# Table of Contents

1  Cover Art ................................................. *Julia Sinn*
2  Collision Staff
3  From the Editors
4  Acknowledgments
5  Photo .................................................. *Jamie Novak*
6  Still ..................................................... *Julie Sokolow*
8  Letter .................................................... *Keith McKellar*
12 Type Writer .............................................. *Ashley Dean*
14 Watching ................................................ *Ryan McDermott*
22 “I & O” .................................................... *Isaac Hill*
27 Oral Terrain .............................................. *Hong-Thao Nguyen*
29 Reunion ................................................... *Justin Hultman*
30 Landing .................................................... *Emily Stokes Halkett*
31 Photo ...................................................... *Heather Kresge*
32 Photo ...................................................... *Anna Rasshivkina*
33 Photo ...................................................... *Anna Rasshivkina*
34 Photo ...................................................... *Jamie Novak*
35 Photo ...................................................... *Lauren Schmidt*
36 Photo ...................................................... *Heather Kresge*
38 Exhibitions in Ludington ......................... *Colin C. Post*
41 Scissure ................................................... *Kayla Hunter*
43 colorado .................................................... *Sarah Reagle*
44 Sure ....................................................... *Stephanie Hoover*
## Collision Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Editors</td>
<td>Lauren Buches, Colin Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Editor</td>
<td>Eileen Tong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Editors</td>
<td>Stephanie Hoover, Alicia Salvadeo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prose Editors</td>
<td>Cate Going, Sarah Reagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Editor</td>
<td>Nicole Boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout &amp; Design Editors</td>
<td>Sarah Ivins, Megan Roth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Editor</td>
<td>Eric Baldwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Editors</td>
<td>KC Euler, Amy Hayes, Tracey Hickey, Kayla Hunter, Elizabeth Gildea, Alisha Lineswala, Ryan McGinnis, Arit Oyekan, Chelsea Vecchiarelli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Readers,

It has been a long, challenging semester that began all the way back in April, after our Spring 2009 issue came out. We lost most of our editors, with current staff members moving into new and unfamiliar positions. It’s been a period of readjustment and growth as we get used to our new roles. Despite all this uncertainty, our amazing staff of new and returning members delivered.

The magazine in your hands is a mesh of their creativity, humor and diligence. It reflects a strong group of emerging writers, most from the remarkable student writers at our own university.

We thank our dedicated poetry and prose editors Stephanie, Alicia, Cate and Sarah for the time and meticulous care you apply while giving constructive feedback to the writers who submit throughout the semester; our art editor Nicole for organizing our first ever film competition; our managing editor Eileen for getting us through the bureaucracy of being a student organization; and our layout and design editor Sarah for combining the many components of this magazine into a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing whole. We’d also like to recognize our design editor Megan who, despite being overseas in London, continued to keep in contact and contribute.

Special thanks go out to our readers. Your continued interest and enthusiasm reaffirms our resolve to produce an outstanding piece of work each semester.

Cheers,

Colin C. Post and Lauren Buches
Collision gives many thanks to:

The University of Pittsburgh Honors College for their continued financial and personal support.

Dr. Alec Stewart for his constant interest in Collision as well as the University’s undergraduate literary student community.

Karen Billingsley for her numerous suggestions and advice, and for navigating us through all the bureaucratic red tape.

Jennifer Lee for her encouragement and guidance in our many projects, and for some great non-magazine related conversations.

Navigator Printing for their continued reliability and professionalism in creating a top shelf product.
First Place

Still

Julie Sokolow
University of Pittsburgh
She spent her whole life cleaning mirrors; still all the telephone poles fell over. Like the furniture, she acquired dust; and the jackhammer spit teeth through the open window. She resented eating and sleeping for interrupting conversation; still, all the cave paintings deserved framing. She realized later, the music – not her date – had turned her thighs red; and the world delivered a deadpan performance to a ghost audience.

She bleached all her miniature deaths from the sheets; still a graveyard flavored her mouth upon waking.
SECOND PLACE

Letter

Keith McKellar
University of Pittsburgh
To: P. Sherman
42 Wallaby Way, Sydney

From: Keith
Narnia

Lety –

How many pounds are in a stone? I just watched this documentary on BBC America and her “super morbid obesity” overwhelms me, but I want a number I can comprehend. I wanted to watch Gangland next (Bloods, Crips? Child’s play compared to the Sharks and Jets) but Intervention started and I remembered my own life crisis.

I realized last night that I am insane. Not a desperate, forceful crazy like that delicious Ann Coulter, but an erratic crazy like your sister.

Remember last year when Lil Wayne stalked and tried to kill me? I ignored anyone who said he was really one of the female basketball players and probably doesn’t know I exist. I think they may have been right. I talked it over with my new best friends, the impossibly trendy American Apparel mannequins, but they didn’t have much to say. I guess they hadn’t read enough of Gawker that day to know what opinion to form. I need to stop hanging out with them. Trevor keeps trying to recruit me to Greenpeace, but I don’t agree with it; a world with global warming is a world without icebergs, one where Jack and Rose never have to let go.
That’s another thing. I care more about fictional characters than real people. I feel more invested in Jack and Rose’s relationship than I do yours. (I got your text, by the way, and he seems nice and all, but my iPod’s also named Paul so that might make things awkward between us). I watched *La Vie en Rose* the other night. The next day I broke down in tears on my way to class thinking about Marcel dying. I bet he heard Edith singing as he died. I’d like to hear Norah Jones singing just before I die. Her sounds would pour into my lungs and breathe out to a world I will probably always be too gentle to impress, words, round and lingering, the last of life but the first of such elegance. (I told all of this to my grandmother who recommended the movie. She called me a fag.)

My own relationships are a mess too. I spent about six hours this morning trying to max out my girlfriend’s body level before realizing I could have spent that time working out myself and not eating a tub of icing. I’m referring to Petunia Wuthershnumps, by the way, not Cincinnati Jones – I drowned her in the pool after she peed in the kitchen and then cheated with Mortimer Goth.

I’m self medicating with food and alcohol. Friday night I did shots and ate Yo-Baby when Liz told me that it’s made with breast milk. I spent the rest of the night throwing up, my brain
abounding with pick up lines: “Yo-Baby, I’m ‘bout ta blow up rill, rill big on Farmville,” “Yo-Baby, let’s do something we can send to TFLN tomorrow.”

Also, I’m paranoid. Some days I walk around convinced everyone is staring at me. (Yesterday, everyone actually was. I walked around the whole day with a pen sticking out of my afro. I get shit lost in there all the time…which reminds me: one day when time has made it funny, I have to tell you about what I pulled out of there last Saturday.) Other days I don’t say a word until night.

I know what you’re going to say to all of this. Dr. Schmidt said that, now that I’m eighteen, the decision to start taking medicine again is up to me – MoJo wouldn’t even have to know. I said I’d give it more time because my idea of “making things a little easier” isn’t spending four hours cleaning the bathroom floor with a q-tip. I’d probably just sell it anyway and use the money to put a down payment on an Urban Outfitter’s graphic tee.

Alright, well, Gangland finally came on reminding me of a letter I have to send to Helen Mirren.
Third Place

Type Writer

Ashley Dean
University of Pittsburgh
Dancing on a tight typewriter ribbon
Ink staining my feet and ankles
Blackness inching up my calves
Until I too, am printed with lies
Stained and degraded and torn
Errors struck through with bleeding white
Letters jaggedly forced
into groups
    on lines
Harsh on the page
Bleeding
The key cutting into soft virgin whiteness
Turning it black
Beating it into submission
And with a click and a slide
It begins again.
Cautious, I creep in the bushes. I swallow and pull out my binoculars. A crooked sycamore grows in my way. Stalking closer, squinting. Looking up, and there I can see them. Oh they look nice. I have a clear view of both, the one on the left is slightly bigger. Plump. Pale. Pointed at the tip. What a gorgeous sight. Look even higher up: two more. These ones are next to the window, completely different types of tits than the first pair. Much smaller, and very perky. I reach in my pocket and grab my log.

TUFTED TITMOUSE – (2) Male & female, possibly preparing to mate. Preening grey feathers on branch. Male has a very large crest, both show thick orange flanks. Singing *peter peter peter*.

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE – (2) Eating seeds at window feeder, heads jerky. Probably both sexes but I obviously cannot distinguish, maybe they’re just friends. Also good chance they may be Carolina Chickadees, who can even tell the difference? Looking for a brighter white nape but I just can’t figure it out, might be either one. Someone in the window is eyeing me up, probably assuming I am trying to see them. I hear the familiar call of *chickadee dee dee dee dee*.

These are closely related to what the British call tits, but maybe timid Americans feel more comfortable with the common names
here (although “titmouse” seems misleading in two ways). Bird names evoke assorted images: different varieties of booby (Brown Boobies can be seen in south Florida as visitors from the Caribbean), species labeled by their breasts (I’ve glimpsed a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Frick Park), and the family with all the tits (California has tiny Bushtits, and in Europe you can see plenty of Great Tits). A White-breasted Nuthatch nibbles nuts, glides to the elm and slides down its shaft, looks for the bugs passed by the Hairy Woodpeckers and Brown Creepers creeping up. Cliff Swallows under bridges, Dickcissels in pussy willows, cute Redheads can be observed bathing in ponds.

My birdwatching seems to give the wrong impressions. The hobby is misunderstood by humans and birds alike, often unwelcome. Both act confused and distressed, wondering what I could possibly be up to. Perhaps it’s just my menacing beard. I suppose I am a bit intrusive, prying into their excitable flighty lives. I remain eager to look anywhere, head in the air. I begin to log sightings in a fieldbook, noting appearances and behavior. Birds can be witnessed performing an assortment of activities, though most act as if they’d prefer not be looked at. The same can be said of my own species.

An afternoon meandering through Edgewood, Common Grackles cackle and soiled babies weep. I bring Huck along, who surveys chipmunks while I search the leaves for movement. Stopping and exploring near houses leads to bulky forearms folding on porches,
wanting no part of what I’m doing. Cars drive by and ogle my dog as he urinates. Enter the open park where Northern Flickers peck, and worry-faced hikers shy away. Maybe they think birdwatchers carry avian flu. What about swine flu, are there pigwatchers?

Peoplewatching is pure entertainment. I attempt to read the minds of strangers. There goes a crusty redneck scratching his armpit, a slim brunette struts past with scorn. She continues through the busy promenade, exhibiting her beautiful plumage of a miniskirt and cleavage, enticing even my own eyes. Twisting glossy nails through silken curlicues, she inspects for a mate. A doctor flashes his bicep and stethoscope: *I’m big and rich, come to me.* Examine the Peacock at the zoo, his glistening ornament is the result of females being picky about the feathers of lovers. Sexual selection rather than natural selection.

Backyard birdhouses bring House Wren lives to you. Scramble eggs in your kitchen while watching them come and go. Go peek into the open circle of a doorway, the mother will flee for her life. Five gaping red mouths will stay and greet your voyeurism, clueless of the outside world. I flip across five channels, each showing unmarried youths being filmed in their cushy apartments.

**AMERICAN GOLDFINCH – (1)** Brilliant yellow male, taking from my thistle feeder. Begins to sing a pleasant *toWEE tweer ti ti ti,*
but is rudely interrupted and scared away by chickadees.
**AMERICAN CROW** – (6) Wayward loitering around the leafy canopy. They bully a screaming Blue Jay out of their territory. Sinister black all over, shouting out *caus*.

**AMERICAN ROBIN** – (2) Males disputing ownership of worm. Each showing off broad red bellies. Tug-of-war, beaks clamped tight upon each end of the muddy victim, neither willing to concede. Stalemate ends as one yanks the meal from the other, soaring away with a triumphant yell of *shheeeer*. Pooped on my sleeve, the asshole.

I watch nature documentaries starring David Attenborough, who has circled the planet observing and filming animals, with several generations of people then viewing his many exploits. I am captivated by the raw footage on the screen. Whenever birds are shown my cat stands vigilant on the floor, often swatting at the televised avian celebrities. Sir Attenborough narrates the Common Cuckoo stealing an egg from an unguarded nest, then laying one of her own in its place. The mother Reed Warbler returns to incubate, unaware of her new offspring. The cuckoo hatches a few days before the others, and this gawky pink newborn proceeds to shove out the two unrelated eggs. The obliviously adoptive parent is then left to service the needs of only one feisty chick. I stroll through the suburbs and roll my eyes at bigheaded children pushing one another from the sandbox.
Parents run to their rescue, but only to shield them from the potential pedophile sauntering down the sidewalk.

I attempt to photograph those finer birds seen. The internet is full of breathtaking ornithological images, along with news of recent sightings. Browse through the woods and capture likenesses of flashy Scarlet Tanagers and striking Northern Parulas, en route to their tropical vacations like so many other pleasure-seekers. Go around and point a camera into the faces of strangers, you’re likely to end up with a black eye. Paparazzi and entertainment journalists live by scrutinizing trivial details of those deemed significant and attractive.

I’ve never been to a cockfight but I would imagine it’s quite a spectacle. Crowds enthralled by bloody feathers flying, violent immigrants quarrelling over bets. In my neighborhood a group of invasive European Starlings scuffles for space in a filthy birdbath. The squawking birds engross me as they pluck away oily down. I’m chastised by a nervous elder for lingering around his property. I may be a terrorist.

I enter the cavernous auditorium ten minutes late for lecture. One hundred sets of pupils follow my hunched figure ascend to its seat; the professor’s sermon fails to gain attention. Immersed in the congregation, I scan the wide collection of multicolored heads. All around people fidget and quietly bicker. Chirping gossip about absent acquaintances, discussions about sweatshirts and the Twilight
movies. “Dickhead, you still owe me two dollars. —— Ugh, look what that whore is wearing. —— No no no, Pittsburgh Penguins are always better on offense, you idiot.” Owls aren’t wise, they just have remarkable hearing.

NORTHERN CARDINAL – (2) Noble red male and dull female. She lands on the feeder first, but once he realizes it’s a safe free meal he quickly brushes her away to gorge himself. His thick bill sifts through the bits, only plucking out savory sunflower kernels and sloppily tossing aside unwanted scraps. His singing is practically narration: *chew chew chew chew chew chew chew chew.*

MOURNING DOVE – (1) Alone on the ground, scavenging the discarded seeds, too fat to get on feeder. Bobbing a bird-brained head back and forth, ignorant of prying eyes and everything else, only concerned with finding more food. Sadly calls out *ooAAH oo oo oo.* What is she crying about?

Gnawing on an eggroll at the All-You-Can-Eat Buffet, my meal-time amusement includes viewing my fellow citizens. Doughy talons grip superfluous spoonfuls of chicken lo mein and roast duck, eventually eating half and throwing away the rest. A grumbling man gobbles up shrimp without chewing. He tilts his head back and gulps the seafood down his loose jiggling gullet like an American White Pelican.
Walking to class, I come upon a ring of spectators on a campus lawn. Everyone is watching a Red-tailed Hawk the size of a bulldog devour a squealing squirrel, picking apart the crimson tendons. The raptor stands defiant as bug-eyed students approach, mesmerized by the heinous murder. I stand aside and witness the entire 20-minute meal, munching on an omelet bagel and sipping my latté. Passersby stop and stare, some revolted by the scene, others giddy and fascinated. Several charlatans misidentify the hawk as a Peregrine Falcon.

Atop the Cathedral of Learning I gaze upon the city from a windowed perch higher than most birds fly. Here the true Peregrine roosts, spying on possible prey far below. I look down upon insignificant flocks of people, appearing so diminutive as they scamper around. Throughout the streets and along the rooftops a civilization of Feral Pigeons thrives. From the corner of my eye comes a swooping blur. The falcon dives for a meal, which it can kill purely by speeding impact. Many birds scatter; safety in numbers in swirling clouds. Others remain unmindful, hopping between large denim legs in a never-ending search for crumbs.

Waiting at the bus stop, I glance upward and notice hundreds of faceless silhouettes, black specks in the blue sky. Making observations wherever I go, curiosity is infinite. Along the ride I’m encircled by civilians flaunting distinctive Pittsburgh Steelers colors (the hues of juvenile Baltimore Orioles), ready to fend off displays of the Baltimore
Ravens. A pimpled teen beside me fluffs his pompadour, chomping down jalapeño-roasted sunflower seeds, and I ponder what is under his obtrusive wrist bandage. An old Asian couple chatters in loud, indecipherable syllables. I catch sight of a Turkey Vulture through the opposite side of the vehicle, and the tan gentleman sitting there questions what the fuck I am looking at.

Inside my own treetop dwelling I study diagrams in the field guide, analyzing form and characteristics. I remember more bird names than first names. Then I discover titmouse sexes to be impossible to discern and my chickadees are in fact Carolinas. Standard deception via appearance. False notions even under close scrutiny. I’m distracted from my research by the beating of wings; an ordinary female House Sparrow has alighted at the window. She just sits there on the ledge, peeping through the glass. She stares straight at me like she knows exactly who I am.
“I & O” ~ Isaac Hill

1.
From “I & O”

there is just
a figure, moving

or being
moved, or

the space is moving
& the figure is still

or the figure is not
separate from it’s

surroundings, there
is no way to say it

& there is a mountain
a hill of dirt or rocks

or sins, tendencies
time, or desire

& I might be
the figure
or I might be
watching the figure
or both
but, the figure must

end the journey
at the top of the mountain

at the end of O
at the end of I

2.
the man looked out at what appeared to be
everything, like an egg cracking from the inside

fractures, rivers of space
empty lines

meeting each other at the end of the egg
as the soft, wet chick becomes yang

the man dropped his eyes, but still saw
feet & arms & stomach & nose & everything
3. “Head Full of Dark” (Peter Gizzi Imitation)

I saw you in the fading light of the screen.

My dead hands felt they could pass through,
touch you, like the little girl in that movie.

There is instead the solidity of black spinning under my tires. Did you ever think, O? we are feet on a treadmill,
sounding only at night as you sleep.


Here, & there are a million points of reference, shining
like cigarettes in a movie.

Quakers, singing gospel
to prisoners in gray suits
with their eyes rolled back.

I have noticed you singing
also.

A green line in the fog.

A girl in makeup tripping over her leg.

A time line of major events in the life of a coyote.

I could try & forget
all the possible avenues
all the branches

& then wouldn’t I just be here again?

I am still an amnesiac
I am still waiting for an ‘an’
    an ‘a’
or ‘un’

something that leads to nothing.

5.

Ben Lerner
once told me
“particularize, particularize, particularize.”
While on mushrooms I noted that
the beauty is actually not
in the particulars
but in the patterns
which are still
particulars.
I.
Houses cannot be altered by changing locks, unlike rectangular newspapers that can alter into airplanes, becoming so-called paper airplanes. Paper airplanes are most effective as they can fly while exposing all words to spectators below. Kiet flew a paper airplane over my home, wings flapping across a collection of Norway Maples and grass. Letters dropped. I screamed. Lotion dissolved in hand. Ripped off clothes when words formed on body.

II.
Imagine how your mouth feels when you say firefly as opposed to firecracker or firewood. They signed me up for speech class the following day and worked on th sounds first, like thumb and breathing and the. They removed my lisp with their advanced technology. Check one, two, three, red wagons ran over running water at Ruth's party. Red wagons ran over running water at Ruth's party. Ms. Schaefer changed my life, I feel confident and beautiful, I look at old pictures and say, never, never again will I go back to that, or that.

III.
I met Jet Li and Lucy Liu who came to me in bodies of dragon smoke horoscope. To view a war is better done off stage, on rocky terrain, where our footprints disappeared as if we never existed at all. When the cameras rolled, we were given kodachi swords. When the
cameras rolled, we used our kodachi swords like bleach sterilizing a pool
of red. No snow willow was spared. The hummingbird I touched
flapped twice, then paused. I moved my lips as words appeared below
my chest - this is where you die, this is where I shall bury you. As you
know, we danced in unison, our cherry satin robes flapping to the
sound of gunfire. Does the scent of an air raid smell familiar or did
he misplace his masculinity somewhere along the Pacific Ocean?
Bury this image, for the love of God, bury it.

IV.
When grandma decides to knit me a blanket, the detail in her colors
reflects tissue paper. This is Jenny Khuu reading her life story on
stadium. With another stitch - we make space on roadsides where
I sold leaf lettuce on a wood table, last before giving body. You see,
naked is ugly, chickens have no heads. We wrap the blanket around
shoulders for size. I give her my bracelet, my small sandals, my hair
follicles, all words too painful to remember in a dollar store gift box.
Some men still live in war
times. My grandfather never trusted
the Japanese. Never left home. Never
knew his father never dreamed
of black neighborhoods let alone
black presidents.

My father drives Vietnamese cars.
He likes the idea of being
inside of them. Leaving
tunnels quickly.

Knowing the enemy. Knowing how to buy
a used car. To finance homes. Votes straight
republican. Pro Life, no queers. Remembers
losing two sons
to education.

History born to repeat.
Some men will live in war.
A flock of snow geese
will churn before its landing
in a way that nature saves only for cyclones, and this.

They don’t seem to calculate, they are only pearls
strung across wavelengths in the sky,

to remind us how briefly we find our joys, how eternal
their memories become;

that wings and fields could touch in a moment
reserved for other times and other places

and their presence could become a symphony
that carries no tune in particular.
Anna Rasshivkina
STAFF SUBMISSIONS
1) At this point in time, I am engaging in a return, taxing like childhood gunplay, I am picking up each soup can found in the wake of a cyclone, and I have not saved any of the labels 2) At this point in time, I have forgotten the meaning of the word “basilic”; I could say that every word I look up in the dictionary is an ingredient, but I am not, at this point in time, preparing to make Rachel’s Famous Pesto 3) I am, at this point in time, wearing my father’s worn gym shorts, they still have an emblem of the high school mascot (a musket? muskrat?) worn too so that it resembles a half-eaten peach or I smudge colophons on the sides of my favorite southern soul food cookbooks, and I am wearing the pink Domino’s Pizza shirt with the sleeves cut off 4) And doesn’t my new tattoo just love this fresh breeze – smelling like bastions of the last interregnum, like it has pushed through Ludington’s columns, light houses, and like it enjoys a game of Shoot-for-the-moon 5) I’m sorry; at this point in time, if I were mayor, each billboard stretched along I-96 would proclaim: I AM HERE 6) At this point in time, I am the close-cropped saw grass 7) Earthenware ashtrays sold at Ludington’s rest stops, at this point in time 8) Investigative journalism is, at this point in time, outlawed in order to make room for parchment paper shops, irreproducible works of 19th century Scandinavian art, school uniforms that adopt an aesthetic of try-as-you-might irreverence to combat the nitrous
oxide released by The Fine Print, new lines of communication (e.g. I am making smoke signals, at this point in time, burning through every copy of the Yellow Pages that has only been used as a high chair), and Woodrow wanted me to tell you to leave a note next time you use up the last egg 9) Do not bleach turnable dry medium, at this point in time, and I’m warning you from the height of a sparrow 10) I’m warring you from the heel of a fine-grained chiffarobe 11) At this point in time, they keep an archive of every Chicago Tribune from 1983 in the hotel lobby and it must be that, from this side of Lake Michigan, Chicago looks about 17 years away; but I read something on a June front page that led me to believe you’d be leaving for Carl on Tuesday, that you’d be loving Buenos Aires over half-off Manhattans 12) Isn’t every combination of words, at this point in time, drawn from memory, at this point in time, I can still appreciate spaghetti and meatball dishes from non-Italian homes 13) I am the afternoon rain in the orchard, baby 14) Would you say, at this point in time, that the fog is a lie, the fog is a discrete set of points, the fog is converging and expanding like the vacationers diving off the ends of Ludington’s piers 15) I often take my work shirt off to revel and to rise and to eat yams and other root plants from the garden; yet, the fine China was made in Argentina 16) I have, at this point in time, trouble deciding between filtered and
Exhibitions in Ludington

non-filtered water or are pronounceable symbols really preferred

17) At this point in time, I am doing woodwork; I am carving a giraffe from cherry wood even though my mother is not expecting any anniversary presents at this point in time

18) Each new combination of socks is put under strict copyright legislation

19) I am “the finger in the pie”, which I took to mean you have some level of interest in baking the World’s Greatest lemon meringue – the kind that would be mentioned on roadside attraction signs or the kind that would be lauded as “prepared with finesse”

20) At this point in time, the rifles will be fired to indicate the difference between jelly and custard doughnuts, summer retreats and winter getaways, and all of the gateways I have set up leading from one room to the next are lined with newspaper as I paint the jambs in a lonely mauve.
I remember the cracks in the vacant blue robin’s egg shell I found nestled between the blades of grass in our backyard in Colorado. I remember my mom’s supple fingernails as she set it in the decorative ceramic nest on the shelf in our living room. I remember the soil in the garden into which my sister and I plunged our hands, the worms we squished between miniature fingers. I don’t remember the black spider with the red hourglass on its bulbous back, or my dad’s eyes when I held it up to him.

I remember the swarms of freckles on my stepsister’s shoulders as I toed down the slope to the river below a rented cabin in Montana. I remember the dark slivers of shale we collected from its banks and the piles that became monuments, castles. I remember the bellyful of water propelled into my lungs the first time the Atlantic Ocean ground me into its bed of sand. I remember the skin that glistened on my stepmother’s legs and chest as she sprawled on a towel and shielded the sun with one hand.

I remember the chipped red paint on the wooden swing that hung from a dipping tree branch in my stepfather’s backyard in Ohio. I remember the two mirrored scars on my knees as my legs pushed off from the tree’s trunk and my lips sang to the chinks in the bark. I remember the dank, endless stacks of chopped firewood that towered
Scissure

over my head in his frigid garage. I remember the splinters lodged in the crevices of my fingertips, the protruding ends I could never grasp with blunt, dirty nails.

I remember the cavernous ravine behind my stepfather’s house, and the arctic it became during that first big snow every winter. I remember boulders jutting from the quiet creek and bent trees cloaked in white that invited, curled a gnarled forefinger. I remember my shimmery, puffy jacket that rustled with each wobbly step on snow-day expeditions through the wilderness with my two friends. I remember flimsy pink plastic sleds dragged on yellow ropes, spotless snow we ate to survive.

I remember the slick grass underneath the shirts that stuck to the clammy backs of my sister and I; wide, open-mouthed grins and tongues that lolled to the side; the raindrops balanced on the cusps of the eyelashes of our squinted eyes.
framing a shot of graffiti that mars ancient iron rails. the sound of trains trembling beneath the bridge. waiting to carry their cargo, their coal. glimpses of strangers’ faces through the slits in my fingers. sitting on a bench by tracks, by trees. dogs barking. chains clinking against leashes. the scent of coffee, loss of calm. later, the smell of sagebrush and sweat. twelve-passenger van barreling down the highway. two time zones away, trying to remember how i’d said good-bye.
SURE ~ Stephanie Hoover

You were looking at me as the blue light skipped across our faces, contorted with honest expectation. I lifted my hand self-consciously to cover the nape of my neck, age-appropriately aware of exactly how three vertebrae stuck out when my thin skin stretched over them. You kissed my cheek, eager. I didn’t look at you. Knees tremble under thighs that are shut tightly. Your lips touch my neck. It tickles unpleasantly. The ceiling reminded me of my grandmother’s house, beige and textured. Let’s go outside, you said. I was sure. I was sure. Your hair was like the leaves crunching under my Chuck Taylors. The shed I would never return to. I don’t remember what your face looked like when you took me. I remember the blue pool rafts in the back, and how they were too dirty to be used.