

# Young Voices

ANTHOLOGY of STUDENT WORK

2014



New York State Summer Young Writers Institute

# The New York State Summer Young Writers Institute

What you hold in your hands are the poems and stories – true and imagined – that the students of the New York State Summer Young Writers Institute produced during ten crazily inventive days last July, interspersed with photos and student comments that help to chronicle the sights and emotions of our annual writing residency.



In its seventeenth year, the Young Writers Institute is held at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY, so that our students can take advantage of the New York State Summer Writers Institute, directed by Robert Boyers, which convenes on the Skidmore campus for the entire month. Having the opportunity to work on their own writing in three classes each day, hear accomplished writers in late-afternoon craft sessions or at packed evening readings, and then try out their own works-in-progress during late-night reading sessions in the residence hall, means that our high school writers are thoroughly immersed in the writing life for every waking hour. And here's what we have learned to expect: they love it.

These young writers are unique in any number of disparate ways, but they all share a devotion to writing. That common interest creates almost instantaneous bonding when they meet each other, but it also encourages them to revel in the writing atmosphere of

our intensive workshop. More than one hundred applicants send original writing samples each April, and we choose the forty best writers to attend the Young Writers Institute. That ability to be selective pays off for us. Year after year, we offer these students respect and recognition for what they have already achieved, and in return we receive not only a committed, attentive group of students but also the dramatic, funny, moving, troubling, and remarkable creative pieces in this anthology. It was our pleasure to watch as these pieces unfolded during our Summer 2014 Workshop, and it's your pleasure to discover them here.

William Patrick

Director  
New York State Summer Young Writers Institute

NEW YORK STATE  WRITERS INSTITUTE  
State University of New York

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# Summer 2014 Faculty



**KATHLEEN AGUERO'S** latest book is *After That* (Tiger Bark Books). Her other poetry collections include *Investigations: The Mystery of the Girl Sleuth* (Cervena Barva Press), *Daughter Of* (Cedar Hill Books), *The Real Weather* (Hanging Loose), and *Thirsty Day* (Alice James Books). She has also co-edited three volumes of multi-cultural literature for the University of Georgia Press (*A Gift of Tongues*, *An Ear to the Ground*, and *Daily Fare*) and is consulting poetry editor of *Solstice* literary magazine. She teaches in the low-residency M.F.A. program at Pine Manor College.



**LIZA FRENETTE** is an assistant editor at the monthly magazine, *NYSUT United*, where she writes features, human interest stories, articles about workers' rights, and environmental education. She has won the Mary Heaton Vorse award three times, the highest writing award from the Metro Labor Communications Council of New York City. In 2012, she won the highest national writing award from the American Federation of Teachers for a feature story. Frenette is the author of three novels for middle-grade children, *Soft Shoulders*, *Dangerous Falls Ahead*, and *Dead End*.



**ELAINE HANDLEY** is a professor of writing and literature at SUNY Empire State College. She is an award-winning poet and is completing a novel. Her most recent book of poetry, written in collaboration, is *Tear of the Clouds*, published in 2011 by RA Press. In 2011 she was the recipient of the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching.



**RICHARD HOFFMAN** is author of *Half the House: A Memoir*, and the poetry collections, *Without Paradise*, *Gold Star Road*, winner of the 2006 Barrow Street Press Poetry Prize and the 2008 Sheila Motton Award from the New England Poetry Club, and his latest, *Emblem*. A fiction writer as well, his *Interference & Other Stories* was published in 2009. His work has appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Hudson Review*, *Literary Review*, *Poetry*, *Witness* and other magazines. His most recent book is the memoir, *Love & Fury*. He is Senior Writer-in-Residence at Emerson College.



**BOB MINER** worked for *Newsweek* and has written for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Village Voice*, *Esquire*, and others. He has published two novels, *Exes* and *Mother's Day*, and is finishing up the third novel in this series, *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, as well as writing nonfiction about Istanbul, Turkey. Since 1980 he has taught writing for the University at Albany, Empire State College, Skidmore College, Syracuse University, Siena College, and the College of St. Rose.



**WILLIAM B. PATRICK** is the founder and director of the New York State Summer Young Writers Institute. His most recent book is *The Call of Nursing: Voices from the Front Lines of Health Care*. He is also the author of *Saving Troy: A Year with Firefighters and Paramedics in a Battered City*; *Roxa*, an award-winning novel; and *We Didn't Come Here for This*, a memoir in poetry, among several other books. Mr. Patrick is currently on the faculty of Fairfield University's MFA Program in Creative Writing, and acquisitions editor for Hudson Whitman/Excelsior College Press.

# When

By JOSH ABERMAN

When I am with you  
I am a tower built  
thousands of stories high,  
a pond with rays of light  
reflected off my smile;  
a rushing river  
strongly flowing  
from its source.

When I see you  
I am a single pebble of sand  
in a beach of superiors,  
a tiny bead of water raining onto  
a rushing, roaring wave.  
You are Australia  
while I am Rhode Island,  
but I am still a river flowing  
from its source:  
able to crush buildings.

When you are with him  
you're a mine-field  
destined to blow up and destroy me.  
My building topples to the ground.  
You are a gentle and eloquent flower  
while he is a fire—  
an elegant being  
dancing around his fire pit:  
giving much needed warmth,  
but untrustworthy, unreliable, uncontrollable,  
but I am the flowing  
river that will come  
put out  
the flames.

When you do not see who  
will always be there for you,  
you are a cheap cologne—  
pepper spray—  
burning my senses,  
but my river  
continually flows.

When you do not see who  
really cares about you  
you're a piece of buried treasure—  
greed and jealousy battle  
inside my mind; you are a pin—  
lost until somebody pricks their finger on you,  
but I will clean  
the blood  
from the wound.

When you cannot see your perfection  
(that utter mountain  
of perfection  
that belongs to only you)  
when you doubt your  
inner and outer beauty  
that is when  
you are no longer  
perfect. You are a  
rippling reflection  
in a glistening  
pond distorted by  
your own lack of understanding,  
but I  
the reflecting  
river  
will make sure to  
show you the truth.



# School of Night

By WILL ANDERSON

CHARACTERS:

JAMES  
STUSSER  
A GIRL  
A PRIEST

*(The scene is a library or similar quiet study area. There are two glass chambers of sorts, study nooks, each of which contains two comfortable red chairs. The chamber stage left contains a blond girl, who is reading and has stacks of books, papers and such underneath her which are currently unused. The cubicle stage right contains two young men, James and Stusser, who are looking at the girl from across the cubicles the entire time. There is some distance between the two chambers. James and Stusser also have books, but they are paying far more attention to the girl in the opposite chamber.)*

STUSSER: Hey James. *(pause)* Oy, James! Did you see this girl?

JAMES: Yes.

STUSSER: Is that your only reaction?

JAMES: *(irritated)* My true reaction occurred within me.

STUSSER: Great.

JAMES: Don't be so sarcastic. She is beautiful.

STUSSER: I know.

JAMES: Don't be so sarcastic! You have no taste, you dummy!

STUSSER: Yes, very true.

JAMES: Great.

STUSSER: Stop that sarcasm. You're ridiculous and cruel.

JAMES: She is beautiful.

STUSSER: Yes. Do you think she can see us? Do you think she would see us, speak to us, meet us?

JAMES: How should I know, dummy?

STUSSER: You know lots of things.

*(Long pause. James begins to look away and return to focus on his book.)*

She can't see us.

JAMES: How would you know?

STUSSER: I don't know.

JAMES: How excellent.

STUSSER: What is?

JAMES: I don't know. Something about what you said.

STUSSER: She hasn't looked away from her book.

JAMES: Yes, I know. Say that again.

STUSSER: That.

JAMES: What?

STUSSER: I said—

JAMES: She hasn't looked away from her book yet.

STUSSER: She hasn't looked away from her book yet.

*(pause)*

JAMES: She had no reaction.

STUSSER: She didn't even look away.

JAMES: She can't hear us.

STUSSER: How would you know?

JAMES: I know.

STUSSER: I wonder if she can see us.

JAMES: Be quiet, will you, they will tell us to be quiet!

STUSSER: Let them come. I want to be hurt.

JAMES: Be quiet. I want to keep watching her.

STUSSER: What's the interest?

JAMES: Vast.

STUSSER: Damn James. Vast and infinite.

*(A Priest enters the chamber where James and Stusser are.)*

PRIEST: Did someone say vast and infinite?!

JAMES: No.

STUSSER: Sorry. Better luck next time, Father.

PRIEST: Ch'aah brah. And that's brother to you brah.

STUSSER: Interesting.

PRIEST: Ch'aayah brah. Like God and the stars.

STUSSER: James.

JAMES: Yes.

STUSSER: What book did she read earlier?

JAMES: I'm fairly certain the book she was reading earlier is different than the book she is reading now. *(pause)*

PRIEST: So do you boys worship my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

JAMES: I don't but Stusser does.



STUSSER: What?  
 JAMES: Your Lord and Saviour is the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.  
 STUSSER: Nazareth? I'm afraid not. I don't know.  
 PRIEST: Were you raised a Catholic, brah?  
 JAMES: I was raised a Methodist.  
 STUSSER: Were you raised a Catholic?  
 PRIEST: Ch'aayah brah! All the way every day!  
 JAMES: She touches her hair when she looks around. It makes me want to know what she thinks about the trees.  
 PRIEST: Anyway, brah, you don't know my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but do you know any hymns that sing his great and glorious praise?  
 STUSSER: Yes. I do.  
 PRIEST: Damn straight, boyees! What are we gonna sing, dog?!

JAMES: Let's sing "Fortress."  
 PRIEST: Nah, brah, "Fortress?" I ain't a Proddy.  
 STUSSER: (with providence) Let's sing "Hallelujah."  
 JAMES: No.  
 STUSSER: Hey—  
 PRIEST: Woah brah, "Hallelujah!" Stupid protestants, tricks are for kids! Dirty Methodists. But I'll do it, anything to praise God. It's full of passion.  
 JAMES: I don't want to sing that one.  
 STUSSER: We have to. Let's do it.  
 (long pause)  
 STUSSER: (sings) And if this feeble body fail.  
 And let it faint or die  
 My soul shall quit this mournful vale  
 And soar to worlds on high!

GIRL, JAMES, PRIEST, STUSSER: (sing) And I'll sing hallelujah  
 And you'll sing hallelujah  
 We'll all sing hallelujah  
 When we arrive at home.

JAMES: (sings) Shall join the disembodied saints  
 And find it's long sought rest  
 The only bliss for which it stays  
 In my redeemer's breast.  
 GIRL, JAMES, PRIEST, STUSSER: (sing) And I'll sing hallelujah  
 And you'll sing hallelujah  
 We'll all sing hallelujah  
 When we arrive at home.  
 GIRL: (sings) Give joy or grief, ease or pain  
 Take life or friends away  
 My soul shall find them all again  
 in that eternal day.  
 (the priest exits)  
 GIRL, JAMES, STUSSER: (sing) And I'll sing hallelujah  
 And you'll sing hallelujah  
 We'll all sing hallelujah  
 When we arrive at home.  
 STUSSER: Thank you.  
 (silence)  
 JAMES: Stusser.  
 STUSSER: What?  
 JAMES: About her.  
 STUSSER: Yes.  
 JAMES: I remember that hymn, from when I was still in Barton. I remember how the preacher man would get so full of fire.  
 STUSSER: I'm full of fire, now.  
 JAMES: (thoughtfully) You are always full of fire.  
 STUSSER: I used to be. When I was back in Los Selvas. That was when I was filled with love and fire. Where did the priest go?  
 (The priest enters into the girl's cubicle.)  
 JAMES: He's in there now.  
 STUSSER: Who, Jesus?  
 JAMES: No, his Catholic minister on Earth.

STUSSER: Oh, I see Priest. Peace be unto you, girl!  
 GIRL: Hey. You're a priest?  
 PRIEST: (Kool-Aid man) Oh Yeah!  
 STUSSER: We can hear them.  
 JAMES: I know, dummy.  
 STUSSER: She speaks! Excellent.  
 PRIEST: Come here often?!

GIRL: Not often, Father. (She has a surprised, slight giggle.)  
 STUSSER: We can hear them but they cannot hear us.  
 JAMES: That's the truth.  
 STUSSER: Sometimes.  
 JAMES: And love, now that you mention it.  
 STUSSER: I didn't.  
 PRIEST: Me, God and my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ form a sort of holy trinity, I think.  
 GIRL: That's kind of cool.  
 PRIEST: Ch'yaah brah!! God is one of my many burning passions. You have the face and voice of God.  
 GIRL: I'm sure.  
 JAMES: This is ridiculous.  
 STUSSER: Yes, in a way.  
 JAMES: This needs to stop. (He rises, perhaps to leave. He stays standing in the doorway.)  
 GIRL: Did you go to seminary?  
 STUSSER: I am filled with endless despair.

(He shakes slightly, rapidly. He is silent. He shifts his gaze away from the girl and the priest, so that he looks out on a strange upward angle, almost in the direction of the audience. The girl and the priest continue to have a vaguely animated chat, but we cannot hear their voices, only see their mouths move. The lights dim. Tableau suddenly freezes completely. Hold. Curtain.) ■

# A Series of Unfortunate Infatuations

BY MALAHNI BANTA

## I. Flowers

I used to be obsessed with flowers. Not the smell, but the visual representation of them. I loved to sit in gardens and feel the plants breathe around me. I used to curl my fingers around the stems and wonder what kept me from ripping them out of the ground. But I would not. I could not. Then one day, I had a dream that you brought me some roses, and I never liked flowers again.

## II. Love Letters

I'd write them to everything I felt needed one, from the moon to the stars, to the homeless to you. And the responses were delicately crafted, from the quaint pulling of ocean tides to the light beneath the doorway. I almost always got a response. I'd pin them to the walls of my subconscious, and keep them there for days when I felt lonely. I love my responses, though, I'm still waiting for yours.

## III. Death

The death of a thing once became more important to me than the thing itself. I was interested in the way in which a creature died. I did not go off slaying field mice and stray cats in my kitchen sink, but rather, I watched the wilting of late autumn plants, and the stopping of streams at the starting of harsh winters, and the death of your eyes, and the light that lived in them, and suddenly I realized that when you left the bed each morning, you never actually came home.

## IV. Boxes

Or maybe it was labels. I'm not sure. No, not the kind they lick and stamp on you every September, from the 'you're the weird one' to 'you're the pretty one' to 'I don't know where to put you at all'. I fell in love with literal labels and boxes. I'd collect and hoard shoe boxes, and write whatever they held on the top in black Sharpie. I had some for postcards, others for paperclips, some for old writings. In the box labeled 'you', I placed a wilted rose, and CD with "Yesterday" by The Beatles on it.

## V. You

Maybe if I turn back every clock, and walk backwards through every dilapidated door frame, I'll find the places where I started to lose you. Or maybe found you. Did you know you can taste regret? Did you know that with every forced kiss and empty hug, you can feel another person's heart die. I cast lines out in the lake, and wait for you to come and find me. But, you never do. You never will. Once a man's will to live is gone, it's gone. Once his heart dies, you'll spend the rest of your life trying to figure out why diamonds are worth as much as they are.



# Journey Through the Planes: Part I

BY THOMAS BELCHER

“Ugh...where am I? Last thing I can remember is that I was walking to school and some wizard, I guess, was fighting this girl who was on fire or something. Then they both did something and then suddenly there were a bunch of people and creatures behind them both. Then they started to fight each other with their armies and all of a sudden I felt like my lungs were on fire and that my heart was beating really fast. Then I blacked out, I guess, and woke up here. I really hope that I didn't just die, and that this is my final resting place. Wait, where am I anyway?” I think to myself as I look around trying to get my bearings. But as I looked around I found no fluffy white clouds or pearly gates, instead I found myself in what appeared to be a vast empty space filled with colored mists. Also there were what appeared to be these mirrors in the midst of the largest mist clouds.

“God, Thomas! What did you get yourself into this time?” I mutter to myself as I take a closer look at the mirrors. On their surface instead of having a reflection they had images of places I had never seen before. From vast white plains filled with giant beasts, to cities tucked away in the side of mountains. I didn't even recognize any of them,

except for the one that was behind me. In that mirror I could see the battle between the wizard and flaming girl progressing. What was even weirder were the mists that were surrounding the mirror. Instead of being the mix of colors I had seen before with the other mirrors, this mirror was surrounded by primarily the blue and red mists. These mists then were sucked into the portal and filtered into the two fighters down below, with the red mist going to the fire girl, and the blue mist going to the wizard guy. What was even weirder was that as the armies fought each other and units died, they evaporated and came out of the mirror and went zipping off towards one of the other mirrors. Then when the two fighters reinforced their sides I could see more mist clouds coming from the other mirrors and entering the one with the battle taking place, where they then appeared as new people and creatures in their armies. My mind just couldn't comprehend the chaos happening around me, so I did what any sane person would have done. I tried to rationalize the situation with myself.

“Okay so I'm in this place with colorful mists, and mirrors that show places that I have never seen before in my life. Also some wizard and a flaming girl are duking it out against one another

with armies they summoned out of thin air, that also appear to be color coded somewhat. Hmm...Ok I got it! I'm in a dream where colors are fighting for control of the title of being the best color in existence and they select champions to duke it out by summoning armies and beasts...? That doesn't make sense even if this is a dream! \*Sigh. . . \* Maybe I can get their attention or something if I pound on the glass?” I tell myself as I start to reach towards the glass of the mirror. As I touch the surface of the glass I can feel myself being pulled towards the mirror. Then the mirror sucked me in so fast I didn't even have time to swear! Then all of a sudden I was back to where I was before I blacked out. But unfortunately that meant I was in the middle of the giant fight between the wizard and the flaming girl. So scared shitless and not knowing what the heck was going on, I probably did the most normal thing I did all day. I ran for my life! ■ TO BE CONTINUED...

*My time at the Summer Young Writers Institute has gone by so fast! It has been so exciting to take classes in all three genres. I experienced creative nonfiction for the very first time and was exposed to different styles of poetry and fiction. I am so lucky to have made amazing friends and to have spent time with so many people who think like I do because we're all writers. Skidmore's beautiful campus is the perfect place for this experience. I am so glad I was able to come to the Institute! It has completely changed the way I approach my work and view myself as a writer.*

– Olivia Belliveau



# Directives for Sensation

By OLIVIA BELLIVEAU

Hold a conch to my ear,  
feed me the siren song  
of the ocean

Turn me inside out,  
press away the excess,  
strike my skin with the  
carpet beater

Pry my hands from  
the safety rail,  
pour wind through my  
trembling fingers

Dip-dye me in  
litmus, scrub my purple  
waverings from your  
fingernails,  
start again

Lift me, let my head  
skim the sky, show me  
endless

Shake me with thunder,  
stun me with lightning,  
melt me with rain

Take my heart, wring it  
out, let it swell again before you  
fasten it here

Pull the dream rug out from  
beneath my feet, let me stumble,  
slip into waking

Shock me with grace,  
dizzy me with spinning  
maybes

Hollow me out with  
a glass and a word

And hold my hand  
and make me  
feel  
anything.

# Educating the Savages

BY LOUISA BENARBANE

I remember feeling myself confined, though not in the sense of enclosure, but rather, a kind of restricting inadequacy that had only been the product of my own uncertainty with my work. So, given my especially heightened state of self-pity, I decided it best to take in the air on the coffee shop patio, and people watch as a mode of inspiration.

A young boy on a red and blue bicycle that was decorated in Hot Wheels and Cars stickers was my first subject matter. He yelled for his mother, and for his friend, whose name was Susan from what I gathered, and after throwing a fit over literally spilled milk, he began his attempt at racing off on the sticker-slayered bike. Though, just as I furthered my focus on the boy's wanton attitude, I was abruptly interrupted.

"Are you a writer?" I heard a faint voice pose. It was an old man, sitting entirely across the patio from me.

"Yes." I found myself responding, though I was initially taken aback, seeing as when I am asked this question, my immediate response is always a sharp, unquestionable no. After having made this realization I instantly followed up my opening responses by fumbling through my words and correcting myself in haste.

"No, I mean yeah, kinda, but no, no."

"Well," he remarked, "If you're not a

writer then why do you have a journal and pen in your hand, that curiosity in your eyes. I hate to break it to you but, you most certainly are not a farmer or a doctor then dear."

The old man had large wire frame glasses that were adjoined in the middle by a thin golden bar with a metallic shine and reflective like. His nose was sharp and pronounced, and curiously, in spite of his age, his hair was remarkably full and distinctly silver.

"How many colors do you see?" I heard the voice pose softly once again.

"Excuse me?" I responded in confusion.

"How many different shades of colors do you see?" He once again posed.

"I don't know, but I have a very quaint feeling that you are about to tell me." And so he did. The old man took it upon himself to then describe to me the scientific origination of this color phenomenon, and how it intertwined with perception

"Don't you see," he added. "Women, men, we see colors differently, and thereby we live differently, due to not only this biological predisposition but the individual differences that make us *who we are*."

He continued on as if I were the unwavering ear, and he passed down this apparent wisdom like it was a kind of ancient knowledge he felt needed to

be expressed to everyone and anyone willing to listen, like an elderly Salinger; Though, it was just me. And so he mused, on and on, about how the paths one takes in life determine their entirety, and about how the sprawls of youth are the enemy of all human progression. He recounted the time he had spent "teaching the savages" engineering and maintenance in postcolonial Nigeria, directly following the departure of the British.

"You'd be surprised what you can do with fifteen hundred men. Doesn't matter what race they are, whether they're educated or indigenous, rich or poor; it's a matter of will, and goddamn did they have it. In '75 it took us only three years to install six of these 250 ton machines that were probably the size of this patio." (Which admittedly was actually fairly large spanning about fifty feet.)

On he went, about his travels across southern and central Africa, Europe, Asia all with his family along for the ride. He divulged his opinions regarding intrinsic motivation, the human capability for compassion and mindfulness that should be extended in all situations, and, of course, he expressed his sincere viewpoint that every individual has the potential to find new

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*The week and a half I have spent at the Institute has been remarkable. The classes were very enriching and informative, the staff was endearing, and overall the relationships I formed and the people I met were so wonderfully surprising. In truth, you live, eat, sleep, and immerse yourself entirely in a writers' colony. Though there are of course some moments of disagreement among the writers here, I am pleased to say that it is only done constructively. Living amongst like-minded people for this amount of time is filled with the charms of hilarity, joy, and the occasional tears that are brought on by truly moving pieces of writing – and they're not at all uncommon here.*

– Louisa Benarbane

## Educating Savages (continued)

ideas, and given that, even the thought of stealing another's is an entirely mind boggling and foreign concept to him.

Then, suddenly, the old man looked troubled; even perverse. I did not ask if he was all right, or even if there was anything that he would've liked to talk about. Rather, I waited momentarily to see if his guise would reassume its once jolly position that stretched up onto the corner of his mouth.

"Oh goodness," he said, "When you're young you can do so many things, really, but..." The grimace now began to recede and he returned to his previously idealistic plight. "You see, I failed out of school, not because I wasn't able, but I thought, there're some things in the world that I'm missing here. At that time, if you weren't going to school though, bam, that's it. They ship you off to the military. And at first I didn't really give a damn, I was fine, but when you put up your hand and say 'I do,' Uncle Sam owns you." He momentarily sighed, "And I, I didn't wanna be owned."

At this point in the story, the old man pushed back the newspaper he had been reading, and sat in silence for only a brief moment that felt like an

epoch, none the less.

He was crying.

"You see, what I saw in Nam, nobody should've - it shouldn't have - it should've been different kid, it really should've. And I mean, after seeing all that horror, and tragedy; I felt like I needed to make amends, with myself, with the world."

"And do you think you achieved those amends sir?" I found myself asking. He paused, took a breath, and looked up at the thrashing green above him and quietly responded with, "I did all I could, which is anything anyone can do. So I'm happy, with my life, and the countless blessings I've been given. And you know what kid, if I could go back, I wouldn't change a damn thing."

I stared at the man at this point, with marble eyes and my pen in hand, hoping I could perhaps scribe down at least one more of his lyrical and heart-felt revelations. Although, upon seeing me do this, he did not reproach, nor did he pose any questions regarding my own life. No, instead, he sat. Staring upward at the blue sky streaked with gray shards that, luckily enough, were never quite able to barricade the sun.

Then the man swiftly turned his gaze on to his watch, raised his eyebrows at the passing time, and stood up.

"Observation is a science, dear. And all this," he said as he spread his arms endearingly, as if to encapsulate all the surrounding thin July air, "all this, is your laboratory. Do your research, and do not take no for an answer."

He looked into my eyes with an endearing, almost fatherly smile, and reached out his hand in an ironic and backwards attempt of making my formal acquaintance at such a late point in our exchange.

"I'm Len," he said, with a smile resembling the skeleton of a half moon. "It was so wonderful to have talked to you today. You are a very bright girl, and you have so many things ahead of you. Enjoy." I shook his hand, upon which his smile still did not wane, and he scampered off in what looked like a hurry before offering one final comment from across the patio.

"You remind me of my daughters."

He then descended down the steps, and toward his undisclosed destination. He was truly a peculiar old man, though I never did succeed in seeing him again. ■



*The greatest, most inspiring time is just sitting around and talking to other people for hours. The people you meet here are bound to bring you ideas, as they also signed up for writing camp and therefore must be crazy – and that makes them interesting.*

– Will Anderson

# Cows in the Morgue

BY EMMA BREDTHAUER

After Alfie died, Marsha was left with only her cows. They slept by her side, ate with her at mealtimes, and accompanied her as she drove around town, just as Alfie used to do. There was Hattie, the plastic shoebox-sized Holstein with the pretty lashes, Button, the limited-edition Beanie Babie ox with the soft, cuddly hooves (Marsha had used those hooves to wipe away her husband's tears during his final days at the hospital because the tissues the nurses provided were too rough on his paper-thin skin) and countless other bovines stashed all around the house in various convenient areas. A veritable shrine to Marsha's four-hooved friends was displayed on the bureau in her bedroom. The cows were usually a cheerful bunch, but after Alfie's death they grew more somber. Marsha had fitted each with its own little black veil of gauze. They were proper mourners.

Marsha was rearranging the cows' veils when she heard the phone ring in the kitchen. "Just a moment, Miss Wayne," Marsha whispered gently to the four-inch tall replica of President Taft's most famous pet.

In the kitchen the phone rang, shrilly. Marsha took a deep breath and picked it up, careful not to upset the decorative cow-themed plate hanging on the wall next to it. She was more clumsy lately.

Alfie had been a carpenter's level for Marsha's eccentricities for sure, but she had never imagined that his

demeanor had an effect on any form of balance other than her mental balance. The cow on the plate smiled up at her reassuringly, its big black eyes full of boundless empathy.

"Hello, Ms. Heffer?" The man's voice wavered. Marsha snapped awake.

"Speaking," she said hastily.

The call came from St. Francis Hospital. It was about Alfie's cremation. Marsha was to come down to the hospital morgue to say a final goodbye. The hospital did not usually provide family members with visitation in the morgue, but Alfie had been adamant about not having a funeral. ("Both the hors d'oeuvres and conversation are always bland at those damned things," Alfie had once said).

This was to be her last moment with Alfie. Feeling strangely young, like a teenage girl getting ready for a first date, Marsha arranged her curly white hair in the mirror and put on a fresh coat of lipstick. She had the key in the lock when she remembered she wasn't quite ready to go out—her cow hairpin was still on the dresser upstairs. She dropped her purse in the vestibule and dashed up to get it. Alfie used to put the clip in her hair before they went out. Tearfully, she remembered the feeling of his fluttery fingers behind her ears as they gently closed the clip. With a sigh and a quick rub of the eyes she headed down the stairs and on her way to the morgue.

The drive was supposed to be short, but Marsha kept returning home, the

first time because she was afraid that the door was unlocked, and the second time because she had a gnawing suspicion that she had chipped the ceramic cow planter on the porch with her shoe in her haste to check the door. It was a half hour past the time she was supposed to be at the morgue that Marsha pulled into the hospital parking lot.

The air was cool in the hospital. It smelled like hand sanitizer and soft lunch foods. Marsha wandered over to the check-in desk dazedly. The receptionist directed her to a waiting area. "The Morgue Assistant will be with you shortly," she said, smiling reservedly. Marsha nodded and shuffled over to an overstuffed chair. She fished a small embroidered pillow sporting frolicking Holsteins out of her bag and eased back, trying to ignore the tightening in her throat. She closed her eyes but it was no use; she'd need a distraction if she wanted to stop herself from crying. She scanned the room for a distraction and found one almost immediately: a brightly lit gift shop adjacent to the room, with flowers in the doorway. She smiled faintly to herself and scooped up her pillow, slowly making her way toward the shop.

The store had snacks, cards, jewelry, blankets, mugs, water bottles, games, decks of cards, fat puzzle books, and a wall of keychains. Marsha wandered over to the shiny wall, transfixed by a keychain that looked like it had a small

*continued on page 12*

*This program was absolutely amazing. Within such a short time span, I have been able to learn so much about my writing style, and about the college experience. I especially loved the poetry class (although I have always loved writing poetry – maybe even more than fiction). I have never considered myself to be a poet, but now I think I can. The teachers here are wonderful, and they really care about the students.*

– Josh Aberman

## Cows in the Morgue (continued)

cow with a tutu mid-pirouette dangling from it. \$10.99. Cradling the treasure gently in her hand, Marsha wandered toward the register.

In the cool of the waiting room, Marsha clipped the keychain to the strap of her purse. She held it between her fingers briefly and let it drop down. It hit the (faux) leather with a satisfying thud. Marsha smiled through her fragile tears.

“Ms. Heffer?” a tall man with gray hair and horn-rimmed glasses stood in front of her, hand extended. He wore simple beige scrubs. *Alfie had worn the same beige cashmere vest almost every day.* She sighed and shook the man’s hand. “You can call me Marsha,” she said.

“Nice to meet you Marsha,” the man said. “My name is Gene. I work in the hospital morgue.” He paused. Marsha nodded slowly. “As you know, allowing visitation in the morgue is rare, but we make exceptions from every now and then. I understand that you may need time with your husband downstairs, but please be aware that this is still a hospital environment.” Marsha knew what that meant: *no crying.* Gesturing towards her, Gene led Marsha out of the waiting room and down a flight of stairs, then through a door and into a hallway. The two walked on in silence.

“Are you a fan of cows?” said Gene in a desperate attempt to end the silence. The corridor stretched long before them.

“How did you know?” asked Marsha warily.

“Let’s see,” Gene said, smiling. “You’re wearing cow knee socks, a shirt with little cows jumping all over the place, your bag says ‘Go Cow or Go Home,’ and you have that cow clip on.” He gestured to her hair. Marsha said nothing, reminded momentarily of the loss of her and Alfie’s sweet ritual. “Hey, I’m sorry,” Gene pressed on. “I have nothing against loving cows. My dad used to breed Holsteins. I know a thing or two about the creatures.” Marsha smiled at the floor. Gene noticed. They

reached a wide steel door.

“It’s chilly in here,” said Gene. Marsha was already shivering. With a grunt, Gene heaved the door open. In the dim fluorescent lights of the morgue shadows danced on the floor. Refrigerators lined both sides of the long walls, their panes of glass revealing the feet of the dead contained within. Marsha was taken aback.

Gene seemed to sense her consternation. “Yeah, it’s creepy,” he said as they made their way down the long hall. Marsha noticed two tiny feet laying in the cell on her right— *A baby?*— She could hardly focus on Gene’s attempts to comfort her.

They finally rounded a small bend. “Your husband is here,” Gene said. He plucked a piece of paper from his pocket and studied it briefly. Then he punched a few numbers into the keypad on the refrigerator door. Alfie’s long, slender feet came into view. Marsha closed her eyes, fighting back her stinging tears. She heard a buzz, like the sound of a mosquito being fried in a halogen lamp. Her eyes shot open. But there was only black. The dim lights had shot out.

“Fuck,” said Gene.

“Mooooooo,” said Alfie.

“Oh my god,” said Marsha.

“Shit,” said Gene.

“Mooooooo,” said Alfie.

Marsha heard feet scrape frantically against concrete. “Gene?” she ventured. “GENE?!” She screamed.

“I’m gettin’ the hell outta here!” His voice was gruff.

“Mooooooo,” said Alfie. *Alfie.* Sweet Alfie. But this wasn’t really Alfie. What the hell was *this?* Marsha could feel the artery in her throat squish blood around forcefully. Her innards tightened.

She had to run.

“I’m coming, Gene!”

“Get away from me, you crazy cow lady!” Gene cried. Even in the dark frantic air, that hurt.

“Hey, screw you!” Marsha’s voice sounded tinny.

“MOOOOOOOOOO.”

Much louder this time.

“MOOOOOOOOOO.”

The sound of a thousand cows.

Marsha was dizzy.

*The cows were following her.*

“GENE, GET ME OUT OF HERE!”

She could see the bright lights of the hospital hallway through the dim crack in the steel door, and Gene’s hair sticking up at wild angles, silhouetted in the light.

“Hell no,” he shrieked.

The door slammed. Marsha tripped.

“MOOOOOOOOOOOO.”

Closer this time.

“MOOOOOOOOOOOO.”

*The sound of hooves?!*

And then the halogen-mosquito sound again. The lights clicked on.

No cows. Not a single one. Marsha sat in silence with the dead’s feet pointed towards her like judging eyes. She began to sob.

“Mooooooo.” This time the sounds was soft, reassuring, as though the noise were inside her. She picked up her purse and the noise abruptly stopped. Then Marsha remembered the keychain. Picking it up in her hand, she examined it... When the cow’s plastic tail was pressed, the figurine uttered a “moo.” Marsha’s tears dissolved into laughter. *Of course.* Gene would feel terrible when she told him that he’d locked her in the morgue because of a keychain.

No. Fuck Gene. Marsha didn’t need to tell him anything. Now, she could have as much time with Alfie as she wanted.

Rounding the bend confidently, Marsha smiled at the sight of Alfie’s pale, milky feet. “My sweet Alfie,” she crooned, kissing each one gently. Then she rolled out the steel table.

Her heart shot straight into her throat.

The head of a cow smiled up at her.

“Mooooo,” it said.

The lights flickered out. ■

# Confidant

By CHLOE BURNS

When Sophie Evans has a problem, she does not speak her qualms aloud to any person. Sophie Evans has a white, long-haired Persian cat with big blue eyes. It is to this cat that the ballerina voices all of her problems, and she will never worry that this is somehow strange, somehow abnormal. Sophie Evans has too many problems and too little time to care about such things as normalcy.

One day Sophie Evans storms up into her pastel yellow room with its light colored hardwood floors and she laughs. She collapses into her wooden rocking chair next to the short wooden bookcase on which the cat is perched. She laughs until the tears begin. Sophie Evans then takes a single tissue, folds it in half lengthwise once and then once again, and dabs delicately at the corners of her eyes. She gives one more burst of laughter that is not truly laughter at all, for it is a low, guttural, dark sound that does not even remotely resemble the maniac cry of before. Sophie knows she is upset, has been upset for a long time. She stares for a moment at her slightly disgruntled cat, then sighs. Sophie Evans lifts her ballet bag from its designated corner and stalks out of the room.

The next morning is a Saturday—the only day Sophie Evans devotes entirely to schoolwork. It is also the only day Sophie allows herself to sleep later than 7 a.m. She languishes under her warm comforter for a moment more, and then rises. While ballet is her passion, Sophie Evans believes academia can be her passion in another life, in another time. Sophie Evans stands and stretches, cracking her back as she does so. She runs a plastic brush through her long brown hair and stares at the reflection of her cat in the mirror. Their eyes meet. Green to blue. The blue gaze is entirely too accusatory for Sophie to take this early in the morning. She slips into her robe and down the stairs for her morning ritual of a coffee, a yogurt, and a croissant - and attempts to forget the eerie stare.

Later, Sophie curls up in a ball on the corner of her bed, wrapped in a soft blanket, and, closing her eyes for a moment, the ballerina meditates. She can hear, no, feel the blood pumping through her aortas, her veins, her capillaries emanating from her heart. Her heart. Hearts should love, no? Sophie stares at her blue veins through the pale skin of her wrists. She imagines that she can almost see a pulse. Then a warm ball of fur and claws and teeth leaps onto her bed beside her and lies down, almost regally, almost like a sphinx. The white Persian cat blinks doleful blue eyes at her. Green meets blue. Sophie reaches out a tentative hand and strokes the soft, white fur of the cat.

That night Sophie Evans practices her pirouettes. Arms arched in an oval, feet moving too fast to note, barely touching the floor. And then she stops and strips off the ballet shoes, throwing

them to the corner. Sophie is tired. The ballerina is tired. The cat stares at her again, and then dozes off out of boredom. Sophie Evans reminds Sophie that she is a ballerina and that she must practice to reach perfection, to attain the unattainable. Sophie Evans retrieves her ballet shoes from their pile and resumes her pirouettes.

Sophie dances in her dreams. She dreams of a stage, of a single spotlight, of a solo she wants so desperately. In her dreams, Sophie cries. The ballerina wakes with still-wet tear tracks down her cheeks.

A week later, so much had happened: ballet practices, auditions, performances, tests, tears, etcetera. No solos, though. Never any solos. Sophie Evans still has a white Persian cat on the wooden bookcase in her room. Blue eyes meet green in the mirror on the wall, and Sophie is released. ■



*I'm glad I was able to escape, even if only for a little over a week, and spend time with people who shared the same interests as me. Skidmore has beautiful scenery, beautiful people, and a beautiful atmosphere. Honestly, my summer would have sucked if I didn't attend.*

— Malahni Banta

# Untitled

BY KIM CHIA

I saw them kiss. They stood a foot away from Michael and me as they slow-danced to the smooth beats of Frank Sinatra. As they got closer and closer together, the eerie sense of premonition I had increased exponentially in weight. But that didn't stop me from dancing closer and closer to the couple. I don't know what led me to move my feet to where they stood. Looking back now, I think I wanted to see it with my own two eyes. My masochistic side took complete control. I think I wanted to confirm what my sneaking suspicions whispered in my ears. I needed to transition from a state of depressing hope to one of healing. My body knew what I needed before I, me, myself knew what to do.

Their lips met and rather than looking away from the sight that made every part of me hurt, I looked harder, as if the truth lay between the lines of their actions. I didn't quite understand what my eyes saw at first, it didn't seem to ring true. They looked happy, her in her mother's dress and him in his suede button down. And me? Well, I stood emptily observing. In my dress, shoes, and hair I had chosen in accordance with his preferences, I stood hating every aspect I could call unique to myself. They were happy, and I was left the miser.

*I had an amazing time here at Skidmore and I've met some incredible people. The program has helped my writing tremendously. I hope I can return next year and enjoy this experience again.*

– Thomas Belcher

I looked away and buried my face into Michael's shoulder, trying to hide the moisture flowing freely from my pitiful eyes. I knew exactly what I had witnessed, but at the same time, I refused to comprehend. I sprung myself to a state of manic happiness in an attempt to salvage who I was. As I bounced to the club music that pounded almost as loudly as my heart, I acted. Even the most talented of actors can fake happiness only to a certain extent. At intermittent points, I would reach my limit and tears sprung from my mercurial eyes. I stood almost apathetically, trying to reach numbness. I was overwhelmed to the point at which I lost a part of who I was. The image that repeated torturously in my head was that of the moment before the slow dance had begun.

I'm not sure about this, but as I stood across the floor from him, he looked right at me. We met eyes for a moment, and I tried to reach his heart from where I stood alone. I willed him to walk towards me, and I stood nervously weighing the outcomes. I hoped for an ending of us, together. He turned and took her hand, and the blossoms that were springing up in my stomach wilted. Maybe the lighting was off, or I saw what I wanted to see, but he weighed his options in that moment, and he chose her. I'll never forget what I think I saw. As the dance came to an end, I walked to the coat room clutching Lizzie's hand. She was there, and at the time, I believed I had to hold tight or she would leave just like he had. Since that night, she's been by my side through everything I have struggled with. Her loyalty is something to be acknowledged and a miracle to be praised. I needed her more than ever.

I lost my naive innocence that night. As we searched for my coat under the high piles, they walked in: the happy couple. Panicked and afraid, I ducked into one of the coat racks like a child does during games of hide and seek in fancy restaurants. I was dumbfounded. I had never been a coward

and my inability to face him scared me. Lizzie stood in front of the coat rack, hiding me, the cowardly lion. He saw my shoes and called out my name. It brought me back to our dinner dates and our hallway rendezvous. I thought of us, and I dug deeper in the rack. To remember was to hurt. It was a stalemate. He sat there waiting for me, even though she was by his side. It was her, and not me. I knew my cover had been blown, but I remained irrationally hiding in the rack. I don't know exactly what I was trying to avoid, but I think it was his eyes. I wanted to avoid seeing him with her, looking at her with what I assumed was love. I didn't want to see the pity in her face whilst she thought of me as a fool and a loser. I didn't want to see his face and still love him, even after all that had happened between us. I was terrified of still being in love with him. What would that make me? If I still loved this boy, this boy of seventeen who had disregarded my feelings and broken my trust, this boy who used to be my best friend and who used to know me better than I could ever know myself, what would that say about me? It was inevitable; I would still love him, no matter how he mistreated me or how he left my feelings unrequited. I was trapped, without a route out.

Love doesn't end when betrayal finds roots. It clings on to the smallest of hopes and the saddest of times. I loved him. As I stood there, hiding in the woools, it struck me. Maybe it wasn't his fault, maybe he didn't betray me, and maybe it was me who didn't work. That night, and after that night, time and time again, I took it upon myself to find fault with who I was in order to explain his actions and try to work to forgiveness. All of this was because I loved him. I couldn't give up, could I? I was a goner. Even when I felt empty, I remembered our ritual of blueberry pancakes on Sundays. I remembered our late night adventures, risking it all to sneak out of our respective houses and jump into the town pool. I remembered our movie nights; I remembered us. ■

# Literally, It's Magical

BY JOHNNY JEONGMIN CHOI

“Aren't you worried at all?” I said, instantly regretting I said it because I knew that her reply would be one and the same, but I also dismissed that regret. After all, it was something I thought any girl'd want to hear in a situation like this. Any normal girl, at least. One day, she'll be normal.

“Nope,” she said, a smile creeping onto her face, absolutely carefree—to the point where it felt more than a little odd. *Gosh, can't you just act a little worried, get a little offended that I asked, or even reassure me and say that you prepared?* Why don't you act normal? Why isn't your laughter or your tears ever timed at when normal people would laugh or cry? I keep these thoughts to myself, as I have done since First School.

She looks at me, expectant. Her eyes were begging me to ask another question. I don't.

The next morning, I meet her by her front door. “How are the test results?” I ask.

She shakes her head, downcast. I frown. I don't say “I'm sorry,” or anything insensitive like that. Instead I say, “Well then, let's get going.” This isn't her first failed test, and I doubt any number of failed tests could curb her passion for passing it.

Her face instantly lights up. “Hey, hey,” she says, “I found a nice place. Apparently thousands of people visit there daily, and all of them have ranked up.”

I raise my eyebrows. “That's what the place that rubs cat's blood into your armpits says, too.” *And it works*, I add to myself, *just not for you*.

“I'm sure of it this time.” She hands me a pink colored pamphlet. “Look, it even says the word ‘love.’ And ‘love’ is the strongest key to unlocking magical powers.”

“That's a children's fable,” I say, “it's just not true.” I take the pamphlet from her still, and flip through it. I look up to see her looking at me, and I shake my head. “This is for a brothel,” I say, “I'll toss it on the way.”

“What's a brothel?” she asks.

“Not somewhere we should be going.” I catch myself. This might even

intrigue her further. “I've been to multiple brothels,” I lie, “and they have nothing to do with magical power.” I'm going to laugh and laugh about this later and someday she'll laugh about it, too.

“Oh,” she says.

“No,” I say, “let's go out to the woods. I have my stuff packed.” I gesture to the hiking bag I'm wearing. “Go get packed.”

“Okay!”

That night, I open the zipper door to our tent and crawl in as roughly as I can, hoping she'd notice. When that didn't work, I crawl over to her sleeping bag, place my hand on her bare shoulder, and shake her violently awake.

“Wake up,” I say “the sun just went down.”

She moans, then turns over to the other side. I shake her harder, now bent over on top of her. Her closed eyes blink open and I see full-fledged panic and other mixed emotions in her eyes. She sits upright, sending her torso in a collision course with mine. I effortlessly move aside. I can see that she's about to cry. It's the first time I've seen her like this.

“Get out of the tent,” I command. “It's the first step to waking up.” She still looks very lost.

“Snap out of it,” I say. I then lead her by the hand out of the tent. She follows, not without resistance. We walk a short walk to Stillwater. Ley lines crisscross the shore of the glimmering lake. I place her at where the lines converge and felt the strongest. I sit down at a different location, just a few feet away, where the lines were strong, but not as strong as the spot she was in. I take care to cross my legs and arms and empty my mind of most thoughts.

Stillwater was a point where many of these ley lines converged and diverged, creating a field of energy around it, more clearly defined at night by some force of circumstance. The concentration of this energy could be taken in via meditation, which resulted in normal people being able to harness more magic than before (a.k.a. ‘ranking up’), or for people who

can't use magic, could infuse them with the power necessary. Which, of course, we were trying to do here. It's been her dream, her ardent desire, to be able to use magic. I guess it comes from being not normal in a society of magicians. Nothing seems to work for her, though, however many tests she takes or however many days she spends following me around.

“Hey,” she says.

“You should be quiet. And calm,” I say.

She says no more.

“What's wrong?” I ask.

“You won't leave me, right?” she says. Without waiting for my reply, she continues. “I had a dream. A dream where you were a high-ranking magician, and you left, without telling me anything.”

“I wouldn't do that,” I say, feeling guilty about actually being a high-profile magician, and having considered leaving her.

“But then you came back,” she says.

“Huh?”

“And told me that I wasn't good enough for you.”

“I would never—”

“And I could suddenly use magic. Next thing I know I'm in a forest of twisted steel and rock with embers on my fingertips and next to me is your smoldering corpse.” She was crying, her tears glimmering like the lake.

“Let's go back,” I say. Strong emotions are dangerous, they mess with the balance and control of a person's magical energy—rule number one to being a good magician. It's especially dangerous in a high-energy environment like Stillwater at night. She didn't have any magic but one could never be too sure or safe. “It's going to be all right,” I add.

We fall asleep together in the tent. She does, waiting for tears to dry. I do, wondering what a teleportation spell to an unknown place, a high level fire spell, and a burnt dead body of myself all meant.

That night, I too, had a dream.

*unfinished* ■

# To Girl from Oxygen Tank

BY ANNI CLARK

It's the forever  
part that scares her, and I think  
I get it. She's only ever known  
finite time and numbered days. It's all only ever been  
a countdown. Her life is an hourglass  
slowly losing its sand, and no one knows how long  
until she's eroded away. So I'm inclined to agree  
that, at least for her, forever is an unattainable  
concept. I'm inclined to agree that everything  
ends, and no one knows that  
better than a girl who has nothing else  
to do than whisper  
to the proof of her temporality. I am the reason she's afraid  
of an infinite paradise, and for that,  
I am eternally sorry.



*My education consists of pointless paragraphs and an environment in which creative writing is not taught after the 6th grade. These surroundings at Skidmore, however, make an experience such as this awe-inspiring. I ventured out of my poetry comfort zone and discovered the beautiful possibilities in writing nonfiction and fiction. This has truly been a place of new experiences for me: my first roller coaster; my first time staying in a college dorm; the original idea of using restraint in a cafeteria; the freedom to write and do what I wish; and the sorcery of coffee. The Summer Young Writers Institute has been, most importantly, the first time I found myself really involved in the world of writing, and I don't want to leave it!*

– Emma Folkart

# Wolf Boy Found Hiding in a Cave in Romania! (Lived in woods and feasted on dogs!)

BY RACHEL COCHRAN

You know how they reacted. I mean, you're one of them. You probably would've been the same damn way.

They called me wild. They called me wild and spoke sounds I could hardly understand. When they appeared as clothed bestial silhouettes at the cave entrance, their first question to me was "how long have you been gone?!" Well, buckets of problems with that question. But first and foremost, let me ask: gone...from where? Sometimes I wish people would accept that we all have different homes. And perhaps mine—a cave in Romania, the warmth of my pack, thrashing wildly through the woods, through the darkness, on a hunt running amongst the other wolves, our breaths hot in the chilly air—perhaps mine is just a little bit more different. Then they said something even worse. "Are you alone?" I lost it then. The other wolves were still nearby, waiting cautiously, and growling, quietly, but consistently. *Here I am, one amongst my eight other pack members, and you ask me if I am alone! Alone? Everything but alone.* I snarled. It was my snarl—the fusion of wolf and human—and I could tell they hadn't been expecting it. They eventually got over themselves, and came closer again. As if none of the other wolves deserved or was capable of being spoken to, they continued asking me questions. To which I gave nothing but a held and gaping stare, and snarls when necessary. Inside, though, I don't think I was snarling. I was weeping.

I admit, I was the only "wild" one in the pack that came even close to being able to converse with the humans. But assuming that a being who just happens to have *been* conceived by humans, been *born* as a citizen of humanity and who at one point in his life lived in human civilization can speak a human language is, to put it lightly, radically and disappointingly absurd. I appreciated their pity and desire to help me, but all of you...your conception of help...is just quite questionable. I should also mention that assuming a being, who once lived in human civilization, wants to *return* to human civilization is an inconsiderate and utterly disrespectful assumption. Anyway, it's all frustrating to a point of disgust. You'll never understand the way I do, I know, but try.

So, I was disturbed. Not only was I

disturbed, but I was scared. My pack had warned me. They tensed up long before the humans even entered the cave, eyes wide with red fire and purple fear. We didn't know what any of it meant. We didn't know what the noise was doing, scrambling around so frantically; the footsteps were an unfamiliar kind of which we could not decipher the creature. We *did* know, though, that change was at the tips of our noses. We *did* know that one in particular had change at the tip of his nose. We *did* know that one of us was going to be hurt. That one was me.

After asking how long I'd been gone—from civilization, they meant—they whispered amongst themselves for a while. I could tell they were horrified, confused, and in utter disbelief. The

*continued on page 18*



*This has been one of the best weeks of my life. I have been surrounded by creative writers in interesting classes taught by intelligent faculty. I remember being accepted into the Young Writers Institute – it was late at night and I was in a hotel when I got the e-mail. I think I may have woken up the entire floor with my scream of happiness. The Institute has challenged me. As a result, I have pushed myself into taking new risks as a writer. Overall, this has been an invaluable experience, and I have loved every single second of it. I so desperately want to return.*

– Lillian Johnson

## Wolf Boy Found Hiding in a Cave in Romania (continued)

disbelief and confusion are perhaps slightly understandable, it having not ever crossed their minds that a human could live with a wolf pack, I know, I know. The horror, however—completely disgusting. And frankly rather laughable. I don't know who started the shaming of bare feet, for example, or desire, or body hair. Somehow, though, concepts of humans being animals are *too* true for practically *all* of them to rap their minds around. Instead, their minds usually rap themselves around themselves. Wrapping arms around *trees* is rather uncommon only an elite class of tree huggers do that. So, as if we shouldn't all be hugging trees, sleeping in the dirt, eating the meat our ancestors ate, hunting our wild desires, living with wolves for a few years at least, the humans that discovered me, brown with dirt, covered

in bushy facial hair and rather thick body hair, mouth still dripping with blood from the meal we'd just had, well...you know. My story concludes here, I suppose. You know very well what they did.

I've already spoken about it too much. I've already spoken in words you can understand and that are foreign to me...too much. I can't believe I even let myself tell any of this. You said you'd try to understand. I believed you. I shouldn't have. You'll go home like every other one of them, and forget about me and my wild life, my wild life of five years. Nothing was more beautiful than the way I breathed, then. Nothing was more beautiful than the way I watched the world. My eyes were wide and as piercing as your bullets. My paws were stronger than you have ever seen, my nails were claws I could

kill my own food with. We killed our food and blessed it in wild silence. Under the vast night sky that never ceased to be our blanket; on the solid morning Earth, we lived. Both in light and in dark I was content—exhilarated on a run, vicious on a hunt, silent and wasted every night I returned to the cave. And from that cave I was ripped, my roots bleeding as they hauled me with pale, fleshy, yellow hands. My eyes were still wide and piercing. I know, though—don't you go thinking that I don't—that your bullets will always pierce our eyes. For those short moments of wild, turbulent, triumphant aliveness, the light we can beam out from inside of us, through the two holes in our head that you call eyes, is more powerful than you ever will be, or understand. I do not deny though, that, in the end, your bullets will pierce our eyes, still. That is what happened the night of my animal death, and did I die indeed.

Now, when I ask them where I should go and what I should do, they tell me to go to school and to find an occupation and to get married and to have children and to buy loads of items that will help me feel more complete with my loads of paper currency and to save the world in whatever way I can and to go die in some nasty human town amongst all my meaningless crap. They tell me to get a life. It may be just me, but I think someone's got things a little turned around.

I don't know if this world can be saved. I had a life, but it was stolen from me. It was stolen from me by a species battling instinct and brimming with fear, denial, and veiled yet coercive obligations for its many citizens. I think they should be freed. I think that everyone needs to change their concepts of saving.■

\*Title taken from Shearwater's version of the song "Our Only Sun," written originally by Jesca Hoop.



*In this week at The New York State Summer Young Writers Institute, I learned more about creative writing than in any English class. It was absolutely inspiring to meet and interact with so many like-minded people.*

— Chloe Burns

# Jared

BY MAURA COLLEY

On the outside, he was  
Swinging the bat,  
Laughing (at us? With us?), smiling  
Or smirking—with a look he could only have learned  
From his father

Sprinting to first,  
Second, third—  
Home

Smarter than me, says brother big,  
Bigger than me, says brother small,  
Kinder than us, say the best friends,  
All the best of us, say the parents

On the inside, he was  
Striking out—giving it away,  
Letting us down,  
Numb and dumb—  
Who smiles like that anyway?

Crawling by, not up to par,  
Nowhere is home

Not smart enough, says the mirror,  
Far from big, says the mirror,  
How are you kind? Says the mirror,  
Gone too soon, we say

...

On the inside, finally nothing,  
On the outside, blue—and tied to a rope.

# New Bruises

BY MAGGIE DUFFY

As Jeff walked into the building he inhaled the same new paint fumes that never faded off the white hospital walls although the renovation's five-year anniversary was right around the corner. The hallways still held a superficial serenity. An air of "okay" hovered over each brass handle, even though inside each room there was a life regenerating, deteriorating or one frozen in limbo. Jeff wondered which category he'd fall under as he approached the elevator.

His wife and daughter had practically forced him to book this appointment as last night's dinner conversation revolved around the thick dry piece of skin that had now spread across his nose like wildfire, a change that made his wife spin her wedding ring around her pinky finger anxiously. He'd grum-

bled and showed his usual fifteen percent engagement but agreed to get it checked, silently asking in return for their pestering to subside.

As the doors slid open he shuffled inside, pressing 16 before leaning on the rail to his left. There was only one other person in the elevator and she couldn't be more than fourteen. Her blond hair shimmied its way over her shoulders, framing the burn that had gradually made camp across her back. Jeff hadn't noticed himself gazing at the bruises that laced her legs when she swiveled and stared directly at him.

"What're you in here for?" her gum smacking every other word. As a global studies teacher at an all girls' high school, Jeff was used to abrupt sass.

"My wife thinks I might have some

form of skin cancer." He said just as bluntly, while gesturing to his nose.

"Sucks." She turned her forearms and began to trace the black and blue marks that lined the inside of her translucent skin. "They wanna make sure I don't try to kill myself."

Jeff paused, "Are you depressed?" She did something that resembled a laugh, low and phlegmy, as if what he'd said had caused her stomach to send air shooting out.

"Well I'm not fucking happy" she answered as the light flashed 14 and the overly sanitized doors moved aside for her twig-like stature to maneuver its way out.

Jeff leaned back against the wall and felt the bridge of his nose and grimaced. "Shit." ■



*This was a week of firsts – each one I greatly appreciated. I had the opportunity to be in a community of fellow nerds who enjoy writing on the same level as I do, which is something I've never had before. That was an awesome experience in and of itself. The level of enthusiasm really made the week for me. Being able to talk about writing outside of class with friends who are genuinely interested in it is a wonderful opportunity. I feel like by the end of this program I have really progressed as a creative thinker. I lost track of the number of times I said to myself this week, "How cool is it that I get to have this program?" Pretty darn cool.*

– Sarah Lofstrom

# Wine and Tea and Coca-Cola

BY JULIANNA ENGEL

I wish I was more French and Japanese.

The French drink wine at dusk. They pick the rose after it wilts, petals creased and papery. The French are all warm bread and cobblestone roads and candle light. I'd never be hungry. I'd pace the vineyards with a floppy wide-brimmed hat and braid my hair. I'd be wildflowers. I would go to the opera and listen to nocturnes and orchestrals and serenades under the yellow autumn moon.

The Japanese, though. They drink tea at dawn. They prefer the bud before it blooms. The Japanese are shaved ice and mossy paths and bobbing lanterns. I would climb the mountain path to the red-arched temples. I would hear the start and stop of the shamisen cricket.

The bathhouse steam would float into the star-flecked sky.

Instead, I am rooted firmly into my American soil. I have been raised on artificial preservatives, bagged Wonder Bread, and tacky tablecloths. I have waved foam fingers. I have chugged Coca-Cola. I have eaten street vendor hot dogs slathered in mustard. My family is a confederation of Southern twang and Minnesota accents.

I am still stoked with that same wanderlust. I still chart the future like constellations, unsure what stars really are. I measure funds, count coins, collect stamps on my passports. And yet my time in this nation has yet to end and I still have much to explore. And, as most things, I refuse to abandon something until I have completely finished it.

My mother told me as we cleaned up after dinner, "you'll have kids and you'll settle down someday. This is just a phase."

Her family is her anchor. She is a ship, bobbing contently in a familiar harbor. I do not feel the same weight on my ankles.

Perhaps I will remain here all my life, cheering for my home team and drinking California wine and driving a Jeep. Americans drink Cola in the afternoon. They like their flowers bright, sitting on the kitchen counter. Americans are open highways and urban sprawl and smiles from strangers. Here I can drive cross-country and find myself in a million different lands. I can hear the anthem chanted in a stadium from miles away.

I have my ancestors to thank for these things, those who came from Switzerland and England and who knows where to sew this mismatched quilt together. This is their nation; this is America. Our shoes are worn and our hands are rough. Americans have worked iron and steel, circuit boards and spinning jennys. My nation has labored so that I may enjoy their fruits. My family has sweat two oceans so I may board a vessel set sail for foreign shores.

It is simply the pride that bubbles in my chest when I overlook my surroundings. I crave that happiness, that gratification. Patriotism is something that grows, like my own tree to cultivate. My branches may shed blossoms in Kyoto and Bordeaux, but my roots will always be imbedded in the bedrock of America. ■



*This week was such an amazing experience. It was really great to be able to talk to, and get feedback from, experienced writers in all three genres. I was also fortunate to make wonderful friends who, I'm sure, will continue to be in contact, and will critique, after the program. It was a truly wonderful opportunity to get to be here, and I'm immensely glad I did.*

– Anni Clark

# The Fragility of Innocence

BY ERIN EQUINOZZI

I was already running late, and when you're a surgeon people tend to be very unforgiving when you miss an appointment. I sprint down the hall, my lab coat billowing out behind me. When I reach the elevator I fiercely pound the up button and tap my pen against the metal frame until finally the door creaks open revealing an empty space, save a little girl in the corner.

I wonder briefly where her parents are and then put it out of my mind. *Don't make eye contact*, I tell myself. *Then you'll have to help*. I avert my eyes and take to staring at the ceiling, praying to god my patient's family hasn't arrived yet. A series of beeps draws my attention downward and I find, to my utter horror, this little girl, this little monster has pressed all twenty-five buttons. She smiles up at me, two dimples appearing, and then presses the elevator stop button.

"No!" I shout, slamming my hand against my head when all I really want to do is just hit her. She laughs at this and then begins twirling around; eager to show me how the edges of her black dress will flare out. A voice begins speaking to us through the intercom in

the elevator. He informs us that the elevator must be reset but the authorities have been called and they will have us out in about a half an hour.

I toss down my clipboard, screw that meeting, and take out my phone to text one of my colleges. Devastation hits again when there proves to be no service. I look down at my young cell-mate and ask, "Are you happy now?" She seems to consider the question carefully before replying, "No, but your tie is pretty." I look down and realize I'm wearing the tie that my wife and kids bought me last Father's Day. I smile at the memory and sigh. "What's your name?" she inquires confidently and I slide down the wall to sit beside her. "John," my answer incites a smile and she runs her fingers through her hair, offsetting a pink barrette, before announcing, "My name is Annalise and I'm five." We continued exchanging random facts about our pets and homes and what-not.

Now that I had already become acquainted with her I felt the need to ask, "Where are your parents Annalise?"

"In the morgue, the morgue is in the basement and I'm going to see

them," she says matter-of-factly. I feel my eyes widen and my heart sink. "T-They... You know..." I trailed off, she clearly didn't understand the meaning of what she had been told, and how could I tell her? It wasn't my job to tell her. I hadn't been given the task of tearing down the world as she knew it.

The elevator dinged to life making me jump. I have to do something though so I pull her into a hug and she lets out a gasp of surprise. "I want you to know, it will be okay." I lean her back to take in her smooth face. "It will always be okay." She smiled and nodded and for a moment there is something unworldly about her, something that stems only from pure, sweet youth.

The elevator door opened and a shout is let out as a worried nurse spots Annalise. She scoops up the child and carries her away. Annalise waves to me over the nurse's shoulder and I feel a tear surface as I wave back. I then turn, my meeting having already been missed, with a newfound desire to see my Jacob and Chloe, to make absolutely sure they know that I love them. ■

I really enjoyed my time here. I think it was very beautiful, and it helped me approach writing in different ways. I think it was a lot of fun! I would recommend the Summer Young Writers Institute to anyone who likes writing.

— Isabel Filippone



# War

BY ELSA EVANS-KUMMER

Some mother's baby  
Blood pooling around his soldier's head  
Some parent's child  
Uniform neatly folded on a clean cold bed  
Some person's lover  
Gun raised, pointed at some other mother's son  
Some man's friend  
Waiting for a letter from the desert  
Some sister's brother  
Crying over the breathless body  
Some baby's daddy  
Sweating as the image plays again under his eye lids  
Some mother's baby  
Holding a stump, what's left of an arm  
Some parent's child  
Blood, coloring his eyes red  
Some person's lover  
Kissing a crumpled photo goodbye  
Some man's friend  
His last thoughts spent in bursts of lost memories  
Some sister's brother  
Fleeing his next prey, foot falls heavy  
Some baby's daddy  
Holding out his hand to whatever comes next.

*The New York State Summer Young Writers Institute was the only conference I've been to that let us go to bed at 7 A.M. and wake up two hours later at 9 and have this much free time. It's a nice balance of work and play, which leaves you free to be creative. The R.A.s, instructors, and other students seem to feel this way, too, making it a very unique atmosphere.*

– Johnny Choi

# Broken

BY ISABEL FILIPPONE

Sunlight hit the patches of water; it illuminated the pavement. The heat burned through everything in its path and yet it didn't touch me. Nothing ever touches me, or holds me, or even loves me. God knows my mother and father didn't. My mother was as cold as the darkness that surrounded me. She was always on her toes, frantic for something exciting to happen, but she couldn't even be bothered to care about her daughter for one second. When I called out to her telling her I felt so alone, my voice only left echoes in the empty rooms. So I had left and moved in with my boyfriend. There were sometimes when I missed my mother desperately, and this was one of those nights.

*My thick heels clicked up the pavement steps and I soon reached the cold metal door. I wasn't ready to go inside just yet, leaning against the knob. My breath hung in the frigid air, like the loose bra straps that had slipped off my shoulder. I shivered and tugged my thin sweater a little bit closer. My rosy cheeks and purple lips appeared to be, but were not, from the cold. I was ashamed at what I had done.*

*Sliding down to the ground, I sat and*

*looked at the stars, each one a pair of eyes that had witnessed my fall from grace. Their heaviness was suffocating me, a relentless ocean whose only goal is to drown me in guilt. If I walked inside I would only have to deal with one glare, but the sadness and guilt I knew I would feel surely could rival the weight of all the stars in the sky. Soon it would be morning though, and I feared that the sun would char me to a crisp as its final realization set in. With all the power I could manage I rose up and opened the door. It slammed behind me with a final click that made me panic, like a trapped animal.*

*I resisted every urge to bolt as I hung my sweater on the wooden rung. I plopped my tired bones on the stool to take off my boots. I faintly heard the TV playing in the next room over. I fiddled with my laces when I heard the bed creak as someone laid down on it. Soon the snap of the night-light left the hallway in complete darkness. Waiting for my eyes to adjust, I sighed.*

*He was mad, but I had expected it. While quietly tiptoeing into the bedroom I rested my gaze on his tense body. He heard me and wrestled with the covers, turning his back to me. I settled down in my stiff chair next to my desk. I desper-*

*ately rubbed my face trying to erase the remnants of yesterday's makeup, and with it the memories. Running my fingers through my tangled hair I stopped at a bobby pin pushing it in a little deeper before pulling it out. I wanted to experience the pain he was feeling but knew the mark on my head was nowhere close. Silently I joined him under the covers and closed my eyes.*

*I was flying. My arms extended as far as they could go, cutting the air as I ran down the empty streets.*

*"Hurry up, Adam," I yelled back to him as I turned around for just a second before continuing.*

*"I'm coming," he responded panting heavily. I smiled back at him and a sudden burst of energy allowed him to catch up to me. He did have the proper motivation I thought as he swooped me up into his arms.*

*He leaned down to kiss me and I could taste the alcohol on his lips. He was drunk. We were both drunk. That was the only way any of this could make sense. We were only happy because we didn't have to deal with the realization that our lives were a mess. I hugged him tighter and deepened the kiss. I was never going to allow this second to end, and yet like all good things it did- I woke up.*

*His alarm was going off but he was nowhere in sight. I was about to call to him to come turn it off, but thought better of it. Instead I rose from the bed. Stepping forward I felt something beneath my feet. Reaching down to find the culprit I saw my phone. At first I thought that I had cracked it with my weight, but then I saw the broken screen.*

*"I had fun last night," I read the text aloud and began sobbing. My phone wasn't the only broken thing this morning, my relationship was broken now, too. I fell to the floor and crawled to the kitchen to get the home phone. Where was I going to go? In a daze I dialed my mom's phone number.*

*Then I remembered why I never wanted to come home. ■*

I thought this was a particularly interesting and worthwhile experience. I learned a lot in my time here, although I came in with a novel already written. So I'd like to say that I already had at least passing understanding of how to write. Even so, this has been extremely helpful, particularly the editing session and reading with fellow students at night. Both of these activities served to make my writing better than it could have ever been without that external influence. If I could write before, I can really write now, and all thanks to the people I met here.

– Stephen Sesonske

# Permanent Pain

BY EMMA FOLKART

We were wild things, straight from a horror story. The lurking lunatic shone bright in our adolescent eyes, and we gripped sharpies as if they were knives. We reared in frustration with our last hours snared in school. Craze was our craft.

The entire eighth grade was out on the sparkling asphalt, supposedly signing yearbooks. But despite the expectations of the hardcover hell, there was nothing to scrawl on. Instead we decided to sign each other, to spite and entertain.

“Hey can I write on your forearm?” my closest friend, Abby, asked as she gripped a thick sharpie that would come on as a slimy silver.

Silence.

I had no wishes for squiggles that would undoubtedly last for weeks, and yet her dopey eyes and plush beam won me over. She was so hopeful, and I believed the best, which one should never do.

“Okay fine write away, just keep it small.” She embarked on a masterpiece, and finished with a grin. It was large and loose, and yet neat enough to appreciate. The curves had an elegance

only she could execute.

We ventured back to the turf, where more than just the graduating eighth graders gathered. The rough dots found only on a football field abraded my knees. I sat and sung and loved the incoming freedom, tender in the June air. Hearts and doodles of various skill slowly accumulated on first our forearms, and soon crept down to our stomachs and up to our backs.

“Emma can I start on your back?” one of the girls in my group, Sonia, asked. A mischievous smirk found its home on her face. I was too trustful. Too naive. Too open.

She scribbled quickly. Her marker was damp and uncomfortable. The ink stung when it seeped into my skin. She laughed and walked away, and Abby grimaced.

“That was too far.” Abby spit into her palm, and started to rub away at my skin. No one had spit on me since my own attentive mother while I was a toddler, cookies smeared across my chubby cheek.

“What does it say?” I asked, concerned.

“Loser,” Abby mumbled, abstaining

from eye contact. Sonia was her friend as well.

“No. That wouldn’t happen. She wouldn’t do that,” I stated, squeezing my eyes, escaping the supposed reality. This was a person who had shared my lunches since the third grade, most days stealing bites while I was in the bathroom. A friend that I told my crush to, and gossiped about his *gorg* moonlit eyes with. I tried to teach her to ride, because of my simple devotion to the sport. The girl who had taught me to apply mascara, *blink onto the brush—no don’t poke your eye out!* But now reflecting, most days I would leave lunch hungry. A frosty afternoon she told my first crush that I *liked* him. And when she couldn’t pick up the sport of riding, she joked I would grow old to be a *crazy horse lady*, instead of a cat lady. And carefully applied mascara now swam down my cheeks. My shoulders caved in, an avalanche in my chest cavity. No one commented, but they stared. We were still in the summer sun. But now it felt like an open coffin. ■



*Living for a week with people who are here and inspired by the same passion for writing that I am but who are all drastically different in style has been an eye-opening experience. The constant inspiration that I got from my peers, teachers, and the environment I was in helped me to challenge myself and expand my writing in ways I'd never tried before.*

– Margot Duffy

# Fluffy

BY SHAINA GORMLEY

When I lay there, almost dead, I realized maybe people didn't walk toward the light so much as they walked into intense heat from Hell. I didn't believe all that crap about the end being warm and welcoming. I came into this world crying and I swear I'll leave it the same way. No one gets happy about uncomfortable beginnings. It's the in-between time that's as close to comfortable as you can get. Don't believe in the fake stuff, the comforting words they'll tell you. None of it's true and I should know. I almost died that day in June.

See, I try to do "the right thing" sometimes. Whenever I do, it seems it turns out wrong. I swear, I actually saved a damn cat from a tree. It seemed like a nice thing to do. Help the neighborhood kid out, right? I was walking down the street when I heard the Tabby meowing from the tree. Turned out, the cat had been lost for months; no one was expecting it to come home. The family bought a stand-in Fluffy and acted like the original Fluffy had never run away. So, I went up that tree and rescued dear old Original Fluffy. When

I climbed up, it looked like the damn cat had set up camp up there. It had a little cat-like nest complete with toy mice. Then I grabbed the cat and it scratched me, swear I hate that thing. But I figured the neighborhood kid, Johnny, would want it back, right? And to leave the act as selfless, I pushed Original Fluffy through the kitty door and went on my way, across the street to my house.

A week later, I found out Original Fluffy had been bitten by a squirrel when he first ran away. So not only did the parents have to explain Fluffy's multiplication, but they had to do it after the whole family was treated for rabies, which I hear is ya know, painful. The police showed up, along with the bio hazard team. I don't know what they thought was in that house but they barricaded it like the streets of Paris in *Les Mis*. Anyway, about two weeks later our perfect little suburban neighborhood was back to its clichéd perfection of sidewalks and thick, green lawns.

A few days after the fight against rabies had been won, I collapsed in the middle of the neighborhood block

party, splat right on the street. Everyone sounded like they were under water and I couldn't move any of my limbs. My head felt like someone had driven a screwdriver into my brain. Then I blacked out.

I awoke in the hospital a few days after being sedated. There's the sour smell of cleaning chemicals and the ever-present air conditioning. Damn Original Fluffy had given me rabies. I swear, I was going to kill that thing after I got out. Unfortunately, I didn't realize Fluffy's family now knew I was the one who had brought the plague upon them since they were at the block party. So there was that to deal with before I killed their stupid cat. Actually, I think I'll kill both of the damn Fluffies.

I swore I was dying. Rabies has a way of making you crazy. But anyway, something in my brain went wrong and my temperature rose to extreme levels and quickly. So that's where the heat from Hell came from, I guess. That's how the doctors explained it away. But I'm not convinced. I infected a whole family with rabies, is that heaven worthy? ■



*Both years of the Summer Young Writers Institute that I've attended have been an amazing opportunity. I learned so much this year. The teachers are amazing. They try to share as much as they can to help us become better writers. I never thought I could write poetry, but somehow I did, and now I enjoy it. Thank you so much for having me back. If anyone is ever considering applying – just do it! You won't be sorry you did.*

– Shaina Gormley

# Earth is Empty

BY TRAVIS GUBERNICK

“Oh no, don’t worry about me Jace. I’m as awake as that damn witch is.” His words sent chills down my spine and his smile didn’t add any reassurance. Something was fishy with this kid.

The next morning—or rather, three hours later—we set out. We gathered our stuff and then strategized a route out of this horrific forest. I had the map splayed out on a rock. It had red pen scribbled all over it. The pen displayed our hopeful routes past traveled, but there was no way to truly know where we were and if we were where the map said we were.

“I think,” said Ashley, who had to constantly brush her hair out of her way, “that we should head across the water, and cut right, hopefully heading west.”

“I don’t know if we would want to head east,” said Briz. “We’ve been heading east for so long, we wouldn’t want to risk any reruns of paths we’ve already walked.”

“Brittany has a point.” That was Steven. Sweat started to burrow itself into my shirt. I found that I no longer trusted Steven enough to lead us into a direction. But he was a persuasive person and he knew it.

“I think,” continued Steven, “that we should travel south, towards the predicted location of the Witch.” My heart jumped out of my shirt. Blood rushed, vision sharpened, and suddenly I saw Steven in a different light – he was trying to kill us.

“Are you fucking crazy?!” I shouted at him, snatching the map up from the

rock. My actions activated the whole group of people, but not in the way that I had hoped.

George: “Hear Steven out. Jace!”

“Calm down man, we need to remain calm!” said Phil.

Ashley sat on the ground, head turned into her knees, hands on her neck. Her body was shaking but no noise was coming out. I’m sure she was confused regarding who to trust.

Briz’s face was stone cold. She was standing straight, looking forward. “Guys,” Briz said, “we are being watched.” All at once, all the shouting stopped and each pair of eyes slowly turned to the spot that Briz was staring at. A small chunk was taken out of the side of a large tree. The chunk had streams of smoke rising from it. The missing chunk was not extremely noticeable, but it was definitely not there when we set up camp. Someone was hunting us. “Guys we have to get out of here. The Witch is known to use a slingshot and explosive rocks as a weapon!” That was Ashley’s frightened voice. She stood up and started packing our stuff. A moment of silence passed, followed by chaos. Voices shouting, hands grabbing any possession they happened to pass. Ashley was the first to run into the woods, expertly finding the path we had planned on following this morning. Thanks to Ashley, we were able to escape our inevitable slaughter with a slight sense of direction. I was the next to follow, folded tent in one hand, backpack in another,

gripping the top strap with bone white knuckles. I had my BB gun strapped around my back and my knife holstered on my shorts, but I was too frightened to stop running and prepare either weapon. I looked behind me and saw Briz, Phil and George all sprinting to keep up with us.

“Follow the path!” I shouted behind me, hoping they’d hear and be able to follow us. Up ahead I saw the stream we had been walking along for much of the trip. We had only broken off of the stream to set up camp. We were heading in the right direction. *WWZZ!!* A rock flew right past my head and set a small batch of twigs to the side of the path on fire. She was aiming for me.

“Briz! Don’t follow me guys, she is after me!” I quickly took a sharp right, following the edge of the river. I looked to my left, across the river, and saw Ashley, George, Phil, and Brittany following my direction. They had made it across safely.

“You have to jump, Jace!” shouted Ashley. *Now or never*, I thought to myself. The river was about six feet across, and was flowing to the left. If I got swept up in its violent current, I would be shot down the river, in the wrong direction. The land in front of me widened a little bit, shortening the width of the river to about five feet. I turned slightly right, planning to make the jump like a baseball player runs to second base – a wide turn around first base only to sprint to second base. Another rock whizzed past my head, this time it landed in the water with a sizzle. I was never much of a baseball player, but my life hadn’t been threatened when I was playing. I reached the widened part of land, made my slight right turn, then turned left and jumped.

I heard the whistling noise of a rock heading my way. My arms were flailing, but despite me holding onto my bag and that damn tent, I made it on land. The rock that was trailing me hit its target spot on, tagging me on the right foot. An explosion, a flash of white, then nothing. ■

*The time I've spent at The New York State Summer Young Writers Institute has been invaluable to me. I've made good friends, and I've acquired skills that are sure to benefit my creative writing and beyond. I wish I could come back again next year.*

– Emma Bredthauer

# 3:33

BY ERICA HELLMAN

it is 3:33 in the morning as i stand in the same place you stood  
one (1) universe and a day ago.  
we have never met, but we could  
have known each other  
somewhere, somehow,  
in another time.  
perhaps in a pregnant frog's belly or the crack in the window  
leaning on the break in reality;  
the one that hordes all our letters, pens, guitar picks  
and lonely, orphaned socks.

our meeting was not meant to be,  
i suppose.  
and i suppose i am not meant  
to remember you at all, even though  
all i know are words coated in ash  
and blood mixed with checkerboard soil.

still, i feel jealous of all who knew  
you, saw you alive,  
supped from the same patch of air that mingled  
through your alveoli, capillaries, bronchioles,  
two (2) lungs and other respiratory terms that  
remain stationary  
in the fog in my mind just as easily  
as the color of your favorite shirt  
and the sound of your voice at 3:33 in the morning.



*I've never been in a group of people where everyone just gets along. I can't speak for any other kids in the program, but I was a friend with everyone. Add in the fact that we all love writing and you get a smart group of kids that loves to have fun and support each other. This program was so much fun.*

*- Travis Gubernick*

# Feed Me

BY LILLIAN JOHNSON

It is the honey  
That sweetens my afternoon  
Taken from the most ordinary of flowers  
You transform it into the most extraordinary of foods  
Cultivated, slowly  
Not a second wasted, not a second spared

It is the honey  
That tests my strength  
You are a venomous worker bee  
I am the skin of a baby;  
fresh and impressionable  
puncture me



*This week has been my most productive week in my 16 years of living. I have the poor Wi-Fi and plethora of writing prompts to thank for that. I have seen so much and written what seems like so little – in comparison with all I was able to experience. When I return to a civilization that is not always stuck in thunderstorms, I know that I will not forget—saints above, help my writing career if I do!*

– Philip Kim

# Know Your Origins

BY PHILIP KIM

I couldn't understand why we had stopped. The road continued on without a town in sight. By all definitions of the phrase, we had parked in the middle of nowhere. My grandfather, a Korean pauper turned business owner in the capital city of Seoul, stepped out of his car with a new suit. It almost gleamed in the sunlight and conducted itself like a right-hand assistant, providing an accurate introduction for the man who wore it. My brother and I took the time to stretch, fighting off the rigidity that had overcome our bodies from the long road trip.

The smell of moss and dirt was new to me; I had spent nearly a week in Korea's biggest urban center, breathing the city's exhaust. Even when I asked my grandfather why we were here, he just gave me a rugged smile. It was the kind of expression someone would want to save and keep hidden lest it lose its luster and effect. As such, I was inclined to keep quiet and follow him as he began down a smooth path into some foliage. The mystery was eating at my adventurer side, and so I convinced my brother to stomp through the weeds and overgrowth ahead of the rest of the family. Soon, we

were smack in the middle of what appeared to be a hastily cut passage through the forest, grass high enough to swallow us whole if we squatted.

My grandfather, somehow comfortable in that office suit of his, strolled through the forest like it was his backyard. He looked to none of us or spoke a word. His eyes were set on a parting in the foliage; light streamed in and painted a portal into a small clearing. The forest invited us to venture a look at its secret. My brother and I stood on either side of this opening, respecting our grandfather enough to allow him first passage. It was only after he entered and became bathed in the sunlight that we went in after him.

It was just an area within the thicket where the canopies forgot to provide cover. I couldn't see why we had chosen to come here, but my grandfather hadn't stopped walking. He had continued to our left, ascending an invisible staircase up a knoll entirely populated by wild flowers and wheat stocks. I had to look down to notice the stepping stones seemingly integrated with the earth.

Then I looked up and saw the headstones. Hidden behind opaque forest

and walls of overgrowth was an ancient cemetery.

There were at least two tiers of these headstones, large plaques with Korean engravings carved into their surfaces. I began to make out the columns of letters, bold fissures cut with passionate precision. They were names. My grandfather had stopped and stared downwards at a second tier plaque. It was resting next to a bed of purple sunflowers.

I knew they had to be important names, perhaps the names of emperors and empresses of an older dynasty. Maybe this was the final resting place of those who founded Korea, forgotten by all but the wisest, like my grandfather. But after a second thought, I dismissed the theory as a side-effect of the fantasies I read so often.

It was a magic scene, a Martin Scorsese moment of silence. The air was so thick with anticipation and suspense that I had to breathe deeply to satisfy my need for oxygen. The world slipped into slow motion in that moment. The wind swept down and rocked the stalks and flowers back and forth in tune with the chirps of a bird choir. The forest welcomed my grandfather with a eulogy devoid of tangible rhythm or score. And like a long opener in a movie, the scene seemed to last an eternity. Maybe we were paying our respects to people who had been dead for an eternity and never visited once in that time.

Who were these people, these individuals who were so important that we and the world had to treat them with the utmost reverence?

My parents came up from behind and joined us on the steps. No one said a word still. Ultimately, one of them revealed the mystery in a strict whisper, "These are Grandpa's parents and grandparents. They are buried here with their parents and their grandparents. When he dies, he wants to join them here." When I looked down again at the plaque, I saw the people who brought upon my birth and prosperous life - long before I was ever conceived. ■

*This week has meant a great deal to me. For one, I met many fun folks and other writers who are simply wonderful. Second, the classes really improved my writing. I should also mention that I really quite enjoyed the sense of being treated more as an adult than as a child. In school, I feel like I am always being talked down to, but here all the faculty treated me as an equal.*

- Noah LaPointe

# Music in Your Head

BY NOAH T. LA POINTE

She was beautiful, wasn't she? Long, flowing black hair. It was thick, remember. You could run your fingers through it and feel healed of your troubles. And those eyes, pleading for your touch upon her skin.

Truly, she was a wonderful thing to behold.

You loved her, I know that. You would fantasize about her constantly in your bed as you pushed against the covers. Not just that night though, you would think back to all of those nights you spent in each other's company. But mostly those nights when her back arched and when the whirr of the electric fan drowned out the bed springs.

You wish there had been music. Nothing special, you think. Just nice, classical pieces. Perhaps that song you heard in a Woody Allen movie no one could recognize if you tried to sing it. Or maybe the theme song for the movie you both hated but had a fondness for. Just music. Any type.

You wish there had been music. In your head there was music.

In her head she doesn't even remember who you are. Or perhaps she doesn't even care.

After that first time, yours, not hers, as you sat in the light of dawn, breathing slowly, she cleared her throat and looked at you with those unwavering eyes.

"That was nice. Thank you," Her voice scratches the roof of her mouth. "It's nice to remember that..." You agree with her, silently closing your eyes. "Last time I did something like that I was drunk."

Your head stays still, but slowly your spine breaks into two. You want to throw her off your shoulder and scream, "When you were what now?" at the height of your abilities, but you can't. You're tired. Exhausted.

When you wake up for the second time that day, she is gone. As usual, she skittered back to her room to take a shower, leaving you alone with your thoughts.

No one in your condition should be left with their thoughts.

You yanked on your trousers and

lathered yourself in deodorant. You try to think about the day ahead, about the classes you're going to take after...

You missed breakfast.

You're slightly proud of that. Nevertheless, you feel awful. Like you were just used for what lies beneath in your trousers. You feel odd. Not like what you thought you would feel.

You feel positively dirty. Did she leave a check? Perhaps a few dollars tucked under a glass to say that the service was terrible? Or did she not pay you at all? Compared to her drinking buddy...

What sort of impact could you give?

Your family says you're too young to be having these feelings. Not explicitly though. They never mention sex in front of you. A forbidden secret to be kept under watch of day. You don't know why they don't talk about it though. We all experience it at one time or another. Why not experience it as a family?

You now realize why that would be an uncomfortable thing to do.

"So, last night, your Mom and I were going at it pretty quick, and, would you know it, the dog was sitting at the end of the bed the whole time! My gosh, you cannot believe the amount of surprise I had when I realized ol' Scruffie had seen the entire thing! We're gonna have to give the pooch some counseling, ha!"

You have a picture in your mind. She is lying on her back, staring into your face. Her arms are around you and her wild mane of hair is spread over the pillow. But wait. There is another thought. A man of strength and considerable stature looms over the bed staring at you. Cast in shadow you cannot recognize his face.

"Hey there, mate," he whispers in the voice of every tormentor in your life. "Fancy a snack while I take care of things here?"

He reaches out, jerks your shoulder and you topple to the rug. He laughs slowly. His foot raises and comes down on your throat. You choke and gasp. He pulls out a bottle and cracks it off his heel; plunges it into your chest.

This is what you think of now.

For that short amount of time, that gap of infinite possibilities when she is away in another town, your grades begin to slip. Your parents stress the importance of this year and how vital it is to get all nineties.

Your scores falter and tumble. Not right away, but steadily. And you feel ashamed of yourself. In such a school, you think, anyone would be able to get perfect scores. You begin to question what you believe in. Is Knowledge really the solution to your problems? Are you really ever going to be able to leave this horrendous scrap of town just by the wit and wisdom of your own being?

She's going to college next year. Harvard, she says, is her safety school.

You start to wish you had never gone to that summer camp. Screw the splendid chats with hundreds of brilliant, creative people. To the wind with conversations that mean so much to who you are and what you live for. If you had the choice, you realize, you would never see the love of your life again.

And she would jump at the chance of never seeing you either.

You think back to that last day with her constantly. All your things packed away in the car along with your parents, patiently giving you an appropriate space. The carpet feels soft on the soles of your feet. The air is warm, comforting. You kiss her, and hold her close. There is a quiet in the room as both of you realize that this is the end.

You will never see one another again.

Music plays in your head, and you leave your dorm for the last time. ■

*It was a great creative atmosphere. Lots of fun. It's very helpful to bounce work off of people who love writing as much as you do.*

– Elsa Evans-Kummer

# Not From Around Here

BY SARAH LOFSTROM

Earlier this year, following an unplanned visit to a ditch in Ohio, an incredibly kind native with a strong dislike for gay people taught me a lesson about open-mindedness. My mom and I had been driving to Oberlin College, or so we thought, when in reality we were driving in the opposite direction. We decided to pull over to establish where we truly were, but being from California, we had no concept of the fact that in the middle of winter, the side of the road in Ohio doesn't necessarily yield solid ground, or any ground for that matter. We trusted the comforting blanket of snow that beckoned to us from the pavement and as we pulled over, we realized the gravity of our mistake. Our car was now tipped precariously to the side, stuck squarely in a rather daunting ditch.

It should be noted that I am the calm one in the family. I remain stoic and cool in the face of extreme discord or times of crisis. The same can, unfortunately, not be said about my poor mother. As I tried in vain to encourage her to stop the tapping of her head over and over on the steering wheel, an action that was emphasized by the decisive muttering of "shit shit shit shit shit shit," I surveyed the scene. A few houses were situated nearby the expansive field that surrounded us in all directions. Perhaps we could try knocking on a couple of their doors and inquire as to where we might find the most efficient roadside assistance. It would be dark in an hour or so, and I knew that even if a tow company could come to us, it might be a matter of hours before they did, and it was starting to snow. We needed to know, and quickly, what the fastest means of extricating ourselves and our dejected rental car from this situation were.

After encouraging my sniffling and shaking mother to get out of the car and breathe fresh air, I gracelessly flailed my way to the backseat, unable to get out of my side as it was submerged in snow. After flinging the door open and climbing out practically head first, I joined her on the road. The 28-degree frigid air swirled around us with the promise of

snow, chortling at our weak Californian skin. Just as I was about to suggest calling someone (although, really who could help) or going to knock on a nearby door, a beat-up navy blue Ford pick-up slid up to us and slowed to a halt.

A strappingly built young man of about 30 hopped out of the driver's side, wearing a T-shirt and working a tobacco wad in one side of his smiling mouth. "Can I help you folks?" His expression was kind, his tone sincere. I looked to my mother to see if she had gathered herself enough to come up with a response. She had. After she explained, she added that we were from California. He said "Aaaaah" and smiled knowingly. "Not used to this kind of weather huh?" We firmly assured him we weren't. He suggested that we hop in his truck and he could take us to the town center to find the tow place. After brief hesitation, my mother hoisted herself up into the passenger side while I squeezed into the backseat, sandwiched next to gym equipment and a six-pack of Red Bull. On we went to town.

He began calling numerous people that he knew in the tow truck business, but all of them would take three hours or so to get to where we were, an option not at all appealing to my mother. The man explained that he owned a gym in the neighboring town and that he was a personal trainer who had time to kill before his next appointment. Eventually, after a myriad of disappointing phone calls he reached someone who could be at our car in 30 minutes. My mother and I were exceptionally relieved. The man suggested that we, driving through town now, stop at a gas station so we could go to the restroom and take a minute before returning to our car. He did this for my mother who was practically overflowing with gratitude at this point. I waited in the car with him while my mother went inside.

I was well aware of the bulk of most residents in Ohio's political and social leanings, being in sharp contrast with my own. I didn't know what to expect from this generous man who had gone com-

pletely out of his way just to help us. We sat in silence for a few seconds before he asked what we were doing so far from home. I explained that we were en route (well, figuratively speaking) to Oberlin College. He stared. He told me of how Oberlin was "a unique place". My perceptive skills were somewhat dulled at this point in the day and I simply nodded my head, smiling benignly at him. He continued, before finishing with, "Yeah there are a lot of...you know...gay and lesbian freaks there." It was my turn to stare. I was saved the awkward experience of trying to assemble an appropriate response as my mother reentered the car.

He drove us back to our car, before double-checking that the tow truck company knew what it was doing and that my mother and I were OK and that my phone had enough juice to navigate us to Oberlin. With our profuse thanks, he left, his blue pick-up sluicing through the slushy remnants of the wicked snow that had so easily fooled us.

That man opened up my mind in a way I hadn't anticipated. I realized that, yes, he had different beliefs, and, yes, he was conservative and somewhat ignorant of the importance of equality for all, but that didn't make him a bad person. It had been hard for me to make that distinction in the past, being from a place that is so wildly proequality that I grew up positively surrounded by the emphatic flaunting of rainbows. I had believed that people who were ardent in their anti-gay beliefs were heartless and unforgiving bastards who had no respect for the rights of their fellow people. He, however, was in the same position as I was. He was raised surrounded by an ensconced set of beliefs that were embraced by everyone around him, just as I was. He taught me that the very definition of open-mindedness is being open-minded to different types of open-mindedness. Who would have thought I would have found that in the back of a pick-up truck of a tobacco-spitting man from Ohio. I certainly didn't. ■

# Pickles in the Dark Core of the Night

BY GRATIS MAXWELL

I thought my wife was going to get a hammer, but instead she returns to the dining room with butter. I tell her that she might as well smash the jar off of my hand, because I'm not letting go of these pickles. She tells me not to worry, and greases my hand with the butter. It doesn't work, and my hand remains firmly lodged in the mouth of the jar.

About a week later, I'm watching television in the living room. The pickle jar, with my hand still in it, rests in a bowl of ice on the side table to keep its contents from spoiling. My wife walks into the room.

"Have you given up yet," she asks.

"Now Martha," I say, "You know it isn't that simple. If I let go of these pickles, I'm admitting defeat. To a piece of glass, no less! I've never rolled over for anyone in my life, and I'm not going to start now!"

Martha sighs. "Fine. But would you at least call the office? You haven't been in since you got your hand stuck."

The next morning I wake up to an empty bed. I am alone with the jar. Martha slept downstairs, on the couch last night. This piece of glass certainly has been driving a rift in our once passion-suffused lives. I go downstairs to make breakfast, but only succeed in knocking a bowl of pancake batter off the counter.

Later, I sit on the couch, once again alone with the jar. Martha has gone to work. She barely acknowledged my greeting this morning, and wouldn't look at me. The pickle jar continues to complicate things, but I can't simply release the pickles. To do so would be to concede that this piece of glass has outwitted me. My hand is swollen and pruned inside the confines of the jar, somewhat green from the constant exposure to pickle juice.

At some point, I doze off, waking later that night. Through the window I see rain and wind splitting the heavens, and the silhouettes of trees flailing in the night. Flashes of thunder and roars of lightning accentuate the storm. I

note that Martha still isn't home, as I can see the coat rack from my spot on the couch and hers is missing.

As the clock strikes midnight, the front door swings open. A bolt of lightning illuminates Martha's outline against the night, and she holds something long in her hand.

"All right Bob," she whispers, "this has gone far enough." She lifts what I could now see is a hammer. "That thing is coming off."

"No Martha, don't!" I cry. "You'll hurt me!" She howls, running through the door with her hammer held high above her like some vengeful incarnation of Thor. Screaming a high pitched scream, I sprint up the stairs, pickle jar flailing along next to me. I flee to the bedroom and spin around, realizing that I'm trapped. Martha steps through the door before I can leave, looking more furious than all the demons of hell. I back up against the wall.

"Give me your arm, Bob." Her voice is low, menacing, almost a growl.

"Never!" I scream, grabbing a pillow from the bed with my free hand and ripping a hole in it with my teeth. I fling it at her and a blizzard of feathers erupts around her roaring figure. I dash from the room and lock myself in the bathroom, pressing myself into a corner. I try not to breathe.

"Open up!" Martha screams from the other side of the door. "Open the door now!" I stay silent, and a similar silence falls outside the door. Seconds pass like hours. My heart patters around in my chest.

Suddenly, a massive impact strikes the door. Then another, then another. Wood splinters. More impacts. Chunks of wood fly inwards, and Martha's face shoves its way through the hole, a devilish grin illuminating her twisted visage as flames billow from her eyes. "I see you." Her teeth jut from her mouth like fangs.

The face withdraws, and an arm comes through, scrabbling and straining against the surface of the door. It claws its way to the handle, and unlocks

it. The door swings open. Martha enters the room, and a wind sweeps up dust and wood chips into a malefic whirlwind. Martha's cry cracks the room's tiles, and she leaps through the air, hammer descending like the wrath of God. I raise my hands, half in defense and half in a meager show of defiance. There is an explosion of light.

\* \* \* \*

I float on waves of salt and garlic, buoyant in a peaceful, cucumbery sea. I drift for what could be an eternity.

My eyes crack open to the sound of birds chirping. The smell of damp grass surrounds me, and I can see the exterior of my house above me. There is a gaping hole in the upper level, and through it I can see the remains of the bathroom. I must be lying in the back yard. I can't feel anything. My body seems distant from my mind. Slowly, I manage to shift my gaze downwards, and gradually my arm comes into focus. The jar is gone, and clenched in my deformed right hand are two pickles, perfectly shaped, medium-size dills. If I could feel my face, I think I'd be smiling. Or crying. Maybe both. I let my eyes drift shut, and my consciousness fades into the deep peace of the final oblivion. ■

*This Institute has not dramatically changed my life, but it has provided me with a web of fellow strange people in which I have found solace. I have been challenged by all the passions here, and I know I am not alone. I am eternally grateful for the doorways that have been opened for me.*

– Rachel Cochran

# The Gypsy

BY ROWAN MELCHER

Henry Davis stepped into the elevator. It had glass walls and a carpeted floor with little speakers in the top corners. Henry was a 60-something-year-old man with short grey hair and a face permanently twisted into a scowl. He was small, only about 5 foot 7 inches, and he had short, thick arms and legs. He was the sort of man who, if your day was the best day of your life, he would be the one to ruin it. He pressed the button to go to the eighth floor, and looked out through the glass walls, watching the floor below him get smaller and smaller. The elevator was filled with the sounds of the acoustic guitar and violins playing a fast reel. Henry leaned against the back wall and grinned. The song brought back memories of yesterday's events.

It had been his day off, so he had decided to go to the carnival. He loved carnivals. The people there were already so miserable that it only took a little nudge to send them over the edge. The brightly colored tents and cheerful carnival music had made his head ache, so he went to find someone to make miserable. He had seen his first target, the hot dog vendor. The vendor was only in his early 20s and was selling the hot dogs out of a little white cart with a red and yellow umbrella sticking out of it. He had been wearing a blue baseball cap and a white T-shirt that read "Joe's homemade hotdogs" Henry had walked over and ordered a hot dog.

"Hey, one jumbo with ketchup and mustard," he had said.

"Sure coming right up" the vendor said with a cheerful grin.

"What have you got to be happy about, you're probably a college dropout or a person that has failed so miserably at life that they have reached the bottom rung of society, a hot dog man in a carnival," Henry had said. "I bet it makes it really hard for your parents to boast of their son, hey? Wilma, my daughter, just got accepted into veterinarian school and what does your son do again? Oh yeah, he's a hot dog sales man."

He had continued to harass the vendor until the man had started to cry. Henry had grinned with pleasure and munched cheerfully on his hot dog until someone called campus security to come and get him. But it was so easy to get out of trouble when you're old: all you had to do was pretend you were senile and didn't know what you were doing and then they are leading you off gently by the arm feeling pity instead of anger. He had been taken away to a different part of the carnival and told not to return to the hot dog man. So instead, he had moved toward a large purple tent which had a large sign with colorful letters that proudly announced "Madame Guatamo's Future Telling Wonders". Perfect. Henry had grinned, an evil smile that was filled with malicious intent. He walked towards the tent and stepped inside. The interior of the tent was dark and gloomy. The only sources of light were the small rays of sunshine that came through the cracks and a lamp that sat on a small table in the middle of the room. Stacks of boxes sat in the corners and papers lay littered about the floor. The tent was split in half by a colorful curtain of red and yellow that stretched from the ceiling to the floor. He had reached the curtain and torn it aside, revealing two benches in one of the corners of the room. He

had seen a pile of clothes lying on one of the benches. Filthy pigs. He had clapped his hands loudly. "Hey! What kind service is this?" he shouted. He had seen something move out of the corner of his eye and had turned to see the pile of clothes suddenly sit up on the bench. He had stumbled backwards until he had realized with a start that the pile of clothes was actually a woman. She was ancient with long, scraggly, white hair and a scarf tied around the top of her head. Her clothes were ratty and tattered and she was wearing a dress that looked like it had been left with seven-year-olds on splatter painting day. Her fingers were covered with gaudy looking rings and a long necklace of colorful beads hung around her neck.

"How may I be of service to you," she had said in a voice that crackled with age. "I do fortunes with tarots, tea leaves, crystal balls; whatever you may desire." Henry had snorted with derision and had dismissed the woman as an old fool.

"Bah, don't even try that old schtik on me, lady, I've seen it all and I know it's all mumbo jumbo and people getting ripped off their money," Henry had replied.

*continued on page 35*

*If getting to write was like getting to swim, then writing at school would be like wading in a kiddie pool and the Summer Young Writers Institute would be like diving into the ocean.*

*— Maura Colley*



## The Gypsy (continued)

She had turned to look at him and he had seen her face fully for the first time. He shuddered even now, remembering what he had seen. Her face was a mass of wrinkles turning her face into something not resembling a human. Her eyes were dark and filled with pain and misery as if they had seen things that no one should ever have to see.

“You never know what you may hear,” she had said. “Let us see what your future is.”

Henry had looked distrustfully at the women.

“No strings attached,” he had said. “None of your dirty underhanded gypsy tricks and trying to steal my money when I’m not looking.”

She had just smiled and gestured for him to give her his hand. She had traced her finger around his palm, stopping at a point right below his thumb. She had spoken but this time it was in a different voice. It was louder, more powerful and all traces of age had disappeared from it.

“You make play of those who are less fortunate than yourself,” she said as she gripped his hand harder, digging her nails into his skin. “Your death shall be soon and it shall be an unpleasant one, befitting of the misery you have caused others.” Henry had yanked his hand away and stood up. “Bah! You old

crone, you’re probably half-crazy by now.” He had turned swiftly and walked back out of the flap and into the sunshine, feeling her gaze burning into his back. He had shielded his eyes against the brightness of the sun until they had readjusted, then continued on until he had found someone else to make fun of.

Henry drew his mind back to the present and tapped his foot impatiently, willing the elevator to go faster. A loud crash echoed throughout the elevator shaft and the elevator came to a sudden halt. The lights flickered then went out and the music stopped playing. Henry stood in the darkness and felt his way down to the emergency call button on the button panel.

“Hey, what’s going on up here?” he said. He waited for a minute, but no answer came forth from the speaker. Henry growled in frustration and kicked the wall of the elevator. The elevator jolted and suddenly began to move sideways.

What the hell is going on, Henry thought. Henry tried the emergency call button one more time. “Whoever is on the other end of this, I’m going to make their life a living hell when I get out of here.” The elevator came to a sudden stop and Henry walked over to the doors and tried to force them open

but the metal doors stayed stubbornly shut. Then the elevator was falling, going faster and faster every second. Henry gasped at the sudden change in direction. He sat down as fast as he could, moaning as his stomach flip flopped. The elevator went faster and faster then it stopped as suddenly as it began. Henry was smashed against the wall, his head slamming painfully against the wall. He grimaced. His only solace was in the fact that he knew he was going to kill whoever was playing this joke on him. He stood up and tried to get a glimpse of where he was but all he could see was darkness. All of a sudden the elevator was bathed in gold and red light as fires sprang up outside the elevator. Henry stumbled back and fell, hitting his head on the metal doors. He felt the blood trickling down his neck. He looked out of the window and saw that the fires stretched on as far as the eye could see. Figures started appearing out of the flames, more and more of them until they formed a crowd. Henry got up and started banging on the glass.

“Over here, somebody help me!”

The figures advanced towards him, getting closer and closer until Henry began to see the features on their faces.

“No!” he screamed and leapt back, pressing his back against the opposite wall. He cast panicked glances in all directions, looking for some way, any way out. His heart thumped wildly in his chest, and his breath came out in short, ragged gasps. He turned towards the door as he tried to force it open again but it stayed closed. “Help please anyone help!”

The figures kept advancing, and no one heard Henry’s continuous cries for help. Thoughts were pinwheeling around his head and he couldn’t think straight. A sudden massive pain erupted in Henry’s chest. He clutched his heart and fell to his knees, his vision quickly fading to black. The last thing he heard was the ding of the elevator and the doors sliding open. ■

*I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at the Summer Young Writers Institute. The classes were taught by wonderful professors who introduced me to new techniques, some of which I'm sure I will use in the future. I have also made tons of friends here, and will never forget our late nights spent together.*

– Erin Equinozzi

# Doing Our Thing

BY JOHANNA MOHRS

Here where my mother's telling falters,  
Memoirs stumble and fall.  
We drink  
To struggle,  
Losing our lives  
Waiting somewhere  
Or wondering if we are awake.  
Here waking to  
Dimness is easy,  
Like finding something to die for.  
Here everyone speaking  
Carries dialogue  
her swaddled babe,  
Selling bottled scenes to outsiders.  
Here we balance on  
Hands, shelter what  
We hardly know by shouting.  
Here we pry a  
Screen reality  
Out of speech.  
Here we know enraged professors who  
Write the steps, their living over.  
Here we study drunken loving,  
Our safe little version.



*I'm really going to miss all the friends I've made here. I feel like I've known my closest friends for years, not days. I adore everyone here. The people were honestly the best part of the program. The writing part was nice, too, but the people were something else. I don't think I'll ever have friends like the ones I've made here again.*

– Erica Hellman

# My Perspective of Him: How Everything Changed

BY MAYA DOMINI PAOLASSO-MARTINEZ

He was confident. At least, anyone would have believed that he was if they walked into a room and they saw him standing there in his all-gorgeous glory, with his head held high, and his perfect nose proudly in the air. He was smart; it was pretty obvious from the vocabulary he used in the emails we'd shared, or in the way he'd present his arguments to the jury in the courtroom. He was personable; he'd always make an effort to start conversation. Plus, he loved to hear himself talk. He was not, in my initial thoughts, a fool, a loser, or an underachiever. Everyone—and by everyone I mean his peers, his friends, adults, and me—all thought he was an amazing guy. Boy, were we wrong.

We were assigned to work together as prosecuting attorneys in a youth court case. We were very active members of our community, both of us known to present ourselves well. And, of course, he would be known for that. He was perfect in my eyes, so why wouldn't he be perfect in the eyes of another person?

And sure enough, the day of the case, prior to the official hearing in the

courtroom, as soon as I sat down he immediately chatted me up.

"I'm here as a prosecutor but damn, I'm still in high school." He smiled as he took his seat next to me.

"That's true." I said, though in my mind I was shaking my head, thinking such a prude, this guy, so conceded.

His demeanor was of a responsible, intelligent young man with a bright future ahead of him. I didn't think he'd be the type to venture out into the world of darkness.

"I don't actually have my license," he said after the discussion of motor vehicles and our teenage years came about. "Maya, can I tell you something?" There was a sudden glint in his blue eyes that I couldn't quite decipher. Of course he could tell me something. He could tell me anything, the more discussion we had, the better for me, so I let him continue on.

"That cop over there," he said as he motioned to the arresting officer texting in the corner of the room. "He's cool, just like all the police in this town. They're really lenient on things." His lips curved into a little signature smirk.

Lenient? That wasn't quite the word

I thought would be acceptable to use when describing a law enforcement officer. I opened my mouth to question his choice of words but as I mentioned before, he loved to talk, so he wasn't done speaking.

"I've got this cousin and he lives down in Florida, he's fourteen but he looks like he's twelve or something. One summer, Maya, I was down there with him, and we decided to drive back here instead of catching a flight." He paused for a moment before continuing. "Now I've only got my permit but he's got nothing—no license or anything—but he was behind the wheel all the way back to New York."

I raised an eyebrow. "So, you're telling me you broke the law?" My eyes widened in surprise, thinking this could be either one of two things. He was either lying to me, or about to tell me something that would lead to a scenario even worse.

"Well, we got caught when we got back to New York, so I spoke to the police officer. I had like a ten minute discussion with him about how I was part of this Youth Court system, and he kind of just let us go."

I inhaled sharply while trying to focus on his eyes. This was obviously taking a turn for the worse as he continued his story.

"And we had drugs in the car the whole way." He chuckled as if he were telling some sort of joke. "He didn't even pick up on that one."

By now I felt as if it were hard to breathe. I could only imagine how my facial expression looked at the moment, but I didn't want him to know I was surprised. He didn't need me to tell him upfront how I felt.

"Well, it was just in the car right?"

I forced a smile and let out a snicker. "I mean it's not like you were high or—"

"Oh no, Maya." He cut me off with an even bigger smile, his perfect teeth a dazzling white as he flashed me a grin. "We were *heavily* intoxicated."

*continued on page 38*

*Being part of SYWI has challenged me, in positive ways, crashing into my comfort zone and allowing me to strengthen my talents. It helped me believe that the power of my mind is far stronger than I ever before would have believed. I am ever so grateful to have been a part of this program, a place that in so many ways is much like home.*

– Maya Paolasso-Martinez

## My Perspective of Him: How Everything Changed (continued)

“Can I ask what drugs?” I replied and he put that little smirk on his face again.

“Weed and alcohol.” He shrugged carelessly.

I stared at his face blankly. He replaced his smile with a soft look as he continued to look into my eyes. I was unable to understand how someone like him, with the image, personality, and talents could be a whole other person behind the professional, perfect facade. He was a fake, a fool, and a liar. He was obviously content with breaking the law. But he had the nerve to be a prosecutor in Youth Court, and be proud of himself. There are defendants here that were getting charged with the same violations that he was getting away with.

He turned his attention elsewhere in the room before I spoke up. “Well, you shouldn’t be sitting on this side, should you?” I motioned to the table that we were seated at labeled “PROSECUTION.”

His eyes shot back over and he looked at me, his expression unreadable as he just searched my face for a moment. After a long pause, he opened his mouth to speak as soon as the court clerk announced, “All rise, Youth Court is now in session.”

As we stood up, we didn’t once break eye contact, but he gave me another smirk before making his way to the front of the jury. That glint that I couldn’t decipher earlier was back in his eyes, except this time I knew what that look was. It was the look of deviance.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I thank you for taking your precious time to be here tonight.” Every eye in the room was glued to him. “I’m here to tell you the case of the offender tonight who has posed a threat to society, a boy whose criminal conduct doesn’t even deserve him this opportunity tonight. Ladies and gentlemen, on the night of April 3rd...”

I lost track of what he was saying because all I could do was stare at him dumbfounded, watching as he began to skewer the remorseful-looking defendant in the front of the room.

What a hypocrite. I nearly felt disgusted with myself for even thinking that he was anywhere close to being perfect. I watched him as he spoke to the jury with repulsion in my eyes. He would look at me between sentences and smirk. With each smirk he shot me, my level of disgust deepened and I felt the awe that I once felt slowly fade until

it was nothing but thin air. He finished up his introductory statement, and I observed the jury members nod their heads and whisper amongst themselves. They seemed to be nodding in approval. Of course they were pleased, I would have been swooning over him too had I not engaged in that conversation with him.

He sat back down and adjusted his jacket, tugging at the collar before turning over and giving me a glance.

“That was a great opening.” I smiled through gritted teeth, hoping he wouldn’t see right through me.

He eyed me up and down before that stupid smirk of his reappeared. He certainly knew how I was feeling towards him now. My forced smile and tone of voice gave me right away. But he didn’t look ashamed of himself, or even try to justify his actions to me.

“I know.” He grinned, raising his head a little higher, his perfect nose poised pompously in the air once again. His smile widened a bit more before he leaned closer to me and whispered...

“And damn, I’m still in high school.” ■

*This week has been as fun as it has been informative. I've made bonds that will last a lifetime and met people I'll never forget. Everyone was quite welcoming and supportive.*

– Julianna Engel



# Love

BY PRISCILLA RAPP

I don't want to say it was a hurricane  
Because it wasn't.  
It was mixed up and lost and fast and waning and strong  
But it was not a hurricane.

I don't want to say it was schizophrenia  
Because it wasn't.  
It was many things inside the other, all hidden, all whispered, all straining for repair,  
But it was not schizophrenia.

It was like a shelf half full  
Of ugly little things, stacked together,  
And when you squint,  
It's almost  
Pretty.

It was like an old box full of drugstore photos  
Bad and blurry candid  
And girls backlit with red eye.  
It was the feeling of screaming obscenities at midnight  
The feeling of sweat.

But when I look back  
There is only her.

*This week was one of the most fun times I've had in my life. The teachers were supportive and really fun to work with. This is a great experience for writers who want to learn more about their craft. I think I have really grown as a writer here. Also, the R.A.s were very helpful and didn't complain even if you broke your key card in your room like I did. All told, it was a great experience and a really fun time.*

– Rowan Melcher

# Newton (Sort of) Discovers Gravity

BY CHARLOTTE RING

The sun rose over the hills of England on a clear autumn morning very long ago. Farmers' wives were tending the cows and children ran amok. Morning promenades were being taken all across the country, long walks through fields over hills, to markets and to shops. They say a walk clears the mind and Isaac Newton was genuinely hoping this was true. Perplexed and at a dead end in his work, he left his rooms at the university where he taught. His skin was pale, and his face drooped with late nights spent pondering his work. The pallor of his visage was so shocking; in fact, he nearly caused a maid to spill her tea tray with fright as he left.

Unfortunately for the learned man, as soon as he emerged into the brisk dawn, he ran into another, less popular, instructor he worked with. Newton would in no way be able to clear his head in the company of such a twat-tling fool. He was called Professor Felix, and the brushing and limping sound of his strange gait was a warning for many to quickly walk in the other direction as if one had just remembered something important they had left.

"Good morning, Professor Newton," said Professor Felix.

"I suppose it is so," Newton grumbled.

"Where dost thee travel on this fine, fine morning?"

"I am taking a short reprieve to clear my head. I have happened to hit a boundary with my work. The mathematics concerning the fundamental forces is still elusive. I cannot discern how the heavenly and the earthly interact." Newton decided the easiest way to rid himself of this man was to bore him into leaving.

"Well, Professor, I have a perfected method for new ideas." The two men had begun walking off the grounds of the university, and reached a small road, indented by the wheels of carts. To the right ran the university orchard, and to the left the neighboring farm, hay bales stacked neatly. Newton

turned right. Felix turned left.

Newton hoped this would mark the end of their interaction, but Felix soon noticed their parting and raced to catch up to the other man, long robes flowing out behind him. Newton sighed. "I would very much enjoy a clearer mind, colleague. But that can only happen when I am alone."

"Again, sir, I know what will give you many ideas for your work. It changes your perspective, truly."

Newton wasn't so keen. He wanted to find a nice spot in the orchard and think. But it was true, he needed a fresher perspective. "So then, what is thy strategy? A method of meditation?"

"Not so, sir." Felix reached into his robes and withdrew two small bottles of green liquid. "A plant extract," he explained. "Opens the mind. Just drink it."

"I do not trust charlatans," Newton replied sourly.

"Oh no, sir, nor do I. This is not a trick." Felix offered up the vial.

Newton, against his better judgment, took the bottle from Felix and unscrewed the cap. "It tastes of a stable," he spat.

Felix, who had just emptied his own

bottle, replied, "Just wait a few minutes, sir, and thou wilt see the effects."

The fellow men continued their morning walk in relative silence, and just when Isaac was starting to enjoy himself, he was overcome with dizziness. "What hast thou done?" he asked, staggering. He held the trunk of the apple tree for support. "Thou hast drugged me, poisoned me!"

"Those are just the first effects, sir."

Newton looked at Felix, and the field of men that stood beside him, vague, dancing images. He saw his formulas burn in the sky, a sign from a malicious god. He gasped and fell to the ground. Felix looked about himself in a pleasant daze.

The trees in the orchard swirled about Newton. An apple fell off a tree, but instead of falling down, it flew upward. Newton gasped. Gravity went up: his formulas could work! Apples flew upwards: that was the key. He stood and grabbed Felix by the shoulders.

"Thank you, sir! Thank you. I must return to my work, now I know the earth can push apples off of its surface!" Isaac Newton giggled and stumbled back in the vague direction of the university. ■

*I wasn't sure what to expect when coming to this Institute, but what I found was an incredible community of interesting and excited students who want nothing more than to use language in ways that will blow your mind. It was so invigorating to be surrounded by people who have large vocabularies and feel the same things that you do. Writing is a lonely craft, but it doesn't have to be at the NYS Summer Young Writers Institute.*

– Charlotte Ring

# Remedies

BY EMILY ROBERTS

It's ironic how I came out of the hospital from my own appointment, but left with my mom actually being the one in need of help. I left Boston Children's on the spring of my sophomore year, knowing the final date of my surgery: August 9th. I had the date wrapped around my tongue and I wasn't completely sure if I liked its taste. After my first hospital visit at eight years old, the date hopefully symbolized my final visit to an operating room for quite some time. I was anxious in a sense that I wanted the day to arrive, but also because I feared the outcome.

My anxiety drove me onwards, and I mean in a physical sense; I was walking fast.

"Let's go to Quincy," I said in a fast-paced, no-nonsense city voice, referring to the Buffet of Boston. I knew perfectly well that my mom was willing to spoil me after these appointments, and I enjoyed walking through the city with her on days where the sunlight bounced between buildings.

"All right, we have all afternoon."

I led the way, walking the path I knew best: past Harvard Medical School and down to the Red Line off of

Northeastern University—the place my parents consider a worthy school for my application. My mom seemed fine at this point, and I, walking several paces ahead at most times, continued to stop and look back to ensure I hadn't lost her in a pool of college kids.

After five minutes, we boarded the T. I sat down next to her and she already appeared to be losing her breath. It wasn't really obvious at first. I thought the walk might have tired her; knowing her knees were bad that assumption wouldn't be unreasonable. In my selfishness I tended to ignore the obvious.

We got off the subway at Park Street and began walking to Quincy. This was when I began to lose her. She was walking slower and slower and her face was being engulfed by a deep red rash. If I had known the significance of this rash, perhaps I would have reacted differently, but sometimes I think that even then, I would have remained happier in a state of denial.

She was visibly wheezing now and hardly shuffling along the cobblestone streets. We were far enough from the hospital that it was illogical to turn back. My mom, physically struggling,

still tried the best she could to conceal her ailment. It was hard for me to comprehend how bad she really was because she felt the need to protect me from the gravity of it.

"Ems... it's time to go back," she said catching her breath, which was rapidly leaving her lungs. She had at last admitted her agony. At the time I hadn't realized how hard that must have been for her. She's my sturdy, tough mother who I rarely see cry, I rarely see hurt. Perhaps that is of disservice to her and maybe to me as well. I too suffer from the inability to reveal the painful pieces of myself. I've learned that lying to yourself only increases the internal torment.

"OK," I agreed. I bit my nails, but I could only cope by delving forward and guiding her to the nearest T. "Just a little further," I would say, trying to help her take a couple steps at a time. I was walking faster, which I understood didn't help at all, but I was thinking the less time that passed the better.

We boarded the T and she collapsed into the seat. Her neck, her face, and her chest were overcome entirely by the rash. I looked at her with little to say. I strove to keep as calm a manner as possible, but inside my heart was drumming against my ribs.

The most fear I felt that day was when we got into the car, and she took the wheel. She couldn't talk, regulating her own breathing was hard enough. I didn't want to distract her from driving, so I turned off the radio. To my surprise, with a few strenuous words she told me to turn it on. I figured she needed a distraction, but now that I think about it, she was trying to distract me instead from the sound of her gasping for air. In reality, it didn't help either of us.

I looked over at her and saw silent tears rolling down her cheek. I refused to mention them. I understood that what she thought she needed was my naivety. I gave her that at least.

She turned into Emerson Hospital, closest to where we live. She turned off the engine, trembling in a state of

*continued on page 42*



## Remedies (continued)

paralysis, knowing she may not even make the walk up to the emergency room. But still I took her arm and led her there. *Why the fuck was the ER on a hill?*

We got into a tight blue room with pamphlets laid out left and right and I sat her down. She was crying and struggling to breath. After the woman asked my mom several times for her information, I gave it for her, wondering how after the first time without an answer, she was even trying for a second.

Then in a whirlwind, she was admitted and hooked up to the hospital bed. I bit down on my bottom lip to stop from crying. The reality was setting in as I took in the scenery of hospital ropes and swinging curtains. I had to be strong for her.

"I'll call Dad," I said, my voice slipping as I darted from the room to get a signal outside.

The first call he didn't pick up. *Fuck.* Luckily the second call he did.

"Dad?"

"Hi Ems, is everything OK?" I knew he sensed a tremble in my voice, even my breathing was unsteady. The second he said it I felt the words fall out like marbles, clinking against the concrete. My breathing grew faster each time I spoke. I gurgled over the phone while trying to give him an explanation. I didn't want to worry him, but I realized very quickly that it was near impossible.

"Mom's in the hospital. She's OK. Come to Emerson night now. Please." He asked for elaboration, but I was incapable of new information, both due to my lack of emotional control, and my lack of general knowledge of the situation.

"OK, OK, I'm coming."

He showed up to the scene of me crying alongside my mom, holding her hand edged off of the bed.

Then a doctor read off the results. It turned out she was going to be OK. After numerous tests it was decided by men in lab coats that she had high blood pressure, along with extreme

stress; a deadly, yet solvable combination.

They couldn't give her an immediate remedy, only a diagnosis and some pills to be taken daily. Despite this, she already looked healthier sitting under the warm covers of the hospital bed.

Soon enough, I left with my brother, who had shown up to take me home. I felt a responsibility to stay, but I knew I couldn't. Her breathlessness had caused me to lose my own, and in that, I needed space to breathe.

As we drove home, I couldn't help adding to my already tear-stained cheeks, but this time it was not of fear, but of relief. Both she and I were finally going home, and in itself, it was worthy of some form of recognition. I closed my eyes as we drove home to familiarity, and if anything, I understood that even the strongest people can't remain strong forever, and perhaps, in no dismissive sense at all, they never were to begin with. ■

The program is definitely a great way to develop one's writing skills. It manages to push for success without being restrictive or oppressive. Any young person who wants to improve their writing skills should apply.

– Gratis Maxwell



# All Hail the Queen

BY STEPHEN SESONSKE

“What are they chanting?” Marie asked, glaring through her window at the rioting peasants gathered in the palace court yard. They strained against her palace walls, screaming, chanting and throwing things. She gasped in horror as a decapitated head flew past her window.

“Oh, all manner of things, Madame La Reine,” the old butler responded, casting a disinterested glance at the masses. He moved across the room, bringing out Marie’s imported china tea set. He selected a gold-rimmed cup painted with little roses, and began mixing her imported tea in the opulent florally-painted teapot.

“Bloody hell!” Marie exclaimed, throwing up her hands in frustration, “I asked you what they were saying. All manner of things tells me nothing! I should have you executed...although they seem to have full control of the guillotines.” Another severed head slammed into a window and Marie gasped in horror. She knew the man who used to own that head.

“Ghastly,” the butler said, pouring her tea into the rose teacup.

“Your unhelpfulness to me makes me quite ill, bring me my tea immediately.” Marie began to fan herself very

dramatically with her hand, pacing the length of the room several times.

“Here Madame La Reine,” the butler said, offering her the teacup. Marie, however, walked straight past him, ignoring the tea and making her way to the glass doors that emptied out to the balcony overlooking the rioters. Ignoring her butler’s passive protestations, Marie hurled the doors open and strode out onto the balcony.

A cacophony of angry voices immediately enveloped her, leaving Marie overwhelmed.

“Down with the queen!”

“To the guillotine with her!”

“Down with Madame Deficit!”

“Liberte. Egalite, Fratenite!”

“I just want to feed my family!”

“Let the streets be bathed in the blood of the royals!”

“I want her head to roll!”

“Kill the Austrian Whore!”

“THERE SHE IS!” one of the rioters had noticed her, and had seen fit to alert the others of her presence. Marie clutched to the balcony tightly, knuckles white and a worried grimace on her face.

“Mes gens...” she began, but she did not finish her sentence. A gunshot tore through the air above the shouting, and a bullet whizzed past Marie, burying itself in the much abused exterior of the palace. Marie shrieked, and backed away from the balcony bannister.

“Kill the Austrian Whore!”

Marie glared venomously at the crowd and turned on her heels, striding with deliberately ostentatious pace back into the palace. She slammed the door behind her so hard that the windows shuddered.

“Bloody hell,” she hissed, “those ungrateful asses!”

“I told you not to go out,” the butler said simply, again offering Marie her cup of tea. “They’re starving. They just want a little bread to feed their families. Can’t you understand what it’s like? Wouldn’t you want to riot if you couldn’t feed your kids?”

Marie laughed dismissively. “I can feed them, that’s the point, isn’t it?” She

shrugged. “If they want food they can work for it. Who ever got paid for rioting? If they want all food and no work then...then...LET THEM EAT CAKE!”

The butler chose not to respond to this sentiment, silently holding both his tongue and her cup of tea which she could take if such an action suited the fancy of her latest mood swing.

“Problem?” Marie demanded, placing her hands on her hips, “They shot at me! Some fils de salope shot at me! Me! And now they’ve taken to calling me ‘The Austrian Whore’ among other titles. Bloody hell, I tried to help them, you know I tried to help them! I aided them and what have they done? They call me ‘whore,’ they riot and shoot, now there are rumors that I’m to be executed? How’s that for grateful!?” She paused for a long moment, putting her face in her hands. “Bloody hell, this is why I hate peasants. And France...for that matter.” Marie had begun pacing now, throwing her hands about wildly.

Her rage consuming her, Marie stomped over to the table and threw her tea set from it. Expensive cups and saucers flew to the floor, shattering on impact. She threw the teapot to the floor personally. Moving next to the butler, she grabbed her tea. Without taking a single sip, she flung open the glass doors and hurled the full teacup down to the rioting peasants below.

“Take that and eat it you ungrateful asses!” she muttered, storming back into the interior. Tears were pouring from her eyes now, sliding down her cheeks and landing on her expensive silken dress. She seemed to be losing control of her breathing, her breaths coming out in short uneven bursts. “Bloody hell, bloody hell, bloody hell, bloody hell,” she repeated over and over, as tears poured out at a heavy intensity. Not bothering to wipe her eyes she sank into the pink silk sofa, burying her face into a pillow. She was shaking with violent sobs now, and her butler vacated the room, leaving the broken woman alone.

Alone, and surrounded by the enemy. ■

*This community was supportive and open, and I was able to make friends here very easily. This program granted me credibility as a writer, confidence as a human, and lifelong friendships.*

– Priscilla Rapp

# Mickey Mouse Down

BY GABRIELLE STILLMAN

Though I never actively made a list of appropriate places to tell your kids you have a rare type of aggressive breast cancer, I honestly don't think the Il Milino Trattoria, in the Swan Dolphin Hotel, in Walt Disney World Resort would make my top ten. I think I took it the hardest. My little sister, Maddy, just sat there. She did not move for a long time. She was a stone statue and did not have the ability to respond at all. I envied her. Wouldn't it be easier to have nothing to say? Isn't it more comfortable to feel nothing at all than feel like your whole world was crashing down at once and there was no way to stop it? Maybe she didn't understand. Maybe she did not want to understand. Maybe she couldn't understand. I guess it didn't matter where I was, or who was there to judge my family. And I suppose it didn't matter what words she used or how calmly she told us. My Mom is definitely the first one to want to shed some light on an unbearably hard issue. Even still, ripping a Band-Aid off slowly or quickly hurts the same once it's off.

I fully understood the monstrosity before us. Every emotion that my friends use to describe their breakups with their pathetic, week-long boyfriends came forward. Everyone knows that I hate all things overly expressive—especially crying. But here I am, and the floodgates open like a little baby, in her crib, crying her eyes out because she needs her diaper changed! Right in the middle of the restaurant. In the middle of Disney World. Yup. This couldn't be real.

Ironically, we are sitting in Walt Disney World, the “happiest place on Earth” talking about chemotherapy and radiations and oncologists. Where is fucking Mickey Mouse when you need him, right? Now everything I ever cared about feels impossibly small. Nothing else matters to me anymore other than my Mom. The terrifying part is, I am completely and utterly powerless. And so is she.

First came the phase of denial, but that couldn't last long because I reasoned it would have been a pretty sick joke to tell your kids you have cancer during a family vacation if it had, in fact, not been true. Next the guilt rushed in. Like most 16-year-old girls, my mother and I have been at each other's throats this past year. Oh yeah, I had this magnificent ability to be a real stubborn asshole when things weren't working in my favor. I could say the meanest things when someone pushes my buttons. It's a blessing and a curse.

Then the immense anger came creeping in like a volcano erupting, slowly at first and then bursting out of control. How could I be so stupid to think that I can even have one day of relief? It was the first day of summer vacation. We never get a break, do we? I finally freed myself from literally the most stressful school year ever, including at least two mental breakdowns and a shit load of failed tests. But that was over now. I conquered my demons. Not that it mattered. It felt like I was holding my school year, a little grain of sand, next to a mountain of bigger life issues to deal with. You know, “real

world” problems.

It's hard to imagine that less than 24 hours ago, I thought all the agony was over. It was the last day of my sophomore year, and I was happy as hell. I remember how confidently I marched straight up to my math teacher, looked her in the face and said, “You know what? Your class was a living hell for me! I'm way too glad it's over, but I really believe I grew up a lot in your room. So thanks, I guess.” And she giggled, we hugged as awkwardly as humanly possible, and I walked out of there with some pride that I couldn't try to describe. I survived, I remember thinking. I made it out alive. No more stress, right? So wrong. It seemed pretty ridiculous now, actually. There I was yesterday, declaring it was absolute torture to take some bullshit graduation requirement in high school. *You know what's gonna be hell?* I asked myself. Chemotherapy. Doctor Offices. The potential loss of my mother. Yeah, that's going to be a shitload of agony. But failing conics and parametric equations and limits quizzes? Now that is child's play, my friend. It was saying, “Dammit, I have a paper cut,” and then having someone stab you in the chest. That paper cut doesn't hurt so much now, does it? Maybe, just maybe, Dr. Murray's class would have been my only experience of anguish that year. Perhaps, I would have been one of the lucky ones. To my knowledge, finding the difference quotient has never killed anyone before, right? Everything was just so much more simple yesterday.

I felt like every moment my mom

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*This program was the first place I had the privilege to experience intense, thought-provoking English classes with students who are writers, just like I am. I go to a Math/Science/Technology magnet high school, so it was really special for me to work with students who have the same passion for writing that I do. It was an honor to be immersed in this writing world for ten days.*

*– Gabrielle Stillman*

## Mickey Mouse Down (continued)

and I were pissed off at each other was time I stole from myself. A flashback of every fight was coming back to haunt me. *Mom, I know I should have done better in pre-calc! Oh and, by the way, you were right about that crazy-punk senior with a joker tattoo, he only wanted to get in my pants—whoops. I'm sorry I started World War III when you forced me to go to the obnoxiously boring hockey game with the Purcells that time I was too busy studying! I'm sorry I drove Dad's car through the garage. It was an accident, I swear! I'm sorry we didn't spend more time together.* That was my biggest regret of all.

My mom is a full-time lawyer, and I am a full-time jackass-crazy-ambitious high school student who will stop at nothing to pull out some good grades. Combine the two, and there is not much room left for quality time together. We live in the same home, yet our lives revolve around completely different things. Mine revolves around tests. *Math test, chem tests, standardized test, pop quizzes, projects, AP exams, and, oh look, some more tests.* My mom's life revolves around cases. *Civil cases, criminal cases, her law partner's cases, even my dad's cases when he's desperate and let's her work her magic.* I'll never feel like we are going to have enough time together. I don't think one of us is to blame, but how is it that the things we were chasing could never make us truly happy? Perhaps, we could have found

legitimate happiness if we had looked down that hall plastered with inspirational quotes and awkward family photos collected over the years. The thing is, I could ace a thousand tests, yet it would mean nothing if I lost my mom. And she could be the most important lawyer in all of Palm Beach Country, but I know it would be worthless without Maddy, my dad, and me.

I'm not a goddamn doctor! Jesus, I literally slept through a year of chemistry, managing to leave the class knowing nothing at all but with my shiny little, good girl A that I so desire. Maybe, I could have learned how to help her make important medical decisions—life or death decisions. Either way, I couldn't *make this go away*. We are going on a roller coaster ride, and we have no control over where it goes or how bumpy the ride is. The track we were on made me sick to my stomach! And, oh yes, forget the standby line; in typical Stillman style, we got FastPasses for this attraction. I was watching my life on a movie screen, because there is no way this is real. This can't be happening, but somehow it is.

I know that breast cancer is everywhere in our world today. Everyone knows someone who has/had it, and it has just become such a part of life that people can't stop and cry after every friend, second cousin, or coworker receives the fateful news. I guess this is immature or crazy, but I just don't

understand how it could affect my family. Clearly, I have heard countless heartbreaking stories on the news of women who have been affected by breast cancer. It was as if I thought that there was a sacred wall around my household to stop anything that may hurt us. Now, I feel like someone has thrown a bomb and blew up our wall of security. With every depressing story on the news, I think I was subconsciously relieved it was not my family or friends. It is just some crazy statistic. It was bound to happen to someone—anyone—else! But now it's here, and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it. Yes, I guess you could say that cancer has a mind of its own, and that is why I still don't know how to handle it today. It is bigger and smarter than I am. I cannot cure it. I can't *make this go away*.

As we walked out of the restaurant I realized that everything I had come to know about Disney World was gone. It seemed like a madhouse, and the screaming children pierced my eardrums. I wondered what they were crying about that caused such violent noises. I bet it was something ridiculous like that their mothers refused to let them have ice cream, or they weren't tall enough to ride Splash Mountain! I'm almost positive they weren't crying about cancer, and in the moment, it really pissed me off!

To my left, Disney's Boardwalk hosted a sea of people, waiting patiently in line to see the man himself, Mickey Mouse. In my mind, Mickey Mouse is a figment of their imaginations. I swear I saw him die that night. He collapsed on the pavement, and nobody even noticed except me. I guess the other park guests were too caught up in the magic to realize what had happened. Why should they have to know? Why couldn't they get some fantasy to believe in? All the more power to them, right? Nobody else saw Mickey Mouse down the way I know I did because they didn't allow themselves; they were still gripping onto the power of fantasy. I was only stuck with my harsh reality. ■

*I've come here for three years now and I'd come a fourth if I could. I loved being surrounded by passionate writers like myself. They gave me wonderful support and useful critiques when I needed it. The teachers were also very helpful and sparked lots of creative ideas for my writing. I was able to get a lot done within this ten-day timeframe, which surprised me. Overall, it was a very enjoyable experience.*

—Lynn Wang

# First Time in Aikido West

BY GREGORY SYSSOYEV

Gregory stepped out of the car, followed by Alexei, his father. The building in front of which they had parked looked like a warehouse, but it was far more than that. The sign on the outside read “Aikido West”.

Father and son looked similar in some ways and different in others. Others were known to remark that they shared the same jawline, the same smile, and the same eyes, but the father, Alexei, was taller and broader in the shoulders, with exhausted, weathered features and a calm, guarded expression that could switch from roaring laughter to twitching rage and back again in mere moments.

The two of them walked in to the Dojo, and Alexei bowed upon entering, motioning for Gregory to do the same. Surprised, and perhaps a little irritated, Gregory bowed awkwardly, not used to having to do so.

Though Aikido West appeared to be a warehouse in the outside, it was a fully equipped martial arts Dojo on the inside. On the right, there was a counter, and on the left, there were rooms in which to change. The entire back portion of the space, which took up two-thirds of

the Dojo, contained tatami mats, suitable for practicing falls and throws.

A large group of children about Gregory’s age were split into pairs, practicing various techniques with each other, under the direction of the teacher. They all wore a curious looking white garment which was half bathrobe and half tunic, and belts of various colors, with white being the most common. The teacher wore a similar attire, save that his belt was black, and he wore a stranger looking black garment that began at his waist and entirely covered his legs, blocking viewers from seeing his footwork.

Alexei and Gregory stood off to one side from the class, watching. After a few minutes, Alexei nodded, as if to himself, but when speaking, it was his son his addressed.

“What they’re doing looks like what I was taught in Sambo, in the Russian Army. Less vicious, of course, but the same... principles.”

Gregory nodded. He was interested, but at the same time, it was a hot summer day, and the Dojo had no air conditioning.

The teacher demonstrated a technique to his students, but abruptly walked off the mat, approaching the father and son. He was a tall man, almost as tall as Gregory’s father, and he was stockier, if not as broad in the shoulders. He had dark gray hair that might have once been brown, and a beard. He had hazel eyes, glasses, and intelligent features, and his smile was friendly, but with an almost mischievous quality, as if the teacher knew the punch line to some joke that he would never reveal. It was a strange quality for the teacher of a Japanese martial art to have. Gregory had always imagined stern-faced, close-mouthed Japanese ascetics who communicated with curt phrases and gestures. Not a paunchy, middle-aged American man with a warm face and a cunning grin. He appeared more a professor than a martial artist, and a strange professor at that.

The teacher shook both Alexei’s and Gregory’s hands. His grip, at least, was firm.

“Hi. I’m Sensei Rob Kent. I teach the kid’s class here.”

Alexei nodded. “We would like to join.” ■



*This camp has become the greatest experience I've ever really had with writing. I felt so easily inspired here, surrounded by people who used the English language much better than I do. I honestly can't wait to come back.*

– Jacoba Taylor

# Clementine

BY JACOBA TAYLOR

When Jacoba was seven, she waved goodbye to her mother's protective smile and flitted through the halls to her classroom. Michael and Shealyn had already shown up, she noticed vaguely as she set her things in her cubby—backpack, shoes, and coat—all on top of one another. Jacoba—or back then they called her 'Coby'—skipped over to them and struck up a conversation as though it had been years since they'd last seen each other. Friends filed in slowly, and the group expanded until it was just a massive pulsing glob of children. They grew rowdier by the minute, pressed against one another, and Jacoba could feel that someone would start something soon unless Mrs. Briggshale showed up. Mrs. Briggshale was a colorful, energetic woman who wore knit cardigans with long patterned skirts and put on face-paint for field day. She wore thick glasses, which sat on top of the frame that her thick, frizzy black hair created around her face.

However, her normal instructor never showed. In her place appeared a tall man with dark hair, pale skin, and, of all things, a curly, black beard. He was wearing dark pants and a flannel shirt the color of a skinned knee, carrying an auburn leather bag on his shoulder that looked much older than he did. When she glanced at his face, Coby met a pair of deep-set, hollow-looking, black eyes. Overall, he looked like Jack Skellington from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, who had scared the ever-loving shit out of Jacoba at age six.

The room silenced immediately, and Coby moved to her name-tagged desk, imagining all the things that could've gone wrong if not for the sudden presence of the mysterious new person. The striking man's gaze shifted around as he eased himself into Mrs. Briggshale's chair. Coby's eyes were trained on him as he swiveled around and wrote something on the board—a name. M, she read to herself as the letters appeared in white against the forest green. R, a period, B, R, G—no, Y, A, N,

T. He set the chalk in the silver tray and spun back around, his smirk tainting his introduction, "My name is Mr. Bryant. I am your substitute teacher for today." She watched as he rolled up his sleeves, and thought, boy, he means business, when he suddenly pulled *Amelia Bedelia* from his satchel and instructed, "Go get your snacks out, and I'll read you a story."

The whole class rose and scurried to their cubbies silently; they were too afraid to speak. They grabbed their food and went back, apprehensive. He scanned for approval, or something, before diving into the tale.

His voice got deeper as he read. Coby unpeeled the clementine she'd brought. The waxy peel stuck underneath her fingernails as he described the drapes in the story, but she didn't especially mind. She could dig it out later when she'd finished the peeling task. She separated one of the slices carefully, wedging her pudgy little finger between the slices, and tasting the sweet fruit. Her eyes focused on the substitute's mouth, which had been explaining banana-cream pie.

"So she had dressed the turkey, drawn the drapes..." He paused, and his eyes, his sullen eyes, shifted right into hers, and he said, "Is that a clementine?"

His voice was intense in a way she'd never known. Later, she would call it chocolate, velveteen, and rich. But it was also eerie. She was completely unsure how to react. Her head bobbed up and down, almost of its own accord. Mr. Bryant grinned slowly and said, "I love clementines," before he continued reading where he left off. But Coby was so shocked that the silly tale lost its charm. Although it was merely a question with an innocent purpose, the potency and depth and ominous tone of his voice rubbed her the wrong way. She felt numb, her face and fingers and throat burning.

The rest of the day passed without her noticing too much of what happened. Math, recess, being picked up,

and going to the grocery store— it all occurred beneath a mask of confusion and fear. *It was nothing*, she tried to convince herself, *he just likes clementines. You like clementines, right? How is it so different? Maybe she was crazy to be scared of this new teacher. Clementines are delicious, everyone likes clementines. Well, unless you're allergic, but that doesn't count. Hey, I bet the President likes clementines! She smiled to herself. But does the President love clementines? Her brows furrowed. Do I really like them that much? I mean, they're pretty good, but not like, mac 'n cheese good. I can't even imagine liking clementines more than mac 'n cheese! She shuddered. What if he's never tried mac 'n cheese? Maybe that's why he sounded so weird. He's never tried mac 'n cheese before!* But she still couldn't shake that ominous feeling.

The next morning she apprehensively waved goodbye to her mother's protective smile, shuffling cautiously down to the classroom. Michael and Shealyn were already there, like the day before, and she swallowed as she set her belongings into her cubby—backpack, shoes, and coat—all on top of one another. She didn't go over and strike up conversation today, she wasn't really feeling like talking with anyone but herself. She picked at the name-tag taped to her desk as she waited for a particular somebody to arrive. She closed her eyes and focused on breathing instead of the tall man who'd never tried mac 'n cheese, who could come in at any moment to scare her further.

"Good morning," A familiar voice rang out through the room. Coby's eyes snapped open as she pivoted in her seat to see if it was really true.

There stood her normal, bespectacled, frizzy-haired instructor, Mrs. Briggshale. Coby practically tripped over her chair trying to get to her teacher, hugging her tightly once she reached the woman.

"I'm so happy you're back," she whispered into the protective pleats of her skirt. ■

# Worldbuilding

BY LYNN WANG

I wanna live in a world  
where fat slips as easily off my body as ice cream does down my throat  
where my closet is filled with endless shelves of designer shoes and sheepskin purses  
and where the next Sherlock season comes out in two months, not two years

I wanna live in a world  
where math and the alphabet are banned from coexistence  
where childhood does not have to be outgrown  
and where my mother has not been battling unemployment for six years

I want to live in a world  
where my child doesn't need to worry about storms of bullets and knives racing towards her  
where the pigmentation of my skin does not exclude me from the land of equality  
and where I can just have a hot meal in the wretched steel snow of December

I want to live in a world  
where I do not have to endure eight miles of blisters on rocks to reach class each morning  
where my sister has not been wedded off to some wealthy man twice her age  
and where believing in my own religion does not follow with the death sentence

I want to live in a world  
where I do not have the constant fear of being  
violated while walking down my own street at night  
where I can stop the swelling of my baby's belly as she gnaws on dirt for dinner  
and where the reaper has a court of justice  
so we can reveal ourselves to the omniscient eyes of death.



# Set Under the Aurora

BY ANNA ZINK

in this land  
with kindled lights set at home  
wind pushes against new blossoms  
and men grow lazy

glazed highland ice  
with frosted cracks  
and fast-flowing runoff  
signals the coming day

in this land  
floodwaters of a single language  
remain so that familiarity breeds

against falling nights  
settling and bitter skies  
the aurora fans

against the solemn times  
people make family with mountains  
and wait for an end



*The Summer Young Writers Institute was a wonderful experience for me. I expanded my writing abilities and met new, interesting people who shared common interests. There were great discussions about writing and world events that widened my perceptions. I feel so lucky to have had the chance to be here and to learn and to make new friends.*

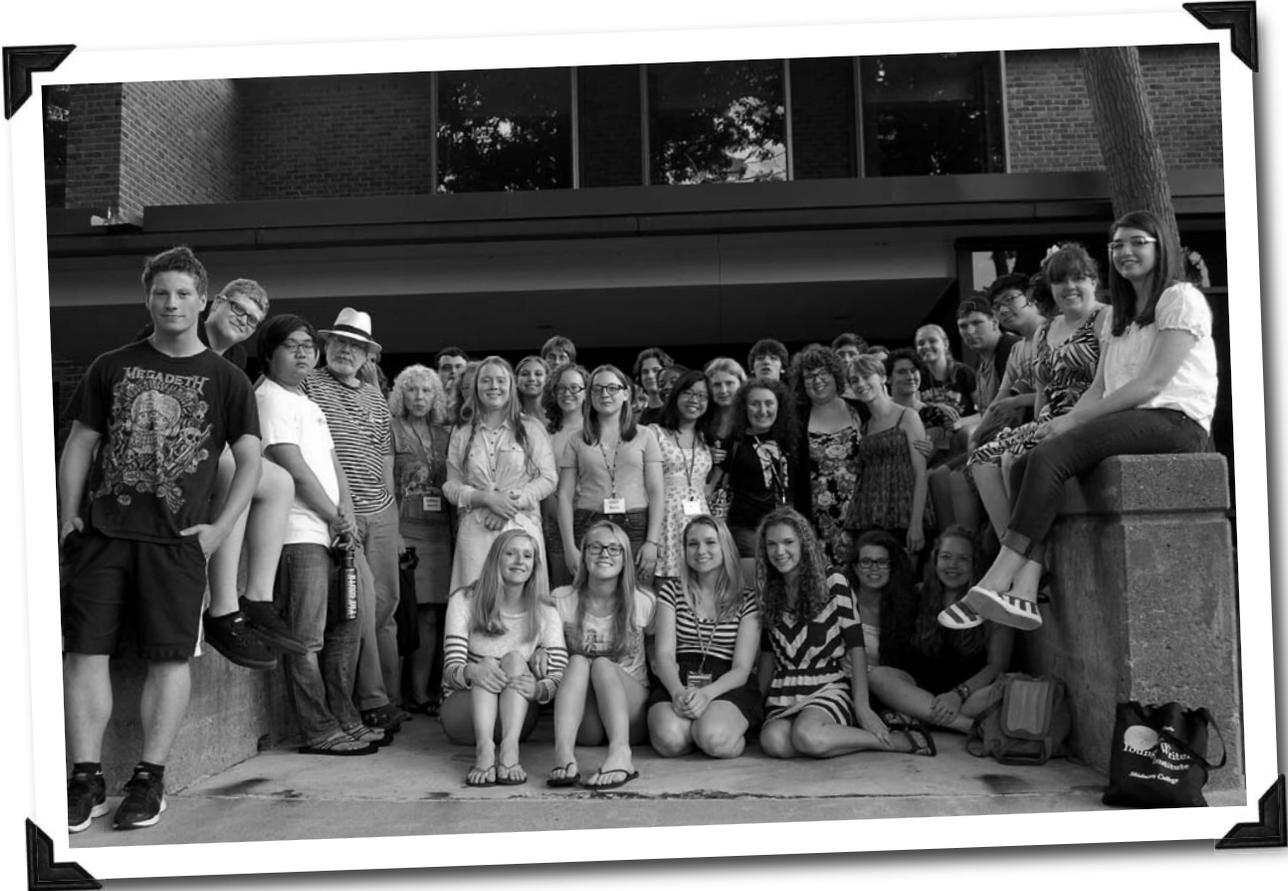
– Anna Zink

# New York State Summer Young Writers Institute 2014 Participants

NAME	CITY & STATE
JOSHUA ABERMAN	NORTH BELLMORE, NY
WILL ANDERSON	SELKIRK, NY
MALAHNI BANTA	OSSINING, NY
THOMAS BELCHER	NEW HARTFORD, NY
OLIVIA BELLIVEAU	STRATFORD, CT
LOUISA BENARBANE	STERLING, VA
EMMA BREDTHAUER	BROOKLYN, NY
CHLOE BURNS	HAWTHORNE, NY
KIMBERLY CHIA	PLEASANTVILLE, NY
CHUNGMIN CHOI	KENT, CT
ANNA CLARK	SYRACUSE, NY
RACHEL COCHRAN	WOODSIDE, CA
MAURA COLLEY	FABIUS, NY
MARGOT DUFFY	BROOKLYN, NY
JULIANNA ENGEL	PARKTON, MD
ERIN EQUINOZZI	GENEVA, NY
ELSA EVANS-KUMMER	PAUL SMITHS, NY
ISABEL FILIPPONE	KATONAH, NY
EMMA FOLKART	BASKING RIDGE, NJ
SHAINA GORMLEY	BALLSTON SPA, NY
TRAVIS GUBERNICK	BROOKLYN, NY
ERICA HELLMAN	DIX HILLS, NY
LILLIAN JOHNSON	HOHOKUS, NJ
PHILIP KIM	PARAMUS, NJ
NOAH LAPOINTE	CROWN POINT, NY
SARAH LOFSTROM	PIEDMONT, CA
GRATIS MAXWELL	SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY
ROWAN MELCHER	HONEOYE FALLS, NY
JOHANNA MOHRS	SARANAC LAKE, NY
MAYA PAOLASSO-MARTINEZ	SLINGERLANDS, NY
PRISCILLA RAPP	NIVERVILLE, NY
CHARLOTTE RING	MINEOLA, NY
EMILY ROBERTS	CARLISLE, MA
STEPHEN SESONSKE	EAST GREENBUSH, NY
GABRIELLE STILLMAN	JUPITER, FL
GREGORY SYSSOYEV	PALO ALTO, CA
JACOBA TAYLOR	BALLSTON LAKE, NY
LYNN WANG	BAYSIDE, NY
ANNA ZINK	BALLSTON SPA, NY

I really enjoyed writing with other writers, because in high school it is often much more difficult to find people who share the same creative interests as you.

– Emily Roberts



It was truly wonderful to be in an environment of other writers. I will remember my time at Skidmore for the rest of my life.

– Gregory Syssoyev

Since its creation in 1984 by the state legislature to promote writing and the artistic imagination across the state, the New York State Writers Institute has become one of the premier sites in the country for presenting the literary arts. Over the course of four decades the Institute has sponsored readings, lectures, panel discussions, symposia, and film events which have featured appearances by more than 1,250 artists—including six Nobel Prize winners, and 90 Pulitzer Prize winners—and has screened more than 700 films, from rare early prints to sneak previews of current releases. The Institute is a major contributor to the educational resources and cultural life at the University at Albany, where it is located, as well as the surrounding community. It is also identified by the writing and publishing communities as a place dedicated to promoting serious literature, where writers and their work are held in high esteem, where being an invited guest is considered an honor, and where talking about books is celebrated as the best conversation in the world.

Further information about Writers Institute programs may be obtained from its website at: [www.albany.edu/writers-inst](http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst).

# SKIDMORE

C O L L E G E

Skidmore is an independent, four-year liberal arts college located about one mile from historic downtown Saratoga Springs, NY. Skidmore extends its academic year emphasis on experimentation and creativity across disciplines into the summer months, through its numerous institutes in the creative and performing arts; the college's Summer Term; programs in the liberal and studio arts for pre-college students; and by promoting a wide array of campus events including concerts, film screenings, lectures, readings, and art exhibits.

# Administrative Staff

**WILLIAM PATRICK**

Director, New York State Summer Young Writers Institute



## New York State Writers Institute

**WILLIAM KENNEDY**

Executive Director

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**SUZANNE LANCE**

Assistant Director

**MARK KOPLIK**

Program Fellow

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**JAMES CHANSKY**

Director, Summer Sessions  
& Summer Special Programs

**CHRISTINE MERRILL**

Program Coordinator

**DANIELLE GRAY-LOBE**

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Resident Assistants

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