



# Trestle | CREEK | Review

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**travis**

hi. i'm smile.

i'm going to beat you up  
and steal your shoes.

**Prized Possession**



**janathan**

there's separations in the seasons  
and it's happened before but it's not  
any less heartbreaking. spring. you were  
blooming when we met. mountain flower  
gray and blue at the cursive show. your  
toyota was white and smelled like pall malls.  
you wanted to vomit the first time we hung out.  
laying on my bed wanting to draw again. here's  
some stationery. we started snapping to tell  
whether we were high, standing between two sheds.  
summer. i had to go. you slept on the ground  
with lane. the camp surrounded with slugs by  
morning. three went south down the grade to visit.  
the toyota didn't make it. sketchy handshake deal  
for \$200. fuck. walking as you find yourself, t-shirt  
wrapped like a turban in the heat. lane bailed and  
you had to call your dad to come get you two hours  
away from home. fall. i can't imagine how silent  
that drive must have been. you sitting there chain-  
smoking, another winter brewing in your heart.





## Chicken Breath

### *Gaggle-Necked*

"**Y**ou hear that noise?"

"What noise?"

"It's that ugly-looking dog again. Listen."

They sat in silence for fifteen seconds.

"That scuffling noise?"

"Yes. You heard it?"

"I did."

"You'll take care of it, then?"

"I could throw a rock at the coop and scare him off."

"You'll take care of it."

"Why don't you go?"

"I don't want to kill him."

He turned his head up from the small tin plate and looked at her.

"Well you know what I mean," she spoke quietly. "I want him dead, but I should sooner have someone else do it."

"I can handle it then."

"You're a saint."

"You shouldn't speak that way."

"You're like Christ himself."

He got up and frowned at her. "I dislike you when you get this way. I said I'd do it, leave it alone, will you?"

She grinned at his back as he went to retrieve his coat, her teeth jagged along the ridge of her face.

"I'm only teasing."

"I'm not laughing."

She grinned wider as he stepped out the door.

His coat felt stiff on his shoulders, the canvas holding tight to the movement of his arms. He felt around in his pockets, his left hand beginning to detail the small rectangular object, fingers tracing the tiny reptilian skin of the book, holding onto the warm leather that bound the feathery pages. His right hand gripped the cool pistol. His leather-soled shoes found their way in the darkness, and soon they were next to the chicken coop. He opened the door and peered in, both his eyes squinted.

Inside, the weird-looking dog stood, staring back at the door. He had heard the approaching footsteps and stopped, stared at the tall man with broad shoulders who had his hands in his pockets.

The man stared back. The dog, with a chicken, snap-necked, strung in the crook of his mouth, stopped to acknowledge the man. Then he ran off under the broken wood he had crawled through.

“Thief!” The man pulled out his pistol, ran over to the hole, and crouching down, looked out through it. He saw the black of the dog racing along his field.

“Thief!” he called out, waiting for the response. He got up and ran out of the chicken coop into the field.

“Thief?” He spoke like a mother calling her child. He kept running down the field, his eyes barely tracing the outline of the dog. He felt the pin-pricks of exhaustion in his legs. He pulled the pistol and stopped to shoot but decided better of it and kept running.

Soon he was out of the field and up the mountain. Then he was back down the mountain and walking home, the dead, torn-up chicken in his hand. He walked into his house and saw the woman.

“You got him?”

“No luck. He was so fast.”

“How did he get in?”

“Some broken patch in the shed.”

“Will you fix it?”

“I’m sure to.”

She smiled at him. “I’m sorry to have teased you.”

“You don’t tease me, you tease our Lord.”

“I’m sorry to have done that.”

“Thank you. But please don’t, especially when we get tense about that old mutt. I hate having to battle you on those things. Tease me about anything else but those things.”

“I’ll avoid those things.”

“I’m grateful for it.”

He sat down again at the wooden table and looked at the now empty tin plate.

“You ate my dinner?”

The woman said nothing and went upstairs to the bedroom. He frowned and returned the plate to the sink.

### *Dogs Without Teeth*

Both the man and the woman woke early in the morning, their hands clasped at each other's sides. He got up from the bed first and left her to wake herself up. The morning was bright and gray, the starch air very kind to his nose. He made coffee and stepped outside with the clay oven-cast mug in his hand. He felt around in his pockets for loose cigarettes and found two.

The surrounding hills were precursors to the mountains behind them. Each day the snow on them slowly slunk down their sides and closer to his home, a small cabin fifteen minutes from the closest town. His eyes moved down from the mountain and over to the edge of the field where the dog disappeared. He remembered the tiny spots of blood on the dirt, barely visible except for the glint they made in the shining. His wife came out next to him.

“You usually wait in bed for me.”

“I know.”

“Cigarette?”

He found the other loose cigarette and handed it to her. They stood there for eight minutes in silence, both of their smoke moving left, the trail of hers passing across his face.

“You thinking about the dog?”

“I am. You think he's still in the forest? I bet with this light I could probably get a feel for where he's been coming from.”

“He might just be a neighbor's dog.”

“He would be traveling a long way just to mess with our chickens.”

“He could be a neighbor's dog.”

“I could ask. I don't think we have any friends in town that own dogs.”

“What about Thomas and his wife?”

“Their dog is gray.”

“What color is our dog?”

“Black.”

They both shrugged their shoulders in unison and continued to stare at the mountains. The man dropped the last bit of his cigarette, ash-mixed tobacco, onto the ground and smothered it with his leather-soled house shoes. The floor of the earth was dry and cold. He lifted his hand to smell the old pale scent before going inside. His mouth felt thick with saliva.

Inside the house the man looked around for a plate to start his breakfast with. He made himself eggs and two pieces of toast. Outside the air got colder and drier, so his wife came in. She kissed his head and touched his shoulder lightly as she watched him eat. Afterwards he drank a glass of water and the air outside got colder. He looked at her and kissed her forehead.

"I'm sorry about last night," she said.

"I know. I didn't mean to be short with you."

"You were fine. I know it can be inappropriate to joke in such a way."

"I suppose it happens."

"I love you."

"I can feel it."

He held her hands and led her outside again. The thick canvas of his coat kept him shrugged and warm. He covered them both in the large fabric and she smiled and was flat against his tall, strange frame.

### *Field Vision*

The dog stood at the edge of the forest, all feet standing in the same place he was last night. His whole body was stiff and apprehensive, his jaw clenched up and wide around his face. This night was like any other night, and would end in the same way, but the dog stood full of anxiety.

The man had chased the dog up that hillside last night for the first time, though. He had finally come close to the dog, his pistol drawn, his feet planted, and the dog stared back, awfully and solid. They stood there together for three minutes, and the man finally put his gun in his jacket again. The dog remembered how he walked up slowly, and then the man kneeled next to the dog, and put his hand on the dog's head. The dog remembered how he spit the chicken out, and how the man picked it up, and how he walked away, and how he ran away.

The dog remembered all this through his old, taut mind. The details felt drunken, but he remembered each one. Now he stood at the edge of the forest, and then running down the hill and then running through the field, and then he was through the field and he was in the chicken coop, and then he stopped remembering and repetition began, and he ran around inside, full-bodied and frenzied. And the man and woman heard him.

“He’s back.”

“He is?”

“I can hear him.”

“I can’t.”

“Listen.”

They listened for twenty seconds, and the thresh of the dog was fully audible now, hung-over and wailing.

“I hear him now.”

“Then go out there and fix it.”

“I could scare him off with a rock.”

“No rock. Use your gun and kill him this time.”

The woman watched the man walk out the door, both his hands in his pockets. He walked carefully towards the chicken coop, eventually coming to stand at the door before opening it carefully and slipping in. She saw all this through the tiny opening in the window shade before looking away and walking towards the table. She sat down and placed her palm on the surface of her Bible, her left hand traced the reptilian skin of the book, the warm leather that bound the feathery pages. Her body jolted as she heard the shot ring off in the yard. She looked down, and the earth groaned.



## **Flood Watch**

The weather report on the local news warns that the river is approaching levels not seen in years. As the words FLOOD WATCH scroll across the bottom of the screen, they cut to an interview of a local man who scoffs and says, “This happens every decade or so, no big deal. I still have sandbags in my basement from last time. We’ll be fine.” I click the OFF button on the remote and remember sitting in my car this morning at the trailhead parking lot, staring at a meadow that just weeks ago slept peacefully under a foot of snow, now flooded with dirty water so deep that the broken limbs of surrounding trees floated on her surface. It had been days since the swollen river pushed two hundred yards beyond its own banks and into her field, forcing her to contain far more than just her own spring mud. I stayed for a few minutes and stared.

Two ducks, grey as dirt,  
dipped their beaks in her water,  
then paddled away.



## **After the Melt**

After the melt she is  
swollen with mud  
and everything that died last

winter. When you crunched away  
she stayed, softened  
herself sticky, let green shoots

push through. If you return,  
approach with caution,  
watch your step, wear boots.

## **A tulip in three springs**

I.

Green stem shoots up between two rocks,  
pierces the air near the mailbox, shakes  
its scarlet fist against the slate-flat sky.  
Sink your knees into the soil and worship.

II.

Rounded petals curve over each other, too tender  
for fingers but you keep probing. Find the folds  
in your babies' skin. Feel every soft thing he ever said.  
Stop before you reach the center.

III.

Leaves cut down to spirals in the dirt, done in  
by the hunger of a nursing deer who struggled  
all winter. This is the year without.  
Shrug and marvel at your detachment.

## North Dakota

At my grandfather's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday party, I visit his table.  
Spread out in front of him are photographs from his childhood.  
Each shot taken from far away, as if faces weren't important  
on the North Dakota plains, ancient family members  
dotting the flat landscape like tiny shrubs.

I point to a picture with no people, only tents on the grass.  
He explains that the local tribe would set up camp  
on his family's land and trade in town. He found it exciting,  
but he worried about their horses because they were hobbled.  
Even after his father explained why, he remained  
uneasy. I thought they might trip over their own legs  
and get hurt, he says. I wanted to untie them.

Later my dad tells me that he'd never seen that picture,  
never knew about the tribe and the tents. And I wonder  
if it might have cushioned what was hard between them—  
the cowering under the kitchen table if dishes weren't done,  
the fist to the face after a broken curfew—if just once  
my dad had heard the story of the hobbled horses,  
animals conditioned to accept pressure and restrictions,  
and how a long time ago  
his father had wanted  
to free them.

## Fish

On my way here, I  
learned to knit, not  
by hands and threads, but  
by words  
    knit, purl, shit.

Words floated up that created and transformed threads  
taken, followed, even abandoned  
    loops, lines, shit.

Off to futures and careers  
Then back to needles and threads  
    the shapes of things

Six hours or so of words  
Intertwined with  
stories and fears, and  
    those not with us

What was gathered was  
    also left  
What came together was  
    also unraveled

Now this is the tail  
    Nine lines of knit  
    Nine purls next  
Then we double to give space and  
    a center  
to turn into a fish.



## Shoes to Fill

**T**he Rathdrum prairie unfolds before Dad and me as we drive on Highway 41 towards Post Falls. We're on a trip to get parts for the sprinkler system because I hit one of the heads when I was mowing last weekend. Now every night between two and three a.m., the cracked plastic head oozes water in an expanding pool around itself instead of dispensing evenly over the grass.

Dad told me he thinks fourteen is old enough to start taking on some responsibilities, and this summer I've started to mow the lawn when he's busy and sometimes help our aging neighbor do things he can no longer do. Dad told me he wants to teach me how to start the trimmer soon.

This summer I've also been running with him. Although I'm only going into eighth grade, he takes me with him to the optional practices he holds for the high schoolers on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings.

I run with the junior varsity boys, usually keeping up with the best of them. Dad's varsity team is stocked full of seniors with hairy chests and muscular arms, who inhale everything the course throws at them, and I cannot compete. Some of them are even getting close to Dad's personal records.

Although I wasn't there long, the prairie here reminds me of southern Idaho. Or at least of how Dad describes it to me. Running for hours along ditch banks of mint fields outside of wherever his family happened to be living at the time. "Are these like the fields you used to train in?" Dad takes his eyes off the road, looking to his left. "Kind of. Although I wouldn't have run there if I could've driven to anything like what we have here."

Across the highway from our high school are fifty acres of undeveloped timberland crisscrossed with rough dirt trails. It might be the luckiest placement of a high school for the cross country coach ever. Spirit Lake, the lake my hometown gets its name from, is an easy twenty-minute run from where we meet for practice. During hot days, we jump in and run back with sopping wet t-shirts and shorts. I ask: "You don't ever miss the ninety-minute runs that all look the same?" Dad chuckles. Running was everything to Dad in high school. He found it when he was in tenth grade. He was persuaded by the cross country coach at Vallivue High in Nampa, Idaho, to join. He started the season at the very bottom. Could barely make it three miles. But he trained hard, and within a year, he was the top guy on

the team. Within two, a competitor for the state championship in the thirty-two hundred meters.

A few weeks before districts his senior year, though, he was in a car accident. He took a corner too hard and rear-ended the woman in the car in front of him. He wasn't wearing a seatbelt, so his head launched through the windshield. The glass like a sharp necklace resting on his shoulders.

When the EMTs came, they put him in a neck brace and told him it had to stay on for eight weeks. He went home, washed the dried blood out of his hair, and two weeks later sat on cold aluminum bleachers as another boy won districts, then state, at a time fifteen seconds slower than Dad had been running all season.

Most of his running scholarships were pulled, and the only place left offering him anything was a small community college in eastern Oregon. He took the opportunity. He would still be the first person in his family to ever attempt college, much less graduate.

On an early August morning, the team met for their first practice. The coach introduced himself and told everyone to do the same. Directly across from Dad, in the small circle they'd formed, was a young woman from Salmon, Idaho. Her name was Stacy Taylor, and four years later they'd be married. A year after that, she'd give birth to me.

Dad has always told me he's glad for being stupid that day. For not wearing his seatbelt and for driving too fast. He would've taken money from another college and never met my mother. Never met the woman he tells me he loves so very much. The woman he says changed his life.

But, to my fourteen-year-old self, it seems like an unintentional sacrifice. That my life came through a fault he made as a seventeen-year-old. Just the chance of him being in the car at that exact moment, in that exact stretch of road, brought me into this world. It was a chance of me coming into being and Dad had to lose something for it.

The radio in the car hums Foreigner, and we're getting close to Post Falls now. The hardware store is off Seltice, so we'll have to pass under the highway. The first stoplight in several miles shines red at us, and Dad slows the car to a halt.

I look at him and he's faintly smiling. He's happy with his life. He has never expressed otherwise. He loves his family. He loves his job. The cross country team he started from nothing, five girls and three boys on the roster, are now winning state titles. The girls team just won and the boys took third.

He doesn't miss the gold medal from his senior year, but I miss it for him. I've started running competitively, and I think I'm pretty good at it. I'm winning some of my races, even if it is just in junior high, and in the rest I'm always in the top ten. Even the big ones. I'm training hard, and I'll surely be rewarded with great success. State championships with the team and medals for myself.

I'm starting younger and working just as hard. I'm not going to drive too fast, and I'm going to always wear my seatbelt. And when I win the gold medal my senior year in the thirty-two hundred meters, I'm giving it to him.



**[I need to go to the ocean]**

*I need to go to the ocean*

she says

as if patterns of froth  
provide some hieroglyphic  
epiphany into the mystery  
where distant swells  
come from nowhere  
build into a wall  
of gush and roar  
where nothing but shallows  
flow onto shore  
rimmed with puny spit  
and stiff-legged waders  
pick at air holes  
in wet sand

*I need to go to the ocean*

she says

as if that judgment  
of light through  
rising wave  
luminous turquoise  
murky brown  
can transfer over  
to this situation at hand

*I need to go to the ocean*  
she says

to remember  
how to wait  
like those boys  
their legs dangling  
over the edge of surfboards  
waiting for the seventh  
the biggest  
the one that can carry  
them  
all the way in

## **Eastern Flight**



## **Walk left stand right go**

I punch my fingers for blood.  
The pinky on my left hand has just the right callous  
to release the red drop, but shield me from hurt,

hurt. I cried when my son left for the plane. All week I was in holding mode,  
watching his words spin out and circle back, waiting to land.  
Then he disappeared in the revolving door, Southwest free baggage one piece.  
Caution the moving walkway is ending and I thought wait, I'm not done yet.  
You're on my lap, you are two, we are swinging at Edgemoor Park.

Then the swing makes an arc,  
I drop into myself,  
I drop into the world,  
I fall into now, hurt.

Each drop provides data to calculate a dose.  
I push it out like a baby.  
With each drop the callous tells me  
hold on, one drop at a time.

## Dear John

It

    makes

        me

            happy

                to

                    hear

                        your

                            voice

was the last thing he said on the phone.  
When I got to New York his words were gone.

He slept on his side, mostly bones,  
while our mother chanted  
John we love you, John. John, we love you, John.  
And the hospital lights turned gray.

Left the room and walked, walked,  
up Central Park West toward the northern sun.

Thinking of John,  
who danced the cumbia in our kitchen,  
John, who spoke of Oxford, of finance, of life in the Maine woods.  
John, in the closet till he called with the news.  
Sweet and vulnerable John,  
at the end,  
on  
the  
phone.

## **Cat at Costco**

Three nights we staked out the parking lot at Costco,  
murmuring, holding treats, offering dishes of milk,  
paying vigil to wholesale prices and a damaged calico cat.  
Employees gone, vehicles gone, security lights on, cat carrier at the ready,  
all we saw were shadows.

Where did you go, cat?  
If heaven exists, are you up there  
observing the others with kohl-lined eyes?  
Is that you at the grocery store, you at the back door,  
letting out the meekest of meows?  
Or did a critter get you, a car hit you.  
Are you buried somewhere in a dump?

You never cared much for humans on earth,  
you rarely purred in our laps.  
Never mind, we bonded from afar.  
We admired, we fed, we treated you for fleas.

I pray you are at peace, cat,  
I pray you are in heaven, if heaven exists,  
I pray the ghosts will disappear,  
I pray your wound will knit, will heal.

**Sleep On**



## What Is Left

**T**he grass is one of the worst parts about the fields. It's quack grass all the way around. My grandpa calls it "cheater's grass." When he bales his field in early July, it's with a sour mood. His neighbor doesn't spray the hock weed or thistle or pull the mullein weeds, so it's Papa and me in June, outside with hammers and a bread bag, pulling them out by the roots and halting every half hour to nurse the cramps in our shoulders. The quack grass is even worse, maybe. It gets tangled in socks and the soles of my boots. It's an invader of crops and thins out the fields like a blight. The homesteaders realized it when they laid down their foundation and released their cattle: that, while everything was beautiful and there was no image sweeter than swaying fields in summer, this was no place for them.

About everything in Harrison Flats can be measured in quarter miles. The town is about a quarter mile in length. The distance from one farmer's field to the next, the same. From my house to the old cement foundation, a quarter mile. From that to the orchard, a quarter mile. And from there to the two ponds, to the first decaying automobile down a steep, blue-black cliff, a quarter mile. A quarter mile is a decent enough distance to make it a place worth traveling to. Maybe that's what the homesteaders thought too. A walk to warm up the body after a difficult night wintering a howling and bitter wind. It's difficult to know when they're no longer around to ask, and when what remains of their presence asks more questions of me than I of it.

The junkheap is exactly that, a garbage dump. Broken glass bottles are strewn about and grown over with moss and lichen, fuzzy yellow-green and a muted turquoise. The St. John's wort in September is the same color of rust that permeates the five dead automobiles that laze about along the cliffs, up on their sides, nose first into a bank or tree, one conveniently parked along an old logging trail with the windshield still intact. The doors groan when I open them. No seatbelts. No fabric left on the car seats. Every squirrel in the vicinity has lived in these cars at least once and made off like a bandit in the spring. These were the weirdest trees they'd ever seen, but a squirrel doesn't worry about the making of the thing. The cars, rusted as they are, are mostly intact. Except for the guts that spilled in their crash, the sunken, cracked rubber tires, they lie dormant in the bushes, lost relics of some creature's attempt at living—the snail's old shell.

From the perch above the junkheap, barbed wire rolls and fence posts dot the bottom of the cliff. The rancher realized he couldn't keep a cow inside



a fence and decided everything man-made must come down. But it's destroyed with care, without anonymity: metal fence posts pulled and piled, the wire rolled palm to elbow. Even the house burned down with no indication of it ever having been there except for the foundation—a chalky, dull-edged thing, which sticks up half a foot in the air, the other end sunk into the dirt. The trees and the weather have made it as solid as any rock. Every year that I walk the trail I roll my ankle and curse about it. Every year the grass grows a little higher and it falls away into obscurity.

In summertime, from the top of the cliff looking down, I can find glass jars by the glare of the sun, and the tiny mouse corpse trapped within. Up close, the moss is a steadfast yellow-green that lasts until the snow obscures it. A mattress spring lies on its side, an axletree embedded in the bushes, wire, bits of old rope strung about like winter Christmas lights. Mullein weeds stick up like vultures, overseeing the decay and slow loss of life. Rust covers everything. The bits of broken glass are the exception. Glass doesn't break down like paper or wood does. It sits, still and glossy, a mirror of the universe. How the homesteader saw himself reflected in the little glass medicine jar—a winner of the wild, triumphing over her gray green boughs, or a loser, tail tucked between his legs as he runs from the thunder, scared like the dog who saw the wolf—must not have mattered that much. The mirror was left behind. The glass draws in the natural world's collectors of shiny things. Ravens, packrats, magpies. They see themselves for the first time in a surface that doesn't move, and they must look closer. It's why the mouse climbed inside the jar and drowned.

Walking this route the homesteaders made takes me back in time. I see visions of their plans: the designated landfill, the cliff face to obscure it, two ponds, the surviving fruit orchard and the stretch of patchy fields in between. It's one of those interactive displays forest rangers put together at national parks to entertain the tourists. The fox barks through a plastic speaker when I press the button below his caricatured frame, his black marble eyes following the trail of the rabbit below him. Next to the information about his habitat, printed in large brown font for guests of all ages, the data on his recent absence from the woods and his slow return, how he was hunted by hounds and fur-traders and forced to flee from one timbered area to the next. Here the story is told in reverse: Man walked through the woods and built his log house, and nature grew through the floor of his bedroom, punctured the wheels of his car, fouled up his

equipment and blighted his garden. No ancient song filtered through his keen ears. No bird call, however sweet, no overturned leaf, as soft as two sandpapered hands, could lift his spirit free of nature's taciturn grip. She was naturally combative. There were easier places to take a stand than here. The fields refused his offerings and his disruptive brand of nurturing, and grew in exactly as they had before. Golden oceans. Fire starters.

At some point in time, while the optimism remained, narcissus bulbs were planted. The gophers move them from one plane to another every spring, but they never completely disappear. All the trees and flowers remain, but in that entire quarter mile distance, there's no evidence of success in producing a harvestable hay field.

Every evening, the elk parade through the canyon below my parents' house, bugling and snorting as they tromp up through the foggy mountain air. I can hear them through the walls of the cabin. They leave patches of fur in the snowberry bushes, droppings by the buggy wheels, ghosts along the ponds' shores. Their hoofprints run deep and ragged along cliff banks. In dreams and in waking, I follow their trail like a hunchback, knees against my stomach, boots sending rocks tumbling into wet ferns. I have found antlers beside a sapling that grew up in between the shelves of a forgotten refrigerator, and have seen them stand on their hind legs to reach the farmer's apple in a crooked tree. They are unshaken by the technological collapse on the mountainside. There is no fear in them about what could have been an impending invasion, no stomping or kicking of heels about it. Oh, the grass tastes better in the permanent shade of the buggy? Then maybe it should be appreciated for what it is. But I am shaken. What could have been makes me pause.

I still get stuck on the small matters, the mouse in the jar.

While I amble through the junkheap, the ghosts trail after.

In recent years, a mountain nearby was logged and stripped with the promise of development. I drive by it on the way home, at the edge of Harrison Flats. It gleams pretty and bald with a single paved road, No Trespassing signs strapped to a dark green gate. The development didn't go through.

Pulling mullein weeds until noon with my grandpa, I know why people leave, why the homesteaders threw in the towel. It wasn't the right time. Nature was still winning. Now, up on the hill overlooking the canyon, the buggies glow red-gold in the dying light.

They are what's left. It seems just about right.



## Whiteout on Alpowa Summit

*"There are only patterns, patterns on top of patterns..."*

—Chuck Palahniuk

If we who predicted no snow that day  
had watched the rough-legged hawks  
before the weather turned,  
before it thickened with cold enough  
to paralyze voles,

if we had heard  
that first tick against the windshield  
before we skidded through the loss  
of sky and road,  
of anything louder than absence

crawling those treeless slopes,  
testing span to span  
the bridges, the drifting ravines,  
would we have dared into dawn,  
could we have seen,

before the plow and sand,  
what we were meant to see  
from another time out of control—  
upside-down, wheels spinning?  
Could we have warned the others?

Or did we need to believe  
they would not hear,  
and if we just kept moving  
resilient clumps of bunch grass  
might reappear?

## A History

*"The quawmash is now in blume and from the colour... at a short distance it resembles lakes of fine clear water, so complete is this deseption that on first sight I could have swoarn it was water."*

—Meriwether Lewis, June 12, 1806

I.

Crossing the camas field,  
her body labors against the wind.  
The camas has begun to fade.

Soon it will be ready for harvest,  
but she will not dream this,  
nor the grief in her bones,

not even the elk antler hard  
and familiar in her hand.  
She will dream of the vole

that scurries underfoot,  
how its eyes fill with her,  
the luminous hawk restraining its dive

as if beauty must pause to negotiate  
the violence it can do.

II.

Tomorrow she'll prepare the pit,  
adjust the stones, arrange and rearrange  
damp slough grass and willow

where the camas will nest  
covered with bark and earth,  
and the fire smolder for days.

But for now, her newborn, the seeping  
veins of blue petals, night fog—  
how it can thicken low over the field,

lace or shroud the ponderosas,  
collect in folds of the Bitterroots  
and throats of birds,

the milk in her body,  
the roots in her arms.

III.

Say you're researching the story.  
Say you've been looking all your life  
for one thing true.

The field is burned over now.  
No hogs. Not even cattle.  
How quiet is quiet?

The tripartite shine of ant body  
rumbles to keep itself  
connected to itself.

Light escapes in pieces,  
the hawk in circles,  
history in a need for words

attending like ash the fall  
of tell-tale stars.

## **After the Election**

Because what has vanished  
could be the whole story

the dream I had last night  
called for that part of me

that dances when the fiddler plays,  
sings out for one last kiss

before winter flares with hoarfrost,  
fills with little soldiers,

little toy guns, the general  
in his gold-tasseled epaulettes,

before soot falls like pollen,  
pollen like snow.

Bootprints patrol  
the lanes of ash and willow

where the bodies lie.  
See how the eyelids flutter,

fingers gone numb,  
limbs hung with nests of snow,

snow on the window ledge,  
the fire escape, snow in my bed, snow

circling the streetlamp, the woman  
on the corner selling chestnuts,

her rosary a necklace  
of buttons she's undone for love.

If the bartender had closed earlier,  
if old fires had not accumulated in the grate,

if hounds had been more thorough  
hunting down grief before the wind changed

would it have made a difference?  
Can a dream imagine for itself a difference,

regret itself, remake itself,  
construct an afterlife, which is to say

take responsibility  
for the consequence of its being?

Words drift along curbs,  
swirl against doorways, lodge in drains.

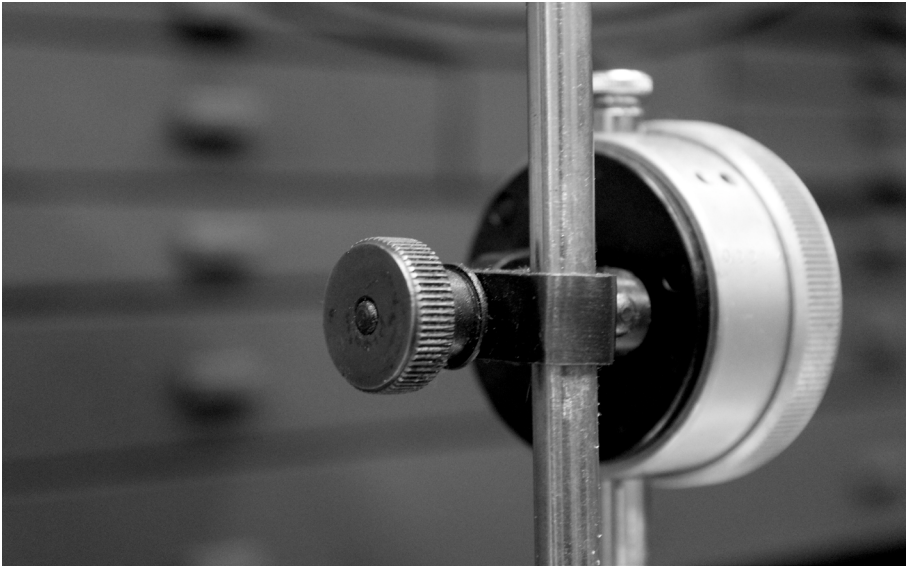
And what of the words that fly away?  
What of the phone in a secret pocket?

What of the watchman, his keys jangling,  
his flask of brandy, the odor of dying.

What has vanished could be the whole story.  
Who can tell in what order

we conceive the other,  
what ghosts or gods we sleep with?





## Going for a Run

It is a cold and snowy February afternoon. The doctor told me I'm sick but I feel fat, so I lace up my running shoes and head out the front door in a sweatshirt and beanie. My partner asks me if I'm sure I really want to do this, and I tell her it'll be a short one.

We live on the third floor of an apartment complex on a street full of apartment complexes, so to get anywhere interesting, I have to climb a hill and take a dirt road out to one of the farms owned by the University of Idaho's agricultural department.

There's a No Trespassing sign on the metal gate into the farm but I'm sure it's only for motor vehicles, so I run around it. As I start to pass the sheep, they run from their feeding troughs by the road to safety under the roofs of their enclosures. Their prey eyes follow me as one foot after the other pounds the dirt outside their pen.

I'm running alone, like I mostly do now, and I like it better this way. I always felt the need to compete with people when I ran in groups. This way I get to enjoy it more. The flip side of that, I realize as the sheep start to return to their troughs, is nobody is here to push me.

I'm only half a mile in but can feel the extra pounds my body now carries in every shock to my legs as my feet push off the dirt. The layers of fat that now circle my thighs and stomach are extra stress on a body I feel I am slowly losing control of.

At the doctor's office earlier, as he wrote me a prescription for an antibiotic, I decided to get my money's worth. I lifted up my shirt to show him the purple and red marks on my stomach. Like claw marks of something trying to get out. "Is this normal?" The doctor looked up from his notepad. "Yeah, it's pretty common with rapid weight gain." He went on to say that stretch marks happen when the dermis can't keep up with the expanding body, so it splits, causing purple and red lines to appear where the body is growing fastest.

Rapid weight gain.

I think back to my mother. How she wore my dad's oversized shirts in the summer at waterparks and at the beach to cover her stretch marks. Her rapid weight gain had been two children from a man much larger than herself. As she grew and protected them, her dermis couldn't keep up. So it split. Even now, eighteen years since her last child was born, she wears a one-piece swimsuit to cover her stomach.

I'm running now because the stretch marks growing on my stomach are too far along, but the faint ones in my armpits and at the seams of my groin are still young, and I'm trying not to let them grow any more.

My BMI says I'm obese. Six foot one and two hundred thirty pounds is a 30.3, well into the obese category of most charts I can find online. I still exercise, swimming or running three or four times a week, and try to keep active in the days between, but still my body grows.

I pass by the last of the sheep pens and turn onto a paved road past another gate. I'm onto a public road and passing homes where chickens run around front yards with children gleefully chasing after them.

I'd smile at them but my body hurts too much. I passed the threshold into anaerobic respiration long ago and the lactic acid burning into my legs is begging me to stop. Instead, I turn around.

It's a pathetic distance, but I tell myself it's better than nothing. Furthermore, I won't be eating all that feel-good food my partner and I bought at the store after picking up the antibiotics. I wouldn't enjoy it anyway. Every bite would remind me that my children are growing.

The prey eyes once again watch from safety as I pass them by. Much faster out than in. I'm barely shuffling my feet, and I'm pretty sure I could walk faster. But that's not the point. The point is every step is a running step. The point is not to quit.

I pass by the gate and the No Trespassing sign and wish I'd listened and headed back when I saw it. I turn off the dirt road and on to the hill outside of my apartment.

Cars pass by on the two-lane road, and I'm sure I look like an idiot. Another hopelessly fat guy on a run trying to save himself from an inevitable fate. Or at least, that's what I would've thought a few years before.

The breaks in the concrete sidewalk pass slower and slower before me as I continue up the hill. It's really not a big hill, I did repeats on ones much larger, but that memory belongs to another person.

Gritting through the pain and refusing to stop shuffling gets me to the top in a minute or so. I tell myself it's just a bad day because I'm sick, but I know it's not irregular for when I'm healthy. I'm much slower now than I've ever been. Much fatter too.

As I crest the hill, the cold, wicked winds of the Palouse wick tears out of my ducts. They stream horizontally across my face. I feel like shit, I'm covered in dirt, and now I'm crying. I want to go home and shower myself anew.

The trek up the flights of stairs to our apartment seems worse than the hill even though I'm now allowed to walk. I grab onto the handrail and move to the side as children walk past me. Another fat guy tired from walking up stairs.

Eventually I make it to the top and the far corner where our door is. I open it and see my partner sitting in front of the couch with the television on. She has a pair of knitting needles and a big ball of yarn on her lap. She asks me how it was. "Shit." I go to the bathroom and turn on the shower. I reach my hand under the faucet and wait until it's hot. I peel off the clothes, too sweaty from just a twenty-minute run, and drop them on the floor.

Soap and shampoo make the body feel clean, but all is not right. There is still the matter of the rings of hardened fat ripping and tearing at my skin. There are still the stretch marks of childbirth on me, and one twenty-minute run didn't fix any of that.

I dry myself off with a towel and go and lay on the bed. I drape the comforter over my naked body, covering my crotch and the lower part of my stomach. Like I'm in a photo shoot for a very specific kind of kink. A twenty-year-old boy with a body nothing like it's supposed to be.

This feeling, though, is not new to me. As I recover naked in my bed I think back to when I was fittest. Sophomore, junior year in high school? I lifted weights and ran six days a week, but I wasn't satisfied with my results.

There had always been another step, another goal ahead of me that would finally allow me to love my body. I was skinny, but not skinny enough. My biceps didn't bulge at the sleeves of my shirts like I wanted them to. Instead of bulging outwards, the veins in my arms hid beneath a layer of beige skin.

Hadn't I always been embarrassed? I even asked my P.E. teacher dad to let me into the weight room in the mornings so I didn't have to lift with the other kids. I would sit at machines quietly before school and hope no one else came up.

In locker rooms, I changed in the stalls or when no one was looking, and never changed underwear. At water parks or the beach, I only had my shirt off from right before I got in til right after I got out. I start thinking, as I lie in bed with only the thin comforter to cover me, I haven't ever been happy with my body before, so what has really changed?

Feather



## Milkweed

I used to save them. I used to  
touch them

        open, split seam  
in the green pouch. The scent  
of the inside slipped. The whiteness  
that had never

        seen light was whiter,  
filaments bursting the dark seeds.  
One hundred white gowns in the garment  
factory hung from green rods on the ceiling  
of the pod. Two thumbs, I opened the pod,  
poured silk into the air. Which words  
do I say out loud? How

        many words  
drift under the world, seeds, the pattern  
for waxy star

        blooms, border of rivers.  
In the wooden box with the brass latch,  
the pharaoh's

        milkweed gleams. I open  
it. This kind of fire  
        lasts, groomed smoke lit  
by white light. I used to throw them in the air, wait

for them to leave my hand,  
        drift.

**Safe Harbor**



## Things Are Coming Up

It's January and  
unseasonably warm but  
there is a cold  
making itself home in this house taking up the spaces of  
my mind and the house that  
I am  
a certain cold can make the body shake and shake  
bones like old trees  
the mind creaks  
and still there, stacked neatly near the woodstove,  
is kindling enough to make a fire although  
it is unseasonably warm I am nearly in the flames  
to feel  
my bones like old trees  
above me the plaster is peeling  
the ceiling softly ripping the room  
apart  
So it isn't worth it to build a fire  
It's almost February and  
I look at the cold  
as it settles  
in



## **Unseasonable around Here**

There's a ghost in this place.  
At first I thought there was enough space here  
I thought, there's infinite space here and that's enough space  
I'm ghostly enough,  
We could float about seamlessly drifting through  
walls and thoughts  
happy oblivion would pass  
two ghosts could make it.

I don't think I'm ghostly enough or maybe  
this ghost is too troublesome because I thought two ghosts could make it but  
then there were three and four and four after that and I honestly lost count after four  
because we are all telling our stories our words overlap when stories are escaping  
leaping from words are scrambling to be we want to listen and hear and heard  
our exploding heads to bellows of lungs quaking volumes walls are down there are things  
are coming up around here grasses and the ghosts of trees and the past is coming out  
it's unseasonable to have so many stories around here, but there should be  
space  
enough.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**ShayLee Bissell** is a student at NIC. Some kind of art creature and an occasional prose-r, she lives with her dog and her old cat in Harrison, Idaho.

**Aaron Cloyd** is an English faculty member at North Idaho College where he teaches writing, American and environmental literature, film, British mysteries, and the occasional class on Cormac McCarthy. His work has been published in *disClosure*, *International Journal of Comic Art*, *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, and *Geoforum*.

**Geoffry Collins** has lived in Idaho for twelve years. He graduated from Sandpoint High School in the spring of 2017 and is currently attending NIC. He is enrolled in the Diesel Technology program at the Parker Technical Center. He considers himself to be an avid outdoorsman. He enjoys hiking, fishing, and hunting. His photo was taken on a hunting excursion in Hells Canyon near Riggins, Idaho.

**Erin Davis** lives and writes near the Little Spokane River and teaches composition and literature at North Idaho College.

**Jenni Fallein** lives in Coeur d'Alene. She teaches yoga in her home studio and leads a monthly kirtan at Garden Street School of Yoga. She and her husband, Roger Dunsmore, have traveled with Bent Grass Poetry Troupe in Montana, hosted poetry circles in their home, and taught poetry at Elkhorn Women's Prison. Her volume of poetry, published in 2010 by Foothills Press, is entitled *If Beauty Were A Spy*. She has exhibited paintings at Avenue West Gallery, Emerge, and in galleries in Montana.

**Farley Egan Green** is a freelance writer who lives in Coeur d'Alene. She has an English degree from Scripps College, has worked in journalism and communications, and is currently exploring poetry for the first time in many years.

**Elaine Green (cover artist)** is a Northwest artist whose work has been exhibited with numerous galleries and institutions throughout the region including the Boise Art Museum, Utah State University, and Oregon State University in Corvallis.

Green was born in St. Maries, Idaho, in 1958. After studying art at Spokane Falls Community College and Eastern Washington University, Green earned her MFA from the University of Idaho in 2005. She has been an art instructor in the Spokane area, and served as adjunct faculty with the Department of Art and Design at the University of Idaho.

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**Lucia Gregory** is a part-time staff member at North Idaho College. She approaches photography intuitively and works to discover uncommon beauty in everyday life. She shares images nearly daily via Instagram (@looshagee). Visit her website at: [luciagregory.com](http://luciagregory.com)

**Andrea Jensen** is a local Coeur d'Alene photographer who specializes in portraits, graduates, boudoir, and events. She's married to John Jensen, who is a philosophy instructor at NIC, and has three daughters, Sydney, Sophie and Simone.

**Elizabeth Keller:** The woman, the dreamer, the photographer. She attended NIC in 2011-2012 with her main focus on business management, and her second, photography. Photography has always given her an outlet to express herself, and it has allowed her to serve, laugh, and learn with some of the best people. Each shot helps refocus attention to the small beautiful details around us.

**Keegan Lawler** is an essayist and memoirist from North Idaho, and currently an MFA candidate in Creative Nonfiction at Western Washington University. The work published here is an excerpt from a chapbook-length memoir on growing up in a family of runners, titled *Running in the Family*.

**Joel Long's** book *Winged Insects* won the White Pine Press Poetry Prize. *Lessons in Disappearance* and *Knowing Time by Light* were published by Blaine Creek Press in 2010. His chapbooks, *Chopin's Preludes* and *Saffron Beneath Every Frost* were published from Elik Press. He lives in Salt Lake City.

**Graham Neff** is a North Idaho local. He received his associate's degree from NIC in 2012 and received his BA in Publishing Arts from LCSC in 2015. He lives and works in Coeur d'Alene. When not writing poems, he writes music and operates his small book press, Black Black Club Books. There he constructs journals and chapbooks by hand.

**Quincee Nuffer** is a human who is interested in narratology, representations of changed environments in fiction, and other mostly good things. She attended North Idaho College and currently studies at University of Idaho.

**Naomi Partridge** has been attending NIC for three and half years and will be graduating this fall with an AA in communication. She enjoys the fine arts, literature, American Sign Language, and educating and playing with children.

**Eli Poteet** is a tender-hearted, plant-loving bookworm who you can often catch drinking coffee and/or playing in the dirt.

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**Abel Siemens** is an undergraduate student currently enrolled at University of Idaho, studying creative writing and literature. He has, in the past, been accepted to speak at the Northwest Humanities Conference, which took place on the campus of North Idaho College. His work has been published before in multiple publications and anthologies including *Trestle Creek Review*, *Foliate Oak Literary Magazine*, and in *An Anthology of Emerging Poets* by Z Publishing House.

**Georgia Tiffany**, a native of Spokane, Washington, holds graduate degrees from Indiana University and University of Idaho. Recipient of grants from the Washington Commission for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, she has been a longtime teacher of English and a visiting scholar for the Idaho libraries' "Let's Talk About It" program. Her work has appeared in various anthologies such as *Poets of the American West*, and *Labor Pains and Birth Stories*, and in such publications as *Chautauqua Literary Review*, *Threepenny Review*, and *Willow Springs*. Her chapbook, *Cut from the Score*, was published by Night Owl Press. She currently lives in Moscow, Idaho.

**Lauryn Winant** is a dual-enrolled North Idaho College student looking to alter perspective with her photography. Her hobbies include kicking ass and watching *Stranger Things*. She hopes to work for the FBI one day and become fluent in Mandarin. She is interested in how the mind works at a linguistic as well as a criminal level.

**Paige Hogan-Hatfield** pled the Fifth.

# Trestle | CREEK | Review

**welcomes submissions of any genre of literary or creative work** for its 2019 issue. Submissions of poetry (3-5 poems per submission), prose (5,000 words maximum), or black-and-white artwork (any style or medium) may be sent via email. We consider work by any member of the North Idaho College community—including students, faculty, staff, and alumni—and by residents of Idaho's northern five counties.

No previously published work can be considered, but simultaneous submissions are welcome. Please include a brief bio with your submission. More information and complete submission guidelines are available at our website, [www.nic.edu/tcr](http://www.nic.edu/tcr). Submission deadline is **January 31, 2019**, for May publication.

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