pointing at the monkeys ahead. “We must hurry and feed them. It will bring us good luck.”

“Why are those boys hitting the dog?” I asked. “Doesn't the Buddha tell us to respect all life?”

He looked back at me, stricken.

“It is true that if you are a good person and gain merit and give food to the monks, you will return to a higher station in life,” he said. “Those who are mean and selfish and only think of themselves return to a lower station. I think the person who used to be that dog was very bad.”

“Really?”

“No, not true!” he laughed. “Too simple. I tell you something maybe the way those boys think about that. They have not become monks yet. You know almost every Thai boy will become a monk. That is when they will truly learn about the teachings of the Buddha.”

“Then they will know not to beat animals?”

“They will know to respect all life whether it is a sad dog or a beautiful butterfly.”

I thought about what he said as I entered the temple and was immediately swarmed by a horde of monkeys, their skinny fingers digging into every crevice of clothing, seeking food. One macaque larger than the rest paused to cock its head in my direction, grimaced, and bared a set of frightening teeth. Rather than jump about waving his hands like the others, that beast stayed in place and focused his eyes on me with a thoughtful malevolence. Was that a glimmer of sadness, grief, or pain within the depths of that feral gaze?

There was an enormous cheer then waves of laughter up ahead. I pushed my way through the crowd and stared at bananas, guavas, rambutans, cucumbers, and lychee fruits beautifully presented in swirls of circles and low mounds. Hundreds of monkeys jumped up and down, screeching and pulling at each other’s fur as they crammed pieces of food into their mouths, all the while urinating and defecating on the food and each other. High above them, in the background, the steep monuments of Siva, Vishnu, and Brahma remained silent against a cerulean sky.

I felt something nudge me. Behind me was the large monkey I’d seen earlier. He’d patted my back and when I turned, passed his paws up and down my front. My face was flushed, and I could not tell if the water seeping from my eyes was salty from sweat or tears. The monkey’s eyes held me in their gaze. I thought of Uncle Max, who’d died many years earlier. He’d long been separated from his wife, my Aunt Rachel, and I knew from family whispers those black-and-blue marks on her arms and neck were not there from bumping into furniture. She had not attended his memorial service and the other relatives who showed up seemed cowed and nervous as if they feared word of Max’s death had been premature.

A smaller monkey tugged at my sleeve and the big one cuffed it away in one brutal slap to the face before returning to stare at me again, this time almost at eye level. He blinked, leaned forward, and clutched my right arm. I was petrified and tried vainly to peel away his fingers. The brilliant Thai sun beat down on the scene. Red dust rose all around, putting an impressionist blur on the monkeys, food, students, teachers, monks, and Buddhist statues. All was in slow motion. A butterfly gracefully moved its wings just to my left. The monkey gripped me even more tightly, its eyes ferocious and focused as if a malignant and intelligent force was trapped there that somehow knew me.

“Uncle Max!” I cried and pulled free.

The monkey slapped me hard on my arm, jumped off to join the others at the food, and left me to nurse red and tender bruises.

I thought of Aunt Rachel.

Burgess Needle  
Ripton



# Searching for Ghosts



Chris Meola  
Middlebury

## **I Followed**

I followed  
the low-hanging orb all night.  
It led me to a cliff then winked.  
A false moon, a false unicorn, and a false love—  
three treasures rarer than the real thing.

Except perhaps the false unicorn, a Chinese medicine that  
uplifts the spirits betrayed by the moon and love.  
Anyway, I followed it to the precipice and hit return,  
trying to make at least an un-false poem,  
slightly rarer than a paragraph.

Alice Eckles  
Middlebury

## **Pillowcase Dress**

Under a giant willow tree in my backyard, about sixty Quakers are sitting in various lawn chairs in a silent circle. They are facing each other this year at a gathering we have every Mother's Day. Sitting on the ground in front of me is a female student from Middlebury College. She is inside the circle of chairs, where the kids are playing quietly—reading books, playing with blocks, and holding stuffed animals. At first glance, I notice the student is wearing a short white dress with old-fashioned lace on the bottom. I close my eyes to meditate. Somewhere in my subconscious, a thought comes. Wait, did the back of that dress dip to her waist? Did she have anything on underneath?

I open my eyes. Yes, her whole back is bare. At the back of her neck is a knot tying the two top corners of the front fabric, like a halter-top. The back-fabric sags. I go back to meditate. Am I seeing this right? I open my eyes. She shifts and I see that there are two separate pieces of material, one in front, one in back with a tiny six-inch seam from below her armpit, not quite reaching her waist. Below that? Nothing but skin. And it seems like no one else is noticing.

Coincidentally, the theme of the meditation is: "Enough is enough and not one stitch more." The kids chose this theme from the book *Cloud Spinner* that they read.

It is about a boy learning to not use more than necessary, but when a greedy king wants more, there are consequences for the occupants of the kingdom.

What about not quite enough stitches? I am thinking when a man gives a message about using resources wisely. Yes, of course. I let my mind go free and notice I am back to thinking about stitches.

A visiting woman gives a message about reusing and not buying new products. I look at how the white cloth drapes over the girl's skin. I don't quite get it. Is it old? Then I think, the rip is probably an accident and I can offer to sew it. I have an old treadle sewing machine right inside that could zip up the seam, without using any extra stitches, but maybe enough stitches. This is my meditation.

I don't know the young woman, but as soon as the meeting is over, I ask if she would like me to sew the seam back together. She says that it would be great. And that it ripped when she was riding her bike over this morning. So, we two walk up the deck stairs and into the office where I keep the machine. I give her a towel to wrap herself in and sew the seam. Meanwhile, she tells me that she is doing a project on living art and that she made this dress from a pillowcase. The art involves living in the school's greenhouse for five days and using found objects.

She "found" the pillowcase and cut one end to make it into clothing, leaving the lace on the open end of the case as the hem of the dress. She did this during the art project (without any stitches). The way she explains the art installation is that students pass the greenhouse and watch her in her daily tasks, while she watches students on their way to the library. So, this is living art going both ways. She and they are taking the boundaries out of two-dimensional art.

After I reinforce the seam, I mention that it might rip again, as it is an antique linen pillowcase and the material is just about worn through. She says the art project is only for one more day anyway. She puts it back on and, while it is still minimal, her side is covered, and the seam now comes to the top of her thighs. She takes it all in stride as she nods at me. Maybe she thinks of this as another part of the art project. Maybe she liked the pillowcase the way it was. I don't know. She didn't seem to care one way or the other.

We walk back to the festivities. I am wondering if anyone else noticed the rip, but I don't talk about it during the potluck meal. Toward the end of the gathering, a man who has spent his life in the art world sidles up to me and says, "That was a nice thing you did, Sas . . . but I'm mad at you. That was a really good resting place for my eyes, and you took it away."

Sas Carey  
Middlebury

## **El Lagarto, Baby**

Our love? Our love is an alligator,  
floating silently in the swamp, waiting  
for an egret or an anhinga to approach unawares.  
An alligator basking in the late-afternoon sun, an  
alligator stowing its eggs in rotting swampgrass.  
Yes, our love is not lovely, but prehistoric and quick  
as lightning. Our love has eighty teeth. Which helps  
our love eat poodles and dachshunds on leashes held  
by elderly retired school teachers. Our love is wild  
and dangerous, but may, indeed, end up as a handbag  
in our favorite shop in Brussels.

Ed Webbley  
Starksboro

## **Zig Zag Crew**

*for the print-version of Issue.3*

\ A. Jay Dubberly | Muir Haman /  
Keith A. Morrill  
\ Maddy Willwerth | Patrick Willwerth /

*for the Re.Issue*

Trish Dougherty \ A. Jay Dubberly / Penelope K. Wade

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### Editor's Note:

Some of the original submissions have been lost,  
flung from the wheel of time. We've fitted this Re.Issue out according to  
our newer style guides & beefed up our editing chops;  
we firmly believe this digital issue to be not only  
an acceptable representation of the original but an improved version.  
But it's okay if you don't like the sequel;  
we can't all be Paddingtons.

# Zig Zag Lit Mag



An arts & literature magazine for & by  
those who live, labor, or loiter in Addison County.

**Re.Issue.3**

**Winter.21**