

High Desert Journal

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An online literary and fine arts magazine

HDJ's Message

❑ Committed to Place

- ❑ Landscape
- ❑ Myth
- ❑ Literature
- ❑ Art

❑ Committed to Culture

- ❑ Flux of identities
- ❑ Understanding the region and land through stories
- ❑ Finding memories and imagination of the creative arts

What is the West?

Last fall, HDJ started a mini-series called, *What is the West?* We asked our authors to respond to this question however they saw fit. Here are a couple excerpts:

This is what I think if you ask me what the West is: the man who unrolled a blanket on the road to Pike's Peak and sold jewelry to a woman running from her family. The woman who accessorized her pride and shame with a slur as she passed them all down. My grandmother felt gorgeous when she wore this bracelet. Now it is my turn to wear it, the beautiful, heavy thing.

Kate Lebo

I stared at the sprawling possibilities of Montana and Wyoming, the allure of the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts, mountain ranges with names like Sawtooth and Bitterroot. The West was a world in my mind, safe and adventurous as any map, shaped by the perfect angles of Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico. It was the truth of my own imaginings that still offer more than the West I now live in. I wondered for entire minutes at Hawaii and Alaska hovering in their own little squares at the bottom of page five. I did not count the seconds before the bell rang; I did not pass a crudely drawn picture to Tom Carter; I did not stare at the girl whose red hair I noticed in September. I was lost, again, in the long, bending arm of California.

Steve Coughlin

Assistant Nonfiction Editor











- ☐ Read Submissions
 - ☐ Vote: Yes, No, Maybe

- ☐ Meet with Prof. Wilkins
 - ☐ Discuss submissions

CREATIVE PROCESS

1. This is awesome
2. This is tricky
3. This is shit
4. I am shit
5. This might be ok
6. This is awesome

Submission Page

<input type="checkbox"/>	Label							
+/-	SUBMISSION	AUTHOR	FORM	DATE ↓	STATUS	ASSIGNED	⚙	
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Grandpa's Final Battle  25	Cesar Alejandro	Non-fiction, essays, memoir	8/9/2017	Declined	Tor Strand		
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Permanent Structures  25	Stephanie Anderson	Non-fiction, essays, memoir	8/9/2017	Declined	Tor Strand		
<input type="checkbox"/>	 In Our Nature  25	Sunni Wilkinson	Non-fiction, essays, memoir	7/24/2017	Declined	Tor Strand		
<input type="checkbox"/>	 excerpts from Sister Zero (2150 words)  25	Nance Van Winckel	Non-fiction, essays, memoir	7/23/2017	Accepted	Tor Strand		
<input type="checkbox"/>	 A Grand Mesa Journey  25	Alice Andersen	Non-fiction, essays, memoir	7/21/2017	Declined	Tor Strand		



Page 1

Joe Wilkins 8/20/17, 2:25 PM
Loving this essay, Margot. Thanks so much for it!

Joe Wilkins 8/20/17, 2:18 PM
Love to make this verb active, if we co...

8/20/17, 12:27 AM
This is slightly confusing to me, are you referring to the library or bar or the place as a whole?

Joe Wilkins 8/20/17, 2:18 PM
| **Added:** his boots and



8/20/17, 12:31 AM
or "all this"?

8/20/17, 12:32 AM
Maybe move this in front of the simile?

So it would read as:
"Merle and Louise take about all this across me, over me and through me, as if I were an open window or a fence post."

Joe Wilkins 8/20/17, 2:19 PM
Love this moment.

Joe Wilkins 8/20/17, 2:19 PM
| **Added:** ,



Miles City

Margot Kahn

margotkahn@gmail.com

At a certain time, the boots coming into the Bison Bar were crusted with shit. It was mid-April, late afternoon, and Louise and I had been there since god knows when. She'd picked me up at the library where I was killing time. She could tell I didn't belong there; I was just passing through. My boots were the give-away: clean, crepe-soled Boulets with pink uppers half-hidden beneath my jeans.

In the next room, a woman was half-bent under a green banker's light shooting pool by herself. "That's Franny," Louise said. "She's always here." Franny had lines in her face like the rings of a tree. She didn't look at anyone, kept her eyes on the prize, even as the door opened and the light fell in on us. The men at the door were cast in shadows until they got close enough that we could smell them. Wet wool, blood, tobacco, mud.

Merle took the stool to the left of me. Louise was on my right.

"Howdy, Merle," Louise said.

"Louise." Merle touched the brim of his hat and then extended his hand, bent up every which way, in my direction. "Ma'am, pleased to meet you." He used a foot to lever himself onto the bar stool and some shit mud flaked off his boots and onto the floor.

The warm weather had been good for the calving, and most everything had been going as well as could be expected: a few gone sideways, a few so big they lost the heifers, the orphan calves grafted onto other mothers. Merle and Louise talked about this all across me, as if I were a fence post or an open window. Across me, over me, through me. I looked at Merle's hands and imagined them up inside me, up to the elbows, up to the shoulder, pulling me inside out. All those heifers, so heavy with purple, and Merle, their deliverance.

Miles City

Margot Kahn

margotkahn@gmail.com

At a certain time, the boots stumping into the Bison Bar were crusted with shit. It was mid-April, late afternoon, and Lori and I had been there since god knows when. She'd picked me up at the library where I was killing time. I was still too soft for that town, she could tell. My boots were the give-away: clean, crepe-soled Boulets with pink uppers half-hidden beneath my jeans.

"Let's get out of here," Lori'd said, and I'd followed her like a pup across the street, through an unmarked door in a blank, white building. The bar stools were empty, but in the next room a woman was half-bent under a green banker's light shooting pool by herself with a Scotch-and-soda perched on the rim of the table. "That's Franny," Lori said. "She's always here." Franny had lines in her face like the rings of a tree. She didn't look at anyone, kept her eyes on the prize, even hours later when the door opened and the light fell in on us.

The working men who came in then were cast in shadows until they got close enough that we could smell them. Wet wool, blood, tobacco, mud. Merle took the stool to the left of me. Lori was on my right.

"Howdy, Merle," Lori said.

"Lori." Merle touched the brim of his hat and then extended his hand, bent up every which way, in my direction. "Ma'am," he said, "pleased to meet you." He used a foot to lever himself onto the bar stool and some shit mud flaked off his boots and onto the floor.

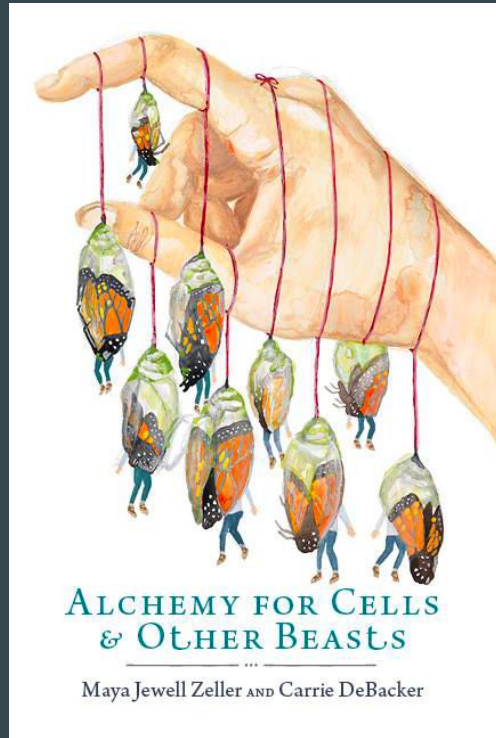
The warm weather had been good for the calving, and most everything had been going as well as could be expected: a few gone sideways, a few so big they lost the heifers, the orphan calves grafted onto other mothers. Merle and Louise talked about all this across me, over me, through me, as if I were a fence post or an open window. I looked at Merle's hands and imagined them up inside me, up to the elbows, up to the shoulder, pulling me inside out. All those heifers, so heavy with purpose, and Merle, their deliverance.

What is a “good” creative essay?

- ❑ Is there intrigue? Does the work pull you in?
- ❑ Does the essay feel fresh and inventive?
- ❑ Can you feel the passion in the work?
- ❑ Is it emotionally gripping and imaginative?
- ❑ Is the syntax clear? How is the sentence structure?



Alchemy for Cells & Other Beasts



FROM HIGH DESERT JOURNAL:

“Zeller’s poems draw out elation, and a craving for the next line. **Delightfully weird**, her words carry a certain distinctness: sharp, wild, and unashamed, often taking on the vulnerability of the body, particularly that of the woman or the child. These poems are gritty, piercing, frightening, and finally, as if it must be noted, utterly beautiful. **This is a book for meditation**, for “when you’re off in your mind field.” Zeller also contemplates identity, purpose, and image, as her poems are paired alongside artist Carrie DeBacker’s demanding, shape-shifting watercolors that accompany nearly every page.”

-Tor Strand (read full review [here](#))

Advanced Editor Copy of *Alchemy* Poem (left) / Print Version (right)

