

<rabble>
a chapbook
companion to
poictesme

Fight

verb

1. *To contend, strive for victory; to struggle; to engage in conflict.*

Masthead

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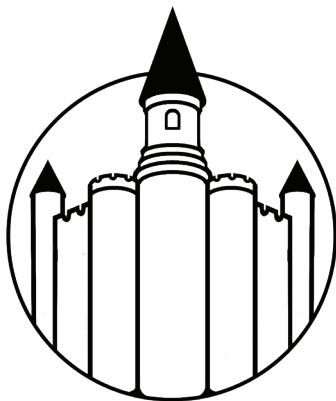
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"Tell the Rabble the name is Cabell."

— James Branch Cabell to his editor, to help people learn how to pronounce his name. Cabell used the word derogatively but we are taking it back. These pages will showcase the writing and illustrations of our rabble—the ordinary students of VCU.



poictesme
<pwa-tem>



curation poems

Caroline Meyers

i curated my own texture. i became
the arbiter amongst materials made
studio-available, sticking tape to
people's laces and waiting for them
to pick their feet up off the ground
but i didn't let them take it all
the way upstairs with them because
i stuck around and kept the pieces
that remained and let me tell you,
those people's shoes made the
downstairs floor look like a city.
it pays to take responsibility.

i curate my peers exhaustively. so many have the
fighting bodies of the student athletes who pretend
that they don't sleep: team spirit creators of the taping
of the knees and ankles i cannot relate to. i performed
this section alone, originally, in my bedroom at night,
thinking of them in the mirror — they step away for
their private afternoon practice continually; floated
out in a van-green mini-jeep imitation 8-seater. and
in their chlorine dream advanced encounters with the
inter-team of girl exchanges, they'll slipper-slide away
from me, barefoot, atop created icy places under the
single optional roof on the centered aquatic space.

Spring

Greg Patterson

I've got a Colt in one hand and my intestines in the other, and I can't decide whether it's a good idea to use one of my last two bullets on myself. I never thought that I'd go out like Ernest or Virginia and I earnestly wanted to die in Virginia. I always pictured my grave on the family plot with some persons who felt me tenderly to tend for me. But I guess any little patch of dirt across the Pacific will do.

It's strange to think about the splinters of seconds that a bullet would spend spinning against my temple. A .45 caliber top boring to the core of my World and smashing through the other side of my skull like a hammer to china. I hear gunpowder was invented in China and I remember a quote about how there are as many people in China as my bullets have brothers and sisters.

When I was young I was expected to believe that taking my own life was an affront to god, but I don't understand how god would want one of his children to feel what I'm feeling right now. There is pain that goes much deeper than description could ever paint, and my clothes are a canvas drenched in red, and the concrete floor is a canvas drenched in red.

I wonder if They'll kill me outright or leave me here on the ground stewing in my own juices; a bastardization of marinating meat whose only ticket out of the pot's gonna lead to some other cast iron conglomeration hotter than the first.

The barrel of my Colt is smooth against my temple.

I'm not angry. I'm just homesick. I won't ever walk outside again on a summer night, and hear the cicadian rhythm coming out of the trees, or open my windows, and smell the crispness of winter encroaching.

I think I'll pay Them back.

“Hello, I was wondering if you could spare some of your moments and let me show you one of the two human experiences that are utterly and completely universal.”

I want to spend my last moments remembering what it was like to be Their equalizer.

I want to divide Them by Zero.

The handle of my Colt feels smooth against the palm of my hand.



Run

Kenny Burchett

It wasn't that I knew or that I didn't know I just
had to find out which one it was and who it was and
who it wasn't.

So I got a knife and a duffel sack and a shit-ton of
dreams and made way to see what I could find.

It was two A.M. chitchats that made no damn sense
and it was fires up to the moon

on the Appomattox River and the sounds of the
djembe's and bongos brought more revelation than
the LSD.

It was dirt in your mouth in the afternoon sun and
slingshots, and traps and broke B.B. guns

being used to kill birds that man was never meant
to eat but we ate whatever we could find because we
were starving

on the Big Pine Tree Island with toads the size
of your pinky nail and catfish noodling if you weren't
scared to lose a hand and

God wasn't real but neither were we so He
danced with us into the night

while we grabbed our cocks and spread unholy seed
into the soil of the miscreant Commonwealth

where we hitchhiked and mountaineered but never left
the state till one scalawag scoundrel grew wings and flew
to Madrid

and life went on and the unknowing escalated until the
knees found their way to the floor

where ecstasy like St. Theresa's ran through veins filled
with nicotine and high fructose corn syrup

where we gulped down Evan with the cheap cola's
they sell at the Food Lion where the Can Man collected
his keep.

And it was a flood of emotion burbling up from the
inner parts and tears watered the soil where the seed had
been planted and peace filled the soul with delight.

And the un-known Book became an intimate friend
and companions once dear faded off into the blackness of
the night

as the lamp lit the pathway of my feet.

And the Lamp led me to a place where angelic tongues
are spoken by men and where the resurrection of the dead
was a daily occurrence and where the spreading of the
unholy seed was cut down with zest

like the tall blue weeds on the side of the free-way being
mowed down by the Machines with fierce gnashing teeth.

And it was all demons and drag queen dreams and
visions of cocks

and unknowing and wanting and running and hiding
and hiding and hiding.

So I was placed in a room and it was the laying on of
hands and I felt my body drained of everything that once
sustained it.

And after the exorcism it was ten pseudo-seizures ten
times a-day and it was fasting and praying.

Petitions for freedom for freedom for freedom and the
more I petitioned the more bound I was

so I fled from the Truth and the Light and sought out
once more the darkness

and I knew that I didn't know but that I might and I
just had to find out which one it was and who it was and
who it wasn't.

And it was small town Christians in Appalachian
foothills that had no qualms with food and drink.

And it was "Hey light yer smoke" and the po-dank
college classrooms with bald washed-up professors saying,
"write, write, write."

And God became real but he didn't matter but He did
and the future looked bright as I sped toward it with all
the anticipation of an expectant ejaculation.



Ava Blakeslee-Carter

And it was Richmond reunions and balls in the James.
It was four days no sleep in Toronto with molly dealers
chasing after Americans for nine city blocks.

It was swan-diving off sky-high bridges into the La
Seine with the Frenchmen shaking their heads at the
American folly while cheap wine was passed to and fro
until I broke down with mighty lamentation

because I knew that I didn't know and the seeds of
believing that I never would know began to sprout.

But I uprooted them quickly and made out for Frankfurt

where it was swine flesh and beer and toe-tapping
shin-digs on tables with blonde-hair, blue eyed babes
that called big bad bulls a little cow.

It was miles long hikes through thick German pastures
and Lutheran churches that once carried the torch of
Reformation now barren and dingy and reeking of mold

with stale cobwebs in the ancient hymnals resting
unopened for five hundred years.

And it was small town Christians in Appalachian
foothills and vessels for life going through a whirlwind
of change.

It was union with Wicca and Christ cast aside and it
was the pouring out of the soul unto death, unto death,
unto death.

It was broke down automobiles and ran out of town.

It was walking to coffee shop barring in the snow and
in the sleet and in the ice and in the ice.

And the birds had their nests and the foxes their dens

and all the while Wicca was there. The darkness it was
my light, it was my light, it was my light.

It wasn't that I knew or that I didn't know I just had to
find out which one it was and who it was and who it wasn't.

And I know and I don't know and it is and It isn't and
It was and It is and It is yet to come and it will never be
and now

now I am content.



Moon Girl

Elise Le Sage

My dad used to tell me he met my mother on the moon.

Dad was a chiropractor with a thick, grey mustache. He has one of those rich, booming voices and can never finish a story without pausing to laugh or digress about some vaguely related set of current events. His habit would plague the tale of their first encounter which, though lately unrepeatd, still echoes through my head in that hearty voice of his.

“Up in the starlight.” My father’s round, hairy finger would point to my bedroom window. The cotton shades were painted pink and caught the glow of the 8 p.m. air. “You should have seen her, my moon girl... my moon girl.”

There was a time when the repetition of this anecdote acted as a ritual every other night. Dad would reminisce relentlessly during tuck-ins, especially on nights when he couldn’t remember a real bedtime story.

Not that his recollection itself constitutes a story or anything. Not really. There were too many ambiguities to Dad’s words, too many questions given a chuckle in place of a real response. Though my father refused to disclose how or why he made it above of the atmosphere, he went into great detail concerning the surface of the moon and the way the sun shines differently in space. “There’s no sound, either,” he would say, his silver mustache stretching into a crescent frown. “No sound, no air.” No sound, no air for his moon girl. Maybe that is why mother never spoke. She hardly moved because the gravity on earth was too heavy, maybe. No air. That is why she stopped breathing. She was used to no air.

I hardly knew my mother; she was silent and mysterious and every bit as beautiful as Dad made her out to be. Back when she lived here, Mother always stayed in the basement, combing her long, pale hair. She would

never look up at me when I entered the room. I used to bring my toy trucks with me when I visited her downstairs. I would line the cars around her sofa chair, gurgling in the vein of automotive sounds as I slammed them against each other. My mother didn't mind. She was not the type of mom who would scold a child for being too loud. She was not the type of mom who would make dinner and go to PTA meetings, either. Dad didn't mind. She didn't belong in kitchens or conference rooms; she was his moon girl. His moon girl.

The only question my father ever answered pertaining to his and my mother's meeting is why she chose to follow him; why he brought her down to earth. "I saved her," he'd muse, and his eyes would light up like satellites.

Though his details were few and far between, Dad taught me that whatever magnificent lunar forces had created my mother refused to let her leave. They held her against her will, Dad said, but once he rescued her, they fought to take her back. My mother did not want to go back, Dad said. The moon was lonely. On the moon, my mother was so lonely. It watched her on earth, the moon did. Dad said he had to protect her from its gaze. And he did protect her.

It's easy to forget about the moon during the day. "It's blotted by the sun," Dad's retinas would roll to the ceiling. "But it can see us," he warned me. My father would wag his finger like a story book witch. "The moon's always watching, and it doesn't forget."

So Dad made sure that I, in turn, did not forget about the moon. He checked to verify that I sealed the basement door each time I returned from a visit with Mother. "Lock it up, okay? Your Mom can't go outside." My arms full of cars, Dad's hand on my shoulder. He'd say, "It isn't safe outside." So we kept her down there, in that room with a lock and no windows and my mother was always combing her hair or watching TV in her sofa chair. Until one day I found her door hanging open.

Maybe I forgot to lock it. Maybe Dad did. I entered the basement one day after school, trucks in hand, and Mom's room was empty. Her television played Wheel of Fortune and cast pantones of light onto her vacant seat. Without her, the room looked fake and strange like a movie set. I dumped my trucks on the floor and watched TV with my head pressed to the arm rest until Dad's frantic footsteps leaked through the floorboards. Mother died after that. "The moon got her," Dad said.

She didn't have a funeral. She was not the type of mom who would have funerals. Her bones were put in an oven, then in an urn, which is somewhere now, maybe in a storage unit. His moon girl, his moon girl.

"It was only her body," Dad said the one time I saw him cry. His face was swollen, like he was allergic to something. "Her soul went up..." And our eyes traveled in tandem to the rock above the earth. "She's watching us," my dad assured me. His moon girl. Our moon girl.

Sometimes late at night, I will sneak out into the backyard and lay in the grass below my bedroom window. The moon will watch me, and my mother will watch me, and my skin will soak up the pale strands of her long, glowing hair. I will tell her my secrets. My mother has always been very good at listening.

A Grave in Ohio

Jordan Grooms

We had to drive
all night, it didn't matter.
Less traffic equates to more thought
of a time that needed forgetting.
Counting each cat's eye
through midnight gray light,
fantasizing which limb to patter pylons with.
Four high and continuing.

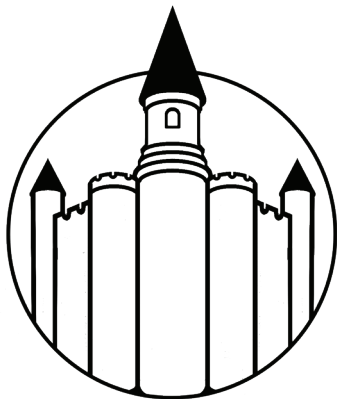
A pellucid nightmare cleanly
forgotten, I marched out of sleep.
The Shell blocked some sun,
it was time to be awake.
Three were jovial, I would
steer in melancholic morning
hours till the Marion necropolis
became the sought after sight.

Two black double-leaved gates were open.
Every memory depicted differently
which rounding route to be chosen,
his epitaph couldn't change.
We wandered the silent lyceum
of dates and dreams no longer discussed.
It was found from the backseat,
an abrupt halt, doors disturbing passerines.

I ceased to jitter
while we drank warmed eastern beer.
I dampened the ground as a toast,
wet irony at the alcoholic's grave.
Four sipped in suppression,
no tears came willingly,
I'll never go back.

Caroline Meyers





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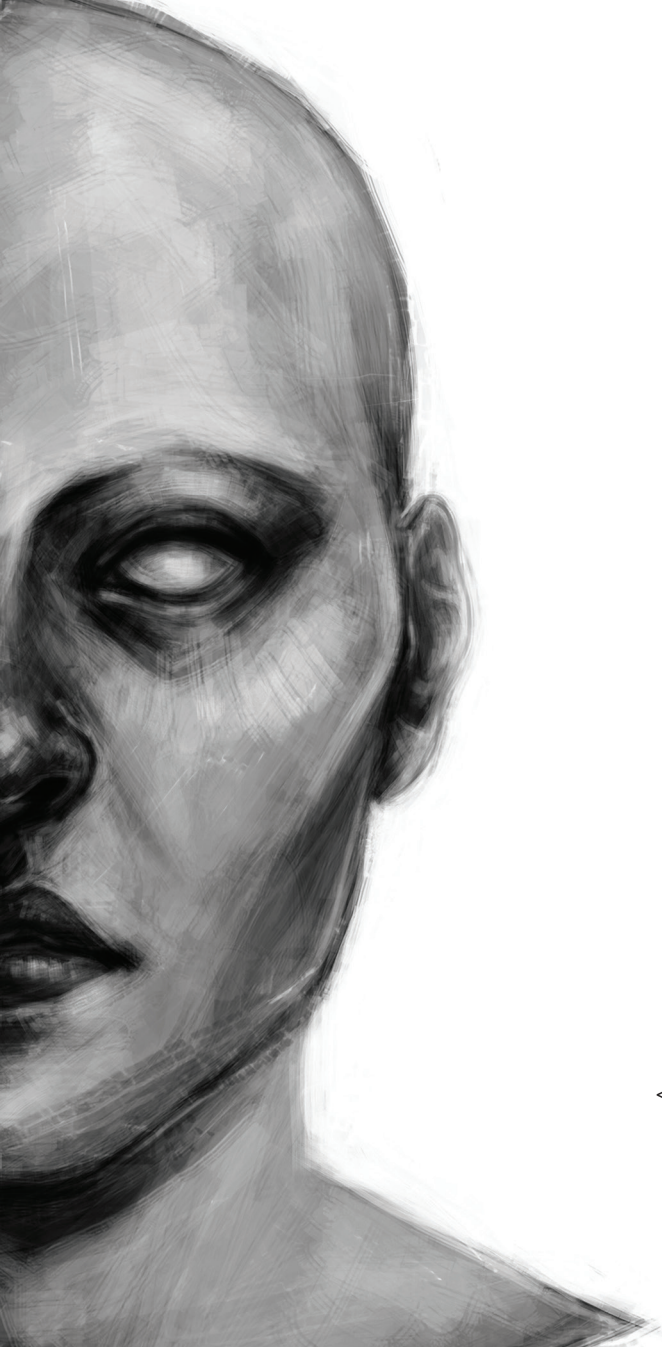
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Flight

noun

1. The action of fleeing or running away from danger; abhorrence or avoidance.



<rabble>