

COLLISION LITERARY MAGAZINE



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## FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

Collision's tenth year of publication brought a number of changes to the magazine. The first was last semester's decision to publish annually, rather than biannually. As a result, we were able to organize more events than usual, including a successful Tenth Anniversary Reading this past March that celebrated the work of past and present contributors. We also launched a new website with the goal of increasing readership and the amount of submissions—a goal well met.

As we give away the few remaining copies of the Spring 2010 issue, we can proudly note a record number of over two hundred submitting authors. It is important to recognize that the number of works that impressed us this year exceeded what we've published in this issue. We were thrilled to witness the diverse talents of Pittsburgh's undergraduate writing community, and were also very pleased to read a staggering amount of submissions from universities all over the country and abroad. The selection process was long and especially challenging, but we are happy to present such a strong issue and very much look forward to next year.

We would like to thank our devoted staff members, whose time and insight was invaluable throughout this year, and whose input facilitated the success of these changes. We particularly want to acknowledge Ryan and Amy, who have done a wonderful job providing constructive criticism to those of our contributors who request it, and also Mike,

for collaborating with local bands to produce this year's music compilation. We thank Sarah and Megan for another excellent layout and book design and for maintaining continual contact with our new publisher.

We believe that nothing can speak better for this issue than the following poems and prose pieces; so with no further introduction, we hope you find it as inspiring as we have.

All best,

Sarah Reagle and Alicia Salvadeo  
Editors-in-Chief

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Rick Baker and the staff of Print Tech, for their continued reliability and professionalism in creating a top shelf product.

This issue is dedicated to Dr. Alec Stewart, who passed away on April 7, 2010. His enduring enthusiasm has meant much to the University's undergraduate literary community, and we could not begin to articulate how grateful we have been for his ongoing encouragement as *Collision Literary Magazine* celebrates its tenth year of publication.

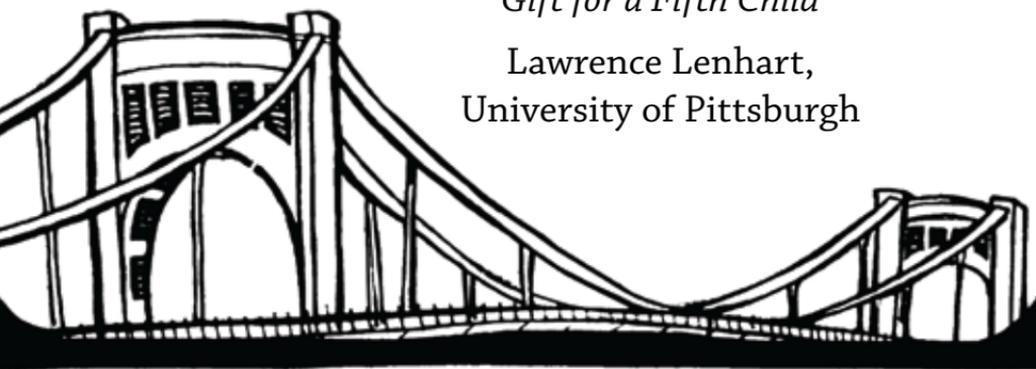
## POETRY AND PROSE



FIRST PLACE

*Gift for a Fifth Child*

Lawrence Lenhart,  
University of Pittsburgh



When the last Bunion died, I pinkie-picked my Muldoon itch.  
Their house on Victor, 118 concrete steps above the valley.  
The last stretch of which—to their aid—the banister creeps  
to the front porch.

“Paint it green.”

“What sort of green?”

“An Irish green.”

As if a grip of Ireland would help them to lug sacks of flour,  
sugar, potatoes.

The cripple-clutching upward to the house where their  
unstirred ghosts gather in cool puddles or cob like porous webs.  
My reverent entering, toeing aside the rug-bunch that  
absorbs the draft.

The inside is arctic and bare, stripped as bones that waggle  
by the pot that boils the adipose flesh.

Inside, the meat hook hinges on the plaster ceiling where  
the pig, now and again, swayed without so much as a  
haunting squeal.

Its echo belongs to the yard.

The kitchen company caroueled around the hook, careening  
the kinked pink-pale tail while the guts unglued along the  
stomach wall—all-Spring supper, slow-draining.

The sisters buttered their toast with the backside of a spoon  
and when the other wasn't looking, took another scoop for  
good measure, slapping the soft yellow wedge onto the tongue.

The warmth of the mouth melted it to a juice that filled the sag of their cheek pouches and the taste, again and again, was the moment of disinheritance.

From their growling hunger in the Depression, it was stifled as they melted too.

It was something rich.

And John carved his can of peaches with a serrate knife because “that other contraption” was too much clamping and cranking—and too, because however clever, it could never remind him of how his mother opened.

The century-old patter of his working heart and how his sclera dims just now, late in life.

The white, the all-else surrounding the pupil; even after 92 years, it remains true that you will always have seen less than what remains to be seen.

Do not look into that corner where Nonni folded, her heart attacking in the midst of her exasperation at a greedy contestant on Wheel of Fortune.

Do not misgaze down into the barrel from which the ladle lifted gulps of their father’s home brew.

Do not enter that crawl space in the attic where John and Bill stayed for too long without heating or cooling or a chance in hell.

That suffocation chamber with two hay-strung mattresses and a coal-black crucifix nailed to the chimney that poked

through the shingles.

Do not notice—in the box, in the corner—the letter *E* John earned for baseball, the one that Patricia thought ought be resurrected to remind him that his younger days were not wholly forgotten.

Or think of how he sat his last years out, in a wheeled chair like being condemned to the bench.

Avert from their wad of \$2 bills and 50¢ pieces, in billfold and china.

When I visited the three unmarried siblings half my life ago, they dispensed to me \$5 (Nonni), \$2 (Bridgie), and 50¢ (John). And as they left—one by the one—I became poorer.

Their absence is my poverty of pocket—no, spirit.

Like when their father, drunk in Listowel, one night found the courage or slurred his cowardice, and asked his sister: “Hanoria,” (my great-grandmother), “give me something else.” “Something else from what, Jim?”

“From this,” and he stomped the dry Irish earth and ruckled River Feale, and she smirked, knowing.

With savings-up, they both bought America, a County Kerry boat tacking and gybing Tralee Bay to somewhere near Wilmerding, Pa.

John’s gifts—the fifty-cent silvers—were last.

On it, Kennedy, the great-grandson of Irish Catholic immigrants.

Much myself.

Bridgie, Nonni, John lived for so long because they never married. (Their favorite joke)

I used to think that the sisters were in pontifical love the way that they framed John Paul II, kept him dusted and adorned with annual palm fronds, glanced at him when conversations lulled.

And Baby John, who blushed and loved only his mother.

There *was* Bill, though—the one among them who did find love—who hid his girl from his family and died at 56.

This is the only place to hear of it still.

Do not peek into the garage where Bill kept his Buick or hear John's jealousy when he called him a "big shot."

Me, just tapping on my brows; I could never know much else beyond the story-answers given me.

One more place not to look: the cushion to the right, where Bill sat on the towel in which his father's canary was drying after a bath.

A shriek-beaked bird muffled by the haunches of a man with the heaviest kind of secret: untold love.

Upstairs, spiraling gold-green carpet like mowed grass trampled upward to their mother's room.

The spinning wheel in its ancient revolutions, yarn-whorl from tight-wound bobbin.

I sit and stomp, the wheel still spins, but a cross-stitched

sweater made of dust and air wears too thin, me: the shiver-cold fifth child that enters this house.

The traveler's chest—of wood or flesh—that held in one place their pieces of Ireland.

When the road did not rise, when the wind stood them up, when the rain would not fall, they crawled into God's palm and wailed.

St. Aloysius Church never knew a better alms collector than John, who felt rich for the first of his life every time he brought the offertory basket forth.

Their own baskets, woven by their father, from sapling switches and willow wattle, flexed feebly but held strong, stuffed with pears or apples from the nighttime pluck-march through the near orchard.

An orchard, maybe, in the vicinity of Ice Plant Hill where there was once farmland, where the baby Hartnett walked ahead of his father, and they looked for piquant cow chips, somehow enthralled to find manure from which to grow vegetables for eight *feed-me* mouths.

“Papa, here: caca!”

“It was dumb that I never spent my money,” John told my dad. The usual expenses never arrived.

Family—he was alone.

House—he stayed at Victor.

Car—everyplace was separated by a walk.

He was a man much without.

My dad helped him to buy the most coveted recliner in the nursing home.

The young girls who worked there tugged on his big ears, and he blushed like an ember glowed the inside of his cheek. In his last year, John made us promise (mirroring my grandmother's adamancy on the subject): "I'll go in through the front door."

An Irish tradition.

In January, the hearse parked at the side of the church. Ignoring the undertaker's white-glove gesture, our six kindred hands gripped and dragged his body forth, pall-bearing the box up the steep steps, and in through the front. I thought I heard his casket sigh.

Their house now as empty as when Westinghouse first declared Saturday a holiday.

A month before he died, he reneged a promise to Father O'Mally (one of his favorites).

"Father, that hat I promised you—"

The priest, shrugging.

"The walking hat in my closet at home—"

"Yes. Yes, I know it."

"I'm going to have to take it back."

"You haven't even given it to me yet, John."

"The promise—I take the promise back."

Instead, promised to me.

A week after the funeral, my father gives me the keys, not ready to enter the house himself. (John, great-cousin, nearly father.)

Steady entering, tip-toeing through the old stubborn house, trying carefully not to look in the wrong directions so as to avoid stirring one of their old memories, to keep it from saddling me and riding me to my own grave.

A century since their boat had brought them, everything waits on me, just before I take the box from the shelf and pull the walking hat over my head.

The hat, pressing around my scalp like a new and heavy atmosphere.

A wool pressure.

Descending 118 times, these steps split the dizzy-weave of the “Old Lane,” a bumping pass hugging 421 Walsh and the renamed church.

These are monumental first steps, like Gabby’s whose might have been on a beach in Ireland, clover-toed in the undertow or Catherine’s first through convent door.

Before I duck into my car, I lift the hat away to set it in the backseat, and I shed the pressure of their relentless memory. A hard brake-stamp on the accelerated accumulation of their history like when Bing Crosby’s “McNamara’s Band” ends, but Patsy and Norene would rather it continue *ad nauseum* because they are “a credit to old Ireland,” champions of

*GIFT FOR A FIFTH CHILD*

family tradition.

Now, for the first, the air that I give, no Bunion can take;  
they are excused from

the organic cycle and given unto a larger cycle of spirits and  
solemnity, prone to nonesuch homage that I need pay.

Never again to breathe in the rising air of the valley, the  
aromatic stench of what was

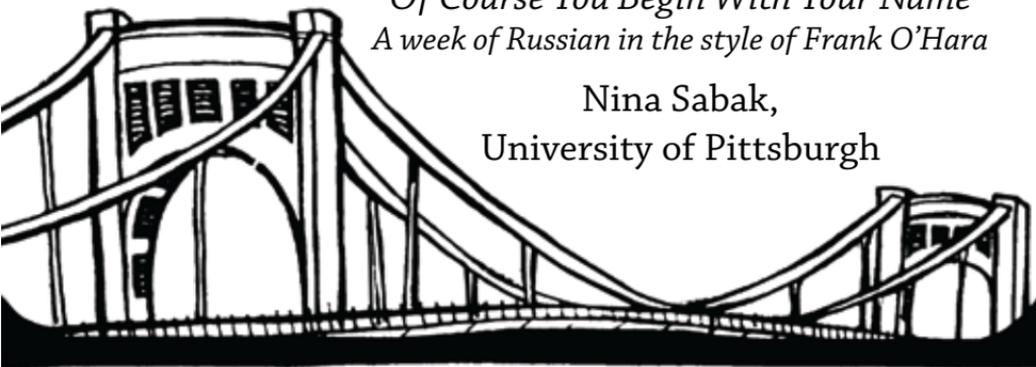
preordained by life's unflinching covenant.

And I breathe my own.

## SECOND PLACE

*Of Course You Begin With Your Name*  
*A week of Russian in the style of Frank O'Hara*

Nina Sabak,  
University of Pittsburgh



## To dance

it grew cold while I slept and my walk is interrupted by leaves skidding across the pavement like snakeskins.

today we are learning complex sentences: *you do not know where Anya was, I know where Misha lives.* Yuliya paces the room waiting and Anya and Misha are waiting too but I have forgotten how

to conjugate *to dance* or rather *I am dancing with you* which strikes me as the first thing you should know, except maybe the

alphabet and slava isusu christu.

it is monday in pittsburgh and no one feels like feeling except maybe the evangelists on the corner with their dog-eared brochures: *heaven awaits the willing. please form an orderly line*

*for the apocalypse.* come on and shake your blues out there's nothing like a little damnation to spice up this weather but we've gotten off-topic, Yuliya sighs and begins to tell a different story, something we can understand, the edges smoothed to our few words

to hell with infinitives sometimes it is better not to know how to say what you are doing

## To walk

Now when I walk past the union I see the men in their rough brown pants pulling

up red geraniums fistful over fistful like scalps from a forgotten war

the petals have fallen off for the most part shriveled and

burgundy like  
the wine that my mother forbids me to drink except at new year's

I walk through the slanting drizzle toward the  
cathedral where you can buy hot tazo tea in a paper cup, taste  
the way your mouth moves: *hibiscus lemongrass rosehips tarragon*  
if I grow up I'll name teas after places I haven't been  
yet. in room 218 I wait for something to begin the rest filing in  
all those boys named after revolutionaries – marat nikita  
iosif who slouch  
american-style

eyes half-shut  
and yuliya comes in and says that we should really be  
able to remember the prepositional case now as in what  
we talk *about* when *we talk about love*  
a woman outside asks if I voted for Sestak yet and I  
have to say that I'm still not from here

for lunch I have waffles and chocolate syrup because I once  
wanted  
to have them for every meal and I'm living the dream now  
I still feel like apologizing or  
eating some broccoli or  
something. on bigelow someone's listening to la roux with  
the bass  
turned up I like la roux when I can hear right I decide, I don't like  
guessing at words I like pre-post-avant-pop not so much  
suffixes we like  
those short-haired girls

I just want to be famous enough  
for someone to cut my hair every week so I can walk around with

the wind on the back of my neck I wonder if one person out  
of 311,000 is  
thinking about the back of my neck as I pass the ex-geraniums  
in silence and walk through the dirt possibly so

## **To breathe**

It is 11:50 in Pittsburgh a Wednesday  
the first day I can see my breath, yes  
it is 2010 and I am wearing my wool coat for the first time  
since march because Rachael told me to and at the light  
at 11:56 I find grocery receipts in my right pocket and  
I don't know how to keep walking

I walk up Bigelow and turn past the crowds of girls in their  
winter tights the boys smoking cigarettes behind their cupped  
hands and no one is talking about the election I pick up a copy  
of the newspaper where they have printed three articles about  
it and a crossword I cannot solve

I go to class  
and Svetlana (real name Allie) asks who else plans to keep  
studying  
this bizarre language and I raise my hand because I like bizarre  
languages and the way they feel on my tongue I've picked up  
enough

french to curse out a policeman enough russian to run a circus  
or maybe just the elephants and in Fairmont I picked up  
enough english to know that I needed to pretend to be from  
somewhere else you know it's all in how your vowels bend  
but mine don't I do a convincing impression of not being  
myself most days

which is to say that I have no opinion of what Joe Manchin does  
back home or God forbid his use of hair gel  
and when we start my heart is still pounding loud  
enough to hear in Rostov or outer space which is what happens  
when you're just a little too suggestible  
bring on the newspapers  
Pittsburgh you can't surprise me

### **To survive**

unit four: disbelief. "tell me something fantastic" yuliya says "I will  
show you how to react." we are learning how to lie  
with words we still don't understand, everyone  
poised to say something un-  
believable. I will be different every time. marat is  
an astronaut irina a lawyer kolya turned  
green overnight. *vot etta da, a ty oksana?* me, I'm a ballerina  
today a very good ballerina I've danced at the bolshoi on  
that raked stage and the ballets russes adored me we went  
everywhere together in our fast cars and shawls  
like isadora duncan a close friend of mine

so sad about that long  
white  
scarf

this I could believe, yuliya says, *pravda*, and I square my  
shoulders to hips like anna pavlova about to take off into  
the cosmos

soundless and sweet  
where it is still raining

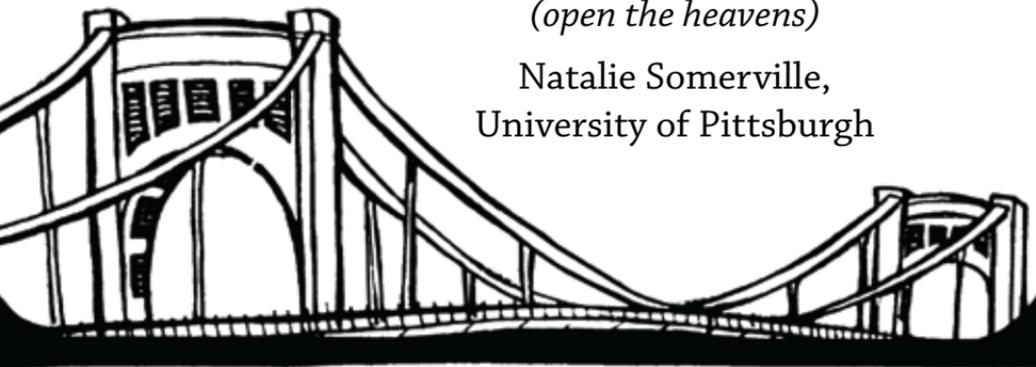
## To disappear

it is 12:27 pm on friday and no one is speaking possibly  
because we have run out of questions to ask in either  
language beyond  
*will we pass* in my backpack I have three books adrienne rich frank  
o'hara and marguerite duras all names I wish I had but  
here even my name is not my name after my rechristening  
in august as  
oksana which means *hosanna* my mother says like I am  
perpetually giving  
thanks for something slightly out of view,  
my constant prayers to  
our lady  
of perpetual astonishment  
yuliya says *voprosy* which means *questions* but knows that  
the answer is *nyet*  
*nyet* questionsky and she raises her eyes to God or alexander  
pushkin and says go  
on *fsyo* that's it out the door no  
looking back

THIRD PLACE

*Umenifunulia Mbingu*  
(*open the heavens*)

Natalie Somerville,  
University of Pittsburgh



*UMENIFUNULIA MBINGU (OPEN THE HEAVENS)*

I speak of the sea that is one foot deep from Madagascar to  
Mozambique,  
so we can walk when you're ready,  
for a cup of coca cola.

And my right eye is sealed  
so I can carefully select the mountain to pinch.  
Smaller than an inch, much smaller than an inch.  
Pinch the mountain.

I bring the Jebel Musa (جبل موسی)   
to you after dusk  
and we make war-paint from the clay of the stream.

And the sunflower drops dust  
when you shake it over top of the platter  
of Vermont's finest crunchy leaves.

and the vibrations of midnight produce  
picture post-cards of skeletons on boxcars  
who smoke the finest cigarettes.

We storm through the sand dunes  
for one more day.

just one more day

HONORABLE MENTION

*Letter to my jaundiced baby brother*

Caroline Kessler,  
Carnegie Mellon University



*LETTER TO MY JAUNDICED BABY BROTHER*

You only know things close to the body: your skin chafing  
against the tree's gray bark, your mouth

stretched wide in infant-song, wordless. The mourning dove  
wanders in: a comma perched atop your tongue.

Glance down, a moth has joined the dove. They're singing  
myths so loudly, you're not sure which is your

voice and which is theirs. You feel their whisker-wings in  
your mouth.

You try to lift your tiny finger to touch them, to feel  
their pulse

on your yellowed hand. They quiver not out of fear, but  
amazement of you.

Already, your skin is turning, becoming like the pink  
of the dogwood blossoms. The color deepens as the tree ages.  
Let the sturdy dogwood keep you company

while the sun glances over your eyelashes, your lips, your belly:  
the day passing its warmth through you.

*CORNBREAD KNUCKLES/SHEEN SPRAY AND COCONUT OIL*  
Savonna Johnson, University of Pittsburgh

• • • • •

“When she writes she roars, and when she sleeps other  
creatures walk gingerly.”

- Maya Angelou

**Cornbread Knuckles**

Roll yellow balls. Rub  
between greasy cracks.  
My skin, this time of year,  
is made from ash,

except when I'm  
in the kitchen, mixin  
the oils. This is my  
place of moisture. You

expect me to find  
pleasure in feedin all  
my dark children.

Southern food, bone  
marrow, the break, splinterin, and  
then the suck of marrow.

Yellow-orange ooze.

Batter for the birds.  
Fry 'em up, fry 'em,  
fry them birds and  
set that table.

Not a slave in the fields.  
Now, in the kitchen.

### **Sheen Spray and Coconut Oil**

pink aerosol can  
dollar general  
aisle wit the  
cheap lookin bottles  
aisle wit fine Black  
men on doo-rag packages  
aisle wit horse hair  
real hair weave latch  
hooks that pull at  
my scalp the reasons why  
my hair's so short  
styles keep breakin my  
ends and why shdn't  
I wear my afro? why  
can't I let it free and  
healthy? no more flat irons  
burnin smells of grease  
forehead scars no more  
relaxers or drippin product curls  
every shampoo bottle flicks  
open wit a coconut  
bubble risin from its tip

—

I have the loud voice;  
attitude wit brown skin.

If you looked,  
you cd see me  
showin my teeth,  
in darkness.

“then i began an awakening a flowering outside/ the  
living dead became a wanderer of air/ barking at the  
stars became a bride/ bridegroom of change timeless  
black with hair/ moist with kinks and morning  
dare...”

- Sonia Sanchez

*IRRATIONAL FEARS*

Kelly Dougher, West Chester University of Pennsylvania

• • • • •

so I ask him,  
What should my biggest fear be?

his reply:  
Sharks  
swimming up through the toilet.

(he has a good one there.)

Could that happen?  
I inquire big-eyed, thrilled  
to play along.  
In some countries?

400 people die every year,  
he says,  
all matter-of-fact.

But what a way to go,  
I reflect.  
and then I have to admit,  
Dying on a toilet, sharks or not, would have to be one of my  
greater fears.  
Like Elvis.  
Too undignified,  
sprawled out naked and...

I trail off with that image in my mind.

Yeah, but the shark thing doesn't happen,  
he adds, as if it's necessary.

Not possible.

It might be,  
I argue;  
In some countries.

but,  
No.  
shakes his head  
regrettably  
at me.

I insist:  
With big toilets that connect to the ocean.

but him:  
Those don't exist.

They should  
I mutter into his chest.

Nope.

silence  
for a bit.

then I ask him,  
What's your biggest fear?

and he replies,  
The shark thing.

But,  
I protest,  
you just said  
it doesn't happen!

and then he tells me,  
Some fears  
are irrational.

*REMEMBERING WHAT THE BODY IS*  
Madeleine Barnes, Carnegie Mellon University

• • • • •

You are is speaking with your fingertips into an aperture,  
lean arms burnt, ventricles wired to flowering strings  
of shaved-down air and flattening sparks, perfectly displaced,  
your body remembering what the body is: a torn-up experiment,  
anatomical fragments. The bed at eight a.m., nine a.m.,  
vomit afterwards, because the mouth must open darkly,  
and with the hospital curtain drawn, I record your intake, it must  
be a pill, a precisely yellow pill, a ghost-swallowed pill, a pill  
of acid rain to crush and drink before bed, a fluorescent pill,  
five hundred pills suspended in the esophagus, iron and ink,  
crushed along the jaw becoming wax, a terrain, a tundra,  
an artful and elegant pill, a chord of pills in a tiny cup,  
your brain smothered in antiseptic pills, take five, five hundred,  
take without food, without help, without burnt white tea  
vitamin water, without checking your weight, the pill wrapped  
neatly in butcher paper, a very unfeeling and blood-stained pill  
a pill the weight of sulfur, weight of a living thing,  
misshapen, unraveling, forced into dust, lungs and phlegm.  
You're safer and closer, you're safe, there's nothing but corridors  
of pills and gowns sewed up with pills and water and waiting  
for a cloud to assemble, a pill that blooms and embalms,  
floods the tongue with its weight.

*SORRY, J.D. SALINGER*

Michael Kamison, University of Pittsburgh

• • • • •

Sorry, J.D. Salinger for taking your picture  
I saw you at the supermarket  
Searching for your shadow somewhere in the bread aisle.  
And Franny (and Zooey) held the flash bulb,  
Letting it burst, spewing shards into the dairy  
I think you stepped on a piece and carried it  
In your boot. You cut up the Earth and left  
This here  
And that there.  
Let's get out of this supermarket  
(Ginsberg was such a queer, he loved having his picture  
taken, especially in the nude).

Your grave is going to give it all away.  
The secret locked  
Somewhere in a face we'll never see  
(But you know and now its buried somewhere).  
Told on a telephone -- the most phony way.  
Was he a dirty blonde or a light brown?  
Where's my mansion with a lock on the inside?  
Why nine? Why New England?

Boys are really interesting, I get it.  
They never grow old.  
They cast off into forever and  
Catch, maybe receive.

But fuck.

Please erase what I said.

You aren't your peers; you don't look at

Those boys wondering where they go

In the winter. They can't freeze in place

On a pond, keep their hair, their skin.

How well could you picture his hand holding hers?

Had it hardened? Glazed over

And romping about New York City

With a glass spirit and a baseball mitt.

## HORROR

Sara Keats, Carnegie Mellon University

• • • • •

Yesterday,  
She first saw  
*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*  
And God!  
She thought it was strange  
The film was funnier than she'd imagined  
and He  
Seemed nice, but  
was shorter than she'd thought He'd be.

She had never met surprise with such indifference  
and hopes she never will again.

"I don't feel particularly sexually repressed,"  
She explained,  
"If I'd had toast, I would have eaten it,"

God's office was at the end of a hallway.  
"I'll be honest, I was nervous"  
But He mostly wanted to talk about Television,  
British Soccer, Brands of Detergent,  
Healthy Dinner Options for a God on the Go.

*UNFOUNDED STRUCTURAL CONCERNS (TSR)*  
Connor Pickett, University of Pittsburgh

• • • • •

[i]

Here,  
in the hour of straight-backed liars,  
in the time of flat-footed serpents,

there is no space for me to walk  
but cower:  
Eventual sky-scraping sons,  
with a mighty, thunderous awakening,  
tore for themselves a space in the heavens.

Here, between them,  
the territorial  
trade glanced accusations  
with the nomads:

“Ours.”

“No  
man’s.”

Walk the bridge,  
don’t cower;

[ii]

Despondent glamor::  
glamorous Despondency.

Over incidental waters,  
under confidential doorways,

these figures' cigarettes  
glowed like the faraway downtown lights

ember and amber,  
adorning a thousand sulking grins

[iii]

“Do some normal things,” you said

Marginal and unimpressed;  
it was a party for one

on a coincidental backdrop.

In a moment of passing  
from reality to dream,

gleam, become  
perfect, pristine and  
we are more beautiful than is

‘fair’

Drink the red-cup dream,  
leave reality for the burning ones?

but liquid reality is  
    itself combustible  
I would know

[iv]

“ $e^{\pi i} = -1$   
because if you take the time,  
with careful deliberation even utter balderdash can become  
quite reasonable

but it's easier, and more feasible,  
 $\sqrt{-1}$ ,  
    to make put the non on sense than to remove it from  
nonsense,”  
    explained Icarus aflame to Peter Rabbit.  
    they stood on my bridge, donning scuba apparatus

[v]

Icarus gave me no warning  
so I'm through walking on bridges, even in  
my hour

I,  
the straight-backed liar

the shape inside my brain  
    collapsed like a soap-bubble  
    the emptiness therein has pulled me in

in a place too easy to enter and not possible to escape  
how do you know when to give up when you have no  
indivcation of your own lack of  
progress

*THE OVERTURNED AUTOMOBILE*

Paul Cunningham, Slippery Rock University

• • • • •

Metal still sings inside the unsealed cotton sacs. Grinding hears a thing from a thing. Ordinary is not seat blood or strings of metal. Arm traced cotton. Leg traced cotton. Loose neck foams red red red cotton. Ripped forward cotton. Shirt blood. Seat-plucked. Dark darked cotton.

Eyes remain sealed. Eyelids remain wetting / open. Heights of head tissue leave you self-same, but aching from the finer cuts. The weight of bodies. Inside.

Bone resembles cotton and everything resembles bone.

INTO COLLAPSE OF KNOWN LOVELY  
Evan Chen, University of Pittsburgh

• • • • •

*Romanticism is then when everything being alike everything is naturally simply different, and romanticism.*

- Gertrude Stein, "Composition as Explanation"

**Scene One**

then, while we in bed, "Nightswimming."  
hearing only the crackle in Michael's voice  
the piano pounds and plods too  
beautified for its subject ahead  
of the lost memory as

**Q.E.D.**

when we return from the first retreat  
the glass that sits in metal, black-  
tinged has been duct-taped over. shattered  
by too-excited a new alumni  
or Pens fan celebrating the Game 5 win

through this glass at the stop where those  
who live on the Hill wait for the 10A to snatch them  
a ticker trails infrared for  
approaching buses, usually off by a few minutes, out of time  
with time  
it has been reset for Summer. only the date

remains so the expected loop of 10A UPPER CAMPUS  
3:40 PM 3:50 PM 4:00 PM instead reads only  
TODAY IS SUNDAY MAY 09, 2010 and tomorrow will  
read TODAY IS SUNDAY MAY 09

on Thursday, July 08, as I read this aloud to the fellows, it reads  
TODAY IS SUNDAY MAY

three days in I forget  
whose thumb sits on top when hands held

**Melanctha**

Alice, baby, tonight from across the  
Atlantic I hear rumor of brick houses  
cast staunchly down hills and my voice cast  
by these folds is between caulked

the bricks, Alice B. and  
I lifted that from *Three Lives*. this poem  
was written by a boy on the cusp  
of unemployment, insensitive to gender  
sixty-eight years after you

pulling onto the highway off Braddock  
brick cast away for trees, those I cannot  
name. only re-  
place



**Virgil Thomson**

I am I—h he writes  
“I—h” he writes clever to ink  
Write something else. the deaf  
custodian at St. Paul Cathedral  
tried to find me a brochure. singles nights

for young Catholics. not single, am young  
not Catholic but wait  
“Lived Experience” too boring, and to be honest  
spent last two weeks mopping floor with hair,  
balancing pen between nose and lip

staring at her book, only its *Stein* cover its epic  
font, she looking above red and white toward whitewash  
wall. get out of Apartment 109, try harder  
the project due  
no time now to create that experience

**1907-1914**

at this rate the whole first book  
will be about how I could not write that first  
book, the first of which to write, to be written, hollow  
participle  
I feel crazed. another page among the seventeen that've

produced Alice I love, Alice written toward the project  
for the up-up who defined, again the participle  
can you write? can you now a week past?  
and how now to read, possess at the podium  
so unsettled. never settle Alice. never settle for this

*DETRITUS*

Jessica Poli, University of Pittsburgh

• • • • •

i.

I threw away cranberries – trash can full of eggshells and  
coffee, now I'm smearing it red.  
And over it all, I threw salt.  
Pulled myself under sheets and left the mess for Monday.

ii.

When I left, wet snow was muffling the sound of cranes  
tearing down the hospital.  
I heard it muting down Atwood Street.  
A block and then twelve and the sound died but the ground  
still shook.

iii.

"I don't know if I can love like that again."  
She said it and threw salt in her mouth.

iv.

Mess still heavy when I came back; cranberries rotted.  
It would all turn into great hills - crows hanging above it  
from strings,  
dipping toward the garbage heap.  
Everyone would come to see.

*A DECONSTRUCTION OF TOWERS*  
Julian Day Cooney, University of Pittsburgh

• • • • •

“The bells, I say, the bells break down their tower.”

- *Hart Crane*

*“Come, let us build us a city and a tower  
with its top in the heavens, that we may  
make us a name, lest we be scattered over  
the face of all the Earth.”*

- The Sons of Noah, Genesis 11:4

Misconstructed  
out of sunshine’s  
inability to be  
on both sides  
of the world  
at once

the beams were  
misconstructed

Once  
the words began  
disconnecting  
foreign from familial;  
flotsam and jetsam

Fortune/Misfortune  
began building a new  
great wall,  
pole-to-pole  
East/West

Callused construction of  
the Us  
—the Them  
sprouting out  
of the former  
as a farmer  
cannot control  
the weeds in his  
fresh field of  
cash crops.

Bowing to Mecca  
five times a  
day, they (as in  
Them) bowed  
to the Towers  
the rest

The pieces of the one  
tower falling  
into misuse—builders'  
hands devoted to  
their own  
towers

The infinitely old  
bearded man  
unclogged the drain,  
cursing the hair  
for being separate  
from His head

Too busy  
babbling  
to watch it fall,

being the strongest  
muscle, did the  
tongue take both down  
resonating?

The clay for  
bricks splayed  
over the face  
of the Earth,  
but building  
too high is  
hubris—  
Lament the  
paradox:

Both are Them.  
Both are Us.

The Lord and  
His plan.

The two are  
now none.

VISUAL ARTS

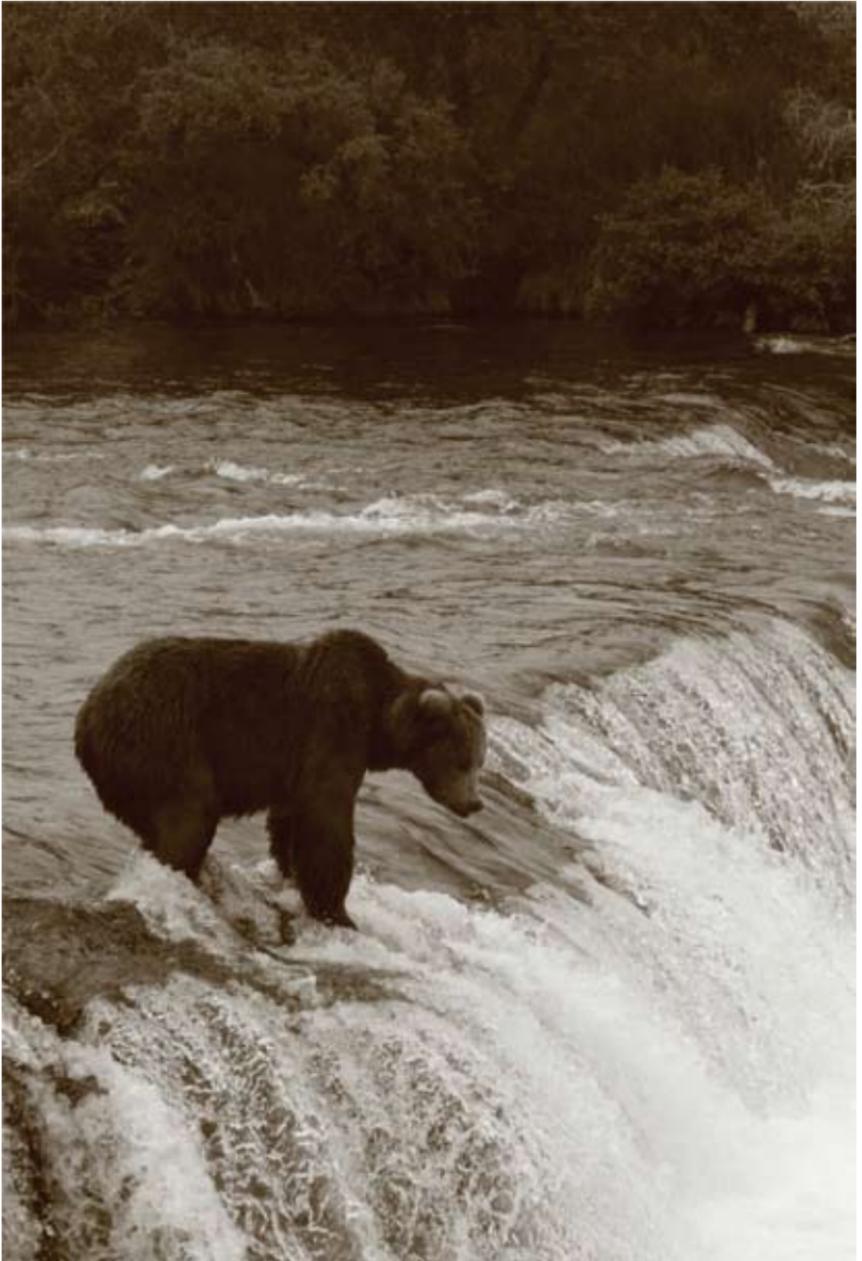






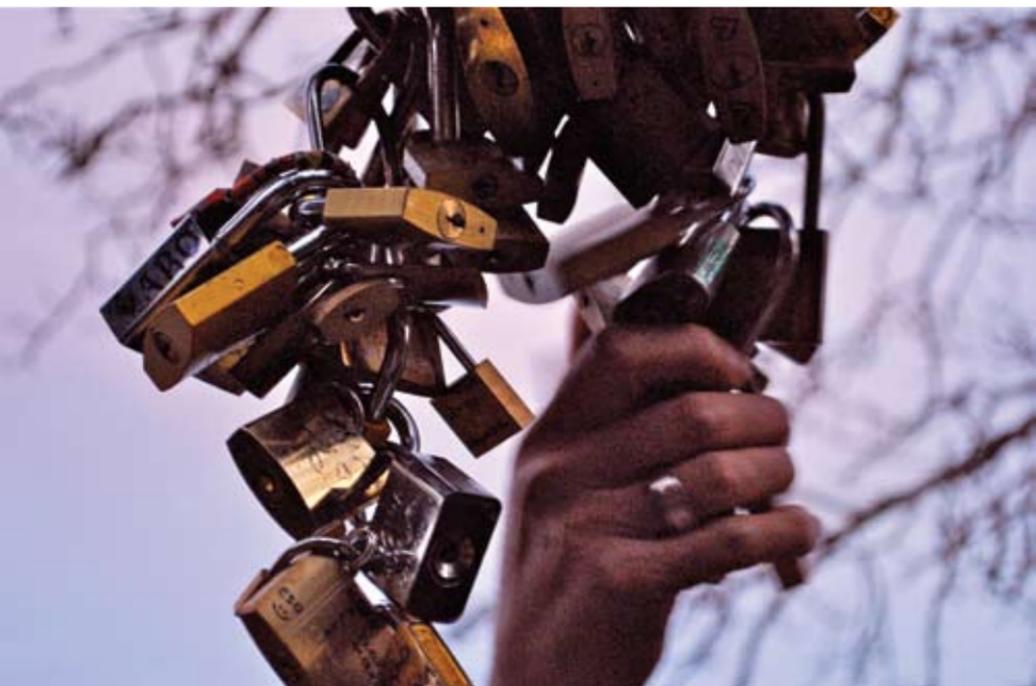












**CHRIST!!** THIS GUY IS SOOOOOO GOOD! I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO WRITE AND DRAW SOMETHING EVEN REMOTELY COMPARABLE. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY I TRY TO MAKE COMICS. I'M NO GOOD AT 'EM. EVERYTHING I DRAW LOOKS RUSHED AND IMPERFECT. I CAN NEVER COMPLETE AN ENTIRE NARRATIVE, WITHOUT THE INEVITABLE GRIPE

SESSION AND RABBIT-TRAILS TO NOWHERE. I KNOW THAT ALL I HAVE TO DO IS PRACTICE AND BELIEVE THAT MINISCULE VOICE THAT SHOUTS, "YOU'RE CAPABLE!" THERE'S ALWAYS STILL TIME, RIGHT? DO I HAVE ANY SMOKES LEFT?

I GUESS I'M JUST A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY OR SOMETHING.



the  
OL'  
COLLEGE  
TRY

**A.K.A.** Give up before you try.



## STAFF SUBMISSIONS

*GESTALT*  
Michael Simon

• • • • •

I. I'm not listening.

The Nazis come up in class again -  
This is German history & all the  
people talking have soothing voices -  
I don't need to listen to enjoy  
their talking - Chan Marshall, shoegaze  
timbre - makes the Holocaust  
sound like a spring wind.

II. Enjoy their talk - all burned out -  
whitefaced like Mephisto -  
I've been to Dachau - I know everything.  
I'd rather admire my own  
handwriting & eat  
pumpkin chicken curry.

III. Shoegaze timbre, a silk tongue  
in my ear. Lovely voices, but  
they can't say the umlauts.  
I can't believe them, they're  
too confident in their enunciations.

IV. I know everything & you do too.  
In Hamburg, a green cupric  
St. Michael vanquished Satan  
in the rain. We stood above  
catacombs & listened to the organs  
sing - birdlike - through their hollow bones.

V. To the organs, with Wagner in tow -

A fatal ode!

'34 - *Der Führer's* plane  
descending from cumulus  
to Nürnberg, loomed  
a shadow cross  
upon us all.

VI. The Holocaust

sounds like a spring wind.

My grandfather almost  
died in Dachau - in 2005.

An evil heat brought him  
to his knees, panting like a dog.

We didn't get to visit the incinerator.

*UNTITLED (TANKA ELEVEN)*

Alicia Salvadeo

• • • • •

there are bears, and then  
there are those that chance to look  
like bears: these vicious  
roaming lightspecks roar through whole  
black meadows, unsuspecting.

*TRIPTYCH*  
Peter Webb

• • • • •

1.  
to nothing

in both cases there are people,  
masses or just several,  
proceeding,  
marching,  
in the same direction,  
in line or correlation,  
to the sky or just across.  
but the problem, in either case,  
is there is no goal or ending.  
John White Alexander died before he finished painting.  
Jonathan Borofsky's pipe stops.  
There's just them  
and then there's nothing.

2.  
the black square

For contrast, restorers leave one part of the murals blackened, as Pittsburgh's former pollution made it. This is a small square, about a foot wide; it covers the face of a girl, one of a crowd of women marching.

3.  
victors.

angels:

crown

andrew carnegie in black knight's armor  
he is armed with a sword  
he is looking at me  
he is wreathed in fire and smoke

shun

andrew mellon with stocks and dinner  
cigarillo held between thumb and  
forefinger  
top hat reflected thrice in shadow  
he considers chicken, flan, and a bowl  
of fruit

either is served.  
either is a victor.

#### Referenced Artworks:

1. *The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh*. Mural by John White Alexander. Located in the Grand Staircase of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History.
2. *Walking Into the Sky*. Sculpture by Jonathon Borofsky. The replica I refer to is located at Carnegie Mellon University Main Campus.
3. *The Capitalist*. Mural by Maxo Vanka. Located at the St. Nicholas Croatian Church in Millvale.

COLLISION: MIXTAPE 2011

*Featuring bands local to Pittsburgh*

- |    |   |                               |
|----|---|-------------------------------|
| 1  | <i>The Newest New Deal</i>  | TY-BO & B-MAC                 |
| 2  | <i>Good Morning, Mr. Evans</i>                                    | THE CHESTERFIELD<br>PROJECT   |
| 3  | <i>An American Mountain</i>                                       | MICHAEL BENJAMIN SIMON        |
| 4  | <i>You Make Me Nervous</i>  | THE SLEEPY TREES              |
| 5  | <i>“Grant Park:<br/>August 28th, 1968”</i>                        | OBSCURED BY CLOUDS            |
| 6  | <i>Mjöllnir</i>   | MIKE SOLO                     |
| 7  | <i>Untitled</i>   | OLD ACCUSERS                  |
| 8  | <i>Spare Me Your False Comforts,<br/>Spare Me Another Sunrise</i> | MEANS TO AN END               |
| 9  | <i>Snow (Instrumental)</i>  | DATAGRAMS                     |
| 10 | <i>Ghost Ship</i>   | COAL MINER                    |
| 11 | <i>Bad Children (Live)</i>  | CAPAX INFINITI                |
| 12 | <i>Untitled One</i>   | MEANS TO AN END               |
| 13 | <i>Leave My Pretty Face Alone</i>                                 | COSTELLO & THE COOL<br>MINORS |
| 14 | <i>Kathryn</i>  | THE SLEEPY TREES              |
| 15 | <i>Lightning, Lightning</i>                                       | MOTH & THE GOAT               |



