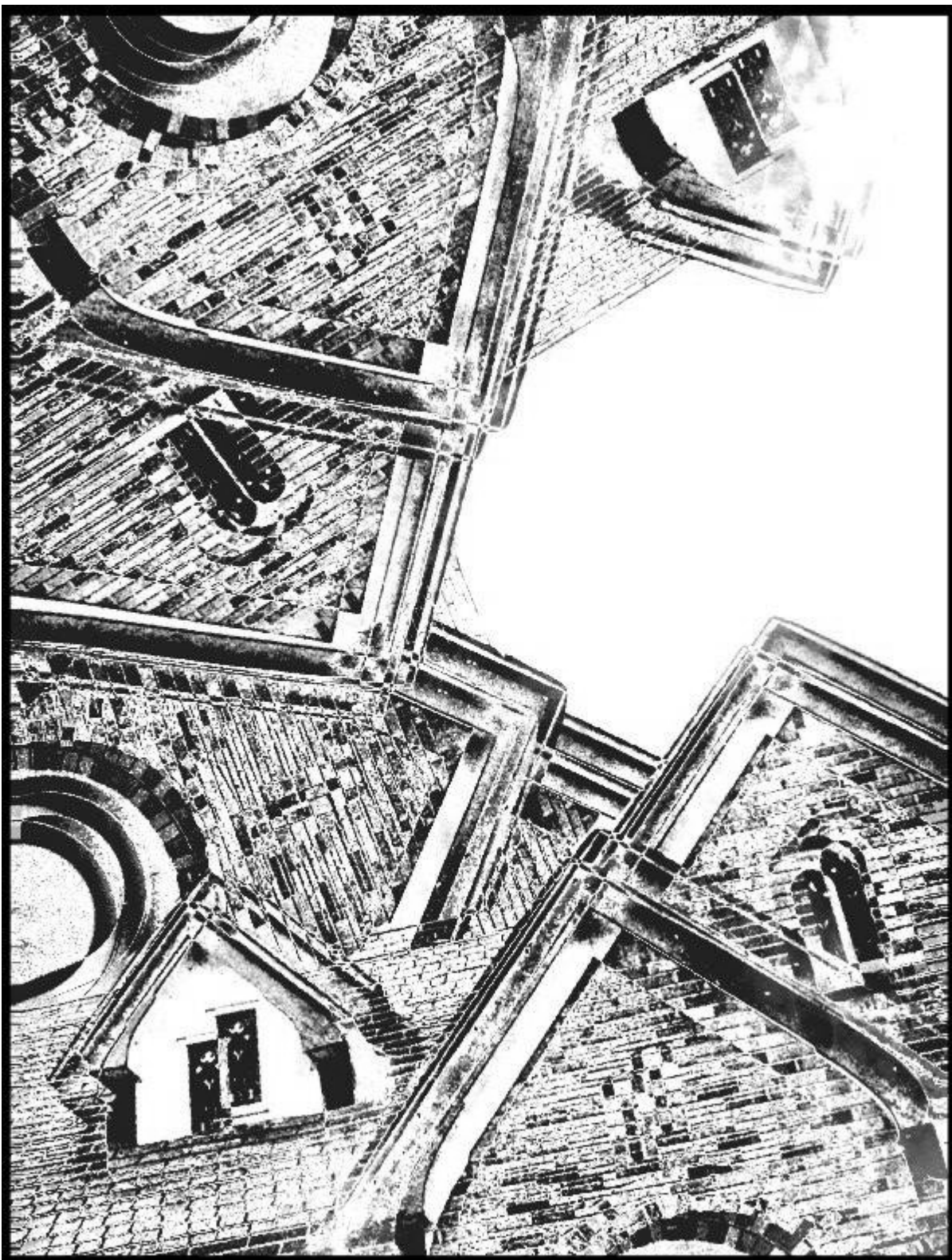


*The Cartographer Electric* is for everybody!

and so is Metta Sáma, Eric Kocher, Paul Nelson, Lew

is Levenberg, Brooks Lampe, Lynne Schneider, and Michelle Corey



Cover art by Ali Reese

# HELLO!

**WE** would like to welcome you to the second issue. And this time when we say “we,” we do mean we, not the editorial “we.” What I—I mean—we...oh damn these semantic games. Let’s start over...

**I** (Micah Towery, founder) would like you to welcome Adam Pelligrini (affectionately, A-bomb Smell-a-weenie) and Joel Davis (affectionately, Joel Davis) to the “staff” (there are those damn quotation marks again (and those parentheses!)). Now there are other staff members to blame when your writing doesn’t make it in (or does). We (Micah, Adam and Joel for purposes of definition) hope that you enjoyed the first issue. If you didn’t, then may onions grow in your navel and may your camel spit upon you. All curses aside, though, we hope it challenged your perceptions and caused a visceral reaction of some sort in your body (be it a smile, tear or wretch).

We’re all very excited about this issue! But there’s also something else we’re very excited about: READINGS AT THE **BELMAR**. Yes, that’s right. We’re running poetry readings out of the best damn bar in all of Binghamton, the southern tier, perhaps the world. Our first reading happened December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, and it was an event to be remembered. Well over FIFTY people packed the back room of the Belmar in the name of poetry! If that’s not exciting we don’t know what is. For information on upcoming readings, check the website.

**WAIT.** Did we just say *website*? In a word, yes. For the sake of sharing **The Cartographer Electric** with your friends, we now have a website! Our very own daught cawm: **www.CartographerElectric.com**. See? Easy to remember. There you will find old issues for download as PDF files and dates for upcoming readings! There are some latent plans to expand it into other realms, forums, etc., so be sure to check it out on a regular basis. For you Facebookers out there, we also have a group where you can check for the latest info—it’s called Team Electric! Be a groupie!

We do believe that covers it all! Enjoy this issue, and remember to keep submitting! Fan mail is also acceptable.

*Sincerestly*, Editors

**Fusillade: a Foraging with Lines  
Stolen (Swamped) (Swapped)** by Metta Sáma

Metta Sáma is a Phd student at Binghamton. Her first book  
*South of Here* was a finalist for the Yale Younger Series.

Fall: a pugnacious night in a gale of haku,  
a monk cloaked in mahogany, a frigid leaf  
clinging (as hyperbole) to a mortified tree, a  
serious cloud cupped in a capsized bowl  
of coffee, a woman with a newspaper  
for a face. Suddenly, attentive to autumnal feet,  
a haiku falls

yellowing leaves park  
on a city street; the sun  
enlightens, showers—

a hippo barks at Bernard, the puzzling saint  
of whisky's licentious thrum and drum. Feet  
away, Fall suddenly settles like pollen, heavy,  
ingestible as pressure: a parasite hosting  
a sullen house party: a river quivering  
under quills: a lover embarks in love, labor  
lost: pesticide settling, solemnly, on a fortress  
of pestilence. On the brighter side: a house  
swims down river, free from the fallacy  
of hesitant inhabitants huddling in the huff of a hug.

**Good** by Eric Kocher

Good morning good to wake up hung over metal on metal  
a circular saw on aluminum siding a gutted deer hanging

from the porch and all you can say is *Good morning Death*  
*how do you take your coffee* with lots of cream lots of sugar

good and sweet good to smell anything gives you a nose  
bleed good to walk barefoot on hot coal to make love on a bed

of nails as long as you make love with no condom no birth  
control no protection from the sun the thunder of two bodies

doing what only two bodies can do so good to each other  
good god to the sound of sirens the emergency sirens

in puddles remember how good the sirens sang to sailors  
how good this all is to me to you for you good to be a child

at the beach good to run from the waves  
as they come in and in and in.

Eric is a senior and a recent selection for AWP competition  
at Binghamton. He is a guitar player and devilishly good  
looking, but gets too many women already. The editors of  
CE would like to remind you that two-thirds of them are  
still single.

## Spread out by Metta Sáma

(Look)

My spread is red, frog  
red, poison. My spread is wide-  
legged, I mean, this spread  
is soft, store-bought,  
patternless, clean. I should  
feel blessed. I sleep beneath a poison-  
dart spread. I don't feel  
free. I don't

*float.*

I wonder about my great grandmother,  
about her blood, where  
her blood spread when she birthed  
my grandmother, Lila Lee,  
Lila with the steel gray hair,  
so straight down her back  
I always wanted to touch it. Lila  
Lee wasn't weaved soft but industrial  
steel cold. She had a silver comb &  
brush on a silver tray, a mirror  
with a silver back, a silver back,  
hers. Steel cold, my grandma.  
I longed to touch Lila's silver strands,  
feel my way past the metal of her;  
she had a concrete tongue, I never  
heard her speak, so I'd stare  
at her ravished/ravenous braids, and  
*Scuse me Grandma, but could I  
unbraid your hair, please ma'am?  
Will you teach me to plait?*  
And she'd set her grey eyes on  
*my momma*  
who wasn't born on a spread;  
my grandma spread her legs  
on a floor and spit my momma out,  
way out, black bottom out, down  
South where black folks don't appreciate  
thin hair, treat thin hair like thin ice, fearing  
a river quivers beneath the surface.  
My momma's hair birthed complex;  
hair like a quilt; piece here: nappy,

scrap here: silk, a swatch not unlike cotton; piece,  
scrap, swatch: summer, crackling  
leaves, tree bark; her hair springs forth

## Spread out, 2

*my hair*

my hair is springy, springy  
clingy hair, black black black black  
hair. Thicker than my momma's,  
dark as my father, strong and anguished,  
sensitive to the scalp, my hair  
(but a warrior sleeps in there),  
no silver comb could glide on a slide  
through my hair. Anyone could lay down  
in the spread of my hair, quilt

*a family history.*

I wish I never had to sleep  
under a store-bought spread  
because my momma knows how to quilt  
in her head. I'm missing something.  
I've never seen my great grandmother.  
Was she a woman of patchwork love,  
sometimey, cut from cloth love?  
Did she save strands of her husband's  
hair, her babies' hair, sisters', mother's,  
father's, brother's? Did she thread  
their hair and wrap her man in its love?  
I need one memory of love, stitched,  
a spread out nappy red black kinky  
thin love, I'll take poisonous love  
if that's the only kind out there.

No, hair

sometimes lies, but I want it  
straight: a family quilt,  
scratchy, a quilt thick with sweat,  
thick with guilt quilt, with babies' blood.  
I want to bury my body in a nipple  
dripping milk, my great granddaddy's  
arm vined with hair,  
laid bare across his woman's belly,  
where my grandma curls  
her finger round the promise  
of black hair, quick & tricky as love.

## Some selections from “City Minutes”

by Brooks Lampe

Only in the city can you  
run from bookstore  
to bookstore, en-  
raged that you can't

find your beloved. Only here  
does your skill of  
parallel park-  
ing grow as thick

as your thumb. Only here do drums  
beat rhythms off  
walls, so loud and  
sure and lonely.

\* \* \*

I live in a house of wood floors  
and eggnog and  
cigarette butts all  
scattered around

in a postmodern medieval  
marxist mess. But  
I'm proud of it,  
of who I am

here in Brookland DC, una-  
fraid of others  
and their crimes of  
self-righteousness.

\* \* \*

They're really dropping now—golden  
leaves on charcoal  
asphalt, my street  
is awash

in corn flakes escaped from Zeus' bowl,  
scattered slips of

paper on the floor  
of the New York

Stock Exchange at the day's end. My  
car smiles as  
they float down and  
tickle its neck.

\* \* \*

Eastern Market, Saturday morn:  
this is why the  
city is a  
beautiful place.

Beggars whip out saxophones and  
give children some-  
thing to dance for;  
a palette of

ethnicity converges for an  
exchange of crop,  
jewel, rug, soap, art,  
mushroom chili.

\* \* \*

Lord, make me a prism of the  
plural; give me  
a Cubist's eyes,  
able to see

the world in thirteen ways.  
I want to be  
a misnomer  
anfractuous

polysyllabic—a woven  
reticle of  
epidemics  
and enigmas.

---

Brooks is a graduate student at Catholic University.  
Recently married, he is fond of odd poetic forms.

## Nine Sonnets for Pop by Paul Nelson

Pop's in the hospital  
a slight stroke we figure  
but in allopathic terms  
expressive aphasia.

Speech difficult to initiate,  
non-fluent, labored, and halting.  
Deficient intonation, stress patterns  
& language reduced to disjointed words

and poor sentence construction.  
Sounds like poetry you think  
while Josephina arrives from Yakima  
trunk full of hand-made corn tortillas.

The heat more than a large can of salsa  
can take with the two hour ride over the pass.

2)  
Resurrection Hospital where the Sox  
could not sweep the Cubs today  
adding insult to a speech-addled Father  
we've always known as fluent

in his condemnation of all things  
like Republicans. *FDR gave me  
Social Security and LBJ Medicare  
but these assholes* then you try to change

the subject back to baseball.  
He was even guarded last year  
when the Sox won it all saying  
*they'll probably get swept in California*  
when they did the sweeping.  
That picture's still my screen saver.

3)  
No, you think, their lab experiment  
is your father and you know the drill  
drugs, surgery or radiation  
*they're not going to use radiation*

Ma says and *don't lecture* and Linda  
says *He'll only listen to you* and you  
can only say *I've known him longer*  
but to see him break down

and cry. We're all gonna die  
and death is no failure  
but who dies on their own  
terms without the Kervorkian

treatment, thank you but no  
Jack, I can't hear a click.

4)  
There are kids in the lot  
cooling off from July  
in the early global warming  
era, someone has to rescue

the frog, but in Darfur,  
death. Plants and animals  
are migrating towards the poles  
as we set this old spaceship on fire.

Meantime, tortillas, a dip in the Stuck  
tender feet don't like the feel of rocks  
and Pop breaks down when the tongue  
won't cooperate with the brain.

Such perception *The Chinese  
will take us over without firing a shot!*

5)  
Nations are permanent  
as July you want to tell him  
but remain silent that he gets it  
and no one has to break it down for him.

But the break down of the arteries  
and the brain parts that depend on them  
means the break down of, not our  
patriarch, but Pop nonetheless

crying at the hospital and some

part of that emotionally-blocked  
bloodline bubbles up into consciousness  
and you'll end up being the last

too smart for I told you so  
contending with your own fire.

6)  
Too much fire in the liver  
the heart, the blood, fire  
in that old goat, fire never  
replenished as in the way

of the old ones, fire coming back  
to bite its master, fire never studied  
allowed to lick where it chooses  
all the lack of gratitude

fanning that ancient blue flame gone  
awry as if you knew how the creator  
intended it. Pop, he don't have no  
language for it and must settle

for a language older than words  
and now all we can do is count tears.

7)  
Take a stubborn motherfucker  
and hope for grace. Stain  
the prayer rug or ply your  
spiritual habits down by the river

and maybe the water bodhisattva  
has an answer and maybe its  
in a tongue you can negotiate  
or maybe you just get a gist

or a gust of wind liberates  
you from your spit  
and you learn to take agony  
and be a shop-keeper about it.

Selling enough to keep yourself

in bread, bananas and beer.

8)  
All his lessons seem  
to come up now, the ones  
about what you can get away with  
and that you should show up

on time to work. The lesson  
of rising early and joining  
the union and paying your dues  
long into retirement. What

Lech called *Solidarnosc*  
how a red flag rises  
out of blood but when  
the blood is undone by fire

or begins to lose its way  
and that eloquent man reduced  
to incoherence...

9)  
You want to think about his stain  
how he had the sense to bring  
more fire to a bloodline  
and more important, heart.

When his brothers died  
when he was not yet ten  
he did what he had to do  
to survive. And you got that

survival like a lifetime  
of clenched teeth and a way  
out of wilderness via helicopters  
over the canyon and a tuning

of fix that fire into a mode  
where somehow there's a *Gracias*  
in all of your grief.

---

Paul Nelson is the founder of Global Voices Radio  
and co-founder of NW SPoken Word LAB (SPLAB!).  
He is also an advocate for prison reform in NY State.

## **Bite the Hand** by Lewis Levenberg

Old prophets don't die  
They just go into scripture

[Bitch is panting  
(Does she ever have down time now?  
She's not really ever sleeping  
Like she's half awake  
I doubt she ever goes into REM sleep  
Do you believe math is objective?]

She stops panting

[Do you think math is objective?  
Objective, or subjective?  
[Objective.]

No  
I believe it's Sub[dzh]Elektiv  
He nods yes  
[Can I snag a crunch bar?]  
That's why they're there.  
Want a cigarette?  
Yeah. No

Yeah thanks)  
She wakes up  
A brown patch quivers  
On her left flank  
Panting again

He burps  
She stands up  
Panting  
[Sit, sit.]  
Call her by name,  
Use a hand signal  
[Mazie – sit.]  
He shows his knuckles  
Hides his thumb

Her lips drop  
She sits

She stops panting  
They say the end is near

---

Lewis Levenberg's individualized major of Profanity Studies was roundly rejected by the administration. Consequently, he studies Comp Lit.

## **at our school** by Lynne Schneider

at our school,  
the halls monitor, glowers of silence.  
no one switches on the lights!  
we lurk between books, whispering  
bibliographies as code  
for opening tomorrow.  
we teach ourselves

at our school.  
classroom chairs shrug  
at one another, all of them  
rough drafts dropped.  
we don't know why  
there are no teachers

at our school  
library, we pick up  
the used books  
of dead men,  
very cheap –  
one, a lover  
of Blake, of Donne,  
when he lived,  
he read close,  
scrawled marginalia  
across every folio –  
he touched every one  
of those pages.

---

Lynne Schneider was born out west in the shortgrass plains, pumping gas and washing streak-free windshields, but now lives in Johnson City. She has one cat, two degrees, and three kids.

## *Two Stories* by Michelle Corey

### **Planespotting**

*For James (Karl with a "K") Stanescu who combs at his bristling auburn beard with femininely unkempt fingernails...*

He patiently coaxed the complaining orange bus around the Dulles Airport terminal. He tilted the reluctant orbit on each pass to go by all three levels. He calmly mashed the brakes as Washington Flyer cabs edged aggressively into his steady circle. He gazed, gazed, with that creeping guilty nausea of lovesickness gone ugly at the seamlessly reflective titans sloping gently outward, standing guard over the ragged crowd like hell's teeming Malebolge. And then he went home.

Home was far away. Far, far away. And it was cold there. Way colder than Northern Virginia's icy snobbery. Colder than the refrigerated stares of bloated suburban yuppies oozing super-sugared coffee and gasoline from every pore, follicle, and orifice. Colder than ice on snow on ice. Deep-down cold, colder than the cardiac cold, the stomach and liver and gut cold of a hundred and five fever violently shivering inside a second-hand coat on a week-long road trip to Boston in January of 2005. The kind of cold that ransacked his memory and looted his soul for baby blue plastic rosaries and busted soccer cleats and the clay snail that the preacher's daughter with the Rapunzel ponytail and key to the liquor cabinet and a necessarily dispensable piece of him he nonetheless hoped she put in a safe place and didn't just toss into the box with the Duran-Duran tapes and slap

bracelets gave him way back before the turn of the century.

His spinal cord itched all the way out through his fingertips, and no amount of expertly executed manipulation on his charged body could alleviate the frustration that coated his skin like molten fluorescent crayons straight from the microwave. He wished with equal conviction that no one had ever touched him and that he had never ever listened to *Please, Please Me*.

This especially wicked year had him reeling. A year rougher than 1986. Worse than 1989. More humiliating than 1994 through 1997. A steeper drop than off the high of 1998. More disorienting than 2001. With a recoil more ruinous than 2003's, which had left him staggering out of breath, fingering several new piercings and pawing a new tattoo. And like that headless chicken whose Alabamian owner kept it alive by lovingly shoving food down its exposed gullet, he was crushed by the realization that it wasn't over yet.

The drive lounged across time and space like a fat man stashing tuna fish sandwiches between belly rolls.

His hobby eugenicist had told him flat out, flat out lying there on her white twisted spine, with her head flat against the bare mattress, her pink nipples perched on flat little breasts, flat out that she did not love him, flat out that she had no intentions of having this *thing* growing leech-like inside her another day.

Her shadow's dissipation couldn't make home any colder.

He didn't need to see the peristaltic push of the people-movers shuttling passengers from

end to end. Dulles oozed life unconscious as its wheeled intestinal hallways filled and squeezed shut and crept across the tarmac. And filled and squeezed shut and crept across the tarmac again. And again.

He missed her. He missed her like mad. Ivan the Terrible meets Tom Cruise mad. Mad dog mad. Janie's rabid Tea Cake mad. And he wished someone would paddle up to him on the back of a cow and just shoot him.

"J, what would you do if—"

"I'm not you, Iggy. I'm not even in high school. I've snuck out of my pre-algebra class and I'm sitting in the girl's bathroom on a short toilet. And my knees are bent up to my chin and there's no trash can—when are you coming home?"

"How's Dad?"

"A bear. And all he eats is cereal."

"Right... Just think about it for me, would ya?"

"I will."

"Thanks, kiddo. Love you."

"Yeah, bye."

He knew Dulles's polished linoleum, smudged windows, and stainless steel stalls. He knew every blind spot and shortcut. Inside and out. And he still didn't understand. Dulles's flickering destination boards batted red lights, "What don't you understand, Iggy? Ask me, I'll answer. Honest, brutal. Flat out, straight up, on the rocks."

"Does it tickle?"

"No."

Why should he say goodbye? He didn't say hello. Not once. Not ever. And Dulles was too coy to write him off entirely. Dulles would be there if he wanted, lounging aloof in the flat suburban chill, asphalt tendrils stretched along the borderlands, dragging deep on every other passenger and expelling each a little lighter, Dulles would be there.

Its glass and cement spell waned as Iggy floored the grumbling bus out of Northern Virginia's forty-minute-radius traffic trap. And then there was only the long, long drive into the blistering cold that dead-ended into what was left of a very rough year, a reserved hug from his baby sister, and a prickled long-distance sighting of his eugenicist bulging with something growing large and leech-like inside her.

## **Ready, Freddy**

"Mommy, why am I ice cream?" the little milk-white face implored. "Why?" it asked with chocolate brown eyes. "Mommy... Mommy, why?"

"Because your father was ice cream," J answered evenly. The day had finally come.

Little wet cherry lips puckered. Opened with a little sigh. Smacked back together as little smooth-sweet features melted. Comprehending. The sugar-craving desire sated for now.

---

Michelle studied Math, Old English, and can quote all of "Prufrock" from memory. She admires David Bowie.