

poetry

2008 graduates Stefan Calabria and Melody Brimmer continue a strong tradition of senior projects in creative writing. These two poets, in particular, show the creative diversity of COA students, proving that high literary quality reveals itself in many forms.

Melody Brimmer '08

*I heard that George Washington broke his teeth
cracking walnuts in them at a party*

Having this image in my mind helps me feel good about
shotgunning a beer at a party, knowing that the father of our country
was not above parlor tricks.
I think if he were here,
He'd be proud.
I think if he were here,
He'd push me to do better,
He'd loom over me, bending near double to reach my ear and whisper,
"Why stop at one? You're an American!"

What a figure the first president made among college kids,
in his powdered wig and military garb,
my modest wingman
Sprinkling salt on the back of my hand
and fetching fresh lime wedges as I did tequila shots.
Later, as I lay curled up on the bathroom floor, sick,
unlike my real father would have,
George Washington patted me on the back and said
"You gave it your all."
And though he complained about redcoats and Martha's cooking, when a
great man holds your hair out of your vomit for you,
you don't nitpick about political correctness or
which century it is.

The next day Mr. Washington even came to check on me,
brought me water and saltines.
The buttons on his waistcoat strained
as he sat on the edge of my bed,
pointed to the jagged broken stumps of his teeth and said:
"If you want to achieve greatness,
you have to be willing to Go Big."
And when I had to excuse myself to go throw up again,
he shrugged and admitted
that he did find his teeth rather sensitive to cold now,
and anyway that he preferred almonds.

nude

there's something I want to get away from
something I want to get to
I'm done with the encumbrance of me

so goodbye t-shirt
bra with the one wire that pokes
I'm pulling off boots
wiping away mascara

there's even a row of buttons running down my back
seams up my calves, like a pinup's nylons
the zipper's catching but I think I can escape this
yes! epidermis piled on the floor
I'm taking it all off tonight,
pulling apart muscle groups like they're orange segments
pieces of my meat drop wetly to the floor

I'm down to bones, light as a bird's
but full of marrow, enough to sustain me
there's a secret in my skeleton
and I'm going in after it

Stefan Calabria '08

Petit Manan Island, Maine

Glass thick, bill and bone so delicate,
a bird, a female Redstart;
flashes of olive and yellow feathers
deflect off the lantern room panes.

Wedging her in the palms of my hands,
body tense, spring-loaded,
dark eyes watery and bulged, fearing death?
Certainly not salvation.

Vibrations trail through my nerves,
beating hard, her pea-sized heart,
hands open, fast, fast she flies,
wings set to the gusts.

Still Life

A tiger swallowtail
butterfly scooped from
Shenandoah's Skyline Drive,
body stilled in summer,
wings half-open,
proboscis flaccid, bent.
Shards of metal,
jagged, transfigured by
cars, heavy machinery,
into wings, serpents,
faces of long-lost loved ones,
holding memories,
stories, the way
pink and white
scars do on skin.