

# PHIction

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# Letter From The Founder

Dear *PHI*ction Readers,

The question ‘What is philosophy?’ is a rather difficult one to answer. However, it is generally accepted that philosophy is the love and pursuit of wisdom. Let us accept this. How should one pursue such a search, then?

I remember it was spring of 2010 when the idea of *PHI*ction came about. At the time, I was an undergraduate working on my BA in English and in philosophy. I confidently and ambitiously walked into the office of Vincent Luizzi, the Chair of the Philosophy Department at Texas State University-San Marcos, and pitched the idea of a journal that recognizes the value of literary arts as a medium of philosophical expression. After all, it only takes a few readings of Plato or Kierkegaard or Voltaire or Camus to understand how literary devices can illustrate philosophical concepts in an imaginative way; and one can read Thoreau, Asimov, Shelley, or Wilde to see how philosophical concepts enhance the content of literature. Of course, the names mentioned are only a handful out of the many that merge the creative with the philosophic.

*PHI*ction’s debut issue appeared in the spring of 2011. Publication was open to all undergraduate and graduate students at Texas State University-San Marcos. Now, in its second publication, the journal has achieved an international and national audience.

And now the answer to my question ‘How should one pursue wisdom?’ Wisdom reveals itself in more ways than one, so why not be a little creative chasing after it.

Cheers,  
to the pursuit

**Founder and Editor-in-Chief,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathryn Slaughter', with a stylized, cursive script.

Kathryn Slaughter



Will Sharp

*“The creative process lies not in imitating, but in paralleling nature—translating the impulse received from nature into the medium of expression, thus vitalizing this medium. The painting should be alive ...every work of art should be alive”*

— Hans Hofmann

The world  
is an ovary

And each thought, each conceit—  
each and every creative impulse—

is a spermatozoon

So it comes as no surprise that  
‘Artificial Reproductive Technologies’  
is standardly abbreviated  
A-R-T

# The Perfect Metaphor For Life

Will Sharp

Virga

# The Intensity Of Truth

Patrick Kelley

The damn moaning never seemed to cease with those things. Sarah could barely remember a world that didn't have undead monstrosities just waiting to rip the few remaining survivors to shreds for a meal. Sarah wondered whether the undead would be considered cannibals since they ate the living, or whether they had lost all vestiges of humanity.

"Jake," Sarah's voice carried in the cold mountain air, "how would you classify those things out there? I mean are they still people or are they something else now?" Sarah didn't turn to look at Jake. Sarah knew he wouldn't be looking at her because he would be busy with his most recent project. Jake was different, true enough, but he seemed normal compared to most of the people that were out there in the wastes.

"I'm not really sure." Jake wrinkled his nose and stopped going over the data in front of him while he engaged this new idea Sarah introduced him to. "I would think they would still be *Homo sapiens*, but I don't know if that is right either. They are dead, well sort of dead," Jake fell silent for a moment as he was prone to do when he was seriously considering something of importance, "but they aren't really dead at all are they?"

"That was a rhetorical question, wasn't it?" Sarah already knew the answer but she liked to hear Jake talk.

"Yeah, it's a rhetorical question, but, please, if you think that you have an answer go ahead and give it to me." Jake had refocused his attention on the data before him, but he kept listening to Sarah because he knew she would keep talking. Jake knew two things for certain in this new world; and that was that Sarah didn't like silence and that she was smart. It was too bad, he thought, that she hadn't had the opportunity to get a formal education before everything went belly-up. He was positive that she could have had a bright future in that world, but in this world he just didn't know. Jake didn't know for her or for him or for anyone to be quite honest what this world's future would be, but he knew if he could make sense of the data here he might have some idea - even if it wasn't a positive one.

"Well to tell you the truth I don't think that they are human anymore." Sarah looked up into the clear sky at all the stars, the millions upon millions of them. "I would call them something else. However it is that you classify animals and plants."

"So you would say that they are a new species." Jake was only clarifying, as Sarah had a tendency to confuse her thoughts at times. He often thought he should really teach her some logic because it would only sharpen her mind and it would be

of some help, not only in her inquisitive world of questions but also in the real world in dealing with actual problems.

“Yeah, a new species but a....what do you call it when you come from something else?”

“A descendent species.”

“Oh, I would say that they are descendents species of humans.” Sarah fell silent as if she was caught on some thought.

“What are you thinking, Sarah?”

“Well, if they are a descendent species, does that mean that we are extinct or something like that?” Sarah was staring out into the dark night in the direction of where the sun would eventually crest the horizon.

“No, it doesn’t necessarily mean we have to be extinct to have a descendent species. Think about your grandparents or parents, you are a descendent of them and we are both descendents of the human species as a whole. These creatures are in a sense descendents of humanity, but not exactly in the same manner in which you or I are descendents of our grandparents.”

“Ok, well then they are a descendent species, but then would that mean that they are still humans or how does that work?”

“Look, if they were humans and now they are something different, as you have suggested, then there was some event that separated them from the parent species of humans. So the new species would be called something like *Homo mortuus*.”

“Homo what?” Sarah turned back toward where Jake sat.

“*Homo mortuus*, it means dead man in Latin. Since they are from the human genus, then we would keep the Homo and find some appropriate descriptor and in this case I think dead is pretty appropriate, don’t you?”

“Yeah, that would be more than appropriate. Ok, so we now have *Homo sapiens* and *Homo mortuus*, but wouldn’t that mean they need to reproduce or something like that?”

“Usually that is how that works, but right now we don’t know if *Homo mortuus* reproduces, do we? As a matter of fact, we don’t know very much at all about them except that they smell pretty bad and like to eat us.” Jake again looked up from his work, his mind following a new thought Sarah’s species argument presented him with.

“True, we know that much and just the thought of those things getting it on...” Sarah’s voiced trailed off as she shuddered slightly.

Jake laughed at what he imagined Sarah’s face looking like. She was as facially expressive as she was inquisitive. She would never be able to play poker he thought. “Yes, Sarah, I do think the thought is kind of creepy, but if they really are a

new species then they will need to reproduce at some point or they will have been nothing more than an aberration.”

“Maybe, but if they don’t eat us we become one of them by simply being bitten, wouldn’t that count as reproducing? And if they really are dead, or undead, wouldn’t that also mean they don’t need to reproduce like other living things?”

“Interesting,” Jake was becoming more engaged in this conversation than he realized, “I guess you could argue that that is their reproductive process, turning us into one of them. I can’t rightly think of any other living species that turns another into its own kind or that doesn’t actually die at some point by natural means. The closest that I can think of that qualifies as both alive and dead, depending on where it is, are viruses. The greatest difference would still be that while a virus infects the host cell and then takes over the replication mechanism to make copies of itself, eventually destroying most infected cells in the process. However, it does not change the host cell into a virus. And, as you pointed out, if we are bitten by one of those things we become one of them, and that is much different than a viral strain using our cells for self replication.” Jake was no longer even considering the data. The idea that these undead monstrosities were actually a descendent species of humans was as thrilling as it was frightening.

“I don’t know if I would say that was interesting, Jake, but I know I would say that it sucks pretty hard considering it implies we are either a meals-on-wheels treat or a future baby for one of those damn things.” A shiver ran down Sarah’s spine at the thought of becoming one of the *Homo mortuus*.

“I never much thought about this as an extinction event, but if we take a step back and look at the overall process, it does seem to be just that. Kind of makes you think that being self-aware isn’t such a good thing, doesn’t it? Here we are able to recognize our end and fully aware that there may be nothing we can do about it, but yet are compelled to try and continue.” Jake looked out into the darkness and wondered what was left out there, because, even in the day, anything beyond their vision’s capability may as well have been a mythical story all things considered.

“So, they aren’t really fully dead, at least not in the normal sense. They don’t really reproduce like we have ever known anything to but technically they do continue their species,” Sarah said, in her little air quotes, “by biting us and making us into one of them.” Sarah crinkled her nose, which was always the sign that she was in very deep thought. “What does that leave then that determines life? And does it matter since they apparently are alive, or at least undead?”

“There is metabolism and waste production, but we don’t know if they produce waste or have a metabolism. We would need to actually get some samples, or at least be able to observe one under a more controlled environment, but I don’t

think we'll be doing any experiments anytime soon." Jake seemed far away as he spoke but Sarah had become accustomed to his idiosyncrasies.

"I don't like it. I mean if they are dead, or whatever, then can't we just wait them out or something? Shouldn't they just, like, turn to mush or blow up like balloons because of internal gases or something of the sort?" Sarah began to get that frustrated indignation in her voice. She would often get that tone when she finally realized something in her reasoning made sense but somehow wasn't reflected in reality.

"That might be a possibility, but since they have been going on for almost six years now in all types of weather with noticeable but retarded signs of decay I think that might be a very long wait." Jake had given that very idea a lot of thought and Sarah's question reminded him of his data print-outs and what they might be able to tell him about their future.

"If they aren't turning into big piles of mush or something, what could be preventing it?" Sarah turned to see Jake's back as he was again hunched over his data print-outs. She wanted to go over and nudge him and get him to face her and fully take part in this conversation, but she already knew that wouldn't work for numerous reasons and she also knew how he was when he got all engrossed in something.

"Well," Jake's voice seemed distracted when he answered Sarah, "that might meet another one of those qualities of life we have been talking about."

"How do you mean?"

"Remember I mentioned that every known living organism requires some form of metabolism?" Jake never turned from his data as he kept time with the conversation between him and Sarah.

"Yeah, I remember that but if these things are dead and we can't really do experiments, how can we know or even think that they might have some sort of metabolism?" Sarah turned back toward the darkness where the moaning had risen slightly in volume. She thought that there must be more of them than usual around tonight but Sarah and Jake were safe where they were.

"Sarah, not all science is direct experimentation. Keep in mind that some sciences are primarily observation based or, as some like to say, best guess based."

"Like what, Jake?"

"Astronomy is one example. In astronomy we don't have direct contact with most of the objects and phenomenon we use to make predictions, and since we cannot manipulate the specific events that we see we make inferences. So, if we look at these things with an objective eye and we aren't in a position to experiment or have direct contact in determining the why or how of a thing, we then do what science is primarily based on, observation. Based on the previous foundation of our

collective scientific knowledge, an inference is made from critical observation. After collecting all of the observable data and comparing that data with what other research or knowledge we have about the event, we then put forward a theory of the phenomenon or phenomena under consideration. I think, in this case, our observational skills aren't misleading us to the facts as they are, or at least this phenomenon isn't a simplistic misperception of our senses as a great many things are." Jake's voice carried out into the darkness, fading away in much the same way he feared humanity was.

"Okay, I can see that, but I don't know of any science or theories that ever considered the dead not staying dead or anything like any of this. Or am I missing something?" Sarah stared into the enveloping darkness where her thoughts were, and waited for Jake to answer her. After a few minutes of silence she turned, "Jake, are you listening?"

Jake laid down the data sheets he had been going over for the last few hours like he had done every night for the past eight months and turned to where Sarah sat. Something about his face, even in the poor lighting, conveyed more than any of his words ever had. She saw an emotion she had never seen in the usually confident face of Jake - resignation. Jake moved his lips in silence for a moment while Sarah looked at him with an apprehension she had never known, not even during the moments when she had been sure the dead would get her. Finally Jake's voice broke through in a strained and almost inaudible whisper.

"That's...that's not supposed to be..." Jake's voice seemed hollow and he seemed to be looking right through her as he spoke. When she tried to question him to find out what it was he didn't seem to hear her. He simply continued muttering, repeating the same words. "We missed it, but how? There was no way, you understand? Every possibility we knew...we knew."

Sarah crossed the short distance between them and took hold of his shoulders. She gently shook him and tried to get him to focus, to come back from wherever he was. "Jake," Sarah's voice took on an urgency, "what did you miss, what is it? Speak to me, Jake!" Sarah could feel the panic welling up inside her fighting to take over.

Jake turned to look at Sarah as if he was only for the first time aware of her presence. "What?" The first of the sun's rays were cresting the horizon and the pale dawn's light seemed to infuse the blueness of Jake's eyes with an unimaginable depth.

"I said what are you talking about? Who missed what, what couldn't you know, Jake?" Sarah's voice had now taken on a soothing tone with an edge, but her panic was checked with Jake's slow recognition of her.

Jake reached into his rucksack and dug around until he drew out a pack of Camel Straights and a pack of matches. Sarah sat back and watched him. He seemed to be back to his normal self, the distant look was no longer there but the cigarettes were something new for Sarah. He lit a cigarette and took a deep pull and exhaled. Then Jake smiled perhaps the biggest smile she had ever seen him smile. Jake looked at Sarah and then toward the rising sun that was just cresting the horizon with a steady confident gaze.

“Jake, you’re scaring me,” Sarah’s voice seemed small and fragile, “please say something.”

“Sarah, if only I could ever make sense of this - of all of this.” Jake swept his hand across the horizon. “The world you never really knew and this world are much the same, Sarah. I don’t think that we, as a species, will outlive this plague, this curse, to resurrect our past and to once more envision a future. In that old world that we have lost—that place we insulated with scientific fact and mathematical equations to assuage our fears with an unfounded assuredness—we cloaked ourselves in rationality and reason, but we forgot truth; or, perhaps we just could never come to terms with it.” Jake’s voice was calm as he took long deep pulls off of his cigarette. “It is amusing,” Jake turned to Sarah with a bemused look on his face, “that for every question and for every law and for every piece of scientific fact and all of our collective knowledge, we knew nothing - absolutely nothing. We became blinded by our own rules and demanded all existence conform to them because we were brilliant and there could be no other truth beyond man’s own acceptable scientific explanation of it.”

Jake reached down picked-up the last page of his printout, re-read it laughed ever so slightly and handed the paper to Sarah. Sarah took the printout and read what Jake had written and her face paled. “Jake,” the paper fell to the ground as she turned to look toward the western sky with him, “what will it be like? I mean will we know it when it comes or...” Sarah’s voice trailed off as she reached for Jake’s hand, which he took with a genuinely heartfelt smile.

“I think we have experienced far too many questions we thought we could answer that we never truly could. Now, let’s you and I,” Jake smiled and squeezed Sarah’s hand, “remember this moment and feel the warmth of our rising sun and enjoy the quiet solitude of peace that has been here since the beginning that we had forgotten existed for far too long.”

Two sets of eyes were momentarily blinded by the light’s intensity, two lives fully awoken.

# Ode To Gregor Samsa

Chaz Lilly

Consider me awake in your bed  
scrawling in full force  
feeding on Chinese take-out,  
grains of browned rice,  
which missed your mouth  
and ended up here.

When the alarm sounds  
sending comforter, pillow, crumbs  
flying from bed to floor,  
consider me temporarily impaired  
with my stub legs  
spinning in the air.

As you check your teeth  
and pluck curry from a gap,  
as I scale tile  
grout by grout  
to see your reflection true,  
consider me completely infatuated,  
enthralled,  
in this moment with you.

# Soldada Sola, Superviviente

Olivia Gibbons

No estuve allí cuando mi mamá recibió el diagnóstico  
la primera vez,  
tampoco la segunda.

No estuve allí cuando tomaron un cuchillo a su cuello,  
cuando quitaron el tumor.  
No estuve allí cuando quedaba en el hospital  
un cuerpo lleno de radiación,  
con solo la palmadita de los zapatos en el pasillo desnudo.  
Mujer aislada

Me escondieron de ella.  
Tuve que vivir en otra locura  
cuando solo quería estar con ella  
a beber té y ajustar las mantas rasposas.  
Tuve que responder, "Está bien, gracias por sus rezos,"  
cuando se acercaron a mí,  
una nadadora cansada en un mar de agua oscura.

Estuve allí después,  
cuando los demás la olvidaron, cuando regresó a la casa.  
Mujer débil

Estuve allí cuando miraron a su cicatriz como si hablara,  
fingiendo que no la vieron.  
Estuve allí cuando caminaba como anciana,  
arrastrando los pies en zapatillas viejas  
y agarrando las paredes.

Estuve allí cuando recuperaba,  
cuando cocinó la sopa con color de sol y olor de consuelo,  
cuando puso la mesa con narcisos.  
Mujer compasiva

Y estoy aquí contigo, todavía.  
No me protejas de la verdad.  
A través de todo, sigo estando a tu lado,  
estamos juntas.  
Mujeres unidas

# Sole Soldier, Survivor

Olivia Gibbons

I wasn't there when my mother received the diagnosis  
for the first time,  
nor for the second.

I wasn't there when they took the knife to her neck,  
when they removed the tumor.  
I wasn't there when she stayed in the hospital,  
a body full of radiation,  
with only the tapping of shoes in the naked hallway.  
Isolated woman

They hid me from her.  
I had to live in another nightmare  
when I only wanted to be with her to drink tea and adjust the scratchy blankets.  
I had to respond, "She's fine, thank you for your prayers,"  
when they approached me,  
a tired swimmer in a sea of dark water.

I was there afterwards  
when the others forgot her, when she returned to the house.  
Weak woman

I was there when they watched her scar as if it spoke,  
pretending they did not see it.  
I was there when she walked like an ancient woman,  
shuffling her feet in old slippers  
and clutching at the walls.

I was there when she recuperated,  
when she cooked soup the color of the sun and the smell of comfort,  
when she set the table with daffodils.  
Compassionate woman

And I am here with you, still.  
Don't protect me from the truth.  
After everything, I continue at your side,  
we are joined.  
United women

## Autumn Leaving

Olivia Gibbons

They are weak, flimsy, and somehow dazzling,  
like a chemo patient at a birthday party.  
Cue ball beautiful.

Do they go peacefully?  
With serenity and the knowledge that time is the only constant  
and that life is relative?

Or do they fight it?  
Do they put on a show to let us see what we're missing?  
Is this a last-ditch attempt to snub us?

Is death a release for them?  
Do they yearn to float effortlessly down from the tree on a slight gust of wind?  
Or do they clench on, exoskeletons pulsing?

Maybe this is their scarlet rage -  
their fury at mottled age spots and bulging veins,  
a season's worth of living.

# In Search Of Authority

Kyle Knox

If only we had known the danger that lies in seeking knowledge this disaster could have been averted. But how could we have predicted such a dire outcome?

It all started with the wormhole, that violent rupture in space that had been theorized by so many but never realized. We could finally breach the light barrier; in essence, the past was ours. Not to affect or tamper with, but to *observe*. There was finally an answer to all of man's questions—a way to completely, once and for all—explain the origins of our universe. So we tore the fabric of space apart, setting out for the very edge of the universe, that we might turn and watch the glorious birth of our galaxy and the formation of all the stars and nebulae condensing about the cosmos. All the scientific exposition, every speculation of our origins and the millions killed in debating them, could have been put to rest by the absorption of eons old photons. If only.

Space was forced; the probe went through. Humanity bonded on the brink of discovery waiting in highest expectation for the revelation of the best-kept secret of all time. Religions temporarily put aside their differences in the light that *finally* they would *know* how it all began; each confident that his own beliefs would be vindicated.

Perhaps, I'm only a doomsayer caught up in the trials of my own moment. In time, I suppose the world will rebuild and will find a way past the fate it has thrust upon itself. Even now there are countries reverting to the Stone Age, pummeling their infrastructure into dust through pointless rioting.

I write this on a laptop in a reinforced laboratory underground. Outside I hear the screams of destitute, hopeless humanity as they try to get through the vaulted steel doors to extract their revenge. They won't make it through, but they don't have to. When the power is eventually cut, the doors will seal leaving me to discover what they all seem to be waiting so impatiently for.

But I stray from my task. I've no delusions of making it out of this tomb but perhaps I can leave some sort of account for whoever eventually opens the doors. Our society is broken; men take what they want, regardless of what they destroy in the process. It is as if the true essence of man has been set free. All inhibitions and consequences be damned. We know the bitter taste of revelation has destroyed every social structure of the last 10,000 years.

When the probe came back it did indeed carry the answers we had sought, but by then the knowledge had become irrelevant. There was something else on the film—something pertaining to the future rather than to the past. I don't know how to even describe it with any degree of accuracy. Where we had assumed the answers would be found by turning the camera back towards Earth, we found something surreal—something that challenged everything we knew by looking out towards the edge of our "universe".

The shell was the first thing we saw. The green, rocky surface stretched across millions of parsecs of space, beautifully rugged, the sheer scale of it beyond

comprehension. It was magnificent to behold. At first, we thought it was an artistic prank, something the techs inserted to relieve some stress from a busy day.

Once we realized the film was, in fact, correct, we surmised that it was some sort of space debris field that had, due to forces we had never seen, compressed into a sort of wall, like a tightly packed asteroid belt. The presence of an empty space, however, as well as the strange movements around the opening, indicated that it wasn't like anything we had ever encountered. We soon realized that the "hole" in the surface was the gaping maw of the something else, something that seemed to be alive, or at least mobile. We decided it most closely resembled a turtle with its beak pointed straight for us though it clearly wasn't a turtle. Some sort of massive creature perhaps, though not truly analogous to anything we have here. It was feeding... feeding upon galactic clusters. We charted the "turtle's" path; unless diverted, it would arrive here eventually. Our universe was flotsam tossed about in whatever sea it called home, something akin to the shrimp of Earth, or perhaps our flaccidity and helplessness was more easily compared to the ambivalent jellyfish afloat without any chance of escape.

The scientific community was both astounded and ecstatic to discover this magnificent... creature? being? God? How foolish we were to think that excitement would reside in the public as well. Those of us who took time to consider the situation carefully were not concerned; if in fact, this monstrosity was a threat, it would be millions of years before it reached us. By that time, humanity would have been able to relocate, to avoid the swath of destruction that was left by this celestial terrapin.

Our firm belief in solutions and rationale, the iron-fast logical stance we clung to, failed us. We released the footage, thinking it was entirely too easy to avoid the creature if it should come to that. By that time, we might be harnessing the "turtle" rather than trembling in its all-consuming shadow. Sadly, the populace disagreed. The idea of being so microscopic—so *bacterial*—destroyed the sense of purpose they had spent their whole lives building. Their perception of life, that gleaming shell in which all meaning was contained, was shattered in an instant. All of their fanciful talk of philosophy, superiority, and the purpose of life ceased instantly in the face of such a crippling rebuttal to our premise of importance.

The lights are gone. The laptop only has a little battery left. I suppose I should go try to find a way to get the ventilation running again. Perhaps this will be uncovered in a week and everything will have settled down. I don't know. But if you are reading this at a later time, if society continues to collapse, my hope is that you've learned to deal with the turtle better than we did.

# Contemplation

Michael Fitzpatrick

## I. Death

What defines an end?  
Is there any truth to death?  
For it seems to be that the earth still spins,  
Its own magnetic respiratory breath,

The cessation of active existence,  
Is the fate which before us lies,  
Is it the absolute coma,  
Or the hereafter in disguise?

As a child I feared the grim reaper,  
With his sparkling scythe in hand,  
Not for fear of leaving this land of many,  
But of entering a land of none,

Jesus told his disciples that some would not die,  
Before He returned as the King of Kings,  
Since then two thousand years have died,  
The universe returns to our satellites lonely echoes,

Only cosmic gaseous vapor looks down from the stars,  
Only dilapidation is found in a graveyard,  
Only the howling wind speaks to my prayers,  
Only attritional seeds move my mountains,

Man stretches his forearm to immortality,  
Not to maintain the miserable pestilence of the present,  
But to hope that with an eternity of search,  
He may find the keyhole to the question of the Whole.

## II. Life

Drifting in this camouflaged system,  
I feel that I have no weight at all,

I have no compass, so how can I be sure,  
I am even drifting anywhere?

While the water belies a solid surface,  
It is quite penetrable,  
And so often I find the sea beneath me,  
Is an illusion above with the life underground,

Hope is the basic element to life,  
The factor that allows us to believe,  
That there is a purpose and a destiny,  
To the oft cataclysmic events that surround us.

I scream, but I am in a room of mannequins,  
They do not even quiver at my voice,  
So real on the outside,  
So dead within.

My soul has been numbed to reality,  
I cannot feel the anger, rage, love, and kindness,  
That connects souls together in relationship,  
The world is transparent to me.

I scream at the heavens in my mind,  
I splinter the strands of angels and cherubim and clouds,  
Hoping to find some transcendence, perhaps the sublime,  
But I am left with fraying synapses and a ticking pocketwatch.

### III. The Demise of Humankind

A few philosophies, a couple ancient books,  
And an id that refuses to withdraw from faith,  
Adorn the tattered remains of my cerebrum,  
This endless cycle of thought my hypostasis,

I sit in my glass house as the storm begins to howl.  
The cracked weather vane I've forgotten,  
My plants have died and I ate the seeds,  
And no one comes for me as the monsoon approaches,

I tear my clothing, and I throw the trowel to the floor,  
“There must be an end to this!” I cry out,  
But the gale force drowns my voice once again,  
My house shatters around me, and I am naked before the assailing fury,

I drool rabidly in the gusto, and my animalism takes control,  
The wind rips at my hide, and my salvo salivates to be sated,  
Thunder courses my veins, and for one fleeting instant I see the seraphim,  
Then it dissipates with the storm.

Around me lies my broken house, my toppled plants,  
My damaged tools, my mangled life,  
I realize that there was no squall, no torrential bluster,  
Save for my own deranged and irrational disfunctioning.

#### IV. Freedom

Between the terrace of delusion,  
And the portcullis of fathoming,  
There is a tiny chink in the wall which few ever see,  
Because the solipsist cannot distinguish that it is there.

Through comes the prophets,  
Out sneaks the recluses,  
The portcullis is too heavy for a mere squire to lift,  
And no squire would dare help the others.

The way is solitary, and narrow, and treacherous,  
But the land beyond the moat is not of glass or synthetics,  
It contains the spectral visions of only the foggiest notions of imagination;  
It is where the Grickle-Grass Grows.

Past the stars, black holes, and galaxies,  
The void of space and the ever tightening noose of time,  
A tiny hydrogen atom shudders,  
And another philosopher is born.

# The Fable Of Dasein

Chris Chrisketcham

Wife Sorge said to husband Besorgen, ‘Our child dasein is despondent.’

‘What is the matter?’ said Besorgen to dasein.

‘I can see the world from here—all the objects, all the entities, but I cannot touch them,’ said dasein.

‘You want to be alongside the world?’ asked Sorge.

‘Yes,’ said dasein, ‘and be already in the world to be alongside it.’

‘You are a little ahead of yourself,’ said Sorge.

‘But how am I to know the world when I am being here from behind, as it were—from looking upon it from so far away. It is as if all things are passing me by,’ said dasein.

‘But you are safe here in reality,’ said Sorge.

‘Yes, but how can this be real in reality when there are things outside of us in the world that I cannot yet grasp, cannot yet comprehend—they seem so distant and ahead of me but we never seem to catch up and then by—they pass me—at least it seems so,’ said dasein.

‘There is a way...’ said Besorgen.

‘Not verfallen!’ said Sorge.<sup>2</sup>

‘What is verfallen?’ asked dasein?

‘The way to the world, but it is a challenging way down...’ said Besorgen.

‘It is the way away from reality!’ said Sorge.

‘Come, Sorge, we knew that once dasein beheld the world, dasein would want to be in the world, be alongside the world, and feel anxiety in not being able to be in the world with others’ said Besorgen.

‘Others, huh. The They, you really mean,’ said Sorge with a hiss.

‘Your mother is prejudiced,’ said Besorgen, ‘But this world is a complicated place. It has only been present to you as something you see from afar, not as something you have experienced, not as something you will have done. You will be challenged to learn its feel, its utility in your hands and around you.’

‘And you will be anxious for what is around the next corner,’ said Sorge. ‘Besorgen, I am fearful that this discourse will come to a bad end.’

‘But you don’t understand me Mother,’ said dasein, ‘In reality I am not fulfilled. It is a place that conceives of itself as being as such but only conceptually—as if it is present at hand but not really there—there is nothing for me to do here but

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<sup>1</sup> Sorge: is care in German; Besorgen: is concern in German

<sup>2</sup> Verfallen: is falling in German

think about thinking and dream about the world. Father, this verfallen, it is a steep drop as far as I can see...I am anxious about dying in a fall.'

'The only way to the world is falling from verfallen. You may die. Yet again, your death may not come for many years,' said Besorgen.

'Death, huh. Talk of death. It isn't something for dasein's ears or any other being. Talk no more of death' said Sorge.

'I do not want to die in the fall; but how do I avoid death?' asked dasein.

'Death is inevitable,' said Besorgen, 'But the way to knowing the world—to having the world— is falling. Yet you must be thrown to the world before you can fall into the world.'

'I would rather just try to descend verfallen without falling,' said dasein.

'It isn't possible,' said Sorge, 'If you must know the world and have the world, you must fall into it and to fall into it you must be thrown. Splat dead is always possible from the moment you enter the world. There are no guarantees.'

'I wish to take my chances. I see no future in a place where there is nothing but thinking and theory and not feeling—only a shadow of what is real. I am ready father. How am I thrown in?' asked dasein.

dasein hugged Sorge and Besorgen and nodded readiness. Besorgen threw dasein from the edge of verfallen. Dasein landed in the world with a thud—no bones broken. The world was not what Dasein expected; nor did Dasein have an expectation of what the world would be like. Dasein had fallen into a narrow path in a large field. Desperate to begin the journey, Dasein started walking, first keeping to the path, which for Dasein seemed appropriate—but only anxiously so. Wandering off the path, Dasein experienced buzzing flies and stinging bugs and whipsaw grasses that cut at ankles and thighs. Not understanding any of these, Dasein became extremely anxious and returned to the path. Dasein discovered that the anxiety of being in the world on the path was less than not on the path. Dasein resolved to stay on the path.

The path widened slowly over time. After a long distance, the path grew to the size of a country road. Dasein began to recognize smells as being the same as what had been before in the journey's past. And Dasein sensed there were differences between small and tall in the world, but what was common was that all such things swayed when the wind blew. The sounds of birds turned Dasein's head but for what purposes these singing entities made such noises Dasein did not yet understand. After a long time, Dasein became weary and rested. Dasein was sore and hungry—things never experienced in the present at hand in the theoretical place called reality. After a short respite, Dasein pressed onward wondering at what wonders the world would bring.

Later, Dasein saw an other coming from behind. This was no ordinary person for it was a huge thing with a giant head and body that clopped and creaked and made an awful sound from its throat. But as it got closer Dasein could see a face a head, arms and body of a sitting person that seemed to be not quite a part of the rest of the thing as it was above it. It came past Dasein. Dasein saw that the person with this thing seemed not to be weary.

‘Hello,’ said Dasein, keeping distance from the thing.

‘Hello, Dasein,’ said the person.

‘How do you know my name?’ asked Dasein.

‘Your name? Why, everyone in the world is called Dasein,’ said the person.

Of course, this struck Dasein as impractical, but Dasein did not challenge the person. ‘What is it that you are on with...or with, on? I don’t understand it,’ asked Dasein.

‘The oxcart? It’s just an oxcart, nothing more,’ said the person.

Dasein was confused. This part of the did not make sense to Dasein. The only things that made sense to Dasein was that this person seemed rested and that was a thing that Dasein wanted...in addition, of course, to keeping on the path for that seemed the most logical, if not familiar, thing to do—and this oxcart had been and seemed to be about to be going along the same path.

‘And for what purpose is this oxcart?’ asked Dasein.

‘For me, a farmer coming from market to home,’ said the person.

‘Is being with this oxcart easier than walking?’ asked Dasein.

‘Sure it is easier than walking,’ said the person.

‘But, is it part of you—giving you four more legs and a strange other face?’ asked Dasein, wondering at all the other features of the monstrosity including great wooden wheels that creaked and groaned over every stone. These were things Dasein could not yet identify as being as such, for they were still but mass and meaningless blurs.

‘Dasein, you are strange. No, I ride the cart and the ox pulls me along. It is quite simple and relaxing,’ said the person.

‘Then I will have this oxcart,’ said Dasein, hurrying to keep up as the cart had begun to go faster.

‘You will not,’ said the person, ‘It is mine. I worked hard for it. You will need to work hard to get your own oxcart.’

Dasein was perplexed. What was mine and not mine Dasein did not understand. What this thing work was was just as foreign. The person shook his arms, and the thing made a loud cracking sound and the oxcart surged away from Dasein. Dasein did not follow, preferring to let this thing and event remain in the

mind to better understand it from its present at hand nature, as dasein had done in reality.

After the cart became a dot in the distance and farther into the mind as a presence, Dasein became more anxious and tired. Night fell and Dasein was frightened, not at anything in specific, but at everything that was and wasn't in the shadows. In the morning, the hunger rumbled more.

When the sun was high, Dasein came to a fork in the road. This presented a problem—which way? Dasein did not yet know the ways of the world nor the purpose and destination for Dasein in the world and resolved that any way would be a beginning. Dasein turned left.

Dasein came upon a small village, yet this village was a murky construct like most things in the world (albeit with growing exceptions like the road and its adjacent fields, swaying things, and the still hazy oxcart). There were others like Dasein in the village. Perhaps these were The They that Sorge had mentioned, or was the person of the oxcart The They...Dasein was too hungry to wonder long about this conundrum and approached the closest person to ask for something to comfort the cravings. Dasein was led into a nearby hut to a table and chairs. Dasein did not sit because Dasein did not know yet what tables and chairs were for, but the table had a suspicious similarity to the oxcart. There was so much here that reminded Dasein of the thing of the oxcart—the smells and things from which the oxcart itself seemed to be wrought were throughout the hut. Dasein looked for spinning wheels and saw one, but unlike the oxcart, this single wheel did not spin. Dasein wondered whether in the world it took two wheels to make wheels spin.

Dasein asked, 'Is this a place where I can work hard for an oxcart of mine?'

The older woman who had served Dasein hard bread said, 'There is work for those who will work.'

'Then I will work,' said Dasein.

'What kind of work can you do,' asked the older woman?

'Work,' said Dasein, not knowing what kinds of work there might be or what this thing called work was.

'The blacksmith has been grouching lately after his apprentice ran off. There is no one to work his bellows while he hammers,' said the older woman.

'Then this is work?' asked Dasein.

'It is work if you will do it. But it is hard work these bellows,' said the older woman.

'Then I shall hard work these bellows,' said Dasein.

As you have probably already surmised, when the older woman took Dasein to the blacksmith, there was a lot of confused talk, but Dasein became a blacksmith apprentice and learned how to live with The They in the village. For Dasein the

world had become small and predictable. The hammer became like a hand and the bellows like an extension of breathing.

After a time, Dasein wondered whether there was anything in the world beyond the village and The They in the village. But for a long time Dasein only wondered about this. Then one day a gust of wind threw open the door of the blacksmith shop and sent coals flying. Before long, the shop was ablaze. Most everything was turned to ash. Dasein found the hammer in the rubble but its shaft was a crusted shard that was strange to heft. The blacksmith vowed to rebuild, but Dasein saw this as an opportunity to continue the journey—to move away from these others in the village of The They—to see what further things the world would bring. As The They had grown to respect how Dasein had worked hard and been pleasant to be with, the villagers came to try to dissuade Dasein. Dasein became concerned. Dasein considered and considered what The They said. All had become such friends, companions, workers, and integral parts of Dasein's world...Dasein was anxious about giving these up.

Yet Dasein was more anxious from a gnawing thing in the stomach that asked, 'Was the world just a blacksmith shop in a small village of The They, or was there something more for Dasein—something authentically Dasein's-own and not just of The They and their ways?' This gnawing grew and grew.

The rebuilding of the blacksmith shop was taking a long time and it was a new thing to be learned—this building a shop thing—which Dasein found difficult and unfulfilling. Dasein decided to leave in the night. Dasein departed the village by the same path of entry. At the fork in the road, Dasein took the unwalked path. Even at the beginning of the walk Dasein was thinking ahead to what was next—the gnawing thing about what will-be-become something different but tentatively optimistic for something that might be-become for Dasein—something authentic and just for Dasein and not of the village, the blacksmith shop, and by, for and from The They.

Dasein traveled through the world, learning new trades from cobbling to tinkering. Each time Dasein first saw murkiness in the tools of the trade. Yet with use, practice, and familiarity, Dasein made the tools and the environment of the new world as ready to hand as if they were extensions of the hand and of the web of existence.

Yet something remained present in Dasein's being. Dasein journeyed ever closer to the primordial spires of Stadt des Todes<sup>3</sup>. Dasein understood that to walk through the gates of Stadt des Todes meant Dasein's end. For the most part, such thinking was not omnipresent in the mind of Dasein but when it was present, Dasein worked ever harder at the trade of the moment and began to think of what might

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<sup>3</sup> Stadt des Todes: is City of Death in German

become in the world for Dasein while Dasein was still Dasein. Wherever Dasein went, the others became The They. The They were simply everywhere. Some were friendlier than others, but few were the beings that mother Sorge had sneered about—The They simply were and always were wherever Dasein went. The They always wanted Dasein to be just like them. It was hard for Dasein to resist The They's thoughts and ideas, but there remained that ever present angst within Dasein about being-becoming Dasein for Dasein.

As the spires of Stadt des Todes loomed ever higher, Dasein speculated about the world without Dasein, and, deflated, realized that there was a reason for everyone to be called Dasein. When one Dasein ceased to exist, there were others of The They and The They would simply carry on as before: other to other, Dasein to Dasein. Dasein understood that no one could predict their arrival at the gates of Stadt des Todes and that it would be important to lead the most authentic life possible before the death of Dasein. In the end, Dasein's work, strivings, and anxiety towards death were Dasein's ownmost possibility for being. Then one day Stadt des Todes was before Dasein. There was no time to reflect. Dasein passed through the gates and became the absolute impossibility for Dasein: death.

# Poetic Syllogism

Samantha Noll

I was told once  
by an old professor,  
with salted hair and paper  
thin skin, that philosophy  
is *not* poetry, that truth lies  
in the logic of the syllogism.

But years later, after  
tasting the bitter almond  
truth that *all humans are mortal*,  
I realized he was wrong.

The red and white lights  
of the ambulance by  
a field of brown-green grass  
bloodied by the accident  
taught me that *he is human*;  
fragile and easily broken by  
nature's law.

And when the rose slipped  
from my numb fingers  
as featureless figures lowered  
the casket where he lay lifeless  
and limp into the ground,  
the truth that *he is mortal*  
came to me in the dry  
throated wheeze of grief.

I was told once  
by an old professor,  
with salted hair and paper  
thin skin, that philosophy  
is *not* poetry.

All these years later,  
I still wonder if he ever tasted  
the bitter almond truth of his logic;  
a logic that rests upon the hard  
won ground of insight,  
like the ones which taught me—  
    that syllogisms are the poetry of life.

# Hypatia

Samantha Noll

In fire and light and searing  
heat, the first of our kind  
died.

She was silenced by the  
wild flame of hegemony  
hidden within the skinned  
hoods of faces.

These masks worn by men  
are more than simple coverings  
when you look out upon the  
crowd and are confronted

by the faces of neighbors  
and friends twisted and hard  
like the cordwood under  
her feet set ablaze.

She was burned for the crime  
of wanting to be *more*..  
more than what they wanted  
her to be.

And aren't we also guilty  
of this? For, after all,  
we may not be facing  
the angry mob that burned  
*Hypatia*

but the message is in every  
line of text passed down  
and every frown from within  
the conference crowd  
says the same—  
Women have no business doing  
philosophy.

And I wonder how long we  
will have to wait or what  
we will have to do to bring  
about change.

What will it take for our  
community of peers  
to welcome us with  
open arms rather than  
cloaked smiles?

For me, personally, a fire  
burns within at the thought  
of *Hypatia* silenced by  
the torch and flame of  
stupidity.

It sparks a *need* to see this  
tradition rewritten so that  
diversity may find sanctuary,  
for once, in a discipline  
supposedly so full of wisdom:

In the Queen of the Humanities—  
In Philosophy

# Boy Who Says He's Straight

Chris Bernal

Modern-day Athenian, but am I  
chaser or chaste?

For too long, *eromenoi*, no longer a boy  
desirous of virtues I do not have.

The skinny, soft voice of a hairy  
gentle soul.

Mustaches, sideburns, and beards—*oh my*  
Radar, Gaydar broken; you've mixed signals.

Why get explicit with your features?

You exist as a form in my mind—  
Glittered perceptions feign serendipity—  
for the matter of your being will  
never be pressed against my own.

# Concept Horse Poem

Sarah Adams and Thomas Brouwer

Thinking of the concept horse,  
Frege did strange views endorse.  
For, though he held these views sincerely,  
they tax the intellect severely.

So different, we should understand,  
shall Begriff be from Gegenstand,  
that (Gottlob would swear on his mother,)  
nothing one could be the other.

To objects - being complete things -  
reference no problem brings.  
To concepts - being incomplete -  
reference is quite the feat.

The doctrine is debatable  
and what is worse, unstateable.  
“The concept horse”, the theory claims,  
an object, not a concept names.

These problems of equinity  
are with us to infinity.  
So, lest our thinking end up broken,  
“the concept horse” should not be spoken.

## *Envoi*

Oh Shergar, Shergar, where are you?  
Alive or dead? - If only we knew.  
Upon your back we could ride  
and, from Frege's problems, hide!

# A Poem About Parmenides' Poem

Sarah Adams

Parmenides claimed that “all is one” – the  
Earth, the moon, the stars, the sun.  
But an expression far too crude  
to express what he did conclude:  
that this world we do extol  
is a single undifferentiated whole.  
And never will it cease or perish,  
this universe which we do cherish.  
For what is now, at once, together  
shall remain unchanged forever.  
Timeless, uniform and unchanging;  
no parts has it for re-arranging.  
Indivisible and all alike;  
no less in one place which might  
prevent from binding it as one,  
this – which to being did not come.

For, the doctrine he once stated  
claims this whole's un-generated.  
No need impelled it to grow;  
no birth it had;  
nor the future will it know.  
So it exists completely or not at all;  
nothing to it will befall.

But surely this view so controversial  
is not likely to become commercial!  
On the contrary dear reader!  
Let me make to you much clearer,  
why such a view our man proposed,  
when appearances it so opposed.

Now, ‘nothing’ can't be the object of thought:  
such an activity would be fraught.  
What-is-not cannot be known;  
this way of inquiry was shown  
to be a dead-end –  
for that-which-is can't not be;  
being is of necessity!

This is something we'll comprehend  
if we listen carefully my friend,

and from appearances deter,  
and from reason we do not err.

“The way of truth” we’ll call this path,  
Which our Pre-Socratic took to task.  
For only one way of inquiry  
will show us how things are precisely.  
We must only say of what is that “it is!”  
when the nature of the world we quiz.

But this way of his was easy not  
and frequently he was mocked.  
Such a difficult life to lead  
by taking obscure views to heed.  
Daily tasks were done in vain  
and no progress did our man gain.  
So, troublesome was conversation,  
greeted with hostile intimation.  
For an example let us consider  
when Parmenides went to dinner.  
A conversation had with his wife  
(which so commonly was met with strife):  
“Are you changed for tea, my dear?  
We’re late already – get in gear!”  
The sage replied in some confusion:  
“Darling, change is mere illusion!

## A Sin's Scars

Alicia Daniels

The red rubber ball soared over the fence and flew into the street. The seven-year-old boy was playing toss in the front yard with his imaginary friend Julio. The boy was the taller of the two, and when he threw the rubber ball in a high arc Julio did not jump high enough to catch it. His mother had a set of rules to follow. One of them was never to leave the yard without adult supervision. But he wanted his ball back. The boy stood arguing with the crisp September air over who would go and get it. They played Rock, Paper, Scissors. The best two out of three would win—he lost. He peeked back at the white house into the kitchen window, the one his mother always gazed through. She was a sentinel, monitoring him as he played outside making sure all rules were followed. This time she wasn't there. He scurried over to the gate, stood on his tiptoes to unlatch the door, and pushed it outward stepping onto the sidewalk. He was about to tread on the black asphalt when he felt his shirt tug backward. His feet kept moving forward but he wasn't going anywhere.

“What do you think you're doing?” his mother snapped in her nasally voice. He silently pointed to the ball across the street nestled in the gutter's mouth.

“You know the rules. It's not safe out there for you alone. I'm going to have to punish you now.” She dragged him back inside, placed him on a kitchen chair, and situated his left hand palm down on the table. A fresh cut stood out against his smooth skin. His eyes got smaller as he shrank into himself; he knew what was coming. His mother took out the Clorox Bleach from the cabinet under the kitchen sink and plopped it down beside his hand. He winced. She left him for ten minutes sitting in that chair staring at the bleach. He wasn't sure why but this was the worst part of the punishment, worse than the searing pain. She came back into the kitchen sporting bright yellow rubber gloves. He thought they were too cheery looking for the act they were going to commit. She released the bleach upon his open wound in sprinkles, slowly increasing the amount. It burned. Tears built up in his eyes. He cried out. His mother put the bleach down and led him over to the sink. She rinsed water over his burning hand.

“I don't want to hurt you like this, but it's for your own good. You have to learn how to follow rules,” she cooed, patting him on the back in a mock attempt to comfort him. “Keep it under the water for fifteen minutes and then I'll dress it up so it's all nice and bandaged for when Daddy comes home.” She left the room. He stood there, water spilling over his hand, his cut stinging. His mother dressed it up

with gauze. “It’s fun playing doctor, isn’t it?” He nodded because another rule dictated so. Mother was always right and he didn’t want another scar.

\*

The squat stainless steel building is hard to miss. On top of the roof, block letters of neon flamingo colored light illuminate the air. Below, snaking along the building, metal tubes trap pink and blue neon electricity. Bendix Diner is the perfect median. It sits on a plot of land separating the two strips of route 17 in Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey. A bus stops on Williams Avenue and passengers exit. A woman stands off to the side of the bus stop, clutching an envelope in her hands, immobile in her contemplation of the return address. Aviators perch upon the bridge of her nose protecting her sensitive blue eyes from the descending sun. Her hair is tied back in a low ponytail allowing the slight breeze to cool her neck. She lovingly traces the words with her fingertips as if they were the person himself, *Jordan Deane*. She glances down at her white ceramic Michelle watch; it is 6:45 p.m. She is right on time. She restores the envelope to its place in the back right pocket of her jeans and looks across the parking lot at the building ahead, looking forward to the promise it holds for her.

\*

The man sitting in the booth is stuck in-between. He has the muscular build and deep voice of a man, but a boy’s vulnerability shines through his macho demeanor. He is considered an adult since he turned eighteen a month earlier. His new freedom led him to this diner. He slouches over his coffee cup, giving it a dirty look as if it has offended him, and curses the American drinking age. He was of age—he could go to war and shoot another man—but he couldn’t have a drink. He would much rather knock back a smooth one to calm his nerves than continue nursing the bitter shit he was drinking. A little liquid courage would do him good. Instead, the caffeine races through his veins leaving him on edge and continuously tapping his feet and drumming his fingers on the tabletop.

He chose this diner as the rendezvous point because it was the perfect spot between their two hometowns. He only had to travel south on Route 17; she only had to travel north—a seamless trip. He hopes this meeting will be seamless and easy too. Bendix is a classic American diner established in the 1930s. It sticks out to him as an emblem of home.

He looks out the diner window and watches a NJ transit bus, recognizable for its blue, purple, and orange stripes, as it stops at Williams Avenue to let off passengers.

He looks at each person as they step off the bus, scouring his or her face for familiar features. The first one off is an elderly man wearing a wool fedora to protect his balding head from the sun. The young man quickly dismisses him, for he is looking for a female. The next is a woman in her mid thirties—about the right age—but as she steps away from the open bus door the man notices a two year old clutching her hand. He feels a pang at the thought of her bringing her son to their meeting. He takes a closer look and notices her Spanish flare. Relief softens his face; this is not who he is meeting, he does not have a Spanish bone in his body, at least not that he knows of. Next, a woman about 5'7" steps off the bus. She seems promising; her fair skin matches his own; she has his russet hair. She pushes her aviators closer to her eyes and brushes her ponytail off her shoulder. His heart starts beating fast echoing loudly in his ears reverberating through the chambers of his body. She is here. This is *it*.

\*

The woman adjusts her sunglasses and hair. Her breathing is troubled. She feels as though it is her first job interview all over again and the pressure to make a good impression is sitting upon her lungs. It is now or never. The man she is going to meet is waiting for her in that diner, probably looking out the window in anticipation of her arrival. If she runs away now, not only will she think she is a coward, but he will too and she can't stand that. Determination takes over. Throwing her shoulders back she strides across the parking lot. Reaching the door, she pulls the handle toward her and steps into the diner. She removes her sunglasses and spots him after her eyes adjust to the glare of the fluorescent light. He had chosen the booth farthest from the door, most likely to keep their conversation from prying ears. She would have done the same, she thought. She breathes deeply, drowning her lungs with air and approaches the man.

“Excuse me, Jordan? Hi, I'm...well, I'm Leah Baker, your mother.” He does not stand to embrace her like she thought he might. She stammers, “Well, I mean, I—I'm your biological mother.” She thought this would make him feel more comfortable. She remembered learning in Catholic grade school the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law and thought this was similar. She was his mother in the literal sense as she gave birth to him, but never his mother in the spiritual—she was never at his bedside taking care of him when he was sick or courtside cheering him on at his high school basketball games. Nerves overtake her, the puppeteer to her puppet pulling the strings to make her talk before he even gets the chance to. “I know this is strange, but I'm really happy you reached out to me. I would have reached out to you of course, honestly, but I signed off agreeing I would

leave you alone unless you contacted me, which you did..." she trails off. She can tell he is just as nervous as she is, but instead of rambling he averts his eyes and stares into his coffee and taps his fingers. She sits down, ignoring her first instinct to wait for him to offer her to. He had invited her there, surely he meant for her to sit.

"You are Jordan, aren't you?" she asks sheepishly, crimson creeping across her cheeks in anticipation of embarrassment if she had the wrong boy. She quiets waiting for him to speak.

"I am," he says.

She drinks him in and smiles. She never had the opportunity to see her baby before now. As soon as she had given birth the nurse whisked him out of the room to rid him of his bloody coat, swaddled him in a blanket, and presented him to another family. One second there was a living being inside her and in the next it was gone. It seemed as though the four arduous hours of active labor she struggled through meant nothing in the large scope of things without the living evidence. But here he was sitting in front of her alive, a miracle. She feels stronger than ever in her decision to give him up for adoption now that she could see he was healthy. He does not have the hollowed out cheeks like that of the hungry; his bones do not jut out where they shouldn't—he is muscular, strong.

"You look just like your father. It's the nose...you have his exact nose," she says drawing out her words as though she is disconnected from the present, visualizing a different face from another time. When she mentally reenters, she notices the scowl darkening his features. She realizes it wasn't a good idea to mention his father. If she hadn't been able to contact him, surely Jordan would not have had any luck either.

Jordan squints his eyes and looks deep into hers, as if daring her to blink. "Why?" he asks. It is only a single monosyllable, but it cuts right through her and stops her heart for a beat. She knows it was wrong of her to expect this meeting to be happy and eclipse the pain they both share. He must feel abandoned and she feels heartbroken.

"Why what?" she whispers, adopting his coping mechanism, looking down at her folded hands in her lap. The waiter approaches the table at this moment, and places two sweating, customary glasses of water on the table and takes their orders. Jordan orders chicken tenders with a side of honey mustard and Leah a Caesar salad—she is watching her figure.

She considered abortion, but the idea tore her up inside. So she went to confession. She admitted her sin to the father in half whispers. She acknowledged abortion was wrong—that we are all made in the image and likeness of God—but couldn't help but think it would be best for herself and for the unborn child. She explained to him her circumstances: she was a boarder in a house for homeless pregnant teenagers—her father kicked her out of her childhood home as soon as he was aware of her condition—and once she was no longer pregnant she would have nowhere to go. How was she going to get a decent job without a high school education? She didn't want to turn out like those other girls, stalking the New York City street corners late at night, lifting their dresses up for some cash. She told the priest the child's father wanted nothing to do with her and the baby. He had left for college in Indiana, and whenever she called him only a woman's voice telling her "the number you are calling has been disconnected" came through. She felt as hollow as the robotic voice on the other side of the line. The priest sent her off with a penance of twenty Hail Marys and asked her to consider adoption. God has a plan, he said. He told her she could leave the baby with the church and that God would find him a real family.

Jordan looks at her with such intensity reflected in his eyes, "Why did you give me up?" The question snaps her out of her reverie as the nerves in her stomach, compressing like a coil, spring suddenly. She plays with the condensation on her glass. She is surprised she isn't sweating like it is.

She takes a deep breath. Hesitates. "I didn't have the means to take care of you. I was a silly seventeen year old without a penny to my name. I gave you up in order to give you a better life, a real family."

"Looks like you're doing fine now." He points toward the Michelle circling her dainty wrist with his left hand, his words as sharp as a pricking needle. The watch's retail value was \$1,955. Leah bought it as a present to herself after her promotion to a main contributor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. It was a rare purchase. She couldn't afford to make others like it. Studying his face, she could tell he was making a wild guess at the watch's expense; he was more curious than angry, searching for answers. She is mad at herself. How could she tell him she was too poor to keep him and then flaunt her expensive watch in his face? Her cheeks flare in shame.

\*

The same three words cycle through his head as if his mind is a music player and someone put them on repeat: *a real family*. That's all he's ever wanted. He sits upon his left hand.

“You would have been good enough for me,” he mumbles, slightly ashamed of his girlish sensitivity. The waiter places their food on the table and Jordan meets Leah’s eyes and thinks he sees tears assembling. But upon second glance they are dry. Leah neatly chews on her iceberg lettuce like a rabbit, taking small quick bites. Jordan doesn’t touch his food. He’s too nervous to eat. The butterflies fluttering in his stomach have staked their claim, forbidding interloping food to enter. However, he ordered to be polite and follow dining customs. Not that the managerial staff would kick them out. There isn’t a line of people out the door begging for seats. What he’s hungry for is an apology. He wants her to tell him she was wrong, that she shouldn’t have given him away. He grew up wondering who his real parents were, who he really was.

It begins to rain. The weather catches his attention only because the constant pitter-patter upon the steel is their conversational background music. In their silence the rain roars.

“I know how you’re feeling. You’re thinking you weren’t good enough for me. But you’re wrong.”

“That’s not true. Feelings are singular. Just like we see different blues and greens, we feel things differently, to different degrees.” But Jordan had to admit the thought had flickered across his mind for a second, *was he not good enough?* He felt as though he was born into the world a burden; he barely took his first breath before he was passed from one person to another.

Leah slowly extends her arm to cover his hand with her own, “Jordan, I was the one who wasn’t good enough. I couldn’t give you the upbringing you deserve. You deserved a complete mother and father. I was broken. You would have been brought up in a soiled world, exposed to its brutality far too quickly. I had to protect your innocence.”

Jordan thinks of the Clorox Bleach hidden under the kitchen sink of his childhood home.

\*

She watches him trace the scar on his left hand with his thumb and asks him where he got it.

“My mother gave it to me...I have more like it too,” he says. Leah’s eyes widen in horror and sweep over his body searching for the others.

“You won’t find them. They’re placed out of view, this is the only one not hidden...she learned from her impulsive mistake.”

“How old were you—“

“When I got the first one? Five, the earliest age children can pinpoint and define the intensity of pain. Sick, isn’t it?”

“I’m so sorry, that’s horrible...”

“Not what a real family should do, huh?” he says with a sad half smile.

She sits in thoughtful silence for a few seconds. She wants to ask him more questions, like how his mother scarred him, but thinks Jordan isn’t ready to disclose everything. “I was taught and always believed the morality of an action was based on the intent, but maybe...maybe it’s really the consequence.” She thought adoption had been the right decision. She never imagined his life wouldn’t be better for it. She felt his body was disfigured because of her. Her intent was good, but was it possible he would have been better off with her? She winced at the thought of physically hurting a child. No, she could never do that. He may have been exposed to the sorrows of the world too soon, but he would have avoided unnecessary pain. She notices his untouched meal.

“You should eat your food,” she clucks. Her motherly instinct surprises her and she thinks, *maybe I would have been good at this.*

She reaches into her purse to retrieve her wallet, but before she can extract her credit card Jordan slides a twenty on the table.

“Don’t worry about it,” he says, “it’s on me.”

The pair scoots out of the booth and starts toward the door. Once outside, Jordan opens his umbrella and sweeps his arm toward the bus stop in a silent offer. The rain falls steadily only visible in the length of a lamppost light. Jordan leads his mother across the parking lot to the bus stop on Williams Avenue. She turns to face her son and sticks out her hand—this time not anticipating a hug. He reaches for the shake but pulls her in, surprising her.

“We should do this again,” he tells her.

“I would like that.” She smiles. She watches Jordan walk to his car and hears the engine rumble as he turns the key in the ignition. His car lights turn on and his windshield wipers beat back and forth like a metronome. Jordan waves goodbye as

he pulls onto 17 north. She watches the path of his car until he reaches the crest of the hill and disappears from sight. A drop of water slides down her cheek. There's somewhere she needs to go. She has a sin she wants to confess.



# God

Mandy Brown

Traditionally learns through fallacious metaphors,  
washing antique truths in paradoxical ambiguity,  
weaving helixed dreams into irrational reality  
while blinking worlds into existence.

# The Spirals Of Aristotle

Joseph Vincent LaMantia IV

Aristotle's arguments appear almost circular on the surface, round as a coin.

Over and over again, one's eyes trace the coin.

Yet something is amiss.

Look closely with light, one will see. Look closely at shadow where none should be.

That subtle difference that prevents redundancy.

Suddenly begins an obsession: Why is it shadowed so?

A smooth surface should not vary in depth when illuminated so.

The path one travels is wrought with familiarity, but with careful scrutiny provides

déjà vu.

Too many things are different; one cannot conclude that this path is not new.

If, with light, one were to move from noon to one, as in the way of the sun,

one may see, contrary the coin, a deep and tenuous coil.

Aristotle's words are as space dust left over when stars have been formed. In this I mean to say: Aristotle bore witness to the birth of stars, but was only able to share with us the dust.

We cannot receive true thought, only its best representation.

We cannot understand a concept without breaking through the second dimension,

without moving, altering ones perspective to gain a fuller understanding.

Aristotle has left us a great mass of celestial dust.

It is up to us, as individuals, to gather the dust, and examine as our own stars are born.

# Fighting Philosophical Problems In Swadesh

Philip Gaydon

Black night eat yellow star.

Eye sleep, head see.

Black in head burn.

Beast in body eat.

Bite, bite,

Tooth red, blood drink.

Belly fat, Horn hard.

Eat, eat, eat.

I, man, in sand lie.

Eye rain, Tongue dry,

Belly groan.

Heart cold.

I, person, die.

Ashes smoke.

New yellow star.

Stand.

Walk new road in sand.

Rain come in night.

Drink water, sit.

See bird,

White feather.

See tree,

Big, green, full leaf.

Mind not know.

Heart see,

Heart full.

New night,

Eye sleep,

Heart fire kill blood beast,

Star white eat black night.

I new star,  
Star burn white,  
Star burn white all nights.

New night,  
Beast in breast beat.

# The Narrow Ledge

Adam Blincoe

*“To my dearest Zoe, I hope you can forgive me for hiking this mountain alone. I hope that our separation will only be temporary . . .”*

*Paul:* [groans and opens eyes]

*Pleasant Voice:* Good, you are awake. You had better get up and take stock.

*Paul:* What? Who’s that? Who’s out there?

*Pleasant Voice:* I am a friend; just someone who wants to help.

*Paul:* Who is that? Where are you? It’s too dark . . .

*Pleasant Voice:* But of course Paul, it is now deep night under a new moon.

*Paul:* Who are you? How do you know my name?

*Pleasant Voice:* Oh I know much more than that, Paul. I am intimate with every crevice of your life, right up until that nasty spill you took trying to conquer this rock alone. Right now you are precariously perched on a small ledge. Despite your fall of nearly 25, your injuries are only moderate. But the cold of the night has set in.

*Paul:* How do you know that? And where are you? Your voice sounds like it’s coming out of the air. Where are you standing?

*Pleasant Voice:* Paul, I know your thoughts. I am expansive and rule this world. And I have as much need for a place to stand as the sun has for a pedestal on which to shine. You had better forget about who I am and how I know who you are and start thinking of yourself. You are in quite a dilemma.

*Paul:* Huh? I don’t understand.

*Pleasant Voice:* Paul, do you want to die on this mountain? Stop trying to understand me. Just focus on yourself and the dire circumstances of your situation. Forget about who I am and just let me help you.

*Paul:* Okay, what do you want me to do?

*Pleasant Voice:* Get your bearings. Tell me what you know about your situation. I will help you fill in the details.

*Paul:* Okay, well, the last thing I remember is climbing up a steep trail near the western edge of the mountain. It was less than an hour into my hike. Some rocks shifted beneath my feet and I tried to grip the rock face, but my strength gave out and I fell over the edge. That's all I can remember.

*Pleasant Voice:* You fell about 25 onto this narrow ledge. You have been unconscious for over 10 hours now. The sun has long since set and the wind has picked up. You are not dressed for this. You will not last out the night on this ledge.

*Paul:* I've been out for 10 hours! [noticeably shivering] But, that can't be . . . I mean, it just can't be that. . .

*Pleasant Voice:* Oh, it is that bad. You had better get a grip on your grim reality. If you do not calm down and make some decisions you will surely freeze to death on this mountain.

*Paul:* But, I don't understand. Why are you telling me all this? Who are you . . . and why are you bothering with me?

*Pleasant Voice:* Do not worry about who I am, just trust that I want to help you. You see, I like you and I think I can offer you a way out. I am here to help you understand your situation and choose the best course of action. Your life hangs in balance, and whatever you do, I think that it is fair to say that you do not want to freeze to death on this ledge. In order for me to help you, you will have to have a bit more sense than that.

*Paul:* Okay, okay. I don't want to freeze to death. Dying terrifies me [crying a bit]. But what can I do?

*Pleasant Voice:* Quit crying, Paul! Now is the time for decision, not whining.

*Paul:* But I only see a few choices and none of them look attractive. I think I might be able to climb a bit, but I'm not sure how far I can get on this rock face with my injuries. I can't see anything past a few feet below this ledge, but I think I remember a steep drop-off that way. There's just not much that I can do [still crying]. Why is this happening to me?

*Pleasant Voice:* Stop crying. There is no need for that. Now is the time to view reality through clear eyes. Yes, you are staring death in the face. Yes, all appears to be darkness. But I have a way out. All you need to do is trust me.

*Paul:* And why should I trust you? You're just a voice in the darkness. If you know so much then tell me why all this is happening to me.

*Pleasant Voice:* Come on, Paul, are you serious? You know why this is happening to you. It's the same reason why anything horrible happens. In this world things tend to come apart: relationships falter, tempers flare, rash actions are taken, our footing gives way, our strength fails and we fall into the absurd darkness. Tell me, why are you on this mountain in the first place?

*Paul:* I wanted a good hike in the brisk weather.

*Pleasant Voice:* Paul, I know everything there is to know about you. Don't bother lying. Why is Zoe not out here with you? You two usually go hiking together.

*Paul:* How do you know about Zoe?! Who are you?

*Pleasant Voice:* Paul, we have been down this road and it is not productive. Knowing more about me will not help you make the decisions that press upon you now. Just let go of this need to know and *confess* to me. Why is Zoe not here with you?

*Paul:* [sighs] Zoe and I had a fight.

*Pleasant Voice:* Yes, you had another fight. What was *this* fight about?

*Paul:* My job. I just got laid off.

*Pleasant Voice:* That's right. This world has dealt you a pretty weak hand, and today you responded by storming off to this mountain *without Zoe* to climb this dangerous path alone.

*Paul:* That's right, I did. So what? Zoe is unbearable sometimes and I need my space. I was even thinking of leaving her for good this time. I mean, what else can I do? She just nags and nags and . . .

*Pleasant Voice:* Listen Paul, I am not here to judge you. I'm a friend. You want to know why you are here, right?

*Paul:* Yeah, I guess.

*Pleasant Voice:* Paul, you are here because the absurdity of this world has led you here. Life on this earth is tragedy punctuated by a few ephemeral bits of pleasure. Today on your hike you were simply trying to claim one of those rare pleasant moments.

*Paul:* That's right. I was. So you understand me.

*Pleasant Voice:* I do, Paul. I think it is time you trust me. Your only alternative is death by freezing.

*Paul:* Okay, so what should I do?

*Pleasant Voice:* Jump off the ledge.

*Paul:* What?!

*Pleasant Voice:* Just slide your feet over the side of this ledge and shove off. It is the easiest way off of this mountain. Indeed, it is the only one that does not involve the slow agony of freezing.

*Paul:* I can't do that. I mean, I saw the drop in the daylight. Surely there's a better way.

*Pleasant Voice:* There are only two other options and neither one is pleasant. You can sit here and wait seven hours for daylight. But in your clothing, the falling temperatures and the rising wind will most likely claim your life in an hour or two. You will agonize and grow colder as the darkness slowly envelops you. And even if you could make it to daylight, seeing the ground below the ledge will only make the jump more difficult. Your fear will increase in the light, not diminish. In the light of day you will simply have more information over which to agonize. On the other hand, you could attempt to climb the rock face to the path above. The climb is less than twenty-five feet but in this weather and with your injuries it is doubtful that you will make it. Even if you did complete the ascent you would still have a good 40 minute hike back down the mountain to your car. How far can your strength take you? How is your leg doing?

*Paul:* It doesn't feel great, but I might be able to do something with it.

*Pleasant Voice:* I wish that were true, Paul, but we both know that your leg is too swollen to be of much use. Face it: the best choice, really the only one worth making, is to trust me and leap into the darkness.

*Paul:* I don't know . . . I mean, there's a steep drop over this side of the cliff. I know what a jump like that will do. I can't take that kind of risk.

*Pleasant Voice:* Why not, Paul? Think of your life. What is it you have to lose anyway: a failed relationship, a lost job, and a world that appears to curse your very existence? Trust me. Take the leap in the dark. Have faith in me. Let go of that sad ledge and jump to your only hope.

*Paul:* Wait . . . I can't risk it. Is my life really all that bad? My relationship with Zoe is rocky, but surely it's not *failed*. I mean, I love her. If I get off this mountain things are gonna be different. Maybe I should wait for the light. Maybe I can ride the cold out by focusing on her. I've heard of people surviving just by thinking of their loved ones.

*Pleasant Voice:* Paul, I have already told you. The light will only make what you have to do more difficult. *Decision* is required now, not further deliberation. Perhaps there are times for such deliberation but now is not one of them. All that the light will show you is a grim jump. You will still need to have faith in me. You need to trust that when you fall I will catch you. Far from helping, daylight will only make faith impossible. Jump *now* while it is still dark. If you keep waiting and deliberating, the decision will be made for you by the cold winds on this heartless rock.

*Paul:* [shivering violently] I can't do this. I just can't. What you're asking me to do is impossible. It's crazy!

*Pleasant Voice:* Is it any more irrational than sitting on a ledge of a rock clinging to a miserable life? Face it, the only friend you have right now is me. Trust me and jump into the darkness, or cling to your sad existence and freeze.

*Paul:* [crying] I don't know. . . I just . . . Are those lights? I think I see lights up there, back on the trail! They've come looking for me! Zoe must have worried and sent someone after me. HELP! HELP! I'm down here! I'm not dead!

*Pleasant Voice:* Paul, Paul. You are descending into hypothermia. You are hallucinating. All that those lights signal is that you do not have much more time to make your decision to jump and get off of this mountain.

*Paul:* But I see them. They're a little fuzzy, but that's just because of the storm. I *know* I see some lights.

*Pleasant Voice:* Oh, I trust that you *think* you are seeing lights. But like I said, that is just the hypothermia setting in. All that is up on that trail is cold darkness. Any light you perceive is merely imagined. Stop holding on to false hopes and jump into my arms.

*Paul:* [crying] But they look so real. How can you know for sure? They look just like flashlights . . . they look just like . . .

*Pleasant Voice:* Of course they do, Paul. In this cruel world many things look real which turn out to be mere illusion. Think about it. Would *Zoe really* send out after you? You two said some pretty nasty things to one another. You said that you “*didn’t care*” if you ever saw her again.

*Paul:* [sobbing] But I do care!

*Pleasant Voice:* That’s not what she thinks. What do you think is more likely, Paul? Do you think *Zoe* missed you after 6 or 7 hours and sent the rangers up after you? Or is it more likely she assumed that you finished your hike and that you are just getting drunk in some bar? Remember, Paul, she knows about your tendency to drink. It is one of her favorite topics.

*Paul:* [panicked] No, no, no! *Zoe* would be worried. She’d look for me. Even if she thought there was only a small chance that I was out here. I should try to climb. Maybe I can get high enough to yell for them. Maybe I . . .

*Pleasant Voice:* Come now, Paul, stop grasping at straws. When you were a child you might have been able to fool yourself with such stories. But you are grown up now and it is time to give up this nonsense. You know that *Zoe* is as selfish and sinful as you are. Those lights are not hope. They are the last gasp of a failing brain. You are too cold to think properly. All you can do is make this one, simple decision. Stay here and freeze or take your chances with me and jump.

*Paul:* [crying] But *Zoe* and I love each other. You’re wrong. You gotta be. I can’t jump. That’s crazy. I just can’t.

*Pleasant Voice:* No, Paul, what’s crazy is that you are trusting in this obviously flawed relationship more than one who is offering you a real way out. I’ve already shown that I know so much about you. *Zoe* can’t even remember what you like on your pizza. Forget *Zoe* and this world of shadows. Jump into my voice. It is the only way off of this mountain. You must trust me . . . or freeze in your delusions.

*Paul:* [crying and shivering profusely] Okay, okay. Fine. You're right. . . I'll jump. . . I'll jump. Let me just write a note to Zoe . . . in case I never see her again.

*Pleasant Voice:* Do what you must. Just hurry up and jump. If you don't take the risk soon you will die of freezing.

*Paul:* [scribbles something down] I think I've got it.

*Pleasant Voice:* Good, are you ready to get off of this mountain?

*Paul:* [with resignation] I guess so.

*Pleasant Voice:* All right then, jump.

[Paul starts to slide off the edge, but flinches at the last moment and hangs from the rock]

*Paul:* [Hanging over the edge, panicked] I can't do it!

*Pleasant Voice:* [laughing] Well, it's too late now. You certainly don't have the strength to pull yourself up. Just loosen your grip and drop. This leap of faith is more of a letting go anyway.

*Paul:* [struggling] I . . . can't . . . no! [loses grip and falls]

*Pleasant Voice:* [laughing] They go out of this world like they come into it, crying and helpless.

*“. . . but I am afraid it may be permanent. I hope you can forgive me for jumping to my death. The climb back up appeared hopeless. I couldn't bring myself to try. In the end, suicide seemed preferable to freezing. I hope that we will meet again on the other side, if such a place exists. Love, Paul"*

## Status Quo

Rita Anderson

*The vortex has you,*  
gray indecision  
as silver as sin, which  
reminds me: What  
kind of mood are you in?

Check the mail, arrange  
the pears, brush up  
on whatever enables you  
to sleep soundly through  
the stares. Sweep the stairs

without climbing, clean  
the closet, rearrange  
the chairs. Deck the halls,  
paint the walls, hang  
mistletoe, have an affair.

Shelf the dust book, cook  
the kitchen, mop the  
chicken, shave the hairs.

Sew the linoleum,  
pray the curtains, check

the cash, and dough the need.

Seek a lawyer, sell  
the house, split the profits,  
and dog the feed.

Double the loss.

Gather no moss.





## Contributors

**Chelsea Cain** is an art student at Texas State University with a concentration in painting and a minor in philosophy. She will be starting her thesis next spring and has been working on creating bodies of work that incorporate both experimental styles and materials with different philosophical themes.

**Will Sharp** is a Masters of Fine Arts dropout and a current graduate student of applied philosophy and ethics at Texas State University. An Instructional Assistant for the Philosophy Department, he is currently writing his Master's thesis on mind-body interaction (or, to state things in the mode de jour, on the causal relations between the mental and physical).

**Patrick Kelley** is currently a psychology major with a concentration in mind, brain and behavior at Colorado State University, and is a former philosophy major with a concentration in science and technology. His first book, "Saving the American Dream: The Path to Prosperity" was published in 2009. His first fictional novel, "Warwik: The Hunters" is expected to come out mid-to-late 2012.

**Chaz Lilly** is pursuing his master's degree at The University of Texas at Dallas. His research and poetry examines the intersection of literature, philosophy and technology – and occasionally Gregor Samsa.

**Olivia Gibbons** is a junior at Seattle University majoring in Spanish and International Studies with a minor in philosophy. She has spent the year studying in Spain and Mexico, and hopes to work with Spanish-speaking immigrant and refugee populations in the United States. Her perfect afternoon would be spent having a Phad Thai and iced coffee picnic with Søren Kierkegaard.

**Kyle Knox** is a 19-year-old English student on the West Coast. His writing primarily focuses on exploring philosophical questions through an artistic lens.

**Michael Fitzpatrick** is a senior at California State University, Chico, where he is completing a double major in philosophy and English. After also completing an MA in literature, Michael hopes to continue on to a Ph.D program in philosophy, where he can continue projects on metaphysics, meaning, stories and myth.

**Christopher Ketcham** is a master's degree student of philosophy with a twentieth century continental concentration at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Chris is also a consultant and teacher of risk management and insurance to industry and academia.

**Samantha Noll** is a doctoral student at Michigan State University with areas of interest in environmental philosophy, development ethics, and feminism. She publishes in poetry and philosophy, enjoys kayaking with her dog Turtle and partner Micha, and is an advocate of community supported agriculture. She particularly hates writing in third person but makes sacrifices for academia.

**Chris Bernal** is finishing up his philosophy and English degrees as an undergrad at Texas State. He hopes to always be pondering and writing creatively. Remember Lot's wife.

**Sarah Adams** –is a first year PhD student at the University of Leeds. She is working on metaphysics and philosophy of religion under the supervision of Prof. Robin Le Poidevin and Dr. Scott Shalkowski. She is funded by Cambridge University Press and works as Editorial Assistant for the CUP journal 'Religious Studies'.

**Thomas Brouwer** is a third year PhD student at the University of Leeds. His research interests concern metaphysics and philosophy of logic.

**Alicia Daniele** studies writing, literature, and publishing at Emerson College in Boston. She is fascinated by the psychology of mankind and has an endless thirst for knowledge.

**Kelsey Erin Shipman** is a poet, performer and educator. She teaches writing to public school students in South Austin, and is an undergraduate at Texas State University where she is currently earning her MFA in creative writing. Read more of her work at [kelseyshipman.com](http://kelseyshipman.com).

**Mandy Brown** enjoys biting off more of the world than others think she can chew. When she isn't changing the world, she is changing diapers as she is convinced the two are closely related. She will graduate in May after finishing her creative honors thesis and hopes to find fulfilling work in academia.

**Joseph Vincent LaMantia IV** is an American, descended from many cultures in blood and from Sicily in name. In academia, he is a psychology major; in his heart, he is a philosopher.

**Philip Gaydon** is a first year PhD student studying philosophy and literature at Warwick University. His thesis focuses on proving the existence and usefulness of artistic knowledge using nineteenth century children's literature. Webpage: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/people/postgraduates/pyrhan>

**Adam Blincoe** earned a BA in philosophy at Wake Forest University and a Masters of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary. He is currently a PhD student in philosophy at the University of Kentucky and his research interests include: history of philosophy, 19<sup>th</sup> century continental philosophy (especially Kierkegaard and Nietzsche), Kant, ethics, and aesthetics. Outside of academics Adam enjoys hiking, camping, rugby and spending time with his wife.

**Rita Anderson**, a second semester MA playwriting student, won the KCACTF Regional's for critical writing, and advanced to Nationals at the Kennedy Center in April. She has an MFA from the University of New Orleans, where she was editor of the annual literary publication. Some earlier work has been published and her writing has garnered a few awards.

