



Voices
FALL 2016

Voices is produced each fall and spring semester by students enrolled in Journalism 139 under the direction of Professor David Pink, with magazine design and layout by Professor Scott Fustin.

Submissions are accepted from current students, alumni, faculty, and staff. All submissions are assessed anonymously, and current student winners in art, prose, photography, and poetry are awarded prizes. Acceptance, publication, and awards are based on artistic quality as perceived by the student editorial staff.

The views or opinions expressed in this magazine are those held by the artists and authors.

Current and past issues of Voices, submission forms, instructions, and deadlines are available at rvcvoices.com.



A Line within a Line by Christiaan Jackson

About the Cover

Cover art was created by Christiaan Jackson, an alumni of RVC and winner of the staff/faculty/alumni prize

Medium: Photoshop



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FEATURED AWARD WINNERS

A Line within a Line

by Christiaan Jackson..... Art

Self Portrait Collage

by Mariah Oakley..... Art

Photography Co-Winners

College

by Maxwell Ramsby Photography

Freedom

by Elyssa Male Photography

Mr. Frost

by Ginny DeLorenzoPoetry

Fiction Co-Winners

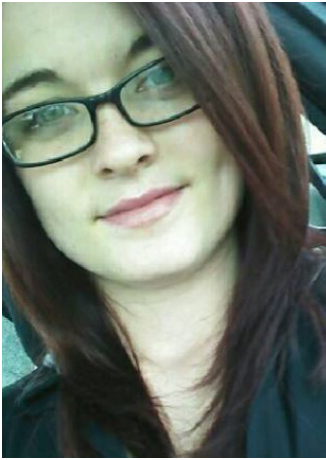
The Cranefly

by Maxwell Malcolm Rearden..... Prose

Tell It to the Fishes

by Ross Enderle Prose

Voices Staff



Alex Williams
Co-Managing Editor



Emily Hankins



Katee McSorley



Peter Schalow
Co-Managing Editor



Sebastian R. Gonzalez

Lazy

by Grant Schubert

I have a friend who fights fires
and sometimes after he has watched a baby die
he is quiet
and we drink whiskey until we are warm

but other times he is loud
we yell about scores posted by men we don't know
and he gets so angry he shakes

slow drip soul rip

he doesn't laugh as much

at some point I believe I danced next to the flame
some abstract idea of heat
but I spend my nights scribbling
while he resuscitates flesh
inhales what a relic city's forgotten people expel

he once broke a man's ribs
demanded a resurrection with his own hands
and made a heart dance.



Self Portrait Collage

by Mariah Oakley



Saturday Afternoon, Early March

by Darcy Breault

Overgrown trail
below
Tortilla Flat.

Here,
only a
shallow knee-deep creek
seems to have
somewhere to be—

my thoughts

swallowed by stillness:

solid mass,
such as the squat stone
beneath me,
seems to
sit
for centuries
content being
in the same place.

Seldom do I find myself
sitting still.

Like the creek,
I have somewhere to be,
never taking notice
how the stone, too, moves.



Reaching for the Sun

by Deb Dietz



Embrace the Flaw

by Cristiaan Jackson



Beautifully Deranged

by Laura Beccera



The Cranefly

by Maxwell Malcolm Rearden



Wispy olive-green grass blanketed the sticky soil like the twisted hair of some unshowered tramp. Simply breathing prompted a torrent of hot syrupy air, the same air which glued the bangs to his forehead and the dead gnats to his arms.

This was America's dungeon. Here lived the heat and here lived the hinterland. Here lived the choice between mud and grime or sea and salt. Here lived the mosquitoes. Here was Florida, a bizarre and amazing circus show which never traveled on. Its zoo harbored the famed palmetto bug, a monstrous cockroach-like insect which crawled in and out of the cabinets, over the dishes, and in between the toes of nearly every resident. But the palmetto bug was truly among the most common in Florida's great menagerie; the true treasures of the state were the carrion beetles, the cicada killers, the assassin bugs, and the bed bugs, the tachinid flies, the black tailed crab spiders, and the bold jumping spiders, the stink bugs, the locust, and the plethoras of ticks. Many of the curious insects which dot this landscape are malicious or even lethal such as the infamous brown recluse; others are simply harmless but giant and repulsive. Among the latter is the cranefly.

In theory, Joel loved the cranefly. It was a gentle herbivore unlucky enough to be cursed with not only an immense size, but a body bearing a strong resemblance to the hated mosquito. It was a misunderstood creature, hated because of its similitude to an enormous bloodsucking pest, with which it had little else in common. In practical terms, however, Joel hated the cranefly, and could not bear its presence. It was a giant beast with long, slender, creeping legs. When it flew, its wings produced a deep, unearthly sound, a buzz loud enough to disrupt the slumber of the hapless dreamer in an adjacent room.

Joel could remember his first harrowing encounter with the creature. He could remember how he had cowered and screamed for his father as he watched the cranefly whirring like a scheming dragon as it jumped from the ceiling to the floor, from the floor to the grimy window. He remembered standing paralyzed under the black brow of the night sky, as he waited to die outside the ancient campground bathroom in front of him, waited for the beast to impale him and drain his veins of all fluid. But Joel could also remember the fondness in his father's voice as he explained the true nature of the insect, and how un-

phased he was by its grotesqueness.

All of this Joel pondered as he sat on the stoop of his home. Inside, a crane fly occupied his bathroom, flying endlessly back and forth between the mirror and the wall. Joel was now nearly 63 but his fear remained. He knew he could not attempt to kill it at close range, thoughts of such an approach conjured images of a frenzied crane fly whirring violently about the room, and in the direction of its unsuccessful attacker. Joel felt a deep sinking nausea and a pain in his heart; the stress was detrimental to his condition. He found the passive approach impossible, as he could not stomach trying to shoo the insect out of an open window, or the possibility of the previously described disaster. The fear in him wanted it dead, but something else was appalled at further persecution of the species. He considered simply leaving the bug to depart of its own volition, but that might take from hours to the whole night. After much consideration, and finding he could not enter the house with it inside, Joel decided to take sanctuary for the night at a friend's house. Joel relinquished his home to the animal, hoping it might be gone come morning.

The next morning as Joel's truck crawled home, the sky wept white-grey light through a net of thick green which stretched out endlessly above the road ahead. It was going to rain. In Florida, the warning consisted of only

a few sparse drops, and within minutes a cold blitzkrieg descended, cutting through the warm humid atmosphere. Then, as abruptly as it had begun, the rain would stop, leaving only a jarring vacuum in its place. Joel opened his car door to be greeted by the mosquitoes which inevitably filled that vacuum.

Joel's boots sank deep into the buttery soil as he paused to look at his home, as a violent series of coughs burst through his throat. A squat red building stood in front of him; its patio had been purged of all glow by rain and humidity, now showing only an aged grey. The house's previous owners undoubtedly took better care of it, but it now belonged to Joel. Now the floors lay unwashed, and the leprous roof shed broken shingles whose jagged edges sank into Joel's feet. Most noticeably, the forest now continued unhindered in its march to reclaim the property; branches and weeds spread, tangled, across the plot. Some grasped at the patio, some filled the dark recess below it, some reached hungrily toward the rickety shutters. The vegetation seemed to almost engulf the structure, reaching and clawing to bring down the blistering sore that sat lifelessly on its turf. Joel walked upstairs, grazing his leg on a thorn as he did, and opened the door.

Turning the corner he saw the crane fly, clinging to the wall near the kitchen table. Joel left the room and felt another sharp pang in his

chest as he sat down on the sofa. The windows were still open and he thought perhaps the next rain would prompt it to depart. The next few hours passed. Joel preoccupied himself with menial cleaning tasks and chores, but afterward found that the insect had not moved. His hunger now outweighing his fear, he prepared dinner, simply restricting his eyes from the direction in which the creature sat. The meal went by slowly, but the deep, frequent, bursts of buzzing grew less abrasive with each installment. The presence of the insect grew to be an interesting alternative to the usual stillness of Joel's home, though he still tried to remain a safe distance from it. His nerves quieted and Joel resumed his cleaning.

The bathroom was a particularly difficult task, as the sticky air glued the dirt and grime to its ceramic. Every gnat, every dark dirt particle, every stray hair clung fast to the toilet, sink, and walls. As he scrubbed he thought of his boyhood home, a frigid fortress in urban Minnesota. He had always hated the blankness of the environment he grew up in, always hated its harsh, unforgiving streets and stony walls. This had not changed, but he now saw some subtle beauties he never had before, though his view should have been lessened by roughly 2,000 miles. There were many fewer mosquitoes in Minnesota, and the air was so cold and clear that it stung the back of your throat. However, there was no risk of frostbite in this climate.

The next pang was more powerful than any before, it came quickly and sharply and sent waves through the expanse of his neural system. He stumbled to his bed and lay paralyzed by the pain. The room he lay in was a weary cream color, and only one of its two light bulbs still functioned. Pain continued to surge through him and his thoughts darted past him, too fast and too far for him to hold. He saw the crane fly just above the frame of the door, flitting sporadically just as it had been. He was happy that he would not die alone.

The house's disrepair grew, and slowly but surely the foliage around it continued its conquering march. The branches and grasses forged on unchecked, their ranks and advantage increasing with time, and at last its territory was reclaimed. The house had been beautiful in its prime, and though it remained imprinted on the film of time, the reel had moved on to its successor. In the swamp there lay a plot of land, free from mark, indistinguishable from any other, and it was beautiful.

Grandpa Shorts

by Raven Ross



Desert Castles

by Darcy Breault

Charred stone walls
still stand,
almost lifeless

 somehow hint
how quickly heritage
 disintegrates
 in dry, desolate heat.

I walk through
what used to be
your front door,

 as if
 you would be
 waiting for me.

Slowly make my way
through your living room.

In the bedroom
I lie down on the dirt floor
where I think your bed
once stood,

 I hear
the kitchen
beg to bake bread,
not be so bare—

empty, waiting to be made livable again.

I could decide to save this place
reconstruction is possible,
strong foundation,
I could write
great poems here.

Flame burned this house.
Sun scorches this earth.
Arid heat from a stove bakes bread.

These things
will not warm my thick blood
or give back my birthright
no matter how much time
I stare at the mountain in the backyard.

You Go-Go Girl

by Mary Rudney



It's All in Smoke

by Mary Rudney





Freedom

by Elyssa Male



Tell It to the Fishes

by Ross Enderle



Tell it to the fishes,
They'll keep it in their gills-
In the night, with lidless eyes,
And secrets in their scales.

Thomas Miscoe cast his line into the dark waters of the lake. There had been no results in the last five hours he had been out on the lake, but this fisherman was uniquely possessed with either optimism or apathy enough not to mind his luck so far. It was better than kicking around that empty old house, he supposed. At nearly sixty years of age, Thomas knew that this lake, which was really a forgotten inlet of the Atlantic, had never allowed more than a few fish per year to be pried from its depths. Thomas had once been one of the lucky few anglers to catch something. That had been long ago, though, and before she had...

It wasn't that there were no fish in the lake, there were countless, and between dusk and dawn they seemed to delight in hurling themselves from the water, leaping again and again in vast numbers. A scientist had once spent three weeks setting up equipment and tests, only to leave in frustration when the results were "inconclusive". The locals had other explanations, only uttered from the bottom of glasses, and only then in hushed tones, to be cut off at the slightest interruption. The lake had been still tonight, with only a few fish splashing in the distance.

The lure clinked against the side of the boat. Thomas decided to switch from a pencil to a plug, and set his pole down across his knees, with the

lure resting between his feet. He flipped open his tackle box, and popped open one of the plastic containers that held all of the dinged, dented, or shiny objects that he treasured. A fisherman's lures are his pride and shame, for each one bears countless tales of victory or failure, and many, many sharp points to match scars on the fisherman.

"Fuck!"

Thomas dropped his pole in surprise as the harsh shout reached him from somewhere in the surrounding darkness. He grabbed the flashlight tucked into his boot, and clicked it on, scanning the beam over the water around him. The water only lapped at the sides of his boat, the soft uneven slaps sounding barely like quiet chuckling. The beam of his light shone on the surface of the dark water, barely illuminating the first foot of the depths below. Thomas felt uncomfortably drawn to the undulating curtains he saw beneath the surface, and switched off his light.

A splash sounded nearer to Thomas than any others had so far. This reminded him of what he had been doing, and he picked up the lure. He removed the line from it, and placed it into its place in his tackle box. He connected the plug to the line, and flicked it out into the lake, landing it some forty feet from the boat, in the direction of the splash. He began reeling steadily, looking out to the light of his house, half a mile away. People did not leave their lights on at night, out of concern for the fishermen who ventured out after dark. Too many lights became confusing in the dark stillness, and a man could easily get lost rowing to the wrong house, only to be swept into some distant edge by the current moving below the cold water.

Only a few lights dotted the long edges of the lake, each one left on in a combination unique to the fisherman on the lake, to allow for navigation back to the home dock. Obviously there were only so many combinations one can organize lights into, particularly that can be seen from a distance. The fishermen solved this by adding strobes to their dock lights. Each one held a different timing, so that a man could watch the strobe, counting under his breath to verify that it was indeed his own. Who exactly had thought this up was not known, or how it had been done before strobes had been accessible. Thomas thought that it was probably done by some patient wife or relative, holding something in front of the-

“Oh God!”

“Jesus!”

Only the second blasphemy belonged to Thomas, as the first had sounded from behind him, with a splash cutting off the full plea. He wheeled, again dropping his pole and pulling his flashlight, and focusing it at the place where he thought he had heard the voice. The barest ripple was fading from the spot, and Thomas turned off his light quickly, thinking foolishly that he would rather not see what might come up. Come on now, what sort of thinking is that, Thomas chastised himself, just look, it’s just the lake, it’s just the same old lake you’ve been fishing since you were a kid. You remember the first time you took Annie out on it, don’t you? It was still, just like tonight, and the stars were all around you.

Remembering that happy moment, so far behind him, Thomas looked up to see the stars. They weren’t there, or rather, there was something in front of them. Though the evening had been clear, the night had evidently brought in clouds to cover the lake. The moon was also absent, but as Thomas considered this, it was just about time for the new moon, and the night looked as it should. These are normal conditions, he reassured himself by taking up his pole and beginning to reel again. Normal night for you, old Tom, nothing unusual.

You’ve spent too much time cooped up inside, you’ve spent so long indoors that you’re jumpy out here.

Not that their- his house was any better. There was enough memories stuffed into that place to make someone sick from thinking. Annie’s portrait was still hung up in the kitchen. Thomas had protected it from all threats for fifteen years, ever since Annie had left that note on the kitchen table.

It was that solitary, starkly white piece of paper that had greeted him instead of his wife fifteen years ago as he came home from work. It was that tiny, fragile slip that had walked with him down to the dock instead of his Annie. He had not taken his gear with him that night, but only rowed out to the center of the lake, and laid in the boat, clutching the paper to his chest, unable to feel anything but hollow. The lake rocked him as his sorrow rebounded through its depths.

He pulled out the paper now. He kept it with him, in the same pocket of his jacket, which he used for nothing else. He unfolded it, and began to read again the words he already knew by heart.

“Dear Tommy, I’m so-”

“Not like this!”

Thomas dropped the paper when the cry sounded from directly next to him. The paper fluttered and landed on the edge of the boat, and Thomas’ heart leapt into his chest as he lunged for the note. His sudden movement was enough to push the paper past its point of balance, and it fell down into the water. A cry sprang from Thomas’ lips, and he continued his movement, plunging his hand into the water to grab the note. His fingers brushed something that was not paper, and he jerked his hand back, grabbing his flashlight and leaning over the side of his boat with it, looking frantically for his poor Annie’s note.

He saw a terrified face with its mouth open just beneath the water’s surface, and a small white flutter which was the note, sinking into the open mouth.

Thomas screamed again, and the face in the water also moved its mouth in a silent cry. The face became larger, and Thomas realized he was leaning too far over the side of the boat. He leaned back, huddling in the bottom of his boat, cursing himself for losing the paper. The face had been his reflection, he thought, yes, yes, just your old mug looking back at you. You never were too easy to look at, he joked half-heartedly, just about anyone might be startled by your head popping up unexpectedly. His heart was still booming somewhere around his ears, and his attempt at humor only lowered it into his throat, where it stifled the sobs trying to chase after Annie's paper.

"George!"

Thomas flinched at the name which sprung from the water and landed with a splash somewhere to his left. He still wept for his stupidity at dropping the paper, and resolved to row home and have the stiffest of drinks, when his plug struck something far below him, causing the rod to bend, and attempt to escape. Instinct overpowered grief, and Thomas seized the pole and began reeling. He jerked the pole, intending to set the hook as he had done so many years before. Fish in this lake were almost never caught from biting the hook, but rather snagging the body. Although this was technically illegal, the people around the lake did not disapprove, partially because the lake was so miserly in its output, and partially because the DNR ought to mind its own damn business how and where folk caught their meals.

The swift jerk that should have embedded the hook instead bent the pole nearly in half, and Thomas felt an enormous pressure on the end of the line. He realized with a thrill that whatever was down there was enormous, at least a hundred pounds. Changing tactics, Thomas relaxed the pole, attempting to feel through the line down into the watery abyss below him.

"Tommy!"

Thomas froze, because his wife had just called his name. His Annie, who had been gone for nearly fifteen years, had just called his name.

"Annie! Annie where are you sweetie?" Thomas called out into the darkness.

There was no reply, and no hope of explaining away this latest occurrence. All chance for Thomas Miscoe to leave the lake with his mind intact had fled.

"Annie!" Thomas cried again, and there was only the night, and the dark water as an answer.

The weight on the line lessened somewhat, and the fisherman's instinct again forced Thomas' hands to begin reeling, taking up the slack.

"Oh God no! Oh please no!"

Thomas flinched as a man's voice leapt into his boat, knocking against the sides and bottom. Feeling the movements of whatever was thumping around his ankles, Thomas turned on his flashlight and looked. Flopping around the bottom of his boat, screaming all the while, was a fish. The wide eyes pleaded with Thomas, and the gasping mouth opened and closed as the screaming went on. Then the fish spasmed off of the bottom of the boat, bouncing over the side and into the water. The splash finally cut off the awful cries. Thomas followed with his light, knocking over his tackle box as he scrambled inside the boat. He directed the light at the ripples the fish had left, and saw a dark shape jetting away.

On the other side of the boat, where his line curved into the water, a bubble broke the surface and popped. Thomas heard, and his small cry of fear hushed all of the distant splashing. The soft chuckling of the lake's water lapping at the side of the boat continued, and Thomas turned, ever so slowly, flashlight in hand, to look at his line. It was gathering at the surface of the water, indicating a large amount of slack in the line, as the distance between the boat and what was below decreased. Thomas looked past the slack-

ening line, and down into the depths of the lake.

Thomas saw, and was utterly frozen. Far below him, barely visible, was a billowing shape, *climbing up the line!* Thomas dropped his flashlight, he dropped his pole, he dropped everything that was not the oars, and he rowed. He rowed like he was ten years old, slapping the water, and making little progress. He corrected his technique, and began to skim across the water, the oars plunging into the lake, and propelling him onwards. His pole was still bending and moving, and he felt the vibrations through the boat, and he rowed still faster. He looked for his strobe, and saw it, only it wasn't his, the timing was wrong, and the next strobe was wrong, and the next one, and the next one, and Thomas realized they were all the same, that the pattern was uniform, and still he rowed, no longer knowing where he was going, no longer caring, feeling only the roaring cry within him to get away, away from this lake, away from what was happening here.

"Bobby!" sounded a cry from his left.

"Jimmy!" from his right.

All around him, the water was erupting with fish, and horrible pleas, the last words of some poor soul before the water slid over the terrified face, slipping down into the throat, and no amount of coughing or crying or speaking could dislodge the lake, because it was within you now, and you belonged to it.

"Come here, Christy!"

"Keep your head above the water!"

"I love you, baby!"

"Mommy loves you!"

"Daddy!"

"Mark!"

"Damn it!"

The voices jabbed at Thomas, and he wept as much as he could while still rowing. Tears flowed down his face and beard, into his gasping mouth. The salt foretold what lay below, and he rowed faster. He rowed until faster was no longer possible, and he could only slow, as his age and terror began to pull at him. A quick glance back showed only darkness, and another look around confirmed that there were no longer any lights on the lake.

Despair overtook him, and he collapsed into the boat, shaking from exertion and sobbing from fear, as exhaustion wiped away everything but the need to sleep. Thomas fought against this, and tried to get up and row some more, only to find that his limbs would not obey him. The line still tugged at the rod, and the rod still tapped at Thomas' shoulder.

Something splashed next to his boat.

Something got in.

Lips like cold rubber brushed his ear, and breath like rotting fish passed over him.

"Did you miss me, Tommy?"

Tweet

by Susan Frampton



Into the Woods

by Molly Carter



Path to the Unknown

by Emily Henderson





College

by Maxwell Ramsby



Dear Mr. Frost

by Ginny DeLorenzo



Dear Mr. Frost, I am thinking of you.
For I also have two ways I could go.
Well, I suppose it is more like a few.
Please tell me, how did you know what to do?

Freedom of choice is a challenging task;
I often wish someone could pick for me.
What if I get lost and chose the wrong path?
Or worse, I regret my choice looking back.

I shall pick my path and I shall tread on,
Heavy with questions, looking for answers.
The road is beautiful, scary, and long,
But through and through I shall continue on.

In all seasons, I'll think of your teachings.
Through summer and winter, through fire and ice;
Through hushed October and pleasurable spring,
I'll be acquainted with night, and on birches swing.

So thank you, Mr. Frost. Your words did show
Me that life is a never ending path.
Did I take the right path? I'll never know,
But I can't stop now. I've got miles to go.

For Him

by Rebecca Denham

Since that day, I am
A non-linear function.
I am that space between the
Graphed line and x-axis,
Getting smaller and smaller and smaller,
Without ever touching

And I will never get to touch you again
And I was too afraid to at your funeral.
Too afraid that someone would see me
And ask who the hell I was to you
And I wouldn't have an answer
Other than
"we had English together Senior year"

Decreasing into non existence by the second,
The fear of not belonging expanding across
My chest
The fear soon bigger than I am not,
Rips from my skin and floats up, away from me -
A great red balloon, tied to my wrist,
Hanging in the empty space between
The mourners and the stained glass of the church.

It said
"Look at this shriveling person,
she kissed the boy in the casket and
saw the inside of his basement once.
She misses him but doesn't deserve to."

I miss you but don't deserve to.

You,
So expansive,
The inverse of me,
The exponential function,
So vast and filled with genius.
The world was open for you.
You had every chance available
Because you were so fucking smart.

How dare I,
Such a small nothing,
Exist,
When an important something
Like you
Didn't want to anymore.

Gilded

by Alexis Cotti



Closure

by Darcy Breault

You drive the road
around the lake
home,

as if
we can
remember our childhoods

differently.

Mid-summer swims,
swinging on rope,
dropping into the lake—

I was always afraid of not letting go in time,
how you'd dare me,
call me a sissy.

I look across this moonlit lake
wondering,
what would have happened
in not letting go?

the option of jumping
back to land

when the rope swung
back toward shore

existed.

We ride this dark road in silence,
both more child-like than when we were
ten—

you once said there were
no such things as ghosts.

yet,

the personalities we inherit have some-
thing to say.

History demands to de-
scend our attic staircase.

I look at your face,
concentrated on the road,
I don't mention how you have
his eyes, her forehead and cheeks.

Maybe,
could have is just a memory,

shadows that disappear with the dawn.

Presented by
Rock Valley College
Journalism 139 students

Voices

Fall 2016

**Rock
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