Tropos: A Magazine of Literary and Artistic Works 2010-2012

Lawrence University
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Tropos is a student publication of the art, original literature, and creative works of the Lawrence University community. Each piece is selected by the Tropos Literary Review Board, a student organization dedicated to providing a space for the publication of student works.

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Camera in Retrospect
By Anonymous

It was, I admit, your camera—
that first enthralled me—
its boxy superiority, the dusty metal
frame that promised endurance
rather than novelty. I wanted
to touch it, press the cold plastic
against my sweaty cheek,
to insert my pricking tongue
into the dusty lens
while you closed the shutter.

Later I noticed the hand
attached to the camera, then the body
attached to the hand
and there was your face
so solemn and pliable
as if you hadn’t decided
how to arrange your expression,
smiling tentatively, unsure your lips
would obey.
I clutched my knapsack tighter
and shifted my gaze
to the dirty mass of people
swaying around us,
their beads of sweat mingling
with our beads of sweat.

My finger reached out
I wanted to grab some of your thick
innocence and rub it into my own skin.

Instead I stared at the piss
yellow grass clumped around my sandals
and stepped outside your magnetic field.
I turned halfway to see
if you still existed.
You were still burning
into my irises. I walked faster
bothered by your intensity
unnerved by your heat.

Electrocutioner
By Justin Jones

My mother destroyed my ego
As a testament to immaterial truth.

She set my trunk on fire.
She had me detusked.

P.T. Barnum and
Thomas Edison stood
and shook hands
over my corpse.

And When She Takes a Drink
By Lauren Schulte

And when she takes a drink
the world is suddenly inverted.
Thick (arctic) glass contorts the truth.
And she sets it down,
the world falls too,
the thud echoing even in Atlas’ ears.
She picks up the glass again—
How much better it all seemed.

Self Interest
By Andrea Parmentier
Sick Again
Jon Erkkila

I'm sprawled out waiting
to cough out this lung already.
But only spittle and traces
of phlegm disperse each time
my body heaves into a cough,
involuntary like an ocean
wave sneaking up from behind,
toppling head
into sand,
home only for the urchins.

Such unfit tastes are quenched
more easily than my situation.
My mouth's dry enough not to allow
me to swallow, yet moist like a cavern
of nasty viruses soaked in snot, stalactites dangling
from the roof of my mouth like barnacles
to the bottoms of boats and the piers
that bind them to the beach. My mind is trying to be somewhere else.
A humid July day in Spring Lake, New Jersey
down on the shore, a day like warm beer
and sunburn, tangy and painful to the touch,
evidence of nothing
to bother me, even as I sit with the sun going down,
muddy sand caked to my ankles
and not enough gas to get home.

I cough again, wake up
to reality, a subzero room in windswept
Wisconsin winter, where illness acts like a mistress,
nagging me all night. There's a pain swelling
up in the left temple of my brain
that makes my summer fantasy
just that.
Gone.

Learning to Read
By Madeline Cooper

My addiction
for fiction colored in the lines
of my childhood

Reading in the bathroom when my mom said set the table
was a way to stay right outside the doors of Azkaban
dementors drifting over my head
but at least I wasn't laying out forks and napkins for more stirfried leftovers
while I could have been rafting down a river back to Redwall Abbey for the feast
My tastes were focused on talking animals, magic groves,
schools for special children magic children x-men children
I hid them under my middle school math desk
just waiting for the teacher to face the board
so I could fall face first back into the land of the ice bears
and maybe save the world

My favorites were hybrids recombined fairytales
women half wild with powers all wild and their bottom half horse,
sea, fish or a pack of dogs running behind.
My dog was no runner he was a lie on his side
my head on his ribs and his back haunches propping up
my latest and greatest: a girl living with wolves.
Or was it dolphins?
I read about women who turned to glass spoke to plants
made friends with vampires
or maybe just made the best cinnamon rolls in town.

And I cooked after the chapter was done
mixing yeast into warm sugar water
beating egg whites to recreate the same meringue made by
so-and-so in what story was that?
And while my bread rose I got my book back out because
I needed to know if the dictatorship would wipe out
the jungle and the country and Blanca's love for Pedro.
And at night in bed, I never dreamed
of frogs turning into princes
because I could never sleep
too busy thinking what would happen next.
Letter from Old Circle
By Justin Jones

She spoke to us as if we were dolls of her own crude design—reveling in the imprecision of our wrists, and the sideways tendencies of our gait.

She was a post-debutante, a neon sign, a carefully designed crevasse whose implicit demand was that we wait on it on her and the vastness of the bright, deliberate line that would separate us forever.

But she was unhurried then and fond of our abstract, crystalline places.

For she still thought herself an ark, a fiery door, and from this she noted no escape.

The Chapel at Sunset
By Linnea Garcia

Light seeps from Behind stained glass, Casting lime-green shadows Upon the balcony seats. A rehearsal, Tedium with anticipation, Strums along with Disinterest, despite The conductor's concentration. Then, a moment comes, When lime-green fades To orange mahogany And subtle moonshine Illuminates colored glass, The chapel breathes. Music runs and echoes Into every chasm of the chapel. Winds twist around Until sound becomes a being and The chapel its keeper. When pure silence settles, Echoes reluctantly disperse Until not a strand of sound Is left over. The chapel holds its breath, Waiting for music To come again.

Sisters, I’m Tired
By Stephanie Parmentier

Sisters, I'm tired. My brown eyes frosted over like stones My spine curled forward like a fetus My lips sectioned by rivers of blood. This body rings young, But the mind stretches aged. It quivers with personal conflict, Humming me awake at night Singing me insane all day. All this, stemming from nothing... I haven't seen much hardship, Devastation hardly burdened towards me. No senseless, world injustice casting fear. No burned cigarette holes on my skin Only personal hate. Self defection - a manufacture disorder. See, I bear red feelings. Incomprehensible, yet deep. As if I was burning in hell But there's no fire here. No reason to scream for help, If the danger isn't real. So please, just let me sleep. Grant me separation from my inflictions. A rest away from all I think. Cause I am the defection of human With a sour mind.

Untitled
By Emma Moss
Words Lost in the Ceiling
By Vivian Burnette

The lights are nodding off
to the sound of my dreaming. Thoughts
scatter and I clamber, raking at air bloated with
skipping phrases, bobbing punctuation,
all that painful tittering
of words anxious to funnel away into
the greater atmosphere—
a thousand errant lambs I’ll follow (what a
desperate shepherd I am!) as they float
towards the ceiling, collecting in
some humble corner where spiders busy
at their spinning wheels will pause
and point to a crack in the wall.

Of The Will To Forget
By Anonymous

Would you trade your days for such morning dreams?
Awake, O solemn simpleton.
Allow the receding ichor of the imagined world to course,
like the horses of the leavening morn,
through what is seen.

And what of memory, ashamed, desirous of blank?
We all stumble through this world, learning the weight of our steps only
in the impressions that lie behind us.

O, but that my steps lay on the ocean’s shelf,
I may forget the hollow of my own foot.

Quite Contrary
By Mary Curtin

my name is not me
it was given to me
stolen from great-grandmothers
i never met
i cannot write myself
into this paper
and fade away
i do not know
how to shape letters
and form myself

The Last Mistress
By Vivian Burnette

The sun lay down beside me,
So near that I could see the thrill
That freckled his blazing brow.
He drew me close and said
That I would die as yet unloved
If I did not love him now.

The moon stood watching in the doorway,
Her hand shaking with the weight of a gun.
“Poor soul” cried she, and thrust the bullet
Through that golden temple of the sun.
Three Haiku and a Tanka
By Andrew Kim
I write these haiku
To procrastinate, though it’s
Harder than homework.
Oh first-world problems
You may be dumb but you still
Somehow wring my soul.
I wish I were like
Stooping, crotchety old men
Who don’t give a damn.
These days, at bedtime
I have been telling myself
“I will try again.
Tomorrow I’ll have thrown off
The weight of my pettiness.”

The Roads We Travel
An excerpt from a short story
By Sam Flood
Past the hordes of Bison-watchers, the miles slid past, until they crested the ridge above Yellowstone’s most famous geyser basin, and coasted down past the boardwalks and sputtering cousins of Old Faithful to the Old Faithful Inn. Ben thought this part was far more interesting than the Bison or the scenery. The largest log cabin in the world, a proud docent told them. He didn’t look like he could be over twenty—a green vest that was too large hanging off thin shoulders, acne blooming across his temples.

“The trees that built this place must have been huge,” Ben said, gazing up at the thick golden beams that angled up to the ceiling. Some of them looked almost as big around as the van. A thick smell permeated the entire building, like rich honey that had crystallized and been mixed with the soft smell of sawdust.

“Makes you wonder how long it will last after we’re gone,” she mused. “Do you think it could last a thousand years?”

“No. It’d burn down.” Ben had majored in environmental ecology in college—before moving to California to try his luck as a starving artist. “Nothing lasts forever. And a thousand years is almost forever.” Caroline looked at him sideways, and he leaned in to kiss her on the cheek.

Old Faithful herself was set to erupt at eight sixteen in the evening. That was poetry, Ben thought. An irregular time, for a regular geyser. But at sunset, when the ridge behind the inn would be backlit, and the sky above the geyser would turn orange, or gold, or purple, and that would be poetry too.

They ate dinner before the eruption. Ben ordered a teriyaki chicken stir-fry, and Caroline ordered pepper steak with almonds and green beans. The food steamed and the plates it was served on were hot to the touch.

“We’d better get there early,” Caroline said, twisting around in her seat at the Old Faithful Restaurant and looking out the window at the geyser, which steamed slightly in the evening air, “We want to get a good seat, on the benches or something. I’m tired of walking.”

“Yes,” agreed Ben, “no sense in standing around. I could hold you on my back, though, even if we don’t get a seat. So you can take your time,” he added with a wink. She poked him in the shoulder with her fork, and took another bite of steak.

“What are we going to do about…”

“Can we talk about that when we get back to California?” Caroline interrupted. “Let’s just enjoy this while it lasts, ok?”

“Ok,” Ben said.

On the way to the geyser, Caroline bought a disposable camera at the gift shop while Ben wondered how many suckers forgot to bring a camera here every year. He thought maybe the park should give them away as part of the entrance fee. Little plastic cameras with yellow stickers marking the brand. For those must-have Kodak moments.

Being there early meant they got a seat on one of the painted brown wooden benches that ringed the boardwalk. ‘Do not step off boardwalk,’ signs read every few feet, with a stick figure illustration falling off the boards, surrounded by burning steam. As the minutes ticked by, people filled in the spaces around them. Men and women in t-shirts and khaki safari shorts, children with

Wolf -Woman
By Maggie Cooper

Wolf-woman walks all the length of the block
on the page
And she smiles Wiley, for a little while
I watch and hide near the street corner sign,
in bougainvillea blooms
where her shadow looms
But then
Honey at the corners of her lips
Teeth sticky, incisors drip
Bloody. That bunny’s fibula falls on the ground
from the crunch crunch to
dead leaves in a mound
like that hot lava volcano
that’ll eat you alive
only lupines survive
that sticky river red
Joe Cool sweaters and jeans with holes ripped in the knees. Fathers with diaper bags slung across shoulders, mothers with children clinging to one arm and cameras hanging from the other.

The eruption started almost right on time. It began as a slow upwelling—almost a burp—and built, the water rising and thundering, seeming to rise and fall at the same time.

“It’s thirty two seconds late,” he said to her with a wry grin, tapping the watch on his wrist. “So much for poetry.” He reached around and tickled her in the smooth concavity next to her hipbone, between where her blouse ended and her jeans began.

“Shh,” she giggled, “you’re distracting me. I want to watch.” The geyser whooshed in a metered rush of water that sounded almost like deep breathing. Caroline began to squeeze his hand in rhythm to the water. She had forgotten the camera. Her lips were parted slightly, her breath whispering between them. The sky was streaked with purple and orange, the entire crowd silent and attentive.

“Caroline. I love you,” Ben said. She turned her head, and their eyes locked. Her eyes were green, flecked with gold. He remembered falling for those eyes the first time he’d seen them, peering over the canvas on his easel as he sat in the sun and painted the Golden Gate Bridge. Now, after a year of looking into them, he had never felt more exposed, had never seen them as intense. Her face was expressionless, her mouth still slightly parted. She opened her mouth to say something, when a ripple of whispered unrest passed through the crowd. Ben ripped his eyes from Caroline’s and followed the gaze of the parents around him. A child was walking towards the geyser across the cracked and pitted, grey earth, stepping around puddles of steaming water. A pink cap bobbed gently on her head as her feet sank into the earth and she teetered. The crowd rippled again, louder this time.

“Angela,” a faceless woman’s voice cried from the crowd. Ben craned his neck, but couldn’t see her. “Angela, come back!” Angela didn’t hear, or pretended not to hear. She tottered another two steps forward. Four feet to her right, a crack in the ground hissed angrily. She looked lonely and misplaced, a pink pom-pom amid a sea of yellowed dirt and bubbling steam, like she could have been anyone’s girl, not someone in particular’s.

Ben didn’t think about it. If he had, he would have stopped halfway. Or he might not have gotten off the boardwalk at all. But he didn’t think about it. He stood up from the bench—barely hearing Caroline squawk as the absence of his arm pulled away her support and she tipped sideways into a stranger—and vaulted over the thigh-high railing.

“Someone call for help!” another voice cried from the crowd as he regained his footing, and he was dimly aware of a dozen hands behind him reaching into pockets to retrieve cell phones. Ben ignored them, and ran, kicking his heels high and hoping that a foot didn’t plunge into some unfathomable abyss of boiling water and steam. He reached Angela just as she turned around with a puzzled and somewhat quizzical look on her face. The polyester of her pink windpants stuck to Ben’s arm as he scooped her up, and he snarled in pain. Angela began to cry, her face twisting and turning blotchy, each breath hitching before it released out. Ben smelled the bottoms of his shoes beginning to melt as he began to run back to the boardwalk, a rubbery acetone smell. They reached the boardwalk, and he handed her over first, then jumped over the railing again and bent over, hands on knees, gasping in exhaustion and pain. Everyone clapped, and men whose names he didn’t know patted him on the back. He didn’t say anything, and as soon as he could breathe, he hobbled off to the van, sitting down in the back with a heavy sigh to rip at his shoelaces.
In the H
By Jami Lin

Her name was Britt Vicious. The name fit her. She was brutal. She looked it, too—her messy punk hair with all the colors leaking out of it, her skin stained from too much eyeliner. Britt was hardcore in a way that all the suburban kids in the program envied. I was jealous of her too; I was young, and easily impressionable. I thought I was dirty because I cut my own hair and I wore jeans from a thrift store. Britt Vicious was different. She was grimy, and she was real.

I met Britt my first day at Adrian Brothers Behavioral Health Hospital’s inpatient program. After carting me in on a stretcher, some nameless doctors brought me to the third floor and dumped me in the adolescent psychiatric ward. A young brunette case worker, who introduced herself as Kerry, sat me down in the main room and handed me a stack of papers to fill out. The room was filled with other teenagers, who stared at me but said nothing. I felt vulnerable in my hospital gown without any makeup on. But I learned back on the squeaky chair and pretended to look disinterested, trying to gauge the other kids’ expressions, the perfect mixture of apathy and discontent. In between filling out my forms, I took sneak peeks at the rest of them—the punk boy scratching an oozing scar on his nose, the short girl with the faded, garbage-colored hair, the kid that was maybe a boy, maybe a girl. The room itself was large and empty, with flowery, inspirational posters covering the walls. Those posters, printed with phrases like If you can dream it, you can do it always made me feel a little sad. I noticed large windows facing the hallway; I guessed this was so we could be watched at all times. Additionally, all the furniture looked like it had been donated from Goodwill. My parents are paying fifteen hundred dollars a day for this? I wondered.

The girl with garbage hair finally responded to Chain Glasses’ question. I’m Britt, she said, and I’m pretty fucking pissed because they said I could go Downstairs on Thursday, but then my case manager found out about the whole Bianca thing, and they brought me back up here, which is bullshit, you know, because we had the family session that Thursday and they all promised me I could go home. For all the vitriol in her words, she didn’t seem terribly angry. Downstairs? I wondered. What’s Downstairs?

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A lady wearing glasses on an old lady chain entered the room. Hey, she said, let’s get started. No one responded. Hey, Chain Glasses said again, louder this time, I said let’s get started! Her gruffness surprised me. But I supposed you had to have a layer of toughness to survive in this environment.

Let’s talk about your weekend, she began, placing her hands on her lap. She looked around fifty; she seemed like she should work in a library, not in this hospital for crazy people. One case worker had explained this program to me during my evaluation, but then I had too many other things to think about, like: was it really necessary for them to bring me in on a stretcher even though I could walk perfectly fine?

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Britt gave me a sidelong glance. That’s the outpatient programs, where you just go for the day. This is Upstairs, the inpatient program. Where do we have to live here.

Chain Glasses turned towards me, and finally I could see from her name tag that her actual name was Kristie. She nodded empathetically. Some of the other kids looked involved in what Britt was saying, others looked out the windows, others looked nowhere. Those kids, the blank-faced ones, they scared me the most. A boy with a bandage running up and down his left arm hadn’t lifted his head off the table since I’d arrived. I wondered if I belonged here, or if I was just an infiltrator, going behind enemy lines.

What was the whole Bianca situation? Kristie asked. If you don’t mind sharing with us. It’s your choice.

Britt shrugged her shoulders, then fished a piece of chewed gum out of her mouth and flicked it across the room at a red-headed girl, who caught it in her left hand and popped it in her mouth. I repressed the urge to gag. Britt guffawed, then turned to me. New girl! she exclaimed, and clapped me on the back. What about you?

I looked at my feet, clothed in the blue toe socks I had received in my stocking last Christmas. I’m just here, I said. What’s Downstairs? I asked. And what’s Upstairs? Kristie asked. Britt shook my hand vigorously. Kristie rolled her eyes. Mark, why don’t you tell us about your weekend? she asked.

We all turned to the boy I assumed was Mark. His shaggy brown hair lay in the front of his face, preventing us from seeing his eyes. I wondered if this was on purpose, or if he couldn’t afford a haircut. He blathered on and on about something concerning his girlfriend and a plastic butter knife, but I stopped paying attention. I tried hard, because I was planning on becoming a therapist and knew I needed to home my listening skills. But he was just so whiny. Instead I evaluated his black T-shirt, which displayed the word KISS in bold letters, with the scary tongue-wagging face in the background. I wrinkled my nose. However, it was not like this place gave us a lot of apparel options. We weren’t allowed to wear shoes, jeans, belts, anything with metal in it, jewelry, makeup, bras, or even tank tops (ostensibly because you could strangle someone with the thin straps.) On this first day, when I was trying to make a good impression, I was stuck wearing a natty sports bra, a summer camp T-shirt, and old sweatpants that were too short and exposed my ankles. But as I looked around, I realized every other kid in the program was wearing a ragtag ensemble as well. Britt, for example, was wearing purple pajama pants with black zombies printed on them, and a shirt screenprinted with a picture of a cat. I decided I liked her.

After Mark finished speaking, Kristie signaled a ten minute break. Britt sidled up to me. I’m Britt Vicious, she said. You can call me Britt Vicious. I laughed in spite of everything. In spite of the fact that I was stuck in a locked ward for God knew how long. She pointed to my sweatpants. Britt Vicious, she said. You can call me Britt Vicious. I laughed in spite of everything. In spite of the fact that I was stuck in a locked ward for God knew how long. She pointed to my sweatpants. Britt Vicious, she said. You can call me Britt Vicious. I laughed in spite of everything. In spite of the fact that I was stuck in a locked ward for God knew how long. She pointed to my sweatpants. Britt Vicious, she said. You can call me Britt Vicious.
her lipstick, but it was smudged at the crease. I thought about how difficult her job was and how
I wanted it to be my job when I got older. Not that that would stop me from giving her attitude.
That was our duty. She turned to me. Emory, it’s your first day here. Why don’t you tell us a little
bit about it? How do you feel about your situation right now?

I opened my mouth and closed it again, willing the correct words to come out. Even though
I was trying to be the epitome of apathy, in order to impress all the stone-faced kids, I was aching
to talk. I never had anyone to commiserate with, and now I had an audience of strangers, people
who were perhaps the only ones who would ever fully comprehend what I was going through. So
I opened my mouth again. They brought me here, I began, on a stretcher. Some kids nodded, as
they had probably gone through the same routine. I continued, And I was like, what is this, I’m not
going to have a heart attack or anything, I’m pretty sure I can walk down a hallway by myself. A few
giggles from the girls in the corner. They were warming up to me, I could feel it. I was encouraged.
Kristie tried to get the group back on track and asks, Who brought you here on a stretcher? Where
were you coming from? I answered politely, I was at the hospital. Kristie said, This is a hospital. I
said, I meant, the real hospital. The one for people who are actually sick. After the words came out,
I realized I had made a mistake. The girl next to me eyed a small boy sitting across from her. People
here are actually sick too, she interrupted. Sorry—I’m sorry, I apologized. I just meant—the general
hospital. The one with the emergency room. That’s where I came from. The emergency room. Kristie
smiled at me encouragingly and told me to continue. I went to the ER last night because I ate a lot
of pills and then I couldn’t feel my limbs and I was like, oh fuck.
Predator/Prey
By Gena Parsons

My poem is starving as is crawls
towards the carcass and
joins the writhing, quivering mass
of other emaciated poems.
They maul and struggle with
each other as my poem tries to
consume a rotting strip of
adjective handing dejectedly off a
piece of bone or wallow in a
stagnant pool of ideas that has formed
at the bottom of the ribcage. Poems
crawling over poems, buried under
poems, slowly cannibalizing
each other when no one is watching.
Now my poem has eaten its fill- turned
into a fat white maggot of an idea
that whittles a chrysalis and awaits the butterfly.

Mixture #1
By Lauren Schulte

I want to cut off all my hair
and burn it.
You’ll lay me down in the acrid ashes,
sing a lullaby
of genocide.
The glistening ruts
traced down my face:
sum of the world’s tears,
years of suffering without grace,
all channeled through my eyes.
Salt spun with ashes.
A heterogeneous mixture,
holding me still.
I want you to tell me another story-
the one
with guns.

Untitled
By Elyse Mische

Tetraphobia
By Elyse Mische
GQ Asks:
What Does Your Tie Knot Say About You?
By Gena Parsons

i think if you had worn your tie in a double windsor i might have loved you a little bit more. silk sliding against silk sliding against an overly starched collar. i want, maybe, to see you loosen your tie in frustration— but this has nothing to do with planets orbiting the sun which have nothing to do with the way you offered to pay for dinner or how you squeezed my hand and leaned in to whisper that your suit is genuine armani

Popped
By Cait Genovese

Untitled
By Hattie Walden

Sempervivium in Bloom
By Savanna Dahl
Contemplation
By Athena Naylor

You Are a Star
By Athena Naylor
Untitled
By Maggie Vincent

Mr. Stripey
By Liz Barenholtz

Backwards
By Andrea Parmentier
Void
By Mary Curtin
Silence drips down
the walls are closing in
the room marches on
like spreading Poison
forever
waiting for the kill
three men in masks
walk in the sunlight
like mimes performing
for the last time
on an empty street
while the Silence drips

Move and Shake
By Anonymous
Something moved me. 12:37, never too late to be moved, shaken up a bit.
Its invisible, this mover.
But I feel like I should be able to grasp it if I reach out.
I'm afraid though, of the reaching.
Also of the shaking.
My entire world is being lifted and dropped, a top to spin.
No sign of release.
I see my purpose off in the distance.
But at 12:40 its blurred… needing of glasses.
And who can really think at 12:42?
It’s the time of night/morning when you start to giggle.
Unexpectedly.
Tonight I’m not laughing.
Tonight I’m shaken. And moved.
When you meditate you’re supposed to clear your head.
Mine never stops.
Ever.
So how can I prepare my head for sleep now?
Or even for my new life?
If I cant even do it when I’m fucking meditating?
12:45 and still wondering if I should move. Shake.
Wouldn’t that be what’s expected?
And when have I ever done that?

Pater
By Justin Jones
I used to think
My father
Wore a watch bigger than the sun
To think
That he’d seen the lot
Where our home had been built
Before the Pacific receded
Or, at least,
Before they’d dug
The knee-high lake
In which I’d thought so often
Of floating
But the only thing
he saw before I did
was the car dealership down the road
And the cemetery
Up the street.

El
By Lauren Nokes
Symphony in A for Apathy
By Joe Kahler

I: Adagietto
Apathy is a psychological disease.

Symptoms:
the absence of any desire to do anything,
effectively shuts down one’s ability to actually do anything;
condition will exacerbate if left untreated;
fatal indifference may develop.

Treatment:
being active and remaining active.

Conclusion:
Catch-22, bitches.

II: Adagio
Apathy is a black hole
in my chest.
My body and being collapsing
in upon itself.
All actions outward movements I cannot make, as
inward-pulled as I am,
gravity-drawn.

Stars of ambition, initiative, and drive burn brightly above me—
beautiful, life-creating orbs gleaming in the heavenly firmament.

I feel ashamed.
And am depressed.

I’m afraid.
I’m afraid that it is growing stronger,
denser, more
inescapable, feeding on every
indecision and
inaction
in my life.

III: Larghetto
Inertia: the property of a body by which it maintains its present state, be it a state of motion or
rest, unless acted upon by outside forces.

Entropy: the property of an isolated system by which it tends towards disorder and a homogenous
distribution of energy that makes all work impossible.

Physics: explaining the presence of apathy since the late 18th, early 19th century.

IV: Largo
Apathy, lethargy, languor, and sloth,
Indolence, lassitude, laziness, dross!
Stuporous ennui’s, torpid maladies,
Apathy, lethargy, languor, and sloth.
Strange that for such an impeding disease
Words for it roll of the tongue with such ease.

V: Lento
My apathy is so monumental
That I am mesmerized
By the momentum
Of mountains.

VI: Grave
Apathy is a beast,
a predator,
lurking in the high grass.
It preys on the sick and the weak,
consuming their muscles
degeneratively.

It rests under shady trees
in plain sight of its prey,
yawning to reveal its toothless maw.

There is no boom and bust cycle for apathy.
Apathy feeds.
And apathy spreads.
VII: Larghissimo
I am as apathetic
as a starfish.

My only hope
that when my limbs rot off,
like a starfish,
I can grow them back.

I have sunk
to abyssal depths.

VIII: Larghississimo
It has been so long
since I last moved
from this seat.

I have become
a corpse.
I have rotted
away.

People spray me
with Febreze
as they pass.

I am a disgrace
to life.
I am a stain
on a sofa.

They’ll sell this
sofa
soon.

IX: Infiniment lent
I am stranded in the Sea of Apathy
And make no effort to tread the water.

I am sinking in the Sea of Apathy
And make no effort to break the surface.

I am drowning in the Sea of Apathy
And make no effort to hold my breath.

My lungs are full of apathy
And I am dead inside.

X: Eternelle
apathy...

XI: Andante
Went for a walk today.
Feel productive.

Untitled
By Maggie Cooper
Am I more Cascade, Olympic?
Probably not Sierra Nevada
but who knows?
The North parts, the high altitude parts
the firs all blowing, their branches together.
Elevation gain leads to
something different. Beautiful maybe.
Not so many of those stone rock faces, so big
you don’t know where to look
because the side of the mountain doesn’t fit in your glasses frames.
I do have thick needles,
can’t quite comb through
I am not that sparse stark forest
Dark green moss and ferns
Cover all surfaces
Some volatile volcanoes
But that’s okay
We all like them
Tick Arms
By A. J. Grund

Ticks all over my hairy arms. This is not a dream because I have only a penis and in my dreams I am always a hermaphrodite. This thought arouses me slightly until I see the tick again. I guess I'd better focus. I start screaming, "Help, my arms are covered in ticks!" and pound the walls. My landlord answers the door and he is a giant tick. Most morons would probably think they were in a dream now but I know I'm not because of the weight dangling between my legs. "Why am I so focused on my crotch?," I wonder silently, as my landlord attaches his fat body to my leg. "I'm moving out," I tell him before impaling his thorax with a butcher knife from the breakfast bar. He says, "I'll call a cab," and leaves along with the army of ticks he obviously controls that formerly infested my very hairy arms. Since I quit my job two months ago various companies have repossessed everything I own except for a plaid easy chair because, and I quote, "We don't want it. It's too fucking ugly." Why did I overdraft all my credit cards? "Gahhhhh," I say and as if answering my inhuman moaning my cell phone rings. The ring tone is "Hungry Like The Wolf" by Duran Duran. It's my old boss whose name I can't remember and who I have in my phone as "Shithole." When I said I quit my job meant I was fired because I called my boss a shithole. What I meant to say was shithole, though. Anyway, I answer the cell. "Why did you come?" asks Shithole. I don't have the heart to tell him I meant to call him shithole so I say, "Hello, shithole." He produces a sound that makes me start to sweat and hangs up. Now I'm behind on my moving out schedule so I take the cushion off my plaid chair and stuff my two extra pairs of dirty underpants in it. Smart, I think. I go downstairs and walk outside to find my landlord did not call any fucking cab. Fucking tick probably can't use a phone. My parents live in New Jersey so I guess I should take a bus anyway. Then I remember the last time I was on a bus and I bury my head in the chair cushion because otherwise I would throw up. Maybe I could travel down rivers or something until I get to Ohio and then I could walk. Boats seem like they would be easy to steal. To make sure I open my fly and look at what's there. This is definitely not a dream. I should call a scientist and tell them about that disgusting talking tick. I think maybe I'm asleep.
Weep at West
By Emma Moss

I painted the solar systems on the backs of my hands
They didn’t quite fit so I painted up my arms curving over ulna
To humerus and spilling over scapula
There are some outermost moons
spinning on my sacrum and the Milky Way
stretches from ilium to ischium
I painted in oil based paint, turpentine
and flaxseed oil
because space doesn’t dissolve in water and
to display the depth of the universe on
two dimensional epithelial cell surfaces
I painted the solar systems full of stars
color correct spectroscopy illuminating planets and
meteor showers thundering down my thigh
to make way for
darkness
Constellations tell stories from spine to sternum
of bears, brothers and Artemis’s long bow
I painted the solar systems on the backs of my hands
and encased myself in reflected light and
nuclear reactions, emissions of
hydrogen, lithium, neon
reflecting energy
back off oceans and
swirling gas pools
weaving its way through gravity
and my fingers

Untitled
By Madeline Cooper

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The Way to Go
By Mary Curtin

She woke slowly, feeling his gaze on her as she became aware of the faint morning light. She smiled at him, the expression never reaching her eyes. "I'm leaving tomorrow," she said, calmly.

He nodded his acceptance of that statement. It wasn't the first time he had heard this. He settled into numbness long enough to prepare a breakfast he knew she wouldn't eat. When she finally made her way to the kitchen and settled at the table, he ate slowly, watching her shred pieces of toast into a plateful of greasy crumbs. He spoke without looking at her, "You should eat something."

She looked too pale in the artificial light of the kitchen. She glanced up, waiting patiently until their eyes met before turning back to her mostly destroyed breakfast. She picked up a grape and carefully peeled away the skin with her fingernails before popping it into her mouth, chewing slowly. He took a sip of coffee before speaking, "What would you like to do today?"

She grinned, "We should have a picnic."

He stared at her plate of tattered toast and nodded. When he glanced up, he caught sight of her grin. One corner of his mouth tilted upwards towards a smile. He began to clean up breakfast, clearing their plates. "Didn't your mother ever teach you not to play with your food?" he admonished teasingly.

She tossed a grape at the back of his head as he walked back to the sink. He found the task of washing dishes soothing, listening to her move around the kitchen behind him. He wondered if bagels were as easy to ravage as toast; they seemed sturdier somehow, to him. The scrape of a chair against the linoleum, the shuffle of feet, the faint clink of pills in a bottle. He watched, drying the dishes thoroughly, as she twisted, pushed, and pulled at that cap. Push, twist, pull, push, twist, pull, push, twist...the bottle clattered against the countertop. She glared at it sullenly. He picked it up, pushed, twisted, and tugged the cap off, tapping out two pills into his hand and offering them to her silently. She shook her head and stuck her tongue out childishly sullenly. He picked it up, pushed, twisted, and tugged the cap off, tapping out two pills into his hand and offering them to her silently. She shook her head and stuck her tongue out childishly.

"Screw you."

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A half-smile. "Maybe later."

She laughed. He finished straightening the kitchen, unaware of her shuffling out of the room. As he passed through their small living area, he noticed her sprawled out on the couch, asleep. He liked the way the strengthening morning light hit her, lending some color to her skin. Reluctantly, he pulled the afghan over her and went to get ready for the day.

Computers, computers, computers. He didn't particularly like them, but they paid the bills. Or at least some of them. Really, he couldn't understand why people couldn't bother to learn to work their own machines. It's the twenty-first century, after all. If you're going to buy the damn thing, at least bother to understand the basics. He was aware that someone was watching him, feeling her eyes on the back of his skull, like a dull tingling. She was awake. "Go get ready and we can go on that picnic," he said, his fingers still hitting the keys at a steady, rhythmic pace. The dull tingling disappeared.

When it reappeared sometime later, he turned, momentarily blinded from the computer screen. His eyes adjusted to the natural light and he found her sitting on the couch, holding a brush. He joined her, sitting behind her, and slowly brushed out her hair, enjoying the repetitiveness of the motion. "Can I leave it down?" he asked, his voice barely breaking the quiet of the room.

She shrugged. She didn't see his smile. He got up and fetched her a glass of milk and two more pills. She looked at the milk with annoyance but drank it anyways. At least it wasn't food. She disliked eating; it was a futile cycle. Buy the food, prepare the food, eat the food, wait a few hours and repeat the process. She found it all rather unsatisfying. She swallowed the pills and flopped backwards onto the couch, closing her eyes. He bent down and kissed her forehead. She smiled, eyes still closed. He left her to go build a picnic.

He was a little concerned, as they didn't own a picnic basket. He stared blankly at the inside of the refrigerator and decided on jell-o cups. They seemed picnic-y. He made two peanut butter sandwiches and put them in individual plastic bags. The refrigerator light was too bright and reminded him of the computer screen, so he pulled two room temperature bottled waters out instead. In the end, he dumped everything in an old pillowcase, since he had to go to the closet to get a blanket for the picnic anyways.

She was asleep when he was finished, but he decided to wake her. He packed everything in the trunk while she got into the car. At the last minute, he remembered the bottle of pills. She stared out the window, watching expressionless as they drove, leaning back in her seat. She turned on the radio and rolled down her window, letting the car fill up with sound. When they got to the park, he grabbed all of their stuff before fetching her. He let her get up on his back, piggyback style, and carried her, keeping a tight hold on her as she chose the perfect patch of sunlight and shade to have their picnic. Spreading their blanket out, he reluctantly let her down.

She threw herself down onto the grass, spreading out on her back. Her eyes slid shut as she let the sunlight soak into her skin, a slight breeze keeping the bright warmth tolerable. Against the glowing insides of her eyelids, she pictured green dappled with gold as she listened to the leaves rustle above her. He was content to watch her, smiling, and let the minutes pass. When his own stomach began to protest, he poked her shoulder. She cracked one eye open and he held a jell-o cup in front of her face, tilting it back and forth in the sunlight so the light went through it. She grinned and snatched it. He looked in the pillowcase and frowned, realizing he hadn't packed any silverware. She shrugged and pulled the plastic off. She held the cup to her mouth, pushing at the cool red mush with her finger, attempting to shove it into her open mouth. He watched, chewing thoughtfully on one of the peanut butter sandwiches. Licking her lips, she finally set the empty cup aside, a red ring around her mouth and flecks on her cheeks that glittered in the sun. She wiggled her sticky fingers at him. "How d'you like me now?" she asked, teasing.

"You're a mess," he said, a smile in his voice, "A beautiful mess."

She considered the irony of that statement and found herself beginning to laugh, just a chuckle at first, growing into a deep, full-belly laugh. She laughed until she cried, and then cried until she laughed. When she was done, she opened her eyes, her sides aching, and he was there, smiling that little half-smile she was so used to, just looking at her. Laying sprawled on her side,
her skin flushed, hair wild, cheeks damp with tears, she truly was a beautiful mess.

He kissed her soundly. She smiled, and it touched her eyes. He lay on his back with her, staring up at the sky, and let the sun blind him so that his eyes watered. Clouds eventually began to move in. She pointed at one with a slightly triangular end. "It looks like a gnome!" she declared.

He tilted his head, one corner of his mouth turning up now and then as he listened to her decide what each new cloud looked like. Dinosaur, stapler, Ringo Starr's nose. She faded into sleep, but he continued to stare at the sky, wondering what she saw. When sunlight began to slip away, he gathered up their picnic and her, carrying them all back to the car. She slept on the way back; the car was strangely silent. It unnerved him and he focused on driving at exactly the speed limit.

He carried her back inside and set her on the couch. When he was finished unpacking everything, she was awake again. He brought her another jell-o cup, hoping she would eat it, although he added a spoon this time. She took another two pills and they watched a movie. She talked to the characters the entire time, warning them and mocking them for their inevitable mistakes. He watched her, the way her eyes focused, the shape of her mouth when she smiled or laughed, and played absently with her hair. He enjoyed the way she filled the room. Her eyes started to droop and he walked with her to bed, shuffling beside her so that he could hold her hand. He lay next to her in bed and fell asleep wondering what she would look like as a cloud.

When he awoke early the next morning, he could still feel her at his side. He turned, looking without touching. She looked beautiful, still and peaceful, if you ignored the red blotches beneath her nose, beside her ears, staining the pillowcase. He did his best to ignore them. Moving slowly so as not to disturb the calm quiet of dawn, he slipped out of bed to stand by her side. He lifted the sheet and looked down at her; in the pale glow of the morning light, she looked almost happy. With shaking hands, he let the sheet go, and it fluttered down to cover her in white.
Homecoming
By Kelsey Fischer

america still holds onto its freedom.
we no longer wake up grateful for the war we won to gain it,
but we drive with the windows down
smiling and waving at strangers
in our crocheted tops and bare shoulders
singing and laughing
because there’s nothing more important to do.
we still drive to public beaches
pay the five dollars to park
and run down hills
and climb up trees
and wade in water, screaming and freezing.
our history is shallow
but we have no strings,
nothing holding us down
and nothing holding us back.
we lack the free museums and frequent monuments
prestigious accents and quiet respectability
of our parent country
but i’ve never seen a londoner’s hair blow in the wind
and called it beautiful
the way i do looking at these friends of mine.

Frozen Tundra
By Andrea Parmentier
Collisions
An excerpt from a short story
By Joe Kahler

I: The Elk

A scream rent the morning air, sweeping through the silent valley like a bitter wind. The scream ceased and the echoes died. The valley did not stir. Again the scream sounded; longer, more insistent. Again, the valley did not stir. All was still. After a long pause, a figure emerged from the dense woods, stepping into a clearing on the mountainside. The morning was dark, as was the beast’s thick coat, but the figure, with its crown of antlers, was unmistakable. It was a bull elk. Despite his massive build, he walked with quiet grace towards the edge of a sidehill cut in the mountainside. There, he stopped and stood stiffly at attention. Immediately below, a smooth rock strip with yellow markings curled out of sight on either side, hugging the curving waist of the mountain. Dark evergreens painted with snow clustered around the strip, hedging in its emptiness like a hazy mist. Snow banks tinged brown were piled on the uphill side of the strip, lumped against the rocky cliff, while the land on the downhill side, after a few initial trees, dropped away, falling down to an icy river. The river, imprisoned deep within the valley’s cold shadows, was neither visible nor audible to the bull. Above the scene, a dark mass of clouds obscured the sky, herald of the snowstorm to come.

A delicate stillness suffused the winter air. The elk considered bugling once more, but thought better of it. His time had passed, his harem disbanded. There was little love left in the world for an old man like him. Now it was the time of the younger bulls. Still, he bugled from time to time out of lonely habit. Anymore though, he preferred these silent moments when life softly slumbered—nestled away in dark, warm holes—leaving him to stand as a solitary sentinel to the passing day. Better not to disturb it. As he breathed in, filling his cavernous body with the cool air that blanketed him, he felt his whole being expand, becoming diffuse and immaterial. He felt like one of his many clouds of breath, as if his body was rising from the earth to dissolve hotly into the chill atmosphere. Who needs sex when one can have this? he mused. Cold comfort, yes, but he did not mind.

But the silence did not last. Off in the distance, out of sight around a curve in the mountain, a whining roar emerged from the silent tapestry. The world, disturbed from its meditation, awoke; the wind began to blow lightly and a few chickadees, outlasting the dying year, flitted into view and landed on a tree across the strip. The bull shifted his body, relaxing it, and turned his attention to the distant sound which was growing louder. Around a corner flashed a sleek shape, hurtling along the rock strip towards him. He was not worried though; he knew that the strange beast always ran along the strip. As long as he stood to the side, it would not harm him. It soon hurtled by and, just as suddenly as it had arrived, was gone, disappearing around the other side of the mountain. Its roar lingered in the air a while longer and then too disappeared, lost among the forests and valleys of the elk’s home. But the still silence did not return. The wind blew and the chickadees cheeped. Damn, he muttered. Free to make noise once more, he bent down and began to graze. As he dug through the tough snow, searching for the cold meal hidden beneath, he turned his mind to the problem of the creatures of the strip. Where did they come from? Every year they grew more and more populous, yet he had Two Birds, One Stone
By Julia Kaczmarek

You ready? No? Let’s go.
You need to learn how to do this.
We’re leaving; start your heaving.
Up, up, up, up. Gasp.
Every feat timed by heartbeats.
Thump-The-Thump-The-Thump
Killing, scalding, picking, singeing
No your ears will not stop ringing.
Sever the main veins and let it flow.

Let’s go! If you’re slow you’ll be still
Crying yourself to sleep at dawn
While I drink all of the Rush hour coffee…Hah!
Catch the blood in a container.
You need all of that
Slicked salivating success.
It burdens you like an abscess.
A painful reminder of what you’re less
Than the cymbals signaling
Swift sanctions- your liberation-
Pick it up right after you’ve bled.
Yeah it’s gritty, yeah you’ll be sickly,
But you’ll be off that liquid liquor quickly.

Ruinous
By Anonymous

Cease this endless muttering.
There is no use for such turnings.
The sun will awake soon;
Still will you desire the hush of midnight whispers.
The august have long withered in their righteous mausoleums, let them lie.
All that remains is the clicking of tongues,
the sinuous motions of woman’s hand,
and the silver dream dust of longing,
glistening in the moonlight,
strewn across the plain.

May life unravel herself before you, a golden cord,
a twirling, majestic ribbon,
untarried, untoussled,
unmarried and measured,
slow and graceful,
a falling swan in lunar flicker.
May all you dare to long for find you,
May all you long for to touch, touch you.

For I long to touch you,
but do not know how.
And see, how, in this midnight agony,
I am become,
Ruinous,
O, Ruinous.
never once witnessed any sign of procreation. Where were they going at such terrifying speeds—screaming, as if in anguish, as they went? What purpose did their hurtling serve? They moved not to feed, not for play, but, it seemed, just to move. The younger bucks laughed at such questions. “Why bother?” they asked. “These beasts are both just a part of life and not an immediate concern.” Avoid and ignore was their policy. He himself had thought that way once. The naïveté of youth. But these questions do matter, he would lecture. How can you ignore the connection between these beasts and the bipedal creatures they live with? No immediate concern? The landscape of our home is changing dramatically with each passing season, becoming more and more inhospitable. They are destroying the fields we graze on, disrupting our routes, stealing our land, destroying our way of life. And they are killing us. I know for they killed my son, my firstborn. That always managed to shut them up.

The day he learned of his son’s death was the day his complacency died. When his father had died, his mother had consolated him with the knowledge that for every death, another being is born into the world. Life goes on. But this is cold comfort at its chilliest. No being can fill the whole left by my son. His son had left him the year before to form his own harem. While travelling with his harem one morning, he was struck crossing the strip by one of those beasts. A few days later the two herds, his and his son’s, happened upon one another. He asked where his son was. They told him he was dead. His grief was immediate and bottomless. His emotional eruption caught him off guard. He had witnessed death in all its forms. He had rationalized it.

He spied the body from afar and for awhile he stood frozen, unable to approach and cement the reality of his son’s death. But his son’s body heaved and, gradually, he overcame his paralysis. His son lay twisted and broken, like a gnarled root, in a ditch adjacent to the rock strip. Blood clotted his fur and caked the edges of his mouth. Chunks of flesh were torn away and his insides gaping hollowly, the scars of scavengers. But these horrors were nothing compared to the eyes. They stared vacantly into the distance, glistening like black ice—cold and dead. Yet even dead, the primeval terror remained frozen in his son’s brain and eyes—cold, eternal terror.

And so his search began, his search for answers. He discovered that the force behind his son’s death was gone. His heart only had room for the rage and confusion he now felt. He could not fathom it... any of it...

And so his search began, his search for answers. He discovered that the force behind the beasts and the changes to the landscape was a single creature, remarkable for the fact that it walked on two legs, had varied and colorful coats of fur, and incessantly chattered its bizarre language. During his many years of surveillance from up in the wooded hills, he had determined that these creatures seemed to inhabit the dead fields of rock, constructing immense lodges within which they spent the majority of their lives. Before his son’s death, he had found these lodges fascinating when they sparkled at night. Some nights, he used to climb to the top of a peak and gaze down upon the mysterious world below. It always struck him as looking like a clear, dark lake reflecting the stars and galactic swirls of the firmament. The entire area, in fact, would glow with a luminous aura. He had found it strangely beautiful, as if he was staring down upon the universe in miniature, a small cluster of bright energy amidst an infinite expanse of blackness. But times had changed. Every year these dead fields were expanded in order to accommodate more of their kind. And every year the rock paths were expanded as well to allow more of the roaring beasts to travel back and forth between separate communities.

The bipedal creature’s relationship to the beasts of the path was most interesting of all; the two animals seemed to have some sort of symbiotic relationship. Apart from the bipedal creature, the large beasts were remarkably docile, content to sit for long hours at a time as if playing dead. He had even approached one lying deserted on the side of the rock path once and it did not protest when he brushed it with his crown of antlers. Later, one of the bipedal creatures emerged from the woods and approached it. It entered the maw of the beast and suddenly it sprang to life—seething with furious, pent-up energy—and roared off into the distance. Yet he often saw the bipedal creatures exit the beasts as well, so the beasts were not feeding upon the bipedal creatures. Certain pairs he had observed even seemed to co-habit the same lodges. The bipedal created gave life and was compensated with transportation wherever he pleased, a true symbiosis, yet sadly, a symbiosis of destruction.

All of his memories from the search formed an indissoluble wash of hatred that continually buffeted his brain. All his memories save one. He was wandering one autumn night when he came across a lodge on a hilltop. It glared eerily in the darkness; like an incandescent dream amidst the soft shadows of the mind. Except it wasn’t his dream. He stood on the outside looking in on another life, another consciousness completely alien to his own. Inside, a few bipedal creatures sat in a circle around a slab of wood. Inescrutable expressions smeared their faces. They must have been conversing for they would take turns wildly waving their arms and flapping their mouths. But no sound escaped the lodge. An invisible barrier existed between their two worlds. Still, he could not look away from the nightmare. He stood and watched in horror as they mutely flailed inside. Suddenly, one of the creatures glanced outside and espied the elk. It turned back to its friends and gestured frantically. The rest calmed down immediately and gathered around the hole in the lodge-side, staring out at the elk. A few mouths hung open; a few faces were mashed, exposing teeth. Every once in a while one of the creatures would turn to the others and flap its mouth again. And so they stood, watching each other, unable to move. He wanted to turn away, escape, but his pride would not let him blink first in this startling contest. They had treated his son the same way, as a diversion from their lives, entertainment perhaps. He wanted to turn the tables. Eventually, they grew bored and turned away, returning to their lives. But he did not feel victorious. All he felt was a vast, pathetic emptiness within. So he turned and he strode off into the night...

Suddenly, a whirring buzz off in the distance awoke the elk from his reverie. Another beast approached. He considered leaving to seek out another moment of silence and solitude further on, away from the rock strip. But he could not move. Perhaps his curiosity had the better of him once more, or perhaps his soul for the first time was mired in lethargy, burned out from contemplation. He did not wish to know which it was. Regardless, he stood still and he waited.