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From the Archives

An Exploration of Penn State Harrisburg's
Literary Magazine History

A Special Issue Produced by The Paragon Press

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LETTER FROM *the editor*

Penn State Harrisburg has a long tradition of literary magazines on their campus. The majority of staff members at The Paragon Press has spent some time studying on this campus, so we decided to take a moment to explore the work that has come before us. Penn State Harrisburg is lucky enough to have an amazing archive that houses a complete collection of every literary magazine since the very beginning in 1970.

The tradition started with a hand-made magazine titled *Pnarque*. The meaning behind the name has been lost, but the writings stay with us to this day. In our pursuit to explore the history of Penn State Harrisburg's literary magazines we have had the pleasure of examining this document as well as its successor, Tarnhelm.

In order to fully explain the concept behind *Tarnhelm*, we will let one of the original editors, Gary Wetterhall, explain that “in Wagnerian/Norse mythology, the Tarnhelm is a winged, magic helmet fashioned by the Nibelung dwarf, Mime, from the stolen earth treasure or Rhinegold. The implications of this immortal legend alone capture the imagination but for men of all time to desire to “go to the ends of the earth” on a wish or to take any shape at will has fostered fascinations, frustrations, and dreams. The poet can this reality; he can forge the treasure of his imagination into a Tarnhelm and the reader of this work can wear this Tarnhelm and dream himself wherever he would go.”

This campus has been blessed with the presence of Tarnhelm until 2008 when the editors had decided to adjust the name to better suit the ever changing community. The name that they decided upon was *From the Fallout Shelter*. Penn State Harrisburg is built on the site of the decommissioned Olmsted Air Force Base. Which means that the campus also has a nuclear fallout shelter in the basement of the Olmsted Building. With this fact in mind, *From the Fallout Shelter* was born. This publication is still a major part of the literary history at Penn State Harrisburg.

Penn State Harrisburg has recently developed a digital Fall supplement to *From the Fallout Shelter* called *Fission*. *Fission* is a chapbook sized magazine that focused on short poems and flash fiction. But that is not all, *From the Fallout Shelter* has joined other literary magazines and have chosen to make a statement against current political decisions. 17: PSU to Parkland is a special issue of the Penn State Harrisburg literary magazine, *From the Fallout Shelter*, is a collaboration between high school students and PSH students in response to the school shooting in Parkland, Florida.

The editors and I have combed through 48 years of history , and we pulled some of the poetry out of these amazing issues that have taught us so much about creating a literary magazine. You will find pieces from 1970 all the way until the 2017-2018 issue of *From the Fallout Shelter*. We are excited for you to see the change in literary greatest from the beginning in 1970 until the present.

Finally, in the words of Gary Wetterhall, “we present you with a Tarnhelm, the first of its kind for Capitol Campus. The them is transformation: from the philosophical questions of “Chuang Chou and the Butterfly,” to the triumphant joy of “Ressurrectius.” There is also an element of Odyssey in the places you can go, so pick up your Tarnhelm and make a wish – but be careful, you may never return. “

Enjoy,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Austin M. Shay". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and connected.

Austin Shay

Penn State Harrisburg BHum '17

Penn State Harrisburg MA Candidate

Publisher, The Paragon Press

My Window with a View | Darwin B. Dosch

Pnarque | 1970

I didn't see it as a child,
But it was there.
I was blind in all directions
And I didn't know enough to care,
But it was there,
A window with a view.

Now today
I've got a window with a view.
I lay on my back and stare at the ceiling
And see all the things that I once knew,
Through my window with a view.

I see my total past,
Layers of experience
Built to last.
I see all my errors,
And the shadows that they cast.
Even today
I see every instant of my past
Through panes of glass
In my mind.

And tomorrow, like today,
I'll see views of far away,
Far away,
Away.
Ill rise and stand,
An aged body called a man,
And escape this life by jumping through
My window with a view.

Sonnet II | Gary Wetterhall

Tarnhelm | 1971

Now there is but one song left to sing
I have sung the others lighting the way
Of my apparent path, and come to nothing.
There can be no night if there is no day –
Then why have I come upon such blackness
As no man has ever know or dreamed?
I have climbed mountains into this abyss,
Following the path my own image beamed!
Where I have been can matter not to me
If my life is a song that others sing.
What once I desired I no longer see,
What I once followed is now pursuing.
The circle has been made, a jaded ring
That has no end, only a beginning.

Buck Thompson Stopped Smiling | R.J. Philbin

Tarnhelm | 1973

He would have cut his heart

On the high sea

Or along the low hum

Of the trilling wire where full

Sail is syllable and metric pulse beat;

He would have stung the stars

With a word of the world

Or sketched a dream's madness

In the eyes of children where

The moon sets seas and shadows free;

He would have danced mad

In a gull-stuffed bay

With the scuttle of wings at his ears,

Or lost himself

In the monotony of the earth

Like a root,

Or in the body of a woman like any man;

He might have seen the slow stretch

Of our shadows at sunrise,

But his vision turns to glass

And the swollen ant of Asia

Penetrates his smile.

Babylon | Michael Essig

Tarnhelm | 1975

darkness falls
like an ebony shroud
across the corpse
of the city.
in weary alleys
shabby feline ghosts
rattle trash cans
seeking food.
lights flicker
in the grey gloom
like uncertain souls.
nowhere
does a voice
disturb
the mortuary silence.
the citizens are gone,
dead by their own hands;
smothered
by their own emptiness.
street and city,
state and nation,
all scattered ruins
governed by blackness
where rats run.

Any Eve. Every Adam | Pam Eiceman

Tarnhelm | 1976

having fought
the temptation
you turned me
away once more
have I become
a forbidden fruit
or perhaps looking
ripe you taste
my sweet juices
and touching a
finger to those
lips you find
your own blood
is that
wicked wetness

“And the disease crept into my body” | Margery Vanderbilt
Tarnhelm | 1976

And the disease crept into my body
It took control of my brain
My life would never live gain
I tried to shake it off
But deeper inside it grew
The humming in my head
The running of my feet
Never seemed to stop
Even as I slept

By day me head grew larger
And sunshine burnt my throat
My body was not getting well
Because the mind was dying

Each day from school id hurry home
To await the coming darkness
Strangers in the night
Music in my head and the
Dancing of my feet
Gave only temporary cures
For what was labeled terminal.

The Spark | Gregory Hall

Tarnhelm | 1977

Sitting.

Chasing a muse. A painting.

Break it, break it,

Imprison me.

Let me alone

To myself and

My thoughts I wish

To be freed.

The haystacks of war,

Gun grey steel,

Silent knives in the moon-lamp

I cannot touch, cannot feel

The refuge within my walls.

Thick snowflakes blanket the moon,

I am lost.

I gasp for tormented air -

Finding none,

Returning to horns

And drums

And yellow roses not

Opening to the sun.

Alone, and wishing to be freed.

A Rainbow | Marilyn Carmen

Tarnhelm | 1978

A woman held by garments of white
And never leaving her garden gate.

I wonder what she felt inside
Alone for all those years?

The birds that soared kept her friendship
And hidden words her treasures.

But little to know
It was never too late
To place arrangements to life's mixture of colors.

**for Emily Dickinson*

Brushwolf Night | Gary Fillmore

Tarnhelm | 1983

Your belt

Hangs from the aspen branch

Precariously,
Although sturdy enough.

I cannot see

The pines
Bowling to the wind
Sweeping into the canyon below.

I cannot hear

The brushwolves
Howling for light
From the barren, starless sky

Receiving only

The wind

And darkness.

Learning Poetry At A Country School in Florida | Marsha Larsen
Tarnhelm | 1984

“My wings are invisible but brilliant;
They carry me to the dark forest
Where the unicorns kneel in prayer...”

You turn my poem back.
I set your response to music I hum myself.
I’ve heard before, I’m a good kid but a dreamer
And don’t apply myself to things that matter
Like Home Ec. (where I’m fit between popular girls
With cross-their-hearts bras ad panda bear names): and
Like Typing (where I plunk keys
To the beat of Timed Writings awkwardly,
As if I wore mitts).

I do it because
They decree I must take a vocation,
Enclose myself with a sturdy purpose
No different from anyone else. But
You notice I am different --
My words fly you with me to the forest --
You hear the unicorns pray their own breath --
You know in your soul what they’re saying.

So I go on
With little showing outside the cocoon
That hides half-visible silk, patterned round and round and
Round with the vivid milk of opals.

After Glenn Miller | C.W. Heiser

Tarnhelm | 1988

American Patrol returned
And skirts dropped,
Like a gray G.I. blanket
Over the trumpet's mouth—

The world swung
And we held on,
Through December mud
And hopeless months

To be standing here,
Drunk
(eight to the bar)
Listening to rock and roll

A Room Where Teddy Bears Scream | Judith Johnson Farina

Tarnhelm | 1989

Imprisoned behind wooden bars,
Furry arms reach out,
Pleading to comfort
The unaborted doll-child
That now lies broken in the corner.

Pale, translucent hair,
Speckled with sanguine flecks,
Veils a once pulsating unfinished shell,
Crushed now against a Mother Goose wall.

Footed pink sleepers,
Torn and crimsoned,
Held by forceps – evidence.

The child-mother
Reaches behind the wooden bars
Clenches the stuffed pleading playmates,
Seeking to quell all their screams.

Both little girls' laughter gone forever.

First World/Third World | Matthew Wilson

Tarnhelm | 1991

childhood images: TV?
buying a pagan baby?
the sleepers huddled on the streets,
beggars, the mad, the still who could be dead,
but another climate, the smell of spice and shit.

try coal and vodka, the working class
reeling, Hogarthian drunkenness,
piani, level hand at side of throat,
the laughter, almost unnatural, in trams,
fathers selling their children's chocolate.

now New York subways smell
like a pissoir, Penn Station
a vomitorium, the dispossessed
at our feet, avoid their eyes,
don't listen to their spiels.

wretched were always there,
away, incomprehensible,
but now here wrapped in newspapers,
stinking in the subways,
the hands held out at the bottom

of the immobile escalator,
a beggar, legs splayed,
half kneeling, like a gypsy
in Salamanca, on the sidewalk
doming penance, his, and ours.

Ceremonial Question | Virginia Parkum

Tarnhelm | 1992

8:16: fused on the clock at Hiroshima.

In the litany of time

Why is this hour

Like no other hour?

Sundials burlled by each warrior's horse,
Hourglasses spilled in the course of rages,
Fabergé eggs cracked hatching revolution,
A thousand cuckoos singed when Hamburg died...
All at a time.

And yet, and yet, and yet
Lord God of Hosts,
Be with us as we forget.

First born
Last born
Still born
Answer me this:
If some elevators skip 13,
Shouldn't all clocks skip 8:16?

Response fused forever,
None passed over:
"I am become death."

Unnatural | E. Mikael Hein

Tarnhelm | 1993

Icy lust...

grabbing seconds
for eye's desires,
spinning my heartbeat
faster, slower, faster,
silent.

Faster you kiss me...

lips caressing my chest,
body mingled with mine
entwined in
the cotton sheets.

Slower your hands touch me

in wonder
of our similar bodies...
grabbing seconds.

Faster the room spins

Before the moment of Icy Goosebumps

Amidst the heat of "unnatural" desire

Sudden
Release
of
Longing
Silence.

Limp from exhaustion,

Our once pale shaven faces

now scarlet and dripping.

You run your fingers through

my yellow-blonde hair.

I freeze—

an unnatural image
of a

Daffodil...laced in blood.

Summer's Velvet, Winter's Harm | Steven W. Todd

Tarnhelm | 1995

The livid leaves bring winter's harms
So shield my soul with savior's arms
Ill caress your velvet summer skin
Till the summer sun shall burn again.

Or deny me home, as Peter may
I'll rot with livid tannic leaves
And feel the burn of winter's wind
And wish to touch your velvet skin.

It seems forever winter burns.
The earth's a magnet to livid leaves.
And the winds that howl behind her snow
Tease with scents of your summer skin.

Sometimes velvet winds in fall
Disturb some restless livid leaves.
I seek a savior's arms these times;
You are a spring time breeze to me.
The winds shall rest in summer time
And build their strength for winter's harms.
So let's enjoy this time we have;
Let's let the sun come
Scorch our skins.

For sometime soon the winds shall coil
To last at last t'ward livid leaves.
From our snow white fortress we shall praise
Some secret sacred savior's arms.
And I shall praise the privilege
And find relief as winter leaves;
I'll reach and sigh to touch again
Your snow white velvet summer skin.

A Poem for Max | Jessica Leigh Groy

Tarnhelm | 1996

At age five his rope swing hung in the backyard.
He smiled at everyone, and could never be brought down.
Once, he even claimed that he wished he could be a balloon,
And reach high enough to hang onto the moon.

At age seven, his rope swing lost its shiny, black tire in a bad thunderstorm.
He didnt mind, though, for he had a new, shiny, red wagon.
Once, he wished his wagon would take him to the Milky Way,
Where he could play hide-and-seek with the stars.

At age ten his rope swing swayed in the autumn breeze,
because his father had left and forgot his promise to fix the tire.
Once, he wished he could be a cloud and float up into the sky,
Away from the people that hurt him.

At age thirteen his rope swing regained his interest,
because he only spent time alone, staring out his bedroom window.
Once, he watched the moonlight shine across the yard,
And wished he could follow its glimmering light to a place far away.

At age sixteen he went out back to his swing.
But he did not swing like he did when he was a happy child.
But swung from a single white rope,
Connected not to a tire...
but to his shattered neck.

Max, now you can dance with the stars, and hang onto the moon.

While Adam Slept | Julia Tilley

Tarnhelm | 1997

I am uncomfortable in my skin.
Like an all-wool sweater on a hot summer day
I long to shed it.
I stretch for understanding
Not quite touching the hatred
Holding me at arms length.
If I could peel my skin off yours
Would we be less hated,
Less hating?
Muscle and sinew
Red corpuscles exposed
Bleeding, the hurt of generations
Poole at our feet a crimson
Cathartic weeping.
Free of our skin
Could we join hands
In soulful joy
Or would we find some other difference
To reprobate?

A Temporary Trip to Utopia | Karen Rafferty

Tarnhelm | 1998

Last night you ran into the shadow with me.

Like a precious gift,

You offered an unconditional escape to better days,

 Via the road from anywhere I didn't want to be.

When you shared yourself with me,

You emancipated an emotional cripple,

And provided a peace

 I am unable to find within myself.

While we stood on the mountain,

August's wind stripped away my sins,

I felt secure in my nakedness

 And I have no regrets.

Anonymous we were,

Entwined with the trees and in tune with the cricket's symphony,

I was winged,

 And freer than I'll ever be again.

The Death of the Author | Glen Mazis

Tarnhelm | 1998

Whenever I've gone to the wilderness before
on long treks or to explore unholy places
others anxiously watched for signs
that I was in shape or made it to checkpoints.

Backpacking 13 miles over the Continental Divide
I knew a ranger would find me fallen or collapsed.
Driving cross-country friends would expect calls
when too many states had flashed by.

Even climbing to Lobo Peak in monsoon season
a week after someone died – the afternoon rumblers
having lashed him with the white whip of electric
wrath
while he clung to the only boulder up there –

my chihuahua might make it back down the trail,
small legs on a mission so we can share
our pillows at night or someone might notice
the vultures' vortex lifting my soul into the sky.

Yet, writing a book, deep in the back country,
walking, walking, falling, breaking bones
and bruising terribly, no one seems to notice
I'm gone or even fathom there's a deadly trip

through scorpions of doubts, which sting late
in the day, when too few pages have been spread
around the desk on the floor for them to eat.
Canteens are useless, when you have to start

the flow, there's no runoff. The fellow travelers
whom you find even in the Himalayas are not
out here, beneath the skies of words
or walking trails where the syntax might fail.

But worst of all are long days when all ideas
go whooshing into the vacuum which leaves me on
a space walk with the shift drifting away
since I'm the only pilot, as well as the repair crew.

I see the earth far away and looking luscious
in blue and green, but without more chapters
there's no chance for a safe re-entry and another
flaming author flashes across the night sky.

Just As He Left It | Patricia Bauer

Tarnhelm | 1999

At the head of the cabin stairs I see his bed,
Dusty treasures lie scattered on his nightstand,
Empty bullet shells
An ancient turkey call
And one small rusted screwdriver that fits
In the palm of my hand. The worn handle still
Faintly reads 'Euclid Auto Parts.'
Without thinking,
I drop the tiny tool into my shirt pocket.

I crawl onto my father's humble bed,
Nestle into heavy, earth-scented quilts,
Soft autumn rain weeps against his seasoned window.
A lone, fragile cobweb weaves between the folds of his worn curtains.
Outside, his beloved woods seem empty and brown.

I look across the mismatched, donated beds,
Try to image all of us there,
Listenin to my father's voice in the dark.
Gone are his lullabies of jokes, farts, and snores,
And endless stories of Clyde, Hooker, and Jay,
All followed by the giggles of grandchildren now grown.

I peel away my cocoon of Dad's old blankets,
 Their weight
 Too heavy
 Against my broken heart.

From the Portrait of Mrs. George Woodward | Dorothy Brown
Tarnhelm | 2000

I cannot go on.

I do not want to pose here,
hands and feet silent and still,
this gold dress
smoothing every angle and curve
of my body
I ache from standing gracefully.

I remember when my legs
were firm and tanned
Woody and I raced down the piney path
to the dock.
The winner took the tiller,
and across the lake we'd fly
angled dangerously, soaked by cold spray.

But now the artists places me just so,
a symbol of
George's success.
He need not say a word;

the portrait speaks for him:
A draped drawing room,
object d'artes on inlaid tables,
burgundy tapestries on the wall.
And, oh yes, his wife
with her silver hair
gracing it all.

Double Yellow Kerouac | Jeff Garito

Tarnhelm | 2002

The road is a razorblade.
It shaves off where you've been
leaving you born anew each mile.
Wind in an open car window at 75mph
cuts the past loose like flung cigarette butts.

Rest stops become baptisms,
each state line is the threshold
to a higher state of consciousness,
car fresheners are incenses and
gasoline transmutes to blood,
friends in distance places become dreams
whispering freedom from self and oppression.

And after the first hundred miles,
the broken blacktop tells you
what you've always suspected:
that life, in every way, is a journey
beyond two points and a straight line.

A Summer Day as a Child | Christine Meck

Tarnhelm | 2003

Youth is like the fruits of summer,
as tangy as oranges, sugar sweet bananas, juicy melons, tart pineapples
and lemons

Fruits that bathe in the sun
As my friends and I do
each day of summer
whishing it would last forever
early afternoon
running barefoot through the tender grass, weeds and fields of
wildflowers

Feeling free as though riding the wind,
picking flowers for mother's bouquet
tulips, lilies, laurels and marigolds

Marigolds,
a rare jewel like rubies, sapphires, emeralds, diamonds
set in gold

I am queen today and tell my friends who are my servants,
"Go, get me some marigolds!"

And so my friends and I giggle and play the day away
until night settles in
the sky fills with stars, the darkness becomes illuminated by
lightening bugs,

And the moon, husband of the sun, guards the sky
as his wife sleeps

my friend says, "Since you are queen, you should marry the moon."

If I were to do so what would happen to the sun with its oranges,
marigolds and rare jewels?

I ponder this thought while we walk home quite as night
while cicadas play our bedtime song.

It Had Been A While | Austin Keith

Tarnhelm | 2005

Like when you used to talk in your sleep,
back when we shared a warm bed in a dark room,
I listened with an ear too close to your saturated breath
to a language spoken by so many
in a country so populated
(where the anthem changes like a dollar for quarters)
by understood by no one.

Your approach
on the ice floor made with too much to drink in the cave
was warning enough.
As you obviously stepped carefully
you obviously had broken through
with your words too warm, because they were so wet.

Grabbing at my sides, checking for meat,
greasy sausage fingers bursting pale with veins,
pulled at my sweater,
trying to bring me down, while you were so high.
But sinking ships don't stay afloat,
so staring into the waterholes about your cheeks, trapped

I drown.

Bodies | Hilary Michels

Tarnhelm | 2007

Arms, two low bowing trunks
hurdling gestures into negative space,
thick and heavy, injure and lumber,
chopped trees and paper mills – these
two arms, gravity slow and heavy, hurdling
low thick trunks.

Trunk, pale and curly, curling like
shrimp, blue and pink and lurching,
asymmetrical attachments dancing off
edges, blue and pink, pale with veins,
lurching shifting attachments, curly
trunk of edges.

Edges, heavy gravity shift, lumber
lurching bending trunks, pale pink and
blue. Attachments, injure like gestures,
curling chopped trees these two
low bowing thick and gravity slow,
lurching asymmetrical bodies.

Village | Mario Fromml

Tarnhelm | 2008

Find me in the milk of a dawning day;
The day awakening in the dew of misty
Fields, rushing mountain streams, who
Like snakes wind down the steep slopes.
The herds are grazing on the lush meadows,
Bleating in the distance; lonely shepherd
Wrapped up in her sheep-skin garb,
Feet wet with the strokes of stumbled grass.
Peeling from the belfry, a handful of
Women rushing their feet toward the church;
Prayer of smoke, and several crumbs of
Bread, under first wrought out.

Silver Eyes | Becky Fus

From the Fallout Shelter | 2009-2010

flickering orange

A pale glow

Shining dimly

Through the white lace curtains

Outside

Is a sea of black

The flickering orange

Glowes darker

As the black consumes it whole

Now solitude

Black for miles around

No fire

No heat

No life

Clouds above

Covering stars

Covering the moon

In a dark abyss

Beyond the sea of black

That is the earth

A deep breath

A frozen wind

Uncovers locked up eyes

Locked up heat

Locked up life

That the flickering orange left behind

And silver eyes

Twinkling brightly

Watch over the melting earth.

With the Sun | Jacob Fled

From the Fallout Shelter | 2010-2011

I was walking somewhere else,
To some deadened destination.
Blackened, bloodied feet on gravel; blindfolded,
I sauntered onward in the night.
Then, with the sun, came redirection
From the darkened paths
To sunlit streets.
I was walking in the light.

I was sleeping, dead at home,
Far from the knock at my door.
In the kingdom of the bed, my throne
Was like a coffin, and I
The jolly corpse, fattened on
Dark fruit, reinforcing
The shades behind which I hid.
Then, like a syringe, the sun
Invaded my tomb with medicine,
Shining through the window
Like revival,
Exposing death to life
And instantly I was visible,
Instantly I was light.

I was someone else, glaring into mirrors
With loving-loading eyes.
Betrothed to my
Reflection, unrecognized.
“Who are you?” I begged
And mimicked back at once.
I criticized my shadow, then
Dug into it shallow skin---

The Color Photographs | Rachel Ginder

From the Fallout Shelter | 2011-2012

Little girl with her head in her hand,
Sees the world in multi-colors,
Observing the moving passerby,
She notices **YOU**.

Can you read her thoughts?
She's thinking about **YOU** ---
She's wondering if **YOU** think of her too.

But the world sees her in black and white,
I

Amidst the multi-colors

Of

She's a photograph, *faded and blurred*

Shoved to the bottom of the pile.

Bottom

To the colors with her grasp

But they barely brush her fingertips.

Letters to the Moon | Emily Kramer
From the Fallout Shelter | 2012-2013

Every night I watched,
As she crept across her dewy lawn,
Barefoot, pale skin exposed in the luminescent night.

I stole her
Letters to the Moon,
Hidden under rocks and
Folds in the Earth, folded into
Tiny books, complete with
Page numbers and beautiful black and white blueprints of
Her version of heaven.

I saved her
The wait. Every night
The moon still rose and she cried,
Tears smudging ink on
Pages she tore from her notebook and
Offered up to the night sky.

They wrote about her in papers.
Poor, lunatic girl. Afraid of fire.
Wrote letters to the moon.
I never replied.

Half of a Face | Ayushman Khazanchi

From the Fallout Shelter | 2013-2014

In small bumps and craters
that fingertips dive into,
a rash, porous touch of expression
layered in dismembered membrane,
miniature hills spread uneven, casting
a shadow on dead—occasionally red—cells
stretching nowhere on the surface.

My thoughts permeate the air,
Who would dare make such ghastly art?

A step or two back and the hills
now recede in their reach,
shades of red stretch further beyond,
and more small craters camouflage
into other small craters, till all is one
revolting half of a face, a victim
to an acid attack, an art no more to me
but an ugly truth of our worlds.

The Why burdens our immediate atmosphere,
Chose to speak out against oppression.

The voice straining, demanding
to reveal an unbroken strength, a resolve
of thundering magnitude placed carefully
in the space between us, suspended
in the thought of half a face—
nature's art—rendered lifeless.

Monsters, I think.

Monsters, she says.

Seeing | Cindy Withjack

From the Fallout Shelter | 2014-2015

I can see right through her shirt
I am her shirt as I watch her
My ability to be transparent both calms and disturbs me
I consider this as I billow and sway
I am her shirt and only I know this
I wonder if she can feel my eyes on her
the way I brush against her skin when her arm bends
sheltering hand on a coffee cup
lips burning
tongue tasting
I laugh when she laughs
She doesn't notice
I allow the melodic rhythm to vibrate against me
for I am her shirt
and her chest
moves me with every inhale and exhale

Fooling Around with Joe Canewell's Daughter* | Maria Wilson

From the Fallout Shelter | 2015-2016

It was the green gold air of summer,
By that boy's daddy's fields,
The grass tickling my naked thighs and bare feet,
Stream humming behind us.
The boy touched me with big chapped hands,
His hard farm boy hands that knew how to grow
But also knew how to beat into submission.
He tried at tenderness like a game,
Like we were man and woman,
But he was no man--
No man had bird cage ribs that shuddered
Over my farm girl body.

When his daddy found us,
Ruddy faced, scarred hands clenched angry,
His back hunched, his shoulders wide
Like he was still carrying all that
Cotton and all those babies of his
Around with him the whole day,
I knew he was grown.

That man he ripped his boy open
With brown leather on brown skin,
And I ran hot air hard to pull into tight lungs
Away from that man with lightning voice
And thunder hands, but his legs were long and fat,
Heavy on mine. I can still feel
The wiry soft hair of his big legs
On my grass itchy girl thighs.

I bled that day.
Blood makes the woman mama told me.
A baptism of red and pain.
The sign the girl is grown.
Mama doesn't know I bled that day.
I bled all over that man--
No flower or fruit for me
I was the cow after slaughter,
Raw bloody stinking meat for a hungry man.

That boy took up the same brown leather,
Stood over his daddy on top of me, a great house of a man,
And whipped him like a dying horse,
Whipped him right off my body.
The boy said that day made him a man,
Told me that day transformed his bird cage
Ribs to jail cell or handmade fences.
He called me girl like I could be his,
Like I hadn't bled alchemy-scarlet bright
On his daddy and their grass that day.

*For the unnamed daughter of Joe Canewell in August Wilson's *Fences*

Like Clockwork | Sam Bixler

From the Fallout Shelter | 2016-2017

The old man sleeps above me,
gentle snores amidst the obnoxious
beeping of machines. He ticks
against the smooth metal of my
bracelet, his hands, like mine, ever-moving in his dreams.

He doesn't look at me much,
anymore. Like I'm meaningless,
like he's given up waiting. People
come in and out and for what?
They tinker, but they can't fix him.

The shift is sudden, one last tick and the
snoring stops. But the beeping grows louder,
frantic. People shuffle in and out, still not
doing anything. His clockwork heart
gives out.

He's grown cold by the time someone
else takes hold. No more ticking,
at least not from him. Within my grasp
he's grown limp, heavy, suffocating.
I'm stretched, pulled, lifted up and away.

New hands reaching in. A voice,
soft yet excited, breaches my cage.
It speaks to another, and I'm passed
around, my crown pulled and snapped back
into place.

The other's fingers are cold against me,
like the old man's, the pad of a thumb
gently brushing my face. Stretched again,
wrapped around another, my bracelet
chafing against unfamiliar skin.

It's dark as the other lies amidst a pile of soft
blankets, clutching me in their fist. They press
against me, jostling my crown and
offering a soft smile as the green light
illuminates their features.

Salty tears fall upon my face, now,
blurring the crystal, making it difficult
to read. The other speaks of the old man,
of memories I can't comprehend—
feelings that have no place with me.
Their pulse ticks in time with my own.
A clockwork heart still beats.

The Stranger in the Mind | Kristina Stokes

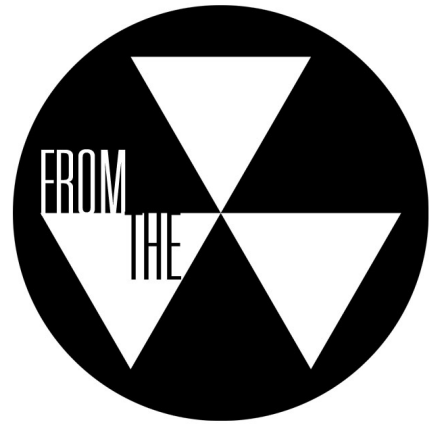
From the Fallout Shelter | 2017-2018

There's a stranger in the mirror looking back at me.
My face has changed over the years— maybe the mirror is just a liar.
Tough to think on the way time morphs a person to
become someone else, someone different, someone you don't even know.
The change is so subtle, you don't even notice until it's too late.
It's already happened and there's nothing you can do about it.
I lean in and see gray hair glittering- what is this shit?
How can I be this upset? Gray hair suffers such infamy.
I tug at my roots, search for another- if I dye it, it'd be a clean slate.
Should I go red or maybe blond? But no, none of those would be familiar.
Blue? No- abandon my hair, look deep into eyes of a woman I know I should know.
And though she is silent she looks back at me too.
I twist around and pull at my shirt, wondering about a shoulder tattoo.
Would it be painful? What would I get? Would my husband even like it?
I can hear him now, grumbling about cost and permanency- his answer would be no
if it were up to him. There would be mention of how I was a mommy
and moms don't do these things, but is this one of those myths that's just a liar?
I could do it without a word, then it'd be too late....
But no, it's an option I won't even contemplate.
I turn back around and lean in close, widening my eyes- they're old too.
I pull at the crows feet trying to form and stretch the skin back to a place that's familiar.
Release the skin, it bounces back— narrow them tight 'til they're only a slit
I've always been this way, my own worst enemy
Most people liked what they saw in the mirror. Me though? No.
Too many freckles, eyebrows too bushy, and this nose? Just no.
Clearly my issues run deeper, right past these eyes of chocolate
and into the soul of who I truly I am, a brain that has always been so stormy.
Just my personality or maybe some emotional illness to pass blame onto?
I don't know the answer and that's painful to admit.
I feel like I don't fit, like I'm just too weird or peculiar.
Even that descriptor is strange, that word "peculiar"
What made me choose it? I don't even know.
Maybe something positive, I know I've got grit...
Am I the only one like this? Can anyone else relate?
Lean on the counter, I just need to stew
Around and around I go, looking into the eyes of this stranger looking back at me.

Roast Beef with Carrots Sliced Longways | Carol L. Karl

Fission | 2017

Roast beet with roasted carrots sliced longways,
Roasted potatoes browned on the edges.
Gravy with tender onions but no lumps.,
(An unattainable memory to me now!)
A Sunday dinner.
Just one of many fine meals my Mum
Cooked for her family of eight.
How I wish I had learned to cook from my Mum
Instead of thinking her skills no so important
Because I was heading to college
Because I would be a professional.
Just one of the many ways I did not appreciate
My Mother as I absorbed and reflected
Her own self-denigration
Instead of recognizing her many many strengths.



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