



plum creek review
fall 2015

the plum creek review

fall 2015

oberlin, ohio

published by and for the students of
Oberlin College

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Front Cover **Dribble Trash** *acrylic on masonite*
Soren Carlson-Donohoe

Back Cover **untitled** *acrylic*
Nicholas Stares

A Wait by the Pier in Hong Kong
Bryan Rubin



digital photograph

Oberlin, Ohio

Nicole Bennett

“Corn,”
she said.
“That’s all there is out here—
just miles and miles of
corn,
as far as the eye
can see.”

“But aren’t there houses?”
I asked.
“And isn’t there a town
a couple miles north
with office buildings
and restaurants
and people, too?”

“You don’t understand,”
she said.
“Last night,
I saw a drunk man,
dizzy with denial,
tear through the fields,
barefoot and wailing
like a grackle
with snapped wings.
He couldn’t have been
older than you or me.
The townspeople,
they had to chase him,
tackle him to the ground,
tie his wrists together
with heavy rope,
and drag him out.
I’m telling you,
you don’t understand.
He was screaming,
inconsolable.
All he could see was corn.”

Tiempo de
Victoria Albacete



On a Visa
Matías Berretta

*You look white until you open your mouth,
said the First Merit teller
who handed me my first credit card
so whenever I enter the US
I try to keep my mouth shut
but the migration officer always
asks for my passport
and my major
and why I would bother
coming all the way up here anyways.*

*My brother called me the other day.
He didn't understand why no one in his freshman hall
knew why the black people on TV needed to protest.
I think people are nice to us because we look white
—are we white?
I didn't know what to say so I said some things
that sounded like they made sense:
we pass as white, we are Latinos that pass
as white, maybe we are white Latinos.*

*But you know, my brother said
you know the same shit that happens here
happens back in Brazil,
difference is, back home
we don't talk about it.*

Satanitron Prom (Oahu, OH)

Zack Owings

If the palm trees are growin' at prom are they called prom fronds?
I try to wonder but say aloud
What palm trees?
Alexandria asks
I don't see any palm trees.
Everyone slurping drunk on radioactive rum
Everyone bleeding from their eyes (*or worse*)
Brutal bubbly oozing up out the sewers
Pounding Molotovs and Mojitos
(*Moe-Hee-Toe*)
What's the theme, anyhow?
Alexandria: It's Satanitron Prom.
I leave the dance floor in a daze, dodge coat check with a whirl
And slip outside to gaze at the waves

Armistice (Gun)

Soren Carlson-Donohoe



screenprint

Through Smoke, A Man

Bryan Rubin



Hamlet, Sometimes

Michael Landes

Mourning quarks rested on the rocks
like mermen braiding beards. It was
improbable that anything would last,
from their quivering or from the nation's
history, or I doubt that anyone was
convinced by us, in the end. There's an
up-your-own-ass-ness about it,
writing poetry I mean, or anything,
which makes me not want to do it anymore.

The furies seemed interested in the investment
opportunity, and so I offered a motel room
and a few hours of my time. Have you ever
heard of delayed gratification? Well, it could
be yours right now, call today, or so the television
told me. They forget that there is no
human experience, but humans, experiencing,
and there, Hammy, lies the rub, because you
are not human, you are a mineral, you are
artifact, you belong in a museum. Goodnight,
my lily-white, my perfect block. Goodbye,
my own chapped lips.

Sayonara Mama
Lindsey Wolfram

Boxed instructions taught me everything I know

Waiting at the stove
for water to boil
I feel your absence there the most

At the dinner table you're far away
A candle illuminates your dull gaze

Somber in trance, you think
of dusty beaches
Miami is your muse and
how can I compete with palm trees?

In between forkfuls you become quizzical
And inquire about my mood
which has only ever been
reflective of yours

In my 19 years
I've allocated my love and affection to
the spoiled dogs of the Upper East Side

there is none left for you

wash that down with wine

In the apartment I pressed my ear to your bedroom door,
but you were lost under cashmere sweaters

cheese was rotting in the fridge, and
I left it there until you came out

you're still buried under the mound

Sayonara mama
I'm leaving you behind
I'd rather be an upscale drifter than
your middleman

Before I left I ate your favorite string of pearls

It slithered down my throat, eager to
decorate my ribcage

Now I am worth millions

Years from now you'll linger in your baths
whispering confessions to fruit flies that gather by the drain
wondering why your daughter still won't look you in the eye

A Dying Art
Mikaela Fishman



All Torso
Katherine Heiserman

Mama's baby's comin' soon.
Only a couple days 'till she leaks
and Auntie May will be moppin' up her mess.

She tol' me
when I was born the sky turned blue to bronze
and the stars fell down and landed in the yard
and pops went collectin' 'em while she sat rockin' on the porch
smilin' at me in her arms.

I ain't met my new brother yet, but I talked to him.
He gon' wash right out mama like hose water
like he ain't got arms or legs,
all torso.

A Meal of Crayons

Bryan Rubin



digital photograph

Eucalyptus Eyes

Katherine Heiserman

It's the eucalyptus
in her eyes, streaming
red and green
it's the stitched self,
the blueberry pie
and four chairs gone
it's the wrong itch
a blood blister
a bruise on the thigh
don't cry, don't cry
it's the drum beat
drills screws hammers
crunch crunch my armor
it's the crane fall
a sharp edge
down she rumbles

...where are the blueberries
ouch the chair is in the room
left turn, hallway, right, left
I know its under...my helmet
there the green...turn right
I left it under the pie
the chair the table I smell
cry cry I smell *cry* passes birds
streaming *weeeee*

A constellation is a group of stars that forms a pattern.

Rachel Finn-Lohman

Me

It was the summer between jump ropes and lip gloss and Dad was a rarity and a giant, often asleep during the day or loud in the night, often not around without much explanation at all, and Lex was busy taking care of the baby that may or may not have been growing inside of her, or else she was “taking care of it,” and she had her secrets and her boyfriends and her cigarettes, and her secret boyfriends who smoked cigarettes, and I had yet to learn the correlation between dangerous boys and babies that never come, but Lex was occupied, so you and I were alone most of the time and most of the time that was okay with me, because you knew how to cook eggs in the morning and could name all of the constellations at night, and we weren’t so very alone with all those stars up there keeping us company, but on the cloudy nights I could feel the emptiness of the world in the tips of my fingers even when I held your hand.

You

This is how to crack an egg with one hand. You can tell if someone is lying by watching their eyes and their fingers. Beware of too much movement. A fractal defines a pattern that reoccurs on smaller and smaller scales, like the branching off of branches on a tree, and they are the most pleasant patterns to look at for human brains. The universe is probably fractal. A star is a huge ball of fire in the sky, like the sun but further away. A constellation is a group of stars that form a pattern. That one, there, is called Pegasus. It’s supposed to look like a horse with wings, but I think it looks more like a jellyfish.

Lex

What do I do what do I do what do I do what do I do?

Dad

Humans were meant to eat meat or we wouldn’t have canine teeth and you are going to sit in that chair until you finish your steak, I don’t care if you sit there forever until you starve, you are not getting up until you eat it, do you hear me?

Me

It was the last summer that I walked around with scraped knees from skateboard accidents, the last year that I was allowed to walk the two blocks from our house to the public pool in nothing but my purple one-piece and flip flops, a towel we once took from a motel bathroom draped around my neck, because by the time the weather turned warm again I had bought my first two-piece with babysitting money and Dad was telling me to cover up, and Lex, whose belly had never grown round like I thought it would, was giving me tips about how to look hot without being called a slut, and in a few months I would get my period in the bathroom at Applebee’s and Lex would teach me how to get bloodstains out of clothes and warn me to keep my legs closed, and that July was the last time I told anyone that I was eleven and three quarters, because the next summer, when I felt self conscious about my age, instead of twelve and three quarters I just said that I would be thirteen in October, and the summer after that I would just say that I was fifteen when I wasn’t, because by then thirteen didn’t feel old enough to hold the person I had become.

Dad

Your mom had the most angel voice you could ever imagine. Her singing used to be the only thing that could stop you from crying. You used to scream like a maniac whenever she left you with me, and there was nothing I could ever do to stop it. But after she was gone you never really cried anymore. Maybe you knew that there was nobody to come sing it better.

You

Do you remember Mom? Do you remember how she used to read to us before bed? Do you remember the Sunday mornings when she cooked pancakes for us and let us eat them in front of the TV?

Do you know what she said to me at the end? She said, “Take good care of your sisters, little man. Take good care of my girls.”

Lex

There are some things that you are too young to understand. All I will say is this: don't trust boys, especially the pretty ones, and don't think that you know more than you do. I haven't decided whether or not I'm running away yet, but if I do leave I'm gonna miss you a lot. Just don't tell Dad anything I've told you and it'll all be okay.

Me

It was the summer when I heard the noises in the nighttime and Lex was not in her bed so I went out to look for her and in the moonlight on the porch she was curled in a ball and I thought she looked like some kind of dying animal and she said, "Oh god oh god oh god," and the moonlight turned her skin so white I could see all of her veins like rivers and she said, "Go back inside, I'm fine," and I didn't know what to do except listen and try to believe her.

Lex

If you put a couple small things in your pocket when nobody is looking, and then you buy a candy bar or something, then probably nobody will notice or stop you. That's the best way to get the expensive stuff, like good mascara that doesn't clump and doesn't drip when you cry.

I couldn't have kept it anyway. I wouldn't ever have known what to do.

Dad

You are a part of a great and glorious world and that world has a food chain and you are at the top of that chain, so there is no point being sorry about the life God gave you because you took some field trip to a farm where the cows looked sad, and there is no point in trying to save animals because guess what we all die anyway, and life is short so you might try to eat some steak and have some fun while you can.

You

Life is fractal if you think about all of the possibilities. In the beginning, there are so many choices like so many paths you can take through the forest, and each of those paths branches off into other paths and then those paths branch off and it goes on forever, and the further you move down the paths that you choose the smaller everything becomes, and there are less possibilities, until one day there are no more choices because you've gone down the paths that you went down and lived the life that you lived. But if you believe in some kind of reincarnation, then it's possible that you get to choose a few different paths, instead of just one, which can make life feel a little bit less disappointing, because at least you get another chance.

Me

It wasn't until much later that I looked back and thought of that as the summer that grew us up like wildflowers, stretched us up towards the sky and the sun, which is the closest but not the biggest or the brightest star, grew us into the people we were becoming, set us on paths that led us to places we weren't ever trying to go, pushed us along faster than we were ready to move, away from some futures and towards others and I never felt like I was making choices. Things just happened back then, and I could feel the movement of the world pulsing under my skin, could feel myself reaching out through the tips of my fingers and longing for something that I couldn't name yet.

You

Some stars are older than others by billions of years. Some stars that we see have already died and we're just seeing the light now because it takes so long to get to us. The stars that make up constellations are trillions of miles apart and don't ever know the picture they're creating. It's the random forces of the universe that created those stars where they are, and it's our tiny human brains down here on Earth that look up at that mess of light and see something beautiful.

Baptism

Mia Silvan-Gau

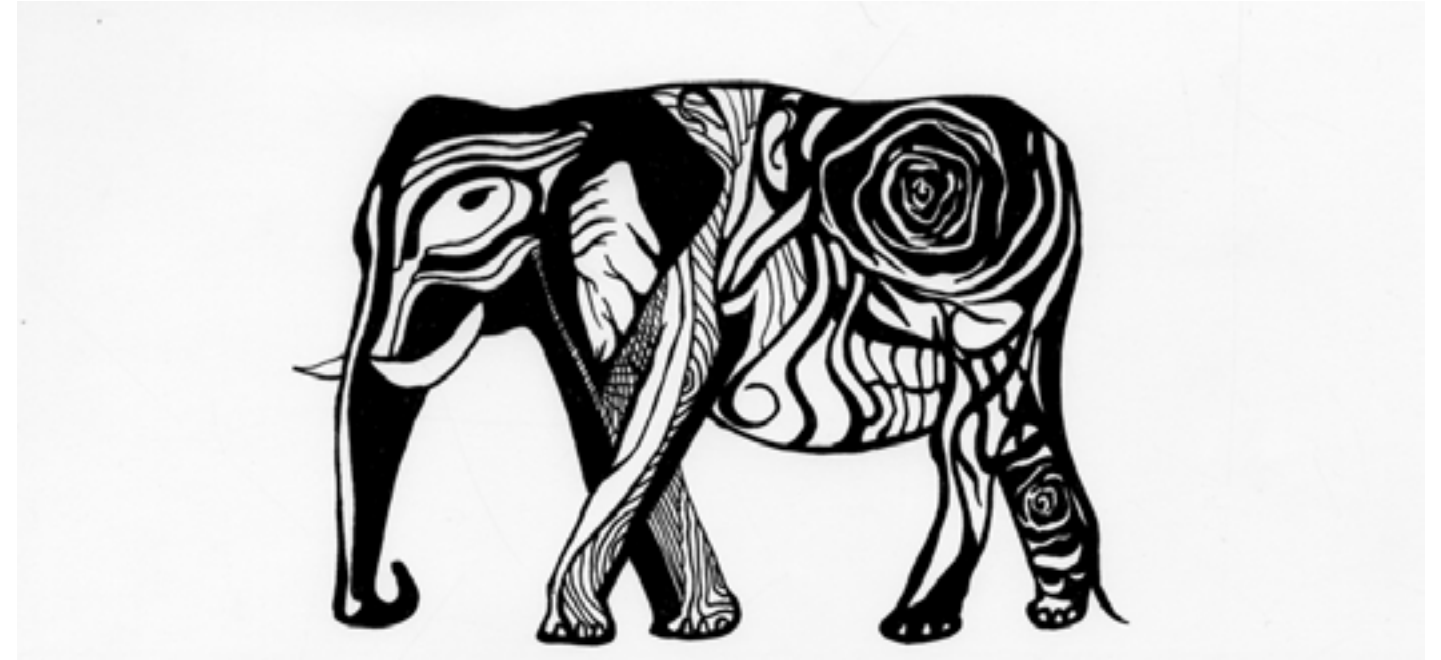


32

digital photograph

Kevin

Vida Weisblum



ink on paper

33

Luz Mala

Matías Berretta

i.

Two brothers shot at each other,
shot each other, and by mistake,
one shot the other's mother in law, the one
who bled slow on his fast black horse, always
black I always imagine his horse black
like his coat and his boots, these maybe brown
from all the mud and cow dung, Martin
I think was his name, always riding away, the way
I imagine it, the V of his back outlined
by the light of the moon the way the moon
can give shape to things only when
the ground is well-deep dark.

ii.

Riding away, he's lost in the dark, never
comes back, Martin, I think is his name, becomes
a ghost, a bad light, a luz mala, a good thing turned bad
by bad company, by which they mean alcohol and greed
and God knows what—maybe God even
—a local god, a personal god, like every other
god, an attempt at a universal language
fractured into dialects, delusions
of time and place, by which I mean earth
and rain and horse manure which
doesn't smell that bad at all, being nothing
but earth and grass and rain.

iii.

Listening to the story,
my brother and I swing on the porch,
just an uncle and a cigarette
split between too many
cousins, except for one, his son
who's not allowed to smoke,
being his firstborn and all. We swing
on the porch where the shooting took place
all those years and uncles ago, right there, right
here in our grandfather's ranch, where I can see
what I still see—the V of Martin's back against the moon
—and wonder how he shot his brother
with my brother swinging next to me, how
shooting him or trying to shoot him
would be like shooting or trying to shoot myself
like us shooting each other or at each other,
what's said in the action weighing the same.

teeth

Vida Weisblum



stitches

Katherine Dye

In a dream, I cracked an egg,
and I saw a little porcelain doll
nestled in a shell. I hit her
head with a small hammer, and
in her head, I found a needle
and thread. You took the needle
and thread from me, and you
sewed stitches in my ripped skin.
I smiled when you pricked
my finger, and you stroked my hand.
I thought it sufficed
for tenderness.

Shipwrecked

Fernando Borges

I found joy in the sway of my hips,
In the Gods of drumbeats and Coqui squeaks,
In thick thighs that turned in waves of hard-to-pronounce names.
I found joy in laughs that fried my skin cinnamon,
And daydreams drunk on Coquito.
I found joy dipped in Cafe Bustelo
Made strong by Abuela's hands.
I found joy in the roll of "R"s,
In hurricanes that cooed like lullabies,
In slices of Avocado.

All this joy, I found,
As the white sea choked "Our" language
From my body.
Foam drowning my sight,
Resting in the sand at the bottom,
Because those sands reminded me
Of the ones I used to call home.

Stormy Island Geode

Bryan Rubin



digital photograph

El Traumado
Matías Berretta

An elegant epitaph for a sulking boy
who talks too much, and thinks too much and is
 too much to bear. For when it came to colors
my mother only got me white and dark and grey
while brother sported red and green and blue.
 A somber son must dress accordingly
 lest people take him for the cheery kind
 and strike a match by way of conversation.
No good for social lubrication—please smile!
 At what? The world. What's that? The people you're around.
 Then burn it to the ground.

Look, I'm not
always like this. It's just this place, it makes
 me mad—the lack of thought, a stagnant river.
 My culture's gutted; your cult is but its husk.

The Underground of Shanghai
Bryan Rubin



digital photograph

Lena
Mikaela Fishman



digital photograph

puppy love
Vida Weisblum

Five thick fingers sit comfortably
between clavicle and
shoulder blade to shake me
in a teasing reprimand:
 "Look at me!"
you say.

As your forehead tilts
to my face, my gaze
traces features I have
come to memorize
after five years of your
instruction:

A wide triangular nose that
bridges angular
cheekbones, and
 thick brown brows that
 shadow milky blue corneas.

That ultramarine is
bitter medicine,
eats through my stomach
like lactic acid.

You are 31, grown and burly,
charmingly grotesque and
oddly beautiful. I am 17 and

you still speak to me as '*child*,'
 although the cranky moans
 that stir beneath the belly
tell me I'm a woman.

I once despised the way
you would bobble your
high-held head, your poise
propped up by
fragile shards of dignity.

 I hated that you
commanded I fly when I
needed to learn to
fall first.

You taught me to
treasure your patience, to
applaud your lousy jokes and
to shout in ecstasy as you watched me flourish
under your wing.

Malice never moved you
and I will never be moved to
fear you.

 Yet you have always
embodied '*man*' before '*mentor*.'
Your hands are paid
to prod my body, place
my limbs
 into their proper positions.

And when I let my
muscles expand and
squirm beneath your
tightened fingers,
I learn how odd it is to
revere you as teacher
and love you as man.

Why, with your frigid palm loosely
 locked in the crook of my neck—
like the firm lick of a wet
paintbrush—must you wonder
why my eyes
 evade yours?

High Line Horn

Bryan Rubin



digital photograph

Yegua

Matías Berretta

And because I missed our stop
I offered you a brownstone which wasn't
mine to offer, but just as beautiful

as the one in that photograph
where you flatter the stoop
with those galloping legs of yours

overshadowing steep steps
while you smoke a cigarette.
Despite the rush I had to quit

you, but wouldn't have,
had you been able to stay
and talk about how those poor horses

in central park with sad, blinkered faces
should be set free. Or at least,
allowed to see where they're going.

BOTTLED

Victoria Albacete

Guayaki,
You frustrate me.

You sell my culture
Our traditions,
As an energy drink.
You call it

Glowing
With 140 mg of caffeine.
Perfect
For every tired hipster college student
Running on empty
Who doesn't want to drink coffee,
Who wants to be

Organic
Natural
Cultured.

I think of my home
Of lying between sierras at night
Passing around the mate
Passing around Fernet con Coca
Of sitting on riverbeds playing cards

¡Último mate - te casarás el año que viene!

Of slouching on a balcony
Four floors up
Watching the world go by
In the high-pitched shrills of sirens
And the shouts of the corner grocery
While las clavelinas del aire
Dance on the electric wires

I remember el mate de mi abuela
Su bombilla de plata
Her favorite Taragüi yerba
Tinged with orange

Then I taste the terere
As it slides from the
Maize-yellow bottles
Of Guayaki Yerba Mate
And I want to scream that

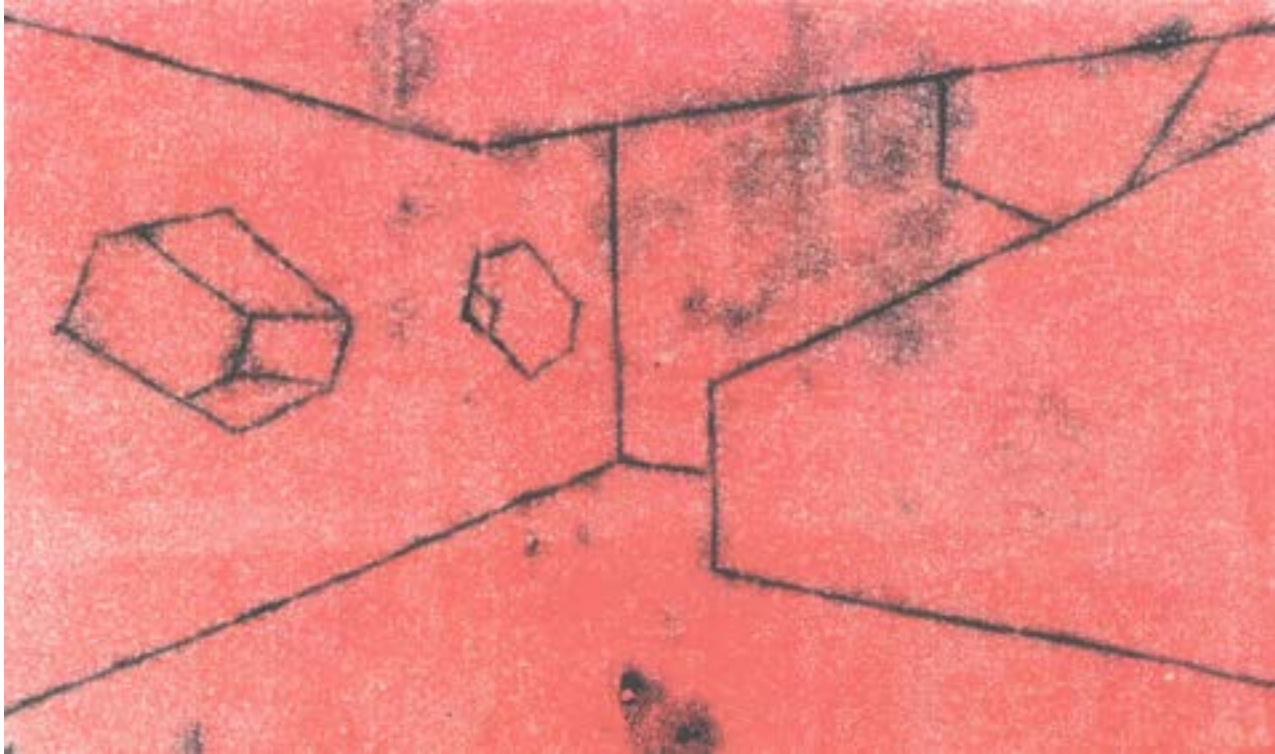
You can't bottle my family
You can't bottle our history
You can't bottle our culture

And sell it for \$2.99

((Less than a smoothie))

Up & Within

Soren Carlson-Donohoe



monotype

Prism

Katherine Dye

I asked if you had ever seen a girl with eyes of amaranthine, aubergine lips, hair of heliotrope. You laughed and asked why I didn't just say periwinkle or plum or purple. I said why mention red when you can have vermillion nails, russet evenings, claret wine, oceans incarnadine. I insisted that erythraean is enticing, saffron dances on the tongue, chartreuse strokes and then stabs, while sapphire, turquoise, cerulean, azure serenely sleep in the deepening sea. Green is galling and emerald is elegant, grey slumps sadly in the corner, while silver sits confident, detached. You shook your head, not understanding, eyes transparent, flat. I dressed in sable instead of black and met you in the tangerine sunset, clouds like fluffs of mauve, blades of grass turning to coal. I kissed you on your pale cheek, your face a plaster mask, your grip tight on my wrist. But I slipped through, dissolved like pigment, bright and potent, into the winter soil.

Deep Sea Blues
Michelle Fikrig



digital photograph

140°
Fernando Borges

My mother burned
“Fat” into my skin
Like she fried
Porkchops:
With every meal
and till the edges
crisped.

A Little Betting

Bryan Rubin



digital photograph

The Death of a Guinea Pig

Sarah Ridley

I knew he was dying when
he wouldn't snatch the carrot from
my waiting fingers

He couldn't stand, his breathing was
musical: a twelve bar blues, a
syncopated tune

My other one stole the food I
left in front of him then
snuggled at his side like
normal
They stayed that way until a
day's worth of choruses
ended; they found my other one in
the opposite corner of the cage

I wasn't home at the time,
a closed shoebox delivered the news.
"Oh yeah," said my dad, "he's dead."

And the labored breaths rang in
my ears, and my other one's eyes
looked wider than
usual

Hahaha Fuck It

Camille Pass

Little skinny white boys
with pouty lips and daddy issues
translucent hands running
across the crowd of suffocated knees

waiting to smash tidy bags of bones
against the other testosterone stuff
just hoping to get to something animal *y'know*
I love it when he just fuckin screams
picking fights with their art school educations
the lead singer farts into a microphone

Coked up veins in spoony necks
Hahha that'd be so funny if we kissed
Model jaw lines burning for blood
groping limbs while they jump forward
cigarette souvenirs in the cracks
of doc martens

Kerouac is my idol
Sweat drips from chin length bobs
onto vintage \$50 white t shirts
cooled in an alleyway
stick n pokes shining
what a shout into the void, Bart Simpson.

A goat's gaze

Bryan Rubin



digital photograph

Through Two Trees

Bryan Rubin



