LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I was looking through an etymological dictionary and playing with the idea that language has the same project as science: a quest for truth, understanding, control. Etymologically, the word metaphor comes from the Greek "to carry, bear" + "over, across." Metaphor is a way of making images and feelings more accessible, more tangible. Science comes from the Latin for "knowledge; to separate one thing from another." It's a way of bridging the divide between the known and the unknown; to carry truth over. Art and science share a common project of finding and articulating truth, but where personal truth is concerned, sometimes art is a more effective means of expression.

The theme of this issue is an exploration of the nature of the body as the most personal and basic of truths. This issue reveals a tension between the power and fragility of the body. It explores the distance and difference between the body and mind, the inner and outer self. Our bodies and the faculties of these bodies (the mind, the tongue, the fingers, the legs) are the only means we have to articulate ourselves, to express ourselves: a hodgepodge of disparate and sometimes disorderly parts. The body becomes magnificent and functional as an amalgamation of these parts, some of which we will never even see, let alone know how to pronounce (when did you last see your spleen, or nucleus accumbens?).

It is a miracle that we can even stand up. But more than that: we can walk, dance, touch, taste, think, see, heal, paint, cook, write, sculpt; we can even create other bodies. The fragility of the body comes from, I think, the difficulty that we can have in articulating our experiences. We cannot always do and say what we want with the tools the body provides. Our death, too, points to the transience and fragility of our bodily selves, but that's not what this is about: it's about the beauty in the meantime. There is a simple beauty in that deep mystery, in the search for accurate expression in the small, natural symmetry of the every day; in its completion, dailiness finds itself neither simple nor small. It's more like a beginning.

Harriet Alida Lye Editor

"Language in art remains a highly ambiguous transaction, a quicksand, a trampoline, a frozen pool, which might give way under you...at any time."

Harold Pinter

Please send submissions, feedback and questions to halifaxroyalmajesty@gmail.com

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She Robert Cook

This is a poem for the children I may have by Harriet Lye

The primal distinction between Galen's heart and the humours, splitting the body in two, then two again, reminds me of something. It is lamentable, this state of Hunger.

The nostalgia of our patriotism is stitched between the (every mistranslated euphemism) peeling the bark of a birch in the spring embedded between the markings on the pale faces on the bus. Spending everything you've earned, you trawl this half-city with a prayer for something you can't remember ever even feeling.

You pace the room, the smell of mouldy lilies overpowering. Now, you consider the salty rhymes that may fill the room with the fullness of their action, instead: shaking the sheets, opening the windows, letting the room breathe. An affirmation: I only watch.

Taking turns to shell out our And leave only the architecture of

This summer you hope to plant a vegetable patch in your new garden, and I know the sun will set on your tilled, dessicated earth daily, without relent.



Deuf Paige Littlefair

DELMORE'S PROBLEM

by Andrew James Weatherhead

Delmore's Secrets

Unsure what to do, you

grew a beard

while Delmore sweet talked his mama and

child, told them National

Secrets

he held inside him a great fear

felt never ready to tell them everything

so, his back against a wall

again.

<u>Delmore's Thursday</u>

I

Delmore left the glass on the table, by the

door.

Thought nothing anymore...

thought it was gon' rain. Rain that side-

ways rain that lost a man for weeks.

П

Shoved off for home

a Thursday night

under the car door

found his keys, thought

nothin of it



Katie McKay



Jirl in window
Sarah Letovsky

A morning after is the bus back from summer camp. Each piece of clothing damp, aching for a real meal, clutching a fingery spread of synecdoche. Last night as you slept on the bed's far side I learned to light my own fire properly, logs stacked pyramidal, tombing cold. My opened eyes burned slow and even and clean into the 3 am sheet. For hours, marshmallows' soft lick would crust your mouth's corners. The morning brushed through your hair and scrubbed neat your face.

When we climb into your bed, you are a girl I take by the hand, lead along your trailed slopes where so much is green and sun-toast. Your tongue is young blackberries, pitcher plants know my taste for mosquitoes' locket rage, the pines are swayed as ripe wheat. Your touch has this distance in it, is made of horizon, is a postcard. To possess only this strip of you, a seigneurie among many. Bushes' murmurs in fractureless harmony with the shape of a

man, thought into the backdrop night.

But this night is fire engines parked up the street, their frantic aurorae juvenile mess over the park's green. Lingerie traffic clings to the blacktop, theatrical cones own its edges, fingers drape from a canoe into a lake, whatever a man can trace in one day belongs to him once. You push me back from the window. You push me to the bed. I think I see you in that park across the street, why, I say, but you're a stray cat. Your parking meters stare zeroes at me, a couple of jars of clear blue preserve.

When we're done I put you down, a full gutter where the sky hides among water's inti-

mate tattoos.

I dream I gut my wallet, lay its cards across a table, zoo map bright—and with black, felt, tipped, extirpate, my name. For a moment—but the sound of every other bites my nails like too many teeth and I panic and I spare one last breeding pair. Sometimes the statue of myself in my mind is so bronze and so sharp and so clean it stings my face, I flinch in the tang of smelted summer cool, in a November cold muted by the hum of the furnace tilling air.

Fire's first rose, the charred bread stench made me hungry, homesick stomach beginning to snarl. But through slow, ungeometric revolutions becomes noxious burning cellophane. A strange common sweat with everyone on the street tonight. It smells of uncleaned pens. It's warm, even for August. Give change to the man outside the liquor store. Never do that. Is a frantic kin in those lights, grizzly, the gut of a lover gazing down wide solitude's throat.

I think I want a love that makes me drunk and bend, that twists my every part, my voice, that puts sap in my hair, boughs me, that unbraids from me my tongue and mouth until they are an otter moving through a pond. Not a love that folds and unfolds maps, parcels continents, an anthem creasing, making hoarse, indian-burning my throat, that flattens, lays out lazy jawbones once moose, or horses, the taxidermic clutch of barn owls, weasels, racoon's hands, the odd squirrel. The name in me buzzes now, power lines, ley lines, conduit. An anthill becomes a haze.

A rain down on a city, flooded, I drank to put off drowning. I had cupped your love like a key. But she, the whites of her eyes roll jarless lightning through me, through. She is tangled tan lines, crosshatching, her hair swallows whole limbs at a time, underbrush where we tear off each other's clothes, paw up edible roots, gnaw at fruit ripe with belly heat. Her touch is cold water, hot, thorns, immediate, breaks small bones. When we fuck she bites hard the back of my neck. Her teeth stalk skin for days.

In months of losing myself in mobius treks I still haven't seen all. She loves how one might love a nascent limb. At times a spent leaf, pored into a tributary of nerve, carried from one, rare toe, lazy over pebbly bones of hands, clear, skin-dipped holes, and down, farther, fast into a limb, its thunder and fumbling, cacophonous with union, the deep deep plunge. Then, still. At the cusp of a lake. Here, together mountains end. A body not provinces but

watersheds. Across us sweat migrating, hot glaciers scribing riverbeds.

One morning we wake and we're disappeared. Air into lungs, becoming a part of important organs, filled with knowing now an end, as we must have then. Just ahead is a fog, handfuls of sweet smoke, where the trees in the park are only and now and are our fond bones remembering themselves.

Handmade post-card to you who I don't know yet; (I will put this in your coat pockets)

by Corey Allan Hinchey

T

I'm seeing the stories and the small box of flame we hide in after a spruce watercolour sky has left a wash over barren nova Scotia letting the cool go wherever it wants

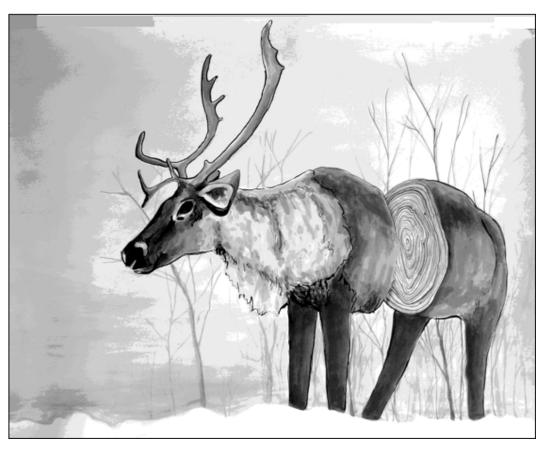
You still have paint on your cheeks from calling coyotes and finding shiny things for our plain wood surfaces. you were born a crow, right?

I don't know:

wouldn't we sew up some wool scraps, make you look like the orphan of small-town? left to find your way among edible berries, poison oak I give you away to the rocks and the green in the morning just to adopt you again at night

П

Handmade post-cards: an allegory; you're upside down on the monkey bars, blood storming to the head, focusing on the texture of the ground you normally have feet on.



Caribou Cross-section

Rebecca Roher

The Rafiki Troupe by Ben Stephenson

In my first year of art school I had no friends. Except for attending my classes, I had no reason to even go near the campus, so all of the time in between the end of one lecture and the beginning of the next, you would find me somewhere as far away as possible from that place. Except you wouldn't find me, because you wouldn't have been looking.

My mother of course wrote to me expressing her concern with my antisocial habits: "You're not an undesirable young man by any means," she wrote, "it's just that you're not *trying* hard enough." The thing was, I didn't want friends much anyway, at least not school friends. And I didn't mind the alone time, usually, but Mom didn't seem to grasp that. Anyway, being one of those strange kids who actually respected their mother's opinion, I decided I would try harder.

So one Tuesday, I tried pretty hard.

The thing about art school is that anyone who can write a half-decent proposal and find ten or so others to sign it can easily receive a grant of five hundred dollars to create an extra-curricular club of any kind at all. I overheard that in class once. Scanning the bulletin board, there were dozens of groups meeting all the time. I was such a fatalist at the time that I had resolved to attend the very next scheduled meeting, no matter what it was. Fate was always such a funny-guy.

"THE RAFIKI TROUPE. ROOM 1105. TUESDAYS @ 8:00 PM." I stopped studying the insanely bland poster and checked my watch. It was 7:42, and I had found my destiny. I headed outside to the courtyard to sit and enjoy the fresh autumn air for a moment – it smelled like frost and foreshadowing - and then went to find the meeting.

I knocked on the door, and no one came. I knocked again, and waited. I cleared my throat, tousled my hair a bit, pressed on the bridge of my glasses, and waited. I looked at the number on the heavy wooden door and saw that it matched the number scribbled on my right hand. I tried the doorknob, and it turned. Why I was trying so hard, I really didn't know.

I opened the door and saw a group of ten or twelve people, students, with easels, forming a haphazard kind of oval with its center not quite at the room's center. Of course, they all turned to look at me, as I stood just past the doorway playing with my hair. But then, miraculously, most of them turned away again.

It was amazingly quiet. The only audible sound was some dim but ambient recording of what seemed to me to be a rainforest, coming from an

old cassette deck in the corner. The lights were also dimmed, the golden glow of the tungsten light-bulbs looking as uncharacteristically unwelcoming as possible. It smelled the exact opposite of a rainforest: like varnish and soot. The air felt thick, like a rainforest might be, except not warm and humid. It felt powdery. The girl nearest to the ghetto blaster was still looking over at me, pryingly.

"Excuse me, is this the -" I started, but was met with twenty or twenty-four eyeballs once more. The girl in the corner walked over to me, and motioned for me to go back into the hall. Once outside, I asked, "Is this the Rafiki Troupe?"

As if it even mattered what it was at all.

"Mmm-hmm," she answered.

"You guys don't talk?"

"Not in our *meetings*, no." she said, as though I should have already heard the information, by way of rumour or divine intervention or something. I had no idea how she meant it, really.

"What made you choose us?" she asked.
"I didn't," I said, "this was the soonest one."

Her eyebrows attempted to have a brief meeting in the middle of her forehead.

"Well, how did you get interested in what we do? I...just need to know how you found out about it."

I kind of shrugged and I think she understood that I had no idea what they did or what I was getting into. My eyes wandered to the rectangular badge pinned to her blouse. 'Allison.' It was a nametag.

After an uncomfortable moment, we went back inside. Allison went back to her easel and I, not knowing what else to do, slowly circled the room.

The first shoulder I spied over belonged to a heavy-set but not overweight young man with very short black hair and a wide nose. If I wasn't in an art school, I would have taken him for a rugby champion. He was painting a very colourful portrait of a monkey, and it was amazing. He seemed to be working from memory, as he had no visual references. His nametag said 'Derek.'

The next lady had long wispy greying brown hair and a flowery shirt. I assumed she was one of the many moms whose kids had all grown up and left home, and was then left with nothing better to do than to apply as a mature student and 'find herself.' I enjoyed assuming things like that. The writing on her nametag was unreadable, and she was drawing some queer pencil line-drawing of what also was some type of monkey.

They were all making monkeys. Some were painting, most were drawing, and one older man was in fact wood-carving, but they were all making monkeys, and no one was talking.

I laughed to myself, thinking about fate for a moment; he thought he was *such* a funny-guy.

Allison walked back over with a much more low-tech nametag for me to wear, just a little white sticker. She took out a marker and looked at me blankly.

"Jacob," I said, somehow forgetting the silence rule once again, and was once more shown twelve half-angry glances. Allison rolled her eyes and smiled. She looked me up and down, evaluating, scribbled something on the nametag and stuck it on me. I looked down.

'Neanderthal.'

The next Tuesday I came prepared. As much of a cult as it seemed to be, I tried not to care. I knew something had led me to that moment of my life, the week before, to the poster, and to the troupe. I had set up conditions for myself and seen them met, so I brought my pens and my paper and joined right in. I spent half of my time peoplewatching and being dumbfounded, and the other half drawing and surprising myself. In reality though, my drawings were pretty bad.

The thing about the troupe was that, in all honesty, there were no rules. Rules were never mentioned in the conversations which took place before and after meetings, or during break. What there were, were understandings. It was understood that there was no talking and it was understood that the subject matter was monkeys. It was understood that Allison was in charge.

"So, why monkeys?" I said to her after my second troupe meeting, on my second Tuesday.

Allison started to speak but stopped, and looked really self-conscious. I felt that she knew how to answer, but didn't know if she should. She turned to the rest of the semi-circle of members in the hall for some support. Some mumbled a bit, Derek pretended he hadn't heard the question, no one made eye contact, and nothing of use was said. Honestly, how strange were these people? I wished I was a documentary filmmaker for a moment.

When it was just Allison left, locking the door, I continued to shoot footage for my documentary.

"So how long have you been the leader for?"

"Leader? Oh, I'm not in charge."

"Well if you're not then I'm pretty sure nobody is."

"Nobody is. You're right. I'm not in charge, I'm just the one planning the field trip."

She was almost frantically jiggling the key in the lock the whole time. It was a tough lock.

"But you've got to admit you at least seem to be in charge. I mean last week, you—"

She cut me off.

"- You know when someone asks a crowd of people, for a volunteer?" she asked, "You know that awkward silence when nobody wants to do it, and then the one person with the lowest threshold – for awkwardness, finally steps up?"

"Ok -"

"That's me."

The third Tuesday, naturally, I won dered why I was going. I wasn't exactly inspired by my monkey drawings from the previous meeting, I hadn't made any kind of connection with anyone in the troupe, and even worse, there was a gallery opening I was invited to, an kind of wanted to go, happening the same night. I found myself saying, "I can't, I've got to go to a meeting. Sorry." Who was the apology directed to, really?

And who was to say that you had to go to every meeting? Some of the veteran Rafiki Troupers even missed days some times, as I had observed last week. That wood-carving guy seemed to think it was his right to just show up whenever he felt like it. If I could have shaken off my morals I would have, but instead I opened the door and walked into the silence.

They were using only candles for lighting that week. Derek had his shirt off, and seemed to be meditating before beginning each drawing. The Mom was in fact eating – from what I could tell – a lettuce sandwich, and crying.

I drew a nice scene with a chimpanzee in a tree only ten feet above a tremendously fat man with a safari hat and a twelve gauge shotgun, aimed for the kill. I drew a King-Kong-sized baboon crushing a university campus and its surrounding buildings. I drew a crude self-portrait of myself in a monkey costume, slitting my wrists. I had brought a red marker just in case.

My drawings were horrible. They were the worst drawings I'd seen anyone make in years. It wasn't that they were bad *looking* – thank God I was still drawing with my own lines – it was the content that was somehow coming out of me. The draw-

ings were shameful and angry and literal. They were made by punk-rock-suburb kids, not by me.

And why did it have to be monkeys? Of all things. I wouldn't have minded any other animal, but monkeys were ruined. With all the kitschy monkey tshirts and obnoxious click-the-monkey internet ads, countless 'random-humour' punch lines, and every unoriginal ten year-old's desire for a pet monkey, how were monkeys even relevant anymore?

And was I becoming pretentious? Because I had vowed not to become pretentious like everyone else. For my creative process class we had to create an artist statement for ourselves: I will not become pretentious like everyone else. My mind was running rampant and began to conjure up things, as it was known to do.

Meanwhile, at the art show – as far as I knew – a young handsome up-and-coming painter who wore quirky glasses would probably be eating cheese and drinking wine. He'd look up from one of the peculiar sculptures on the floor and find himself staring the girl of his dreams dead in the eyes. She'd throw herself into his arms and he'd drop his wine glass, and it'd shatter on the hardwood. They'd kiss gently and roughly in a cab in the rain. They'd give every last penny they had to a blind homeless man, and the next morning he'd wake with perfect vision, and thank the Lord. A month later they'd be married on the sunniest day of August in an apple orchard. Morrissey would sing at their wedding. Perfect.

I had worked my mind into a considerably large knot by the end of the meeting. So when Allison took me aside in the hall and asked me to be the student council liaison for the troupe, I overaccepted my fate.

"Y-y-yup!" I shouted, this time creating the silence rather than destroying it.

"What is wrong with you?"
"Wrong with me? Nothing! Yes, I'll be the liaison!
Sign me up?"
"Well, no, it's ok —" she whispered, examining the

"Sign me up!" I repeated.

Derek, now fully clothed, gave Allison a concerned look and they walked off down the hall together. Everyone else followed. I went out the door on the opposite end, and didn't say goodbye to anyone.

I had calmed down by the next Tuesday. My mom wrote me another e-mail: "P.S. - Have you met any interesting people lately?" I told her I thought I had fallen in with the wrong crowd.

It was strange, but Allison wasn't at the meeting. Derek said she was sick.

I sat on the floor and drew. It took me ten or

fifteen minutes of drawing monsters before I had the courage to try a monkey, but I did draw some

I watched Derek carefully and tried to pick up on the significance of monkeys. At least, I guessed, they brought some type of naïve happiness to the observer, or maybe even a type of innocence. But, the same could have been said about thousands of other animals. Then there was, of course, the evolution thing, if you bought into that. Perhaps there was something calming about seeing a simpler version of ourselves.

At break I asked Derek how long he'd been coming.

"Ohh, five years now?" he said.

"Five? Wow. Are you working on your Master's then?" I asked.

"Oh no, I'm not a student---" he coughed, and said, "none of us are, actually."

"What do you mean?"

The Rafiki Troupe had been founded in 1994, by a group of only three students, and had been slowly growing each year since. Somewhere around '98, Derek guessed, it was decided that friends could attend as well, even if they didn't go to the school.

Steadily, though, the student portion withered and the outsider portion multiplied. No one knew why, but the group simply ceased to draw in any members from the student population, and people generally only came into the group on a friend-of-afriend basis. And so, the troupe met weekly, all but unbeknownst to the school, and became self-reliant. Derek was strongly of the opinion that they needed better advertising. It was true that the poster sucked.

"So as it stands today, you are the only student – cough – out of everyone," he finished.

"...And that's why I've got to be the liaison." I deduced.

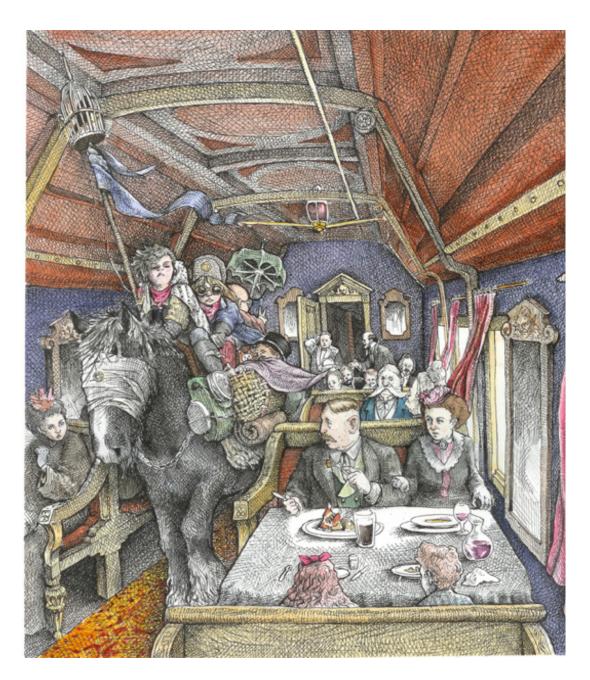
"That's why we wanted you to be it, yes." Derek said.

"She didn't sign me up?"

"We didn't expect to ever see you again, really."

"Oh. Yeah, sorry about that," I said. I didn't have anything else to say, but break was over so I went back into the room. I was glad that I wouldn't have to attend any student council meetings.

to be continued



CATEGORIES OF DAYDREAMS



3. Nostalgic Accounts

With the crackly texture of an old home video, the boy stared at the camera and said: "I am slow to love." There were no smooth segues, it just cut to him swinging on his belly on a tire-swing in his backyard. The weeds were rampant and the grass was long; there were some purple flowers brimming over edge of the garden. He opened the fence and ran through, then was on a purple tricycle that he had outgrown. The camera zoomed in on his floppy strawberry blonde hair, and a girl kissed the back of his head. She said "You look just like a periwinkle flower that is sprouting purple at the base and then turning strawberry coloured. The garden is making your hair turn colours!"

They laughed loudly and then she kissed him fatly on the mouth. She closed her eyes and he kept his open. "I love you, you know!" And he kissed her again as she pulled away.

2. Fever

Folded over, bending forward, legs in second position like a properly soggy ballerina, I was being jolted by the rickety bus – or, more specifically, by the poor suspension system manoeuvring the summer roadworks.

I had carefully positioned myself so that I was strewn and spread around the other sweaty bodies that crowded the bus so that no skin would be touching any other skin. My body looked orange from the reflection of the afternoon sun refracting from the fraying orange polyester seats. The bus was full with the early-afternoon Friday rush hour, the rush to get out of the city, but I wasn't going anywhere but home to water the plants and walk the dog.

All of the windows were open as far as they would 14

go, many of them broken and only open a crack, and every body-part of every passenger was reaching outward, stretching out as far out into the stagnant air as possible, trying to catch the wind from the stiff motion of the bus for a bit of relief. My bare back was flat and beads of sweat were blossoming from the bumps and valleys of vertebrae.

A woman in front of me, lucky enough to have a seat, craned her head back to try to touch her nape to the metal headrest, thinking it would be cool against her neck. She sighed, blowing up her floppy bangs, and lifted her head again: even the steel was sticky.

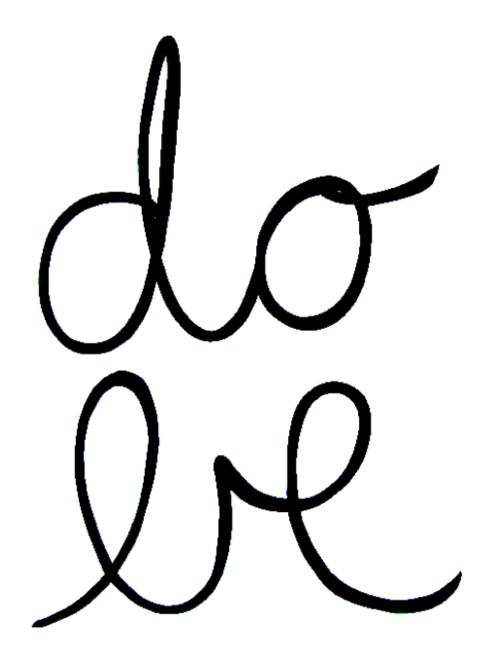
Suddenly, I felt a knee gently thrust between my legs. I couldn't twist my head to see whose leg was haphazardly thrown into my inner-thigh because of the cluttered sea of torsos that lapped next to my head; I didn't want to move and cause any more touching of body parts. This knee was comforting, though; I still like to think that it was intentional.

The sweat was beginning to drip down my back in subtle streams; I tried to arch my spine so that it would pool in the small of my back, but a briefcase was in the way: I couldn't move. Fingertips likely belonging to the same body as the knee between my thighs began delicately dancing down my back, slowly and deliberately, whisking the beads away with mysteriously cool fingertips. I closed my eyes. The fingers picked up speed but remained soft. Goosebumps traveled from my tailbone to the crown of my head. I licked my lips, licking the sweat from my upper lip. It still tasted like maple syrup.

When I got home I sat at the kitchen table that was covered with a plastic checkered tablecloth. I clutched a full watering-can and stared into space for an immeasurably long time before I was able to go outside.

1. Alternative Outcomes

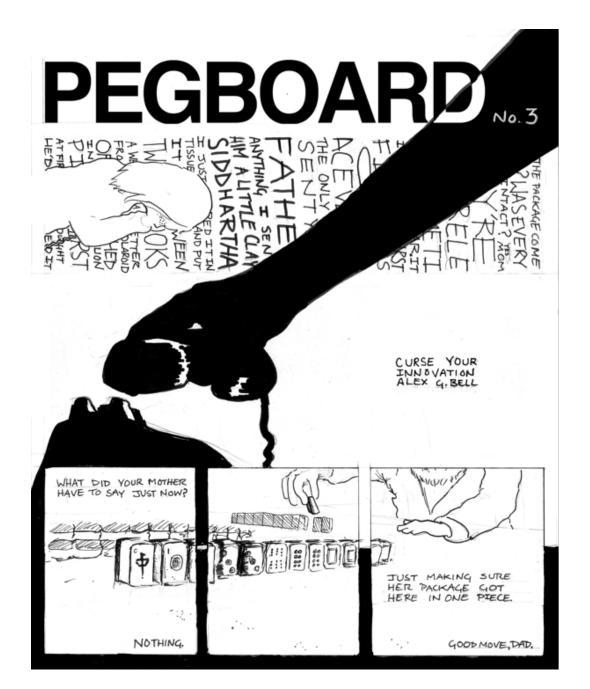
I dreamt about you last night, but you know how dreams work: you were still young, still you, & your hair was different, thicker, heavier. All of your hair, I mean, even your eyelashes. Butterfly kisses under white sheets in the morning light; we were just kids blinking on each other's cheeks, believing that the strength of our wings beating would reach all the way across to China and make everyone fall in love.



Julia Kennedy



Graveyard bus stop
Matthew Dionne



awakening

the amaryllis in the kitchen opened overnight
— just a
crack — but

(my nightmare drove me to seek safety in the touchable cool hardness of the surfaces of appliances and mess of

kitchen chairs, so at six in the morning, the hour before winter dawn,) I am the first

to see into its little pink womb:

stripes & stamens overlap, petal skins crumpled are eager to unfurl



Sweet Potato & Pumpkin Soup

recipe by Ilana Spiegel

This soup is delicious and quick to make, will keep you warm on those bleak February nights, and it tastes and feels like orange velvet. I suggest serving it with a thick slice of rustic bread and a green salad on the side.

4 tbs butter
3 medium sweet potatoes,
mashed
1 28oz can of pumpkin
7 cups veggie or chicken broth
1/2 cup smooth peanut butter
1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

Melt the butter in a pot. Add the mashed sweet potatoes and cayenne pepper (Note: An easy way to cook sweet potatoes quickly is in the microwave: just prick them all over with a fork and stick them in the microwave on high for about 6 minutes, or until soft. When they are cool enough to handle, just scoop out the insides and mash them with a fork). Add the pumpkin and stir it all around for another minute. Add the broth, bring to a boil and then cover and let simmer for 20 minutes. Add the peanut butter, stir, adding more broth or water if it is too thick. Season to taste with salt and pepper. I like it with lots of freshly cracked black pepper.

Enjoy! 2

A list of things

He stood at the window, remembering the feel of her small bones beneath skin; remembering the paleness of her skin, pale like the sky on a January morning, pale like milk. He would rub her back when it was sore or when he wanted an excuse just to touch her, to have her stay still. He saw her body as one single piece, a large slab of beautifully sculpted clay. He told her this: he told her that she was a perfect piece of artwork, complete and whole and beautiful. He kissed her shoulder and turned her to face him. He'd never seen her look the way she did then: it was as though something was burning on her tongue. She looked at him without recognition. She stood up, walked to the window, and was very still, like a kettle almost boiling. She turned around, her arms tight and straight, and said "You are wrong. All bodies are like woven things, intricate like lace, made up of millions of millions parts that compose their whole. There are fine strands of muscles braided along the backbone, bones aligned and malleable and fragile, tendons clinging like elastic bands to the joints, to the bones, motion -" He saw her shake. She took him, pushed him down onto the floor, and sat behind him, tracing his back with the tip of her finger, impressing the shapes of him into his own awareness. She knew his back as though it were a family tree.