

if you need time to think...



*Chop
arts and literary
journal*

2018 - 2019

THE LHSP ARTS &
LITERARY JOURNAL

if you need time to think...

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THE LHSP ARTS & LITERARY JOURNAL

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Our mission is to create a student-run publication that showcases vibrant and engaging work produced in the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program community during the academic year.

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Carol Tell

Letter from the Director

I'm happy to inform you that this will be the last year that the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program (LHSP) will publish an arts and literary journal.

Wait, what? Happy? Oh, don't worry. Our program is still thriving, as I hope the pages of this journal indicate. And our program will continue to publish a journal, curating the best of what our students create—hopefully, for many years to come.

It's the name. Our program name is changing.

By the time this journal is launched, the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program (LHSP) will have officially changed to the Lloyd Scholars for Writing and the Arts (LSWA). The students, staff, and faculty of the program believe that by putting “Writing and the Arts” front and center in our name, we better represent what we do here.

We owe a lot to our history, of course. The first Michigan Learning Community, we began as “The Pilot Program” in 1962, then morphed to “The Lloyd Hall Scholars Program” in the mid-1990s. Indeed, the decision to change the name to LHSP now seems obvious (how long can a program claim “pilot” status without being mistaken for an airline training group?). We are keeping “Lloyd” in our name to honor our rich past—plus, we're still located happily in the beautiful Alice Lloyd Hall. Yet we are a program for writers and artists of all levels, regardless of their majors or professional pursuits, and we have been for many years. As such, our name needs to reflect that important focus.

This year's journal, *if you need time to think...*, is a remarkable accomplishment, and certainly showcases “Writing and the Arts” front and center. The visual arts are splendid

and diverse. From photography (see, for example, Ethan Bruce’s pensive “Overlook”) to sketches (Mariah Parker’s luminescent “Hand”) to paintings (Jenny Boudon’s “Le Leçon de Mandy”), many of these pieces have a reflective tone, as the journal title suggests, not just providing the viewers a chance “to think” but also offering different versions of what “thinking” looks like. The writing, too, represents reflections of all kinds, from a variety of genres—poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and more. Justin Levine’s “Goodbye, Mr. Gills” is a playful, film noir screenplay about the tragic murder of a goldfish. Annie Ning offers a stirring character portrayal in “Views from the Middle of the River.” Many of the pieces have a timeless quality, even as they are located in the here and now; Anthony DiBello’s “My Eleven Neighbors” reminds us of the terrible Pittsburgh shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in October 2018, yet also moves beyond the specific event to consider larger questions about community, grief, and loss.

I’d like to thank this year’s editorial board, who worked extra hard this year to fit so many outstanding pieces into a compact book. The choices they made were tough ones, but the book reads coherently and beautifully. I’d especially like to thank this year’s editors, Alexis Aulepp, Morgan Rubino, and Aubrianna Wickings, whose expertise can be seen on every page. Finally, an extra big and warm thank you to Marie Sweetman, who has worked with students on the journal for the past two years and will be stepping down from the position, as her full-time job as Acquisitions Editor at Wayne State University Press is making increasing demands on her time. We’ve been graced with her enormous professionalism, good sense, sensitivity, and student-centered editorial approach.

Thank you, most of all, students of the final Lloyd Hall Scholars Program. You’ve been tirelessly interesting and joyous to work with this year. I hope that as you enjoy these pages, you remember many of the significant moments from the academic year 2018-2019. And I hope you will drop by next year to see what’s going on at the Lloyd Scholars for Writing and the Arts.

Alexis Aulepp, Morgan Rubino, & Aubrianna Wickings
Letters from the Editors

I've been thinking a lot about LHSP lately. This program has been my home on campus for three years now, and I expect this upcoming fourth year to be no different. But our name will be new, and that will be something. In light of this, I've been thinking a lot about what it has meant to be part of the LHSP community—both how that may change and how it never will. Mostly, I've been thinking about the people and experiences that have defined my LHSP journey. I've been thinking about the residents that have come and gone, the leadership that has changed hands, and all the ways LHSP (soon to be LSWA) has been renewing itself while maintaining its heart for students and their creativity.

This past year, like the other two years that I've been part of the Arts and Literary Journal team, I felt the same sort of awe that comes with each new batch of students and their submissions. Without question, the talented and passionate individuals our program manages to gather under one roof never ceases to amaze me. This year in particular, I was thoroughly impressed by the range and quality of the submissions the journal received. In truth, early in the submission cycle, we had to put our acceptances on hold because we were accepting too many things. This year's group of creators had enough talent to burst the binding of the finite pages of this journal, and that turned out to be a bittersweet aspect of our work as editors.

But all was not lost. The pieces that we *were* able to include make up quite a masterpiece of human emotion, experience, fantasy, and inner workings. In selecting a title, then, our editorial team chose something that we hope captures the importance of pondering all that this year's cohort had to offer. Drawn from the first line of Sidney Popp's provocative poem of the same name, *if you need time to think...* not only expresses our desire that this book be a

source of rumination for our readers, but also a memento, a coffee-table-favorite, and a solace for times when our minds get muddled. We hope that it will, like many works of creation, be something that leaves you changed, even if only in small or hard-to-articulate ways.

If nothing else, we hope you will think about all the hard work that went in to putting this journal together—both from our wildly talented students and from our editorial staff: Marie Sweetman, Morgan Rubino, Aubrianna Wickings, Emily Buckley, Lauren Champlin, Ekaterina Makhnina, Dana Pierangeli, Deena Sukhon, Teuta Zeneli, Melissa Zhang, and myself. This group of women made this year’s creation of the journal far more exciting and productive than I ever expected, and for that, I am immensely proud and grateful. Thank you to each one of you. And thank you to *you*, dear reader, for deciding to ponder so many of the amazing things this final cohort of LHSP students offered for our selection. I know that I, for one, will be reading this journal many years from now and thinking about each one of you. I hope that you, too, will read, reflect, and do the same.

—*Alexis Aulepp*

Life is unpredictable. If there’s anything that these first two years in college have taught me, it’s that the world has a way of keeping you on your toes, at times picking up speed and spinning completely out of control.

Yet it is in moments like these that I, and many of you, have turned to art. It is in moments like these that creative expression thrives, as it allows you an escape from the stressors of everyday existence. Art can grant you that time to think—time to reflect, look deep within yourself, and produce a complicated, beautiful, and raw semblance of your emotions. So if (and when) you need time to think, find solace in the presence and power of art, like all of the awe-inspiring contributors to this year’s journal have.

Before my second and final year in LHSP comes to a close, I must give special thanks to Alexis, Aubri, Marie, and this year’s club members—as it was your enthusiasm, insight, and laughter every Wednesday at 8pm that made this experience memorable.

—*Morgan Rubino*

Progress—that is what the Arts and Literary Journal has always symbolized to me. The Lloyd Hall Scholars Program is a place to flourish in a way that allows students to work hard to showcase their skills. Be it through visual representations, prose, poetry, or auditory representations—the journal the program manifests and curates on a year-to-year basis has allowed for people from across the university’s scheme of majors to remember one key fact: their creativity is still there, alive and well.

The Lloyd Hall Scholars Program Arts and Literary Journal has inspired students to leave their freshman year of college onto bigger and brighter things (inevitably), knowing all the while that they didn’t lose their sense of artsy whim. When one steps into a collegiate atmosphere which seems to thrive on executive dysfunction, insomnia, and networking so often that one can’t remember what makes them an individual before a student—a journal like *if you need time to think...* can inspire students to remember what makes them feel most at peace with their own power to do great things that no one else can.

That’s what *if you need time to think...*, as well as every literary journal before and after this, has meant for and to me. We’ve managed to cultivate a space, time and time again, for students to feel inspired to strive for. And because of the desire to strive that the journal instilled, I’ve had the privilege of watching my freshman-year roommate make room for an hour every night to work on her perspective drawings for her journal submissions. Because of that desire to strive, I’ve had the privilege of being a sophomore S.A. who gets to check in on her freshman mentees, only to hear them giddily ask me to listen to a poem they want to submit. Because of that desire to strive, I, myself, have been able to find a space where I feel like my art is worth sharing.

Therefore, I feel inclined to thank everyone involved in the creation of *if you need time to think...*, from my fellow club leaders, to every beautiful club member, to Marie and Carol, to Tina (for the end-of-the-year food and supplies, of course), and to everyone who gave us something to review every Wednesday night: My sophomore year was as inspiring as it was in part because of you all.

Here’s to a lifetime as an LHSP member and enthusiast and a lifetime as an LHSP alum.

—Aubrianna Wickings

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Alissa Asocar

A Hunger

//Cruel kings corrupting

 Their miserable mistresses

 Parading their plentiful pleasantries

 For pretty princesses

 Forgetting their faithful friends

 And worrying wards

 Substituting sturdy soldiers

 For senseless sharpers with swords//

Alexis Aulepp
Yin & Yang

Did you know that in China, *white*
is the color of mourning?

But in this place, *white*
is the color of new beginnings;

like weddings, or life
without you.

Here, *black* is the color of sadness.

Black like a line down the center
of a pure white page,

because, of course, *white*
is also *purity*.

Purity, as in
absence.

Absence, as in
you're gone.

*You're gone, as in
I'm sad.*

*I'm sad, as in
I'm watching the snow
blanket the earth
in cold, and new, and mourning,*

*and I'm trying to find a star that I can wish on,
or maybe give your name and talk to,
but all I can see is night.*

*And snow.
And black.
And white.
And absence.*

*A blank page. An un-chalked sidewalk. A painted wall, just waiting
for grubby little fingers, is all that is standing between you
and me. Just six feet of dirt
and a rock
and a million,
million stars.*

*A million pin pricks of fading, watery white,
floating on a smooth black sea.*

...

They are the same stars, I think,
that one can see from China.

Malin Andersson

The Leper's Tear

This is my house
I know
They did a great job
You can take off your coat
Just put it over there
What was that?
Oh, it's best if you leave them on
The floors are stone, so your feet can get cold
They were originally wood, but we had them redone
Oh, I know
Nobody should have wooden floors
It's like having dirt for a driveway, you know?
Primal, right
Plus, it creaks with every step you take, and
the girls have to learn to live silently

Oh, you must see this
Marvel at the winding staircase,
the diamond chandelier,
the stained glass window
Do you see what it depicts?
C'mon. Really?
Fine, I'll tell you
It's Jesus healing the leper

Look at the artistry,
how the light touches Jesus's hair,
the detail of his eyes
Beautiful
And, and look at the leper
He is so sad
I just love to look at him
See the tear on his face,
Isn't it lovely?
The craftsmanship is impeccable
A perfect tear
So pristine
So genuine
It's my favorite part, no doubt about it
The leper's tear

You didn't have trouble getting here, did you?
Oh, really? I guess because of the construction
It's for a house at the end of the street
A sick house
Actually, it was my idea
Thank you! You should've seen them
They littered the street when we first got here
I completely agree
Oh, I'm fine
Far enough away to be safe
Close enough so we share the same address
That was important to me
They should still be a part of society
Even though they don't look it, they're still people, I always say!
Plus, my morning walks are easier to navigate

Yeah, it was a maze
You should've seen them
Cloudy eyes,
bent shoulders,
some with no fingers!
I know!
Like this!
They'd hold out their hands and just look at you!
I'm telling you, I cried
Oh, not a lot
Don't worry
I offered three or four tears
My mother always taught me to be generous

If you come over to this window you can see the construction
It'll be nice
Cots,
a double door entrance,
beautiful hardwood floors,
a real home!
Thank you
Well, I've always had a big heart
Yeah. Right. I know
Well, we have to give back
Us, with staircases and chandeliers
We must lend our hand
If there's soap nearby
Yes
Lovely
How kind of you
Well, like I told you before
The leper's tear is my favorite part.

Mikayla Bosma
before the end

the melody washes over me
a vivid memory crawls over the notes
It vibrates through my fingers as it enters my mind.

i can almost hear my father's laughter
floating across the car,
the day we turned on regina spektor
and danced in the seats.

“i like it,” i told him. “it's pretty.”
he told me he already knew I would.

this was before the lines in his face
went from kind crinkles around his eyes
to deep lines across his forehead.

this was before everything we built crumbled in front of us
like his face crumbled when he found out about me
about us

before we attempted to fix the hurt with flimsy bandages
never fully addressing the wound
but painfully aware it was festering.

“eet,” the song said.
i looked it up that night.

it meant undo.
undo. undo. undo.
i only listened to that song for the rest of the year.

Mikayla Bosma

But Her Kids Weren't Fine

She used to water her plants with rainwater
Collected in dirt-caked milk cartons from festival foods.
“No point in paying for water the sky will give you” she'd say.
I always nodded in solemn agreement.

I never understood why my mom used the hose
Refusing to touch the buckets placed strategically around the garden.
“You'll understand when you're older,” she'd say.
I never thought I would.

But I guess I'm older now, by ten whole years.
She's gone; it was to be expected.
Apparently, a steady diet of abuse and trauma can lead to heart problems.

Her words are still with me today.
Nothing special,
Just the mundane phrases I grew so used to hearing.

“Get your feet off the furniture - this is not a barn!”

“You can’t eat in here, you’ll attract ants!”

“You bought that without a coupon? Do we look like damn millionaires?”

They echo in the cold garage

Where my mom would try to hide the evidence,

Coiling the hose back up

And making me dump the rainwater in the sink.

Her house was fine.

The appraiser went out of his way to tell us how well-kept it was.

We got more money for it—and I think we spent it on ham buns at the funeral.

Ethan Bruce

Skylight

We lie together
Our backs pressed against the cluttered carpet.
Our eyes look up
At the window that cuts, cleanly, through
The smoothness of the vaulted ceiling.

The window flashes with electric light
Pops of thunder punctuating the gentle roar
Of the heavy rain.
Lightning punches through electric air
His fingers curl tighter around my own.

I feel the warmth of his hand against mine
As it pulls me and leads me
Down the steps of the carpeted staircase
Out the front door and onto the porch
We are sheltered for a moment from the ire of the storm.

We run across the lawn
Feet stripped bare, toes pressed into wet grass.
Rain pours down our faces, water drips down our cheeks
Like happy tears past happy lips.
We're soaked in seconds.

The storm drags us
Leads us into the street where rivulets of water rush past our feet
On the rough concrete.
We looked at love from a safe distance
Before we stepped into the rain.

Rocío Cuesta Camuñas
One Year Later

Woods broken by winds,
roofs taken by rains,
an island, crying out in pain.
When they look at my home,
that is all they see,
and all they say it will ever be.

It has been one year since everything changed,
and we are still being targeted by the deranged
man who sits in his oval,
typing his words with total
disregard for truth or decency,
and people act like this is all there is to see.

What the people don't know
is the true beauty home can show.

They remember the dark of the days
and the lines in the streets,
but never the children, playing in the seas.

They do not hear the beat of the music,
nor the rhythmic footsteps of the people who use it.

They do not see the groups of teens,
taking to the streets to help clean.

They do not hear about the abuelitas
who lost everything but still toss
some coffee on the machine for the kind men
who are trying to turn the power on again.

One year has passed since the storm
and everything that was torn,
and brown and grey
is growing back to green today.

Yes, things were bad.
The people at home are still mad.
But my home has so much more
to show than the memory of blood and gore.

This is where I first learned to love
the nature around me, from native parrot to simple dove
while wandering through the remote paths of the rainforest, or
down the cobblestoned streets of San Juan that I've walked a million times before.

This is where family Christmas parties mean over fifty
people in your house, leaving you dizzy
because your tías give you sips of their coquito,
“para que aprendas un poquito.”

This is where microorganisms make the beaches literally glow
with neon blue lights, never bothered by threats of snow
because of the endless tropical state
of our not-quite U.S. state.

All of this is why, old or youth,
deep in our bones lies a simple truth:
We will survive through this bad weather,
so long as we continue to weather it together.

Justin Levine

Goodbye, Mr. Gills (an excerpt)

INT. RICHARD'S BATHROOM - DUSK

It's storming outside. The thunder ceases for a moment, and the tapping of dress shoes echoes. A man opens the door and enters. He is RICHARD. He is dressed in a suit and tie, and carries a plastic bag. He's a goofball, and he never lets anyone forget it. But today he seems somber.

Behind him is his closest friend, DOM. Dom isn't the brightest, but he shares Richard's sense of humor and heart. He too is expressionless, and he walks in with a suit and tie. There's a strange air, as if neither friend quite knows how to break the silence.

Richard turns to face his friend, making eye contact.

RICHARD

(staggering)

I-I-Don't even know where to begin.

DOM

You can do this, Rich.

Richard takes a deep breath. And then pauses. And then another deep breath.

RICHARD

We are gathered here today to honor someone no one else will weep for.

DOM

(nodding)

Damn straight.

RICHARD

We loved our friend, and while our relationship had its up and downs, I will never forget all that he's done for me.

Richard raises the bag now, and pours it into the toilet.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Rest in peace, Mr. Gills.

They stare down into the toilet, as Dom flushes it.

DOM

The best fucking fish to ever walk the Earth.

They stand in silence for a moment too long.

RICHARD

Well, I'm bored. Let's eat.

INT. RICHARD'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dom brings over a platter of fish sticks and fries, and sits down across from Richard. The two begin eating.

RICHARD

Dom, don't you think this is kind of fucked up?

DOM

(confused)

What's fucked up?

RICHARD

Never mind. You know, I found him right over there.

He points toward the kitchen buffet.

DOM

On...the counter?

RICHARD

Yeah. I took in the mail and I got some weird ass letter with my fish in it.

DOM

That's...super fucking weird. How did someone get the goldfish out of your house?

RICHARD

Man, I have no idea.

DOM

What did the letter say?

RICHARD

I don't know, I was a little distracted by the rotting corpse of my goldfish.

DOM

Dude, you don't actually think your fish was murdered, right?

RICHARD

He had to be. But why would anyone murder Mr. Gills? He's a fish! All he does is swim, eat, and shit.

DOM

No clue. Look, I've gotta get going. I've got my own fish to fry, if you know what I'm saying.

Dom gets up. Richard gives him an annoyed look, but Dom fails to realize the mistake he's made.

DOM(CONT'D)

(smiling)

Oh, my bad! Sorry for your loss, man!

RICHARD

That's not what—never mind. See ya.

DOM

Peace!

Dom leaves, forgetting his jacket. Richard sits for a moment, and then walks over and opens a drawer. He takes out a teal envelope, pulling out a letter. He glances at it rather unenthusiastically, but soon something catches his eye. He pulls the letter closer. The last sentence reads:

"this is only the first. aqua will be turned into sanguis. more is to come."

RICHARD

(under his breath)

What the fuck?

Richard walks over to his home office and takes out a post-it note. He writes down "sanguis" and places it on the wall.

He opens up the Internet and searches up the word. He finds it is a term in Latin, and then translates it. He writes "blood" on a post-it. He searches up "water will be turned into blood" and continues to scroll. He writes something else on a post-it.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What the—

The webpage he is looking at contains a bible verse: Exodus 7:14 - 11:10 NIV. He zooms in on something, his gaze fixed on the screen as he frantically scribbles on a post-it.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

"The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water."

He finishes writing post-its and attaches them all to a wall. He stares at them, shaking his head in confusion.

He takes out his phone and calls someone. It rings for a little bit, but then a woman picks up. She is HANNAH. She is reserved and highly intelligent and works as a detective for the city's police department. She and Richard haven't talked in years....

(End of excerpt)

Lauren Champlin

A Lesson in Floating

When I'd given you full control
why was I surprised when you abused it?
You took up space like water filling a glass
every soft word, a drop
every kiss on the cheek, a pour.
Leaving my space consumed
my head bobbing at the surface
fighting for air.
But I still stayed
because living without you scared me more than sinking within you.

Can you call me when you get a second?

The water has calmed since you left.
No longer a rushing stream
just a steady pool slowly draining.

My body floats to the surface with room to breathe now
nose breathing in
mouth breathing out
lowering with the water until my back
meets the cold surface of the empty glass.
The only water remaining clinging to my clothes
to my hair.

I feel guilty for missing you
for wanting to dive back into the freezing pool
to ease the stinging cold you left on my skin.
I feel guilty knowing that

If you called, I would always answer.

Grace Coudal

Unapologetic Apricot Jam

We bask in August sunbeams,
When the days fade like park bench orange peels.
When the weather feels like love,
tell me if you want the lights dimmer,
how much papaya I should save, what color tupperware to use.
Tell me if you want the window open. If you want the radiator on. If you want both.
How big is the bed your heart sleeps on?

Is there room for me in it?

Is there room for another silver spoon?

Hypnosis is easier in the heat.
Infatuation is easier in the summer.
Your smile scoops curves off my sun-freckled belly.

This is where you've lost your hunger,

Lost your sugar cubes,
coffee beans,
and lemon zest.

I'm sorry.

But,

I told you
I have a sweet tooth,

it's been here

since I was little.

Shreya Datta

An Open Letter to a Past Self

To you I say this:

It's become easy for you
To sit in the darkness
To crawl back into your shell
To get comfortable being hidden

To find any distraction to silence
The voices
in your head that
Make you feel small

You know how some kids want to be grown?
Not you
You knew growing up would be painful
In between the playfulness and the carelessness
There were moments when you just knew
That questions would get bigger and unanswerable

That warm fuzzy feeling that grew in your bones
As an adult you would spend a lifetime trying to get back
Holding on to whatever sparks made it feel alright again

Sometimes you just want to start all over again
What they don't tell you is that feeling never leaves

And that is what adulthood is for you
An effort
A process
To get that fuzziness back again

Shreya Datta

I Met My Dad in New Orleans

It was the gumbo
the hot, deep brown stew
peppered with cajun seasoning
burned your tongue
and melted the inhibition
in your stomach

No, it was the jazz
the whirling tempos and asymmetrical rhythms
drummed into your head
and released the pressure

I think it was the lights
words glided off your tongue
and as we passed by the gaps
of the cobblestone, dimly lit alleyways
I saw glimpses of a hopeful past

That week
the lights shone brighter
the people more dimensioned
the moments more weighted
time slowed

Doubt crept back and joined the beads in the sewers

I think about the hurt I've caused you
the frustration and the sleepless nights
how duty rode your back and made your spine hunch
how, when we spoke
each word that came out of your mouth was tinged
with the flavor of lost hope

But there in New Orleans
I saw a part of you that I had missed before
something that I wouldn't give myself a chance to see
a part I wish I could keep

Alejandro Derieux

Cider Press

Apples ferment heavy
in the bottom of an oaken barrel
hardlined with wood grain Steel rims
hold strong on dark stained planks

Hole in the side lets through not light
but scent Waft it to your nose
Like earth and leaf
with a top note of age

The forest floor in autumn replaces
the crunchy, gilded underfoot
as it's blown away
Maintains a constant state
to the part-time observer
Like these apples in the lack of aether

Confined in a body
they change themselves
Submerged in fluid they exit
in different forms
But still isolated from study
in the security of the closed barrel they
exist as all at once

Seemingly formless the apples
are granted infinite potential by a lack
of sense Until they meet humans
and collapse into short-held meaning

Corneal feedback
Hormonal decisions
Impulsive fingers

Body heat

Alejandro Derieux
Elephant Funeral

Sprawled over paisley carpet slowed bodies encircle vision.
With grin askew from mouth – feel like novacaine
I ask where I can sleep.

I'm ferried to an unlit room in the middle of stairs
snug between floors. The doorway spits ink tint in line of sight.
I extend my arm to probe through.

A lamp luminesces. My guide already across.
Bookshelves line the edges. Titles gossip of cities
child-rearing and weight loss. He points to the bed.
Here.

The pillowcase reeks of menthol toothpaste and smoke.
I tug the bulb's cord click the light off meter my breath
in pace toward daybreak.

Farther into seas of night the door creaks open. I wait
for footsteps the rustle of sheets weight of a bedfellow
to sink me toward the left.
They exit instead.

What did they see
among this vacancy
of starbeams?

Alejandro Derieux

Puddle Jumping

Duckling yellow raincoat
Drips dry over dew glossed undergrowth
Drapes over miniature silhouette
Pale carnation pink trousers
With the lime green galoshes polka-dotted with tulips

A nearby butterfly
Perches atop the purple inferno of a clover bloom
Sunbeams bake its orangutan-orange back panels
Black, jaguar-spot speckles

Those unwitting galoshes galumph
In pattern to place
The porcelain whirligig underfoot
In a corkscrew/pirouette/ribbon dance
It evacuates

Tissue-thin wings flutter
Waves of air pressure:
ripple the waterlogged surface
of sweat-coated fingers,
tingle the nerve cell roots
below hair follicle mangrove trees

This tickle picks its pace
Through the toddler explorer's sensory circuits
An energetic crawl along bone length
Up wrist and elbow
Bicep, shoulder
Spinal cord
Followed by

A giggle

Alejandro Derieux

Scott Sits on the Floor / I Lie on the Sofa

Take me apart with a seam ripper
Vivisect me along the dotted line where convictions and intestinal lining fail to mesh
Until I'm a cross section of human-shaped fabric wide enough to embrace

Keep yourself warm on nights when the bulbs of the stars no longer shine and the landlord shuts
the heat off

Frosted corners of the room in mimicry of grocery store freezers, the vanity on your bureau fogs
like the streets undercurrent of these numbed toes

Anchor my spread thumb and little finger with pins

Mount me to your wall like the death-form of a luna moth; elven wings half-parted and dusted
with flakes of smashed emeralds and lux

A hypodermic tapestry of filtered trash pumped from one end of the bottle's clamping roots to
the other,

A storybook barren of all fantasy except the sound of scalpel on swollen abdomen imbued into
the turn of every page

When you're bored:

Write "leave" below the wrinkled flesh where my larynx pressed

My bones will crawl from the charcoal black dustbin with "things not worth keeping"

spray-painted on it in orange,
Arrange themselves in the perfect symmetry of the crustacean Cancer,
Puppet me across the salt-and-pepper linoleum,
And out over the green sill of your kitchen window

I'm the hawk,
Struck by a car,
Hidden beneath a white pine off the side of the interstate
Scarlet-speckled wing held hard to its breast

The missing radians of a pediatric wheelchair tire,
Swallowed in the undulation of a polyethylene tarp and its azure dunes
Stagnant in the trunk space of an ash-colored Subaru minivan

The abstruse jealousy
Between an emptied plate
And a stomach full of eaten food

One day I may return
For the clear plastic bag labeled "things worth remembering"

When I do:

Lock the door

Mitchel Dipzinski

You're Not Coming Home as *THAT*, Are You?

she lamented. I sat in the backseat
of the car, gripping my pillow,
knuckles bleached white. laundry
stacked to my left. the door pressed
firmly to my right shoulder. words
stuck like cement in my throat. she
glared through the rearview mirror.
my thoughts raced, backtracking, thinking
of excuses for bringing it up. the fear of
That raging inside.

That is a communal creature who
loves unconditionally. *That*
is a creature who wears colors,
celebrates within a grey world.

That looks back at her with passion,
cloaked in timidity, and

wishes to love out in
the open. *That* sits in
defiance to expectations.

don't be afraid of *That*: it's only
Queer.

Laura Dzubay

**listening to “boots of spanish leather” at a gas station
in leland, michigan**

what would I forsake / for your sweet kiss? the car / I got when I was 17? my brother's / teeth? /
my own teeth are not such treasures / to me / I don't get letters on lonesome days / I get texts and
DMs on regular / days / not all of my days are lonesome / but all of my days / have lonesome
parts / your last text said you were doin fine / doin fine / it made me want to sing a song / to you
or someone / like you / maybe just to me / it made me want to reach my hand into the phone /
wear the light like a glove / wave it around / diamonds from the deepest ocean / drenched to my
wrist / when people speak / the words always sound one of two ways / entrances or exits / I like
it the first way / I guess that's something I'd never forsake / I'm not cruel I just have / cursed
values / like how the words / your lips / might be more beautiful than your lips / like how your
kiss / feels like an exit / to me

Laura Dzubay

listening to mitski on the drive to my mom's house

*I bet on losing dogs / as the sun makes / golden beetles / of all the cars in front of me / a cresting wave / under the purple / how is it / you can make everything else seem ignited / just by / igniting it / song lyrics are important to me / I told my friend the other day / this is the same friend who we're both going to be famous / someday / we pinky promised / lately I've been shaking / all the time / even when I'm not shaking / will I ever / be the mouth / *happy come inside of me* / as the sun makes white / teeth of a cloud / doubloon sun / how about that / how about I sing your praises / singing my own / has never / worked / someday / I'll sail / from a cliff's edge / I'll scratch the side / on my way down / see / the copper flakes / I will not land / anywhere.*

Mia Ersher

Constant Change

For a moment,
everything goes back to normal,
It is here where I am safe,
Here where everything's familiar,
But, still, nothing is certain.

What is it about memories
That makes you change?
For a moment,
I am different,
But, still, the same.
I remember moments in my life
But I don't just remember,
I feel them.
I experience them.
Because I am here,
But only for a moment.

Annie Ning

Views from the Middle of the River

“Nurse, hey, Miss Nurse, could you do me a favor? If you’re not too busy, could you write down what I say? You might need to pull up a chair; this’ll probably take a while.

“Huh? Why? Haha, Miss Nurse, don’t patronize me. Don’t pretend you don’t see these wires on the floor and tubes in my body. Don’t pretend you haven’t noticed the stench in the room or the reaper waiting patiently in the corner. I’m already a dead man. These are going to be my last words.

“Let’s start from the beginning, from the very beginning. From that gorgeously ambiguous higher power that we call the gods, or whatever you prefer, that power that has forsaken me—let’s start there. Those gods who left me, an average man with an average story who lived an average life—they left me here without a care in the world and now sit up in their endless nowhere and laugh, not at just me but at us. Because I’ve realized in my time here that we are all bits of the same: average beings with average lives in an average world, floating aimlessly in the middle of utterly nowhere. The futility of life, the absurdity of it all, those gods pour themselves gleaming chalices of blood red wine and give a boisterous, lively toast to it. They say that suffering is given to us in order to teach us the value of life—they say it while sitting on their lotus and gold thrones, playing russian roulette to see which puny little mortal gets the gift of tragedy next. I will not pray to them. There is no point in praying to those who only take. But I do not resent them either. Nothing else could have been done. To blame and to let blame...from that no hope can be born. I refuse to play that desolate game.

“What should I address after the gods...the world? Let’s say it’s the world, this world of ours that belongs to the young, the strong. I’ve already forgotten it—the taste of the air on my tongue, the orange sunlight at three in the afternoon. I wonder what it was like to sit in a café with nothing to do. I wonder if one day I’ll remember. All I know is this hospital room, after all, this white ceiling and the constant beep of the heart monitor. Though I’m sure this place will be devoid of that sound soon.

“Miss Nurse, don’t cry, don’t cry yet. Cry when this is all said and done, when this room is empty and it doesn’t smell like rot anymore. But not yet. Wait for this dying man to use up the rest of his fading soul. I have yet more words for you—more words about this beautiful, beautiful world that I cherished even before I ended up on this hospital bed.

“I wanted to see it all, but I only got as far as the ocean—didn’t cross it. My toes touched that water and it was cold, so cold. And the salt burned my eyes and the back of my mouth but I was young and alive then so it didn’t matter. I saw seals basking on the buoys in the harbor under the same sun that was soaking so generously across my back and seeping all the way through to my bones. My nose was red and my toes were freezing, but it was warm there on that windy, foamy coast strewn with black seaweed, so, so warm. If I weren’t lying here right now in this cluttered hospital room, I’d probably already be on the other side of that chilly, sunlit ocean. I didn’t know what I would’ve seen on the other side, but I’ll shamelessly admit that I wanted to go anyway. Like young people always do. Oh, the taste of recklessness. How I regret not tasting it more. I would’ve gone to all the places, all the wonders in the world, perhaps. To climb the icy cliffs of mountains suspended in the sky and then run my hands through swathes of clouds as they pass by my side. Maybe I’d breathe the cold morning fog of ancient forests, ankle deep in three-leaf clovers, and trail my fingers through their clear rivers that feel like silk against my palms. Or maybe I’d just sit at a hole-in-the-wall café on the side of the road in the city of Nowhere and listen to the sound of people, the low murmur of passing lives that are just as colorful as my own. Lives that I will never know. Lives and sounds that I haven’t heard ever since I woke up to white

lights glaring from a white ceiling, accompanied by this steady, steady beep that's been slowing for the past long-enough. I wonder what it felt like back then when my throat wasn't crusted in a layer of medicine and I could walk on my own two feet. I wonder if the sun is still as warm as it used to be, out on that chilly shore that I thought about crossing once. Not anymore.

“Miss, you're crying again. The ink will bleed if your tears spill onto your writing, you know. But still, I'm glad you're here. You've got a pen, a paper, and my last words held in the palm of your hand, so I think that makes you the most powerful person in the world right now—I think that might just make you the strongest, too. It takes a lot of courage to listen to a dead man, doesn't it? So don't cry, please don't cry. I don't regret living and, lying here right now, I'm not afraid of dying. I stopped being afraid a long time ago. When I realized that blaming those gods wouldn't change a thing, I closed my eyes and began to wait for the day when I finally cross that murky, black river and take the sound of my beeping, beeping heartbeat with me. Because I don't believe in miracles. If I did, I wouldn't be here, giving you my last words. I'd probably be praying to that incorrigible divine power or whatever it's called that maybe it would forget about the tragedy, about the morbid game it played with my life, and I'd wake up tomorrow ready to walk across that ocean to the side I never saw. But I won't pray; I can't. The gods don't care. And I can't blame them either for the same reason. Their lungs are so deep, their voices so bellowing, that no matter how loud I scream, no matter what I say, they won't hear a thing. So, Miss Nurse, I am not afraid of death. I might not want to die, but I've already come to terms with the idea of crossing that barren river. I just... I don't know, I guess I just wish that you could tell me what it looks like on the other side. Are there still oceans with their cold, salty breezes? Is the sun still warm? Are there valleys, caverns, skies, monuments, wonders, incredible things that will make me feel like a child seeing the world for the first time? Is it beautiful over there? Miss Nurse, do you think it's beautiful?

“I might’ve told you that I’m not afraid of death, but, honestly, I think I’ll miss this world. This world full of things I wasn’t given the time to explore, so many things that would’ve taken my breath away in a fashion less literal than my current state. ‘Valleys, caverns, skies, monuments,’ I’d told you, and ‘wonders.’ Wonders I’ve never seen, wonders maybe nobody’s ever seen. Jade mountains that tower over my head and into the clouds, so high that it wouldn’t be hard to imagine them touching the stars, already hewn cold and smooth over more than just a few hundred millennia. Canyons that tumble and crash straight down into the earth, into the ocean, so deep that even time hasn’t managed to reach the bottom. So deep that perhaps if I jumped in, I’d never stop falling. Colors and things and places and maybe even people—families that spend lazy Sunday afternoons on card games and reruns of old movies, that laugh at each other’s antics and wake up to the smell of coffee brewing every morning. Maybe they exist too, those kinds of wonders, those kinds of sunlit, fairytale wonders. The kind I never got to be a part of.

“I’ll miss the world and I guess I have to thank the gods just this once for creating a spectacle so extraordinary. I’m sure the river I have to cross will chill my toes like the ocean did, and I have to admit that that makes me just a little bit happy. At the very least, it will mean that I’m actually standing on my own two feet—for the first time in much too long. So, Miss Nurse, Miss most-powerful-person-in-the-world-right-now, as I begin to board for my final departure, I must find some proper last words for you. I’m not lonely, no; I won’t tell you anything about that. And I don’t have any ‘if-only’s left either. All I can do is thank you, thank you for hearing out this dying man, this hopeless, dying man. And then I guess I’ll have to tell you not to cry. Don’t be sad; I’m not sad that I’m withering away. I’m sure it’s warm over there across the opaque mist that rises over the river. I’m sure the ocean still smells like fresh yesterday, and the sun still feels like a heavy down blanket around my shoulders. Maybe I’ll even be able to hear the sound of people again. Who knows?

“I’m a dead man, already halfway there. So, Miss Nurse, don’t cry. I promise you—it’s beautiful on the other side.”

Sidney Fisher
Jazzed on life

is a bare chest

glistening

still so innocent

if it is marinated from the inside

with responsibility

cut abreast

are you listening?

To the pop of ligaments

And flavor of cedar, burns my eyes

A wound of zero versatility

Sidney Fisher

How to open up to your therapist in eight steps

1. Hide.
2. You can hear her counting. 9. 10. 11. 12. Get as small as you can. Don't breathe. You can hear her footsteps coming toward the empty cupboard in the armoire. Towards you. As soon as she peeks inside, turn to dust.
3. Think of some better hiding spots on the way home, but don't trace the way home in your head because the ride will feel longer.
4. Notice how the sunlight was addressed to someone else. If it weren't, you wouldn't have to squint.
5. Allow the weight of your tongue to settle in your dry mouth. Feel guilty.
6. Wrap your pinkies together so that you are liable in keeping a promise to yourself. I'll do better next time.
7. Feel your mother send you a disappointed glance as she reminds you that you aren't doing her any favors,
8. Do better next time.

Sidney Fisher

Stalled

I yearn for something human
A nap, a sickness, a hug
Something to warm my body
Almost to sweat
Something to give attention to me
And only me
For the time being
A treasure hunt lies in these hallways
Looking for my wants
Needs
Desires
To escape the sea of bodies, counterintuitively
I barricade myself in a bathroom stall
Breath labored and dry
I rest on the toilet seat
Warmed by her thighs

Sidney Fisher

Why do I do this

First,
it was an accident
Running my fingers through your
hair, hoping the oils will linger until
tomorrow.
I stayed up with you until it drained
Me and the bags under my eyes are too heavy to hold alone
So why do you insist on going out
when you can see the color from my face lays in a puddle on the floor
drying into the grout and seeping into
the down of my bed's pillow.
You hope it will evaporate so
that you can just take it off and
move on, but the longer it sits,
the more pungent the mildew smell
will get until we forget what
the room ever smelled like when
it was new.

I find myself rubbing
my fingertips on my soft denim
until they tingle and burn, and
I know, however long I might yearn to feel warmth or
togetherness or some shit, I will find myself wading in the smell.

Sidney Fisher

Your absence

Your absence is a lamb
Bleating a ringing in my ears
Stamping impatient feet
Blurred behind hot tears

Down the second corridor
And all through the night
Eating bulbs of peonies
Shredding tapestries to light

Tonight I would dance
For the first time in years
Stamping impatient feet
Blurred behind hot tears

Amber Foster

Underlying Message

Even the smallest seed of happiness
always blooms with
the thorn of hate and
leaves no room for
love

The reality is that
expressing hatred
is more natural for us compared to
expressing love

We know

“love is patient, love is kind” –1 Corinthians 13:4
is a cliché because

“love only breeds eternal misery”

It is clear that in our world
the feeling of hate
is stronger and easier than
the feeling of love

We’ve learned that
allowing yourself to be loved
requires more suffering than

not being loved at all
In the future, our children will discover that
choosing to live a life with love
will always be contradicted by
a world filled with hate
We live in a society where
trying to protect ourselves
is far more valuable than
looking out for the people we care about
I have realized that
There is no hope for a hate-less world unless we decide to *reverse it*.

(Note from author: Now, read the poem backwards. Start with the last line and end at the first line.)

Dylan Gilbert

After “The Morning is Full” by Pablo Neruda

The morning is full of storm
And then it breaks and that is called thunder
My body is full of my partner
And then it breaks and that is called pleasure

I have always gone wide-eyed at the sight of something shattered
Glass on the floor
Ceramic on the floor
My father on the floor

Each of them scattered
Each a jagged mess
Each ruined
By my hands
I am
Clumsy and queer
And I should just stop touching things
I'm not supposed to

2014

I am a sophomore in high school

My dad is spread on the bathroom tile

And so is his urine

so is the rum

so are my eyes

He tells me

No more faggots in his house

So I break up with my girlfriend of six months over text

Tell my best friend she can't spend the night anymore after basketball games

Unzip my wrist and pour half of myself down the drain

No more faggots in his house

My heart was full of her

And then everything broke and that is called

Catholicism

A good daughter

Keeping the family together

Keeping my father off the floor

Now

I am a sophomore in college I wear
My cross on my neck
My boyfriend's arm on my shoulder
I am not looking to go wide-eyed
I can't afford to break anything else
So I cover it all in plastic
My notebooks
The cups
My nails
The sex
I don't touch anything
I'm not supposed to

Dylan Gilbert

everything smooths in the water but me

and i used to envy
all the
canine-toothed bottles
and arrowhead rocks
that kick and roll in earth's womb
and wash up baby-skinned

for my body grandmothers in oceans
waves tattoo their motion on finger tips
and toes wrinkle like post-worship bed sheets

maybe the ocean cannot sand down any body that holds edges as soft as its own
maybe the way my belly curve like a whisper
and thighs press into one another like unsure lovers
makes me brook
or creek
or any third cousin of the sea

on land
all the crooked air and angled cement
scream at me that i am
black girl hard
that i rip through throats with an undisciplined tongue
that i occupy and hold hostage every space i'm set in
that i pickpocket silences and fill the void with all my loud
and angry
and everything in need of a
"calm down"

it is then that i leave the:
discussion section

/Lecture hall

/Espresso royale

/ * *

so that i may
let my fingers venture into the cascade of a public bathroom sink
just to watch my palms ripple
just to remind myself that
i don't smooth, i mimic water
and i am soft
and this is skin

and i am human
and i am human
and i am human

even when they make me out not to be

Dylan Gilbert

I wonder who I'm here to make room for

On my dumbest days
When I only show up to lecture to study the hands of the girl
I want to know
I can hear all my ancestors sigh at once
I come from a long line of gold chains, tired bibles, and desperate people
Everything in this poem is in the biblical sense of course

All this generational disappointment is suspended above me like the dullest halo
And I must seem like a real silly thing to have suffered for right about now
Gay and ditzzy
And even late on rent for the home I've made inside my head

On the days when my feet are closest to the ground
I think I am my grandmother waiting to happen
And I think she would take offense
Seems like the farther I stray from God the closer I get to her

She was a teacher
Every job I've ever had has been working with children and I didn't notice
until Jamie called me Ms. Gaines last week

It won't be long until I leave no cheek without my lipstick on it
And discover all the uses of a wooden spoon

They tell me I look like her
But my grandfather didn't start calling me "Bernadette" until after she died
You could call that dementia if you wanted
But I don't

Pretty sure I inhaled some of her at the funeral home and I've been holding my breath
ever since

She had three sons
One is terrible
She loved three sons

And it makes me want to
Cut my womb out
Salt it
And hang it in the basement to dry

I wonder if she would erase them all if given the choice
If I were my grandmother
(and some days I do believe I am)
I might
Erase my children and all of theirs and all their great loves
Just to escape the thought of birthing the ugliest part of myself
And then having to love it

But I'd only say this on paper
Or in a jar to store in the basement cupboard with my jerked uterus

I'll probably be like her
Marry a man
And marry him young
Maybe regret it
But I'll never tell

Just take my husband to the crawl space under my house so he can see how infertile and
terrible I am
So he can divorce me himself
I'll say "yes dear"
Yes dear
Yes dear
Like the women in my family do
Smile,
Agree
Make him a plate
And don't care if we look weak

Because it's always coming out of his mouth
But our fingertips wet as lobbyists for guns
And don't we always know
Who placed the thought under his tongue?

Dylan Gilbert

the mother, the moon, and everything is holy

when i am forced to breathe the driest cold
the kind that chaps my lips and lungs and leaves me splintering
when i am too far from sand
and the sun is all too selfish
when i cannot be enveloped in an ocean
i am forced to become one
or not forced
or yes
forced
but it is gentle
the softest power
handles me with gloves and only moves what is under the skin
it is the moon mothering the tides
pushing the waves away and back to her

Be free

Come home

Be free

Come home

i am swayed by the moon
like i was expelled from a part in her thighs
i am 86 percent water or some other shocking number
and i think that makes me just as child as the sea
i swell and fall flat
i leak salt and have even drowned a few bodies
i hold reflections

if you put a mirror to another mirror don't they just bounce light off one another?
if i stand under the moon on a night with no clouds will we play catch with the sun's excess?
will she feel me back?
how do you repay a parent?

the other night mother bled all over the sky and i didn't even gather a cloth for her
didn't even ask if she was okay
just drank all her pomegranate stained haze
selfish and horny and hiccuping
i didn't even bother to ask
typical teenager
self-obsessed and drunk
i can't buy the moon a house when i've made something of myself

how do you repay a parent that only knows giving
and nothing else
not even your name

Subarna Bhattacharya

The Presence of Woman

For a Hindu girl hailing from the west of India, there is no event that creates more excitement than the auspicious Durga Puja. During this time, we pay homage to our Mother Goddess, Mahishasura Mardini: the one who slayed the demon Mahishasura. These festivities are wrought with pomp and color in honor of the female deity who defeated the demon no male could. So it's no surprise that I've always believed in the power of the female mind and heart.

But as I grew up, I became more in tune with the “real” world: gang rapes on public buses, domestic violence tearing families apart, and the silencing of victims who had spent too long already being silent. This silence confused me; why does my culture spend countless days of the year making offerings to the female goddesses, yet recoils when women express themselves?

I realized that our society may like the idea of a brave woman, yet when we are faced with a real one, we suddenly tighten the reins. I started to believe that I would be better off holding myself in and becoming a shadow of who I really was. For my entire middle school and early high school life, I thought I was protecting myself from the humiliation that so many girls my age had faced from the public.

Now that I look back upon these years of my life, I realize just how dangerous it is for a girl to stop believing in herself just because she has a slightly different genetic composition than her male counterpart.

As Durga Puja 2016 rolled around, I felt the familiar anticipation of a week of laughter, devotion, and good food. But this year, there was something else at the back of my mind. The 2016 U.S. presidential election made me more aware of the misogyny that our nation has accepted for generations. Thanks to social media, comments like “women have too many hormones” and “a woman is too fragile to be trusted with the nuclear codes” seemed to erupt from every corner of the country.

Now, I don't have a revolutionary solution to gender inequality; all I can say is that I was able to rethink my own views about myself and change them for the good. Reading all of the opinions people had about a female president made me realize that I was holding these same beliefs about myself. How can I look towards a more equal, inclusive America if I can't accept myself, as well? If the stories of the goddess Durga have taught me anything, it's that even if the bad guys underestimate a woman, she will prove herself capable.

I had to stop being the bad guy. I had to convince myself that I could accomplish whatever I wanted, and if someone had a problem with me being outspoken, so be it. When I stopped caring about how I looked to the world, I started caring about how I looked to myself. After all, aren't we our most important critics?

The world has a long way to go before achieving gender equality. For me, the first step was to accept that I was equal to my peers. By learning to value myself, I am even more inspired by the strong women in both the media and my religion who fight for what is right. As I enter college, the gateway to adulthood, I will continue to be inspired and motivated by these women, and will do my part in proving to the world that we all have a bit of Maa Durga in us.

Macy Goller

An Open Letter to My Mom

Thank you for being accepting.

I've changed a lot this year and I know it's been hard on you.

We didn't pray at Thanksgiving this year because atheists outnumbered my parents.

That was weird.

My girlfriend came over and that was fun.

We watched *Schitt's Creek* and my dad didn't yell "No!" when the gay guys kissed.

That was cool.

My mom didn't slap the steering wheel and yell, "No, you're not gay!" once this week.

That was cool, too.

Because I'm not gay, I'm bisexual, as I explained to her.

And that gave my mom some peace of mind.

"I just don't want you to miss out on being married to a man and having kids."

"There's a really special bond between a man and a woman."

"But I really like Julia, you understand that, right? I think you guys are great together."

Thanks, mom, I like her too.

My mom cried when I told her I didn't believe in God anymore.
She kept crying when I said, "or if there is one, I don't think I like him."
But once she calmed down she told me she understood this was just a phase of doubt I had to go through and when I was ready to come back God would be waiting for me.

The worst part was that was really nice to hear.
Me and my mom used to talk Jesus for hours, throwing Bible verses back and forth.
But now when I'm sad I don't go to her anymore 'cause she throws Jesus at me but I don't catch him anymore.
And when she tells me she loves Julia, I smile through the knowledge that Julia is the only part of this new me that she likes.

I'm sorry, mom, I still love you.
I always will, but we're not so close anymore.
We can't be, we don't want the same things.
I'm sorry, mom.
I don't want Jesus or his dick.

Macy Goller

The Night the Wolf Man Bowed My Strings

His vexing music overtakes the diag
A night once filled with noise of boots and groups
Silenced by sounds that will leave me in ag-
-ony. Oh, as he plays, I swoon, he loops

*

In his boober and swirling goes the sound.
To be with him under his chin as dear
To him as his violin we'd go round
And I'd close my eyes and open my ears,

*

Feeling only the softness of his paws.
But the wolf man knows not that I exist.
With each melodic clause I'm caused to pause
And "awoo" for his sweet allusive kiss.

*

The bow juices sound from the fine carved wood,
The bow pressing and pulling me under
His spell, I melt, hit the ground and go mute.
Howls of sirens silence the night's murmur.

*

Along with the bitterness of the air
I've breathed in the last sweetness of his song
Perhaps my last breath lest the medics care
Not for haste and are stopped by song along

*

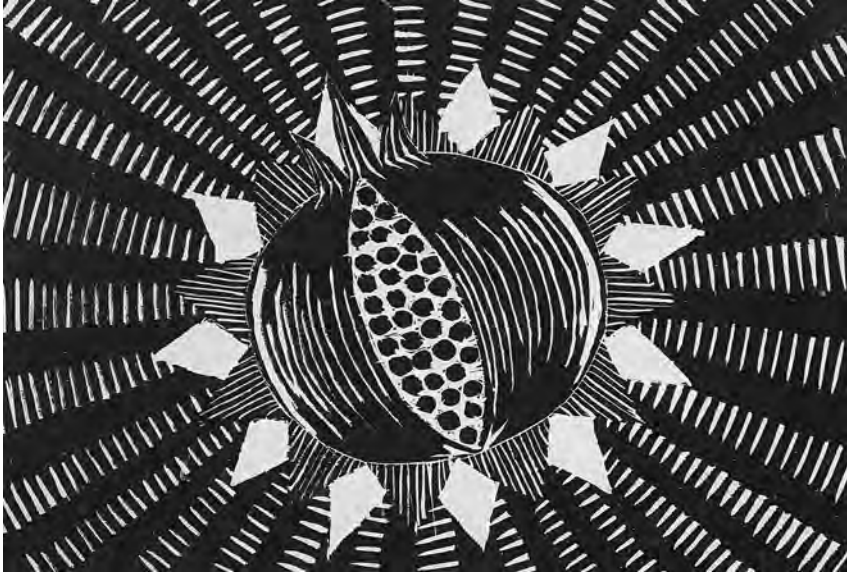
Their way as I was and fall faint as well.
This death of theirs and mine is no matter
Wolf Man commits no crime despite casualty.
For his music brings life and that's all that matters to me.



Savannah Abluwalia

Dreary Day

Photography



Emily Anfang
Pomegranate
Ink on paper



Jenny Boudon

Le Leçon de Mandy

Gouaché on paper



Noah Brenner
Home Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's "Falling Water"
SketchUp (3D Modeling Software)



Noah Brenner

Make America Safe Again

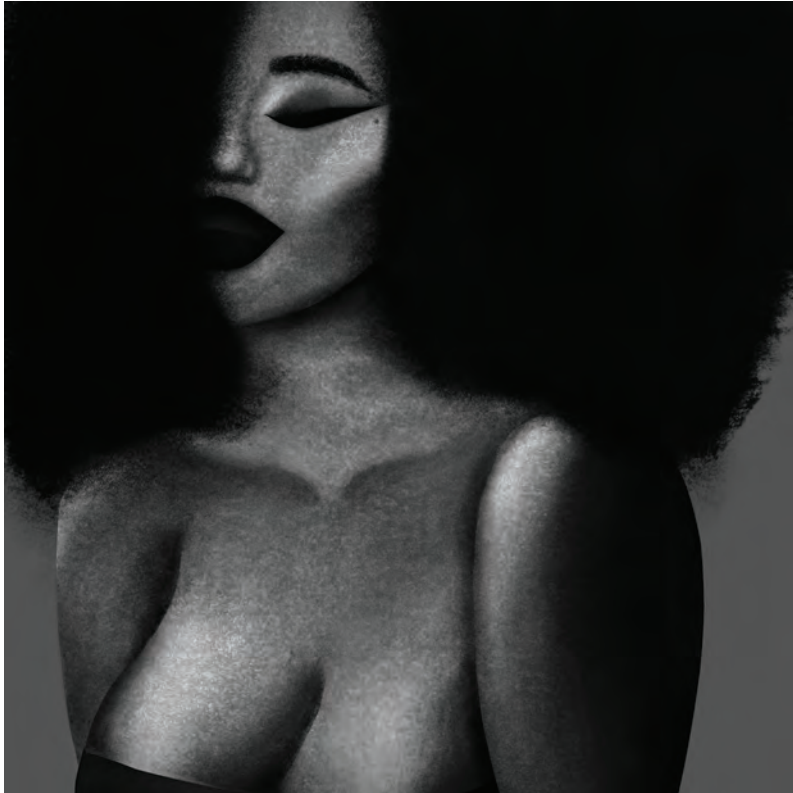
Photography (Canon t5i)



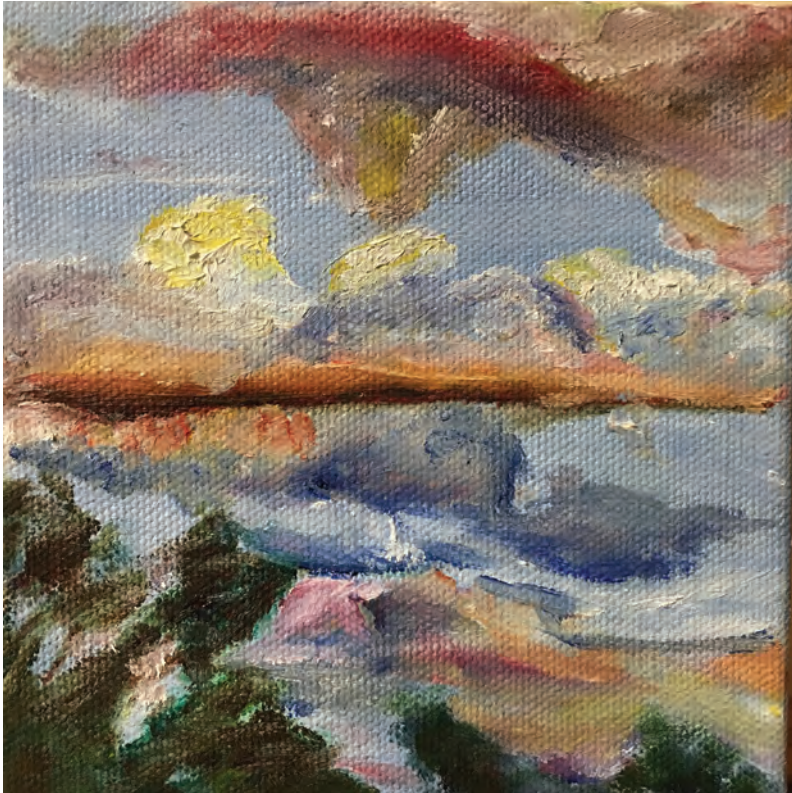
Ethan Bruce
Overlook
Digital photography



Emily Buckley
September
Digital



Emily Buckley
Strength in Self
Digital



Shauna Caffrey

sunset

Oil paints on canvas



Michelle Cai
Alive
Embroidery



Lauren Champlin

Illuminate

Acrylic paint on canvas



Lauren Champlin
Mother of Space
Acrylic paint on canvas



Nicole Choi

Abstract Thinking

18x24 in, mixed media



Nicole Choi

Fish

24x18 in, watercolor and colored pencil



Nicole Choi

Solitude

2866x3600 px, PhotoShop



Marcus Clark
Prince
Graphite pencils



Madison Copley

Pop
Pencil



Jack Ellington
Untitled
Watercolor



Sidney Fisher

Strong Black Man

Embroidery



Lara Graney
FTOD
Photography



Mary Hepp
Evening Lily
Photography



Christina Kim
2-in-1
Acrylic on cutting board



Christina Kim

A Gift from Earth

Acrylic on mat board



Christina Kim
A Gift from Man
Acrylic on mat board



Kyra Koprowski

Erin

Oil



Kyra Koprowski
Fabulous Flamingo Friends
Acrylic



Kyra Koprowski

Isolate vs. Embrace

Charcoal



Kyra Koprowski
Lady Peacock
Acrylic



Mihir Kothari
Drowning
Photography



Mihir Kothari
Silenced
Photography



Kirsten Lam

The College Experience™

Collage



Kirsten Lam
On the Road Again
Digital (GIMP)



Caroline Leary
Blue Car in France



Caroline Leary
Elephant in Space



Grace Livsey

Chalk Sunsets

Chalk pastels



Grace Ma
Dancing Sculpture
Acrylic on canvas



Ekaterina Makhnina
Playing with Fire
Digital



Lily Nunn
First Look at Innocence
Photography



Celeste Pan

Corner

Pencil



Mariah Parker
Hand
Photography



Dana Pierangeli
cityscape perception
Photography



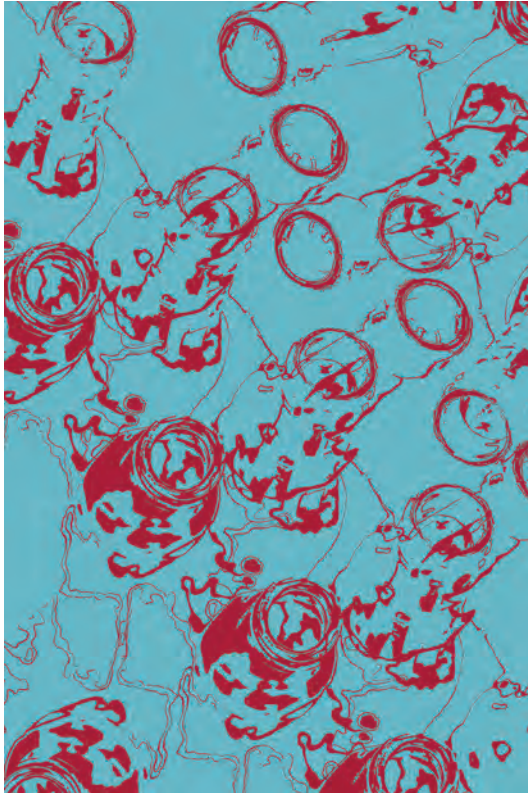
Dana Pierangeli
cityscape perception
Photography



Dana Pierangeli
cityscape perception
Photography



Dana Pierangeli
cityscape perception
Photography



Jessica Rice
Untitled



Keri Zhang
The Best Nightmare
Collage



Melissa Zhang

Details

Photography

Tyler Gordon

gentrified expression

gentrified expression, cut off by their digression
gentrified expression, looking for a point of entrance
motivational neon sign over the window's rainbow flag
shop owned by the man who called me and my boyfriend a
million at Chicago pride but none of the floats are ours
they drag us out for a spectacle while I just look for clear coasts
but find bars swarmed by straight girls looking for a token
or for safety, all of us products of a system broken
you visit our neighborhoods, wear our colors, pledge support
but when the stone wall falls on us you sit and watch from hedge forts
white moderate was mlk's bane, they still let us get bled out
same moderate that called us aids carriers, don't think we forgot
same moderate that thinks racism ended in '08
same moderate that thinks gays have been safe since '15
same public that thinks systemic change is too extreme
same moderate made up of both parties' old guard
your tweets don't do shit to save anything but your conscience
i remember who called me faggot then made their facebook profile rainbow
can't you guys just do it in private?
why are you still complaining?

Tyler Gordon
stage left

curtain rises, spotlight on stage right but I'm on the wrong side
heart on my sleeve, this boy gonna catch a solo next time
this mask a past version from the edge of memories faded
can't slip into a character, I don't belong on the stage
how long can you run before hitting the edge of the cage
scribble five versions before flipping the page
can't use the backside because the ink bled right through
this a landslide all thoughts at once make a jumbled story
tripped on the groove for the moving set piece I asked for
arms flail on the fall down biggest laugh so far
people laugh at your pain or they relate to your pain
either way all I know how to do is channel from my brain

play the jester the linda the biff all at once
never played the star and this focus unfamiliar
control freak support staff nobody's favorite
there's a big red flag and the whole audience waving it
this oversharing isn't healthy but it makes for entertainment
and it's catharsis giving one more day so I'll entertain it

Niharika Kalia

A Not Very Definitive List of Things I May or May Not Have at Some Point Kinda Done

When the white man crossing the street tells you to go see a psychiatrist. Resist the urge to punch him with a fist in the shape of a foreign language. Bite your tongue. Let it bleed.

Cut your hair. Let it fall in clumps on your bare shoulders. It looks like shit. You feel great. You don't look like you did when she broke your heart over the phone.

Burst into tears in the middle of a coffee-shop.

Disappear for an indeterminate length of time. By disappear I mean put your phone on airplane mode and walk around campus listening to heavy metal watching the leaves fall through blurry eyes. Wonder who's sleeping in his bed.

Squeeze your eyes shut. Don't brace for the pain. Punch a brick wall.

Eat ice-cream to cure your sore throat and write a poem about it. Realize how stupid that is halfway through. Continue to do it regardless.

Drink that sixth cup of coffee. Take four times the prescribed dose of your sleep medication. Live life half asleep. Rinse and repeat.

Play the guitar until your fingers bleed. Watch the strings drip crimson.

Throw your phone across the room. Pick it back up because you can't function without him.

Be honest. Tell your grandparents you love them. Tell your dogs they're precious. Tell your friends they're stupid. Tell him he was right all along.

Write love letters to strangers. Smear red lipstick on the mirrors of public bathrooms—you're more of a lip-balm girl anyway.

Substitute chewing gum for full meals and fall back in love with your best friend. Trust her not to break your heart. Hope that you won't. Know that you both tried.

Niharika Kalia

productive insomnia

hands coax butter into the crevices of baked bread
a soft tap dance on kitchen countertop
breaking apart
bursting soft sunshine hearts

soft-soggy-cooked-done; too busy slow dancing
a gentle bitterness adds character
burnt but barely
cold creamy banana slices, sharp stinging strawberries

sticky syrupy fingers
probing blackberry brains
reaching for jam-stained swords
through mouthfuls of muffled words

some sleepless nights you just have to get through
with a 4 a.m. can't-sleep-breakfast-for-2

Niharika Kalia
Rabbit Holes

When I say my thoughts are birds I mean
Up to one billion birds die from window strikes in the US each year
And my skull is glass

When I say I'm a perfectionist I mean
The Apollo 11 only had 20 seconds worth of fuel left when it landed
And my lack of motivation is gravity

When I say I'm an invasive species I mean
Termites eat through wood twice as fast while listening to rock music
And I have colonized most of the world in spite

When I say my life is a lie I mean
Froot loops are all the same flavor
And I have a lot left to learn

When I say I'm tired I mean
Human life expectancy has increased more in the past 50 years than in the 200,000 before
And I'm only nineteen

When I say I am alone I mean

If you die in Amsterdam with no next of kin, a poet will write a poem for you and recite it at your funeral

And loneliness isn't all that lonely

When I say I feel lucky I mean

I'm Feeling Lucky' costs Google \$110 million a year

And I'm still searching for meaning

Niharika Kalia
tuesday nights

we're playing pool in the basement and our laughter is grape soda swishing in our stomachs, it's butterflies before a first kiss and it's drunken noodle happiness; we feed the greedy green velvet and with every clack and thud we stifle giggles and taunt each other in hindi so that the girls sitting on the sofa and watching the bachelor can't understand our playful and brutal vulgarity; our disgusting love and when we somehow manage to miss every single one of the fifteen balls we clutch our sides with chalky blue hands and fall to the floor in tears spilling laughter and grape soda everywhere leaving handprints on the cold concrete floor and it's the most fun we've had since last tuesday night

Calibretto Kinstner

Underpasses

With eyes closed, I perch my head
On the car door window, I wait
Not for the trip to be over, but to start
With eyes closed, it does

The slight curves and bumps, familiar
The straightways reach forward eagerly
My head gives, settling in
To a nook between the door and seat

Climbing, climbing, climbing
Then, silent noise, as if I'm not even moving

I peek to find out

Raking the windows and seats of the car,
The orange rays of light welcome me back
At ease, I close my eyes once again
Knowing and feeling the rays as they pass

I see them too, my favorite part
The only things I can recognize with my eyes completely shut
The light blissfully brushes over my eyelids, bringing me to sleep,
Until it doesn't anymore

Anthony LaBuda

Three Simple Words

The nervous shaking of my body
As the energy in the room revealed
What would leave the arch of her lips

A question that only begged admittance
To the crime I had committed
for three long years

Its energy hit the essence of my being
Before I had the chance to continue my cover
And it all faded to a blur

I was forced to examine my real self
And realized in three simple words
To be completely free

Your soul must be completely open.

Jack Lancaster

Palo Alto

The trees do reach higher here, like the people too, seeking fruits I have never even heard of, a knowledge I have become disillusioned with / Camille Claudel is picked as the prized student of Rodin, his collaborator, model, muse, mistress / Palo Alto—how my tongue flicks the roof of my mouth, the rounded o's, a tongue which trips, ties, slips, lies, can form a language I am starting to lose. / History calls this her start. Her works are called derivatives of his. She would be called tragic / *Te quiero mucho* I could say before I knew the phrase in English.

The direct translation of *querer* is to want, loving and wanting almost interchangeable / Some of Rodin's works are unsigned, and suggest the work of four hands / but it does not mean a need.

In this city's sculpture garden / Claudel asks for him not to come, her works still considered somehow his / Rodin's work among lavender, he shows his obsession for models of the divine, how one sees God at work in the *Gates of Hell* / Claudel's commissioned work have either disappeared or sit in the Musee Rodin / but I pay attention to Eve, alone in the corner of the park. Here, she does not reach for the fruit / Just before Rodin's death, Claudel's brother confines her to an asylum. She will spend 31 years there until her death / One hand hides shame, the other clutching her uneasy side, ribless curves. From that origin, we were born broken, half-ribbed.

Annalese Lohr

A Staff Full of Notes

Notes scrawled upon pages
Composers have lived through the ages
Brahms, Mozart and Liszt
With the devotion to persist
So they remain on paper today
In the styles that we play
Not remembered in quotes
But in a staff full of notes

Hannah Rutherford

Head in the Clouds

The air was cold and dry. It felt artificial and was making my head hurt. I was grateful we were almost there. The four-hour flight was half over already. Long ago I had received my tiny bottle of red wine and pack of pretzels. The red wine was gone within minutes. Usually I would stick to water on a flight like this one, but today my nerves were acting up.

I was worried about the man seated next to me. Not about him specifically, but about how he was acting towards me. He seemed to think he knew me. I knew better. He was a stranger, but he did remind me of someone I once knew; not that I would tell him that and justify his forward behavior. He was beginning to creep me out a little. This was the third time I could remember running into him just this week! He never moved too close, though, and never showed an intent to harm me, so I let him be and tried my best to ignore him. Maybe he was lonely. Maybe he was lost. I would definitely tell my mother about him when the plane landed, though. You could never be too safe, and she's always warning me about strange men.

A “bing” sounded as the seat-belt sign began to flash. I maneuvered mine into the buckle and looked out the plane's window. I had always enjoyed windows, looking out and getting lost in the clouds and cities zooming by. I daydreamed often, imagined what my life would be like a year from now. Five years from now. Ten. Twenty. Fifty. I played different scenarios out in my mind. What I would say. What I would do. I pictured two little boys, running around the backyard with their father, myself watching from the kitchen window. Warmth filled me, and I felt myself smile at the image.

An announcement from the pilot sounded; a storm had changed direction and was now in our path. We were adjusting our flight plan, but some turbulence was to be expected. I sighed and leaned my head back against my seat. I have never been one who was scared to fly, but today felt different. I was anxious and could not pinpoint why.

“Nervous?” a deep voice beside me asked.

I looked to the man who may very well be my new stalker. I took a moment to observe him before I responded. His dark green sweater looked warm, and I suddenly wished I had worn something more comfortable. If I had to guess, I would say he was around my age, maybe a few years older. I looked towards his hand resting on the armrest between us. He was wearing a ring, a wedding ring, on his finger. It was not the first time I had noticed the ring. A classic gold band. Simple enough to suit him. I caught him spinning the ring on his finger earlier in the flight. He messed with it often. Each time I looked at it I wanted to ask about his wife, but for some reason I was afraid to hear the answer.

“I’m fine, just tired,” I replied tersely.

He was silent for a few moments and looked down at that damn ring again.

“Thanks for asking,” I continued, attempting to soften my first reply.

The plane began to shake, and it knocked me towards the window. A baby somewhere behind me must have been woken and started to cry loudly. The man touched my arm as if to ensure I was safe.

“You’ll be okay,” he told me. I gave him an odd look. Of course, I would be okay! It was just turbulence. And who was he to know what was happening in the sky.

“We’ll be okay,” he whispered softly. Yet it seemed he was saying this to himself more than he was to me. He touched his wedding band.

I shrugged him off and looked toward the window once more. The sky was gray.

The pilot was speaking again. His voice calm but the plane was rattling now. The baby cried louder, and other children joined in as the lights in the cabin flickered off.

I felt the man grab ahold of my hand and intertwine our fingers. I looked down at where our palms met, then back up towards his eyes. Fear. Longing. The plane rattled more.

His hand hugged mine.

More rattling, then a loud click as my seat belt was forced undone.

My head was pounding, and I was no longer in my seat.

I felt a rush. A jolt. My head hurt. Another jolt. I was thrown against something hard, and searing pain flooded behind my eyes and through my head.

Everything went silent for a moment, and then noise overwhelmed me. I opened my eyes, not having realized they had been closed.

I felt his hand hug mine once again and looked into the eyes of my husband as the plane crashed down.

Makenzie McIntyre

History Lesson

You say I'm cold and callus,
That I don't know how to let people in.
With this you are only half right
For you don't know where my heart has been.
I am cautious and distant,
But I know you would be too
Had it been your love betrayed,
Beaten black and blue.
I know I can let people in,
It's not a matter of how,
Once your love knows deceit
It's selective of those to allow.
You see, I trusted openly once,
Believing I would never be spurned.
I learned the hard way then,
Black hearts aren't born, they're burned...

Alex Mullen

I

Lord, hear my prayer.

Let my voice be heard as the roar of twenty candles the burning of twenty million questions
I am but twenty digits with a thousand hands to hold please, Lord, remove the hands choking
me or is that my hand on my throat Lord, pardon my discontent but believe in my faith I
am a man who stops to smell the flowers but chooses to ignore the smell of smoke I would
eat an orchid just to swallow a bee anything to feed the oven in my chest Lord, when will
I keel over from exhaustion You can tell me if I already have keeping secrets puts wear on
the ribs Lord, is my faith a prison state do I live in Foucault's beehive full of eyes is it
possible to swallow yourself you could show me how I am strong in my devotion, Lord I
believe in You as I believe in the fire burning in me that I cannot put out I have lost my rosary
but I can feel it around my neck I wear You like a second skin, Lord, and Yours is a warm one
I am burning in this arid room turning to cinders in Your hands or are they really Mine

Can you hear me, Lord?

Alex Mullen

From Behind a Pilot's Eyes

Make sure to recall that you are vapor.
Your history is a thin trail of white in the sky.

Hear the drum beat of swans' wings flying low,
Asking you to join their rhythm. Let
No missed strikes on a well-stretched skin
Deter you. Fear not past mistakes, because those
Swan songs call forth the future.

Steam streams from your lungs, a thick exhale.
Cleave the past with the future in hand, the
Rough-edged blade of your timeline.
Are we not the result of stepping over mistakes laid out before us?
Presently, I believe so.
Each of our fumbled happenings urges us to make new missteps, new scratches in the sky.

Like the swan, our feet never touch the bottom. We are
Odd-shaped progressions
Without fear of drowning.

Dull words hang on your breath
Resisting the call of higher powers.
Ingrate.
Forgetful of your past, your beginnings, your end,
That line in the sky your ghost will call home.
Incapable of living conscious of your
Normality, your disuniquity, your unindividuality.
Gathering wood-carved idols about you to pray for change.

Crocodile teeth line your gums,
Lingering taste of flesh in your mouth, biting into others to mold your time but
Our lasting impressions do not hover over the ground, we are not
Undulating fog gone the next
Day. Our scars are left in the sky, hanging just below the
Stars that blind us each night.

Alex Mullen

The Sturdy Jackalope Observes His Reflection

Something he has recently gotten into the habit of doing as
the moon illuminates his studio apartment—
every night after he showers,
every night before bed.

His antlers don't quite fit within the frame but
his bunny ears stretch up
to fill the space above him.

The sturdy jackalope has worked hard to look like this.

He goes to the gym three times a week and
plays basketball for
two hours every Sunday to
maintain his muscles.

He reads customer reviews on Amazon.com
for the best protein shakes for antlers.
He looks through online health blogs to
be sure what and what
not to eat for dinner.

Before he goes to work
the sturdy jackalope watches nature documentaries about the African plains for
bodily inspiration,
envies after the great antlers of the giant sable antelope,
the massive tusk of the rhino,
the half-moon blades that jut out the elephant's cheeks.

From the blank gray walls of his cubicle
he hears whispers from people
around the corner, quietly laughing and
he wonders what's so funny.

The sturdy jackalope doesn't want to be called fat.
He knows that people think he's fat.
He can see it in their faces during casual conversations, during
water cooler banter after bathroom breaks.
He reads the expression like a psychic reads the future off the pad of a paw.

The sturdy jackalope eats kale chips while he relaxes watching
Game of Thrones and *Saturday Night Live*
instead of eating the Oreos that he used to like.

The sturdy jackalope wishes there was someone there to call him sturdy.
He texts his friends to see if anyone wants to eat kale chips with him,
but no one ever answers.

The sturdy jackalope wishes he could see the world,
but he can only afford in-state travel.
He takes lots of pictures of his local leisure trips
on his iPhone 5C and
uploads them to Facebook.
His bunny ears prick up every time he hears a new like.

The sturdy jackalope maintains his appearance
with the discipline of a zen monk.
He polishes his antlers
with leaves off the oak tree outside his house,
and he wears his best button-down shirt on
dates with his ex-girlfriend.

The sturdy jackalope sleeps between his cold sheets at night.
He prays to God that someday things will change, and
he looks out the window
wondering what change looks like.

Annie Ning
Chengdu

I didn't notice
2008
When the sky was already greying
And the people were already coughing
And although I saw everyone wearing face masks
I didn't notice

I was too young
Still single digits
To realize the big big world beyond smokers on the sidewalks
And food stalls in the streets
And aunties taking walks beside calm green lakes
Green. Already green

And I didn't notice
2011
How the city was still aging
How the air was disintegrating
And although I saw more people wearing face masks
I didn't notice

Because one day the clouds cleared and the sky turned blue
And in the distance, a mountain, just the peak, peered through
And my aunties and uncles and grandmas and grandpas all said
It's the first time we've seen that in nearly a year
And I didn't notice
I had never seen it there before either

And I didn't notice
When I went home and the sky was still blue
When I went home and the grass was still fresh
And I thought that surely this was the way it always was
The way it'll always be
I thought surely

It took me a while. Until 2016.
Grandpa came for the summer, to see the states.
And he said the air here, it's so easy to breathe,
It's not heavy.
And you have a yard in the back, blooming with weeds,
But blooming nonetheless.
And I can feel the Sun even on cloudy days,
Instead of barely at all.
Imagine that.
Imagine that.
Imagine the gardens we could grow.
Humming an indistinct song,
Grow big tomato plants and squash vines.

Watch peppers sprout bottoms up and rabbits crunch on cucumber leaves.
No space back home. Too crowded.
No sunlight either. Too cloudy.
But the air here is so easy to breathe;
I'm sure the plants think so too.
Imagine that.
He puts his hands behind his back,
And hums.

I want to go back,
I don't want to go back,
I want to go back,
I don't.

To return to that city inside the mountains,
Trapped between different smokestacks.
I'm scared to notice the weight of the air
The coughing and the greying sky
I'm scared because I didn't notice the first time
And I no longer know what to decide

I want to go back,
I don't want to go back,
I want to go back,
I don't.

I look up, through screen windows
Through light air and clear blue
I'm scared to be hopeful for such a difficult thing
But I spot the wisp of clouds in the distance
And I think I want to see it again
That mountain in the sky

I want to go back,
I don't want to go back,
I want to go back,
I don't.

I want to go back,
I don't want to go back,
I want to go back,
I—

Lily Nunn

An Ode to the Fellow that Lives in My Closet

i feel bad for the people who never go insane—
the nakedness of it.
to cut yourself out of a rotten mattress,
and move through dirty streets
like an addict of nothing more than attention.
when you decided to be right for the day
and ended up wrong for an eternity,
when sunken faces and sunken thoughts
are your only aspirations.
knowing that if you had not been the one
to question the authority
of “how it has always been”
you wouldn’t be who was forced from society—
the rape-culture society—
that had the *audacity* to accuse you of confusing yourself,
behind the backs of people who have no authority over what you think—
or how they think.
you are insatiable with your bottle of
“would you rather”

while wasting away on the walk
just outside your house.
I honest-to-god feel bad for the people that don't go insane
because these are the people who cut their heads off,
give up when they see them at their feet,
and aren't *forced* (but feel obligated) to open sheep farms,
where they thought they would grow old,
and wept when they found out that was impossible
when they had never lived.

Charles Pardales

Ghazal for Some Lost Love

Sweet honey falls like stars to the land
of grateful wanderers
Among them I lay, missing every last drop
of sweet honey

Brisk Saturday mornings on the porch, tranquil
with the foggy dew
I sit eating toast, thinking not of the day,
but of sweet honey

“How do you write a happy poem?” “It’s hard
to describe” you say.
“What makes you happy?” you ask. I smile
and say “You...my sweet honey”

We reach the top of the hill and look out
over our kingdom
We fall to the ground, laughs murmuring through thick
woods like sweet honey

There's a new song on the radio, not about
you or me
But us. Dance under the moonlight! Singing tunes
of sweet honey!

Forgive me, dear. Whisper kindly—Caesar—in my
burdened ear.
Hear the lilting waves, see the sun melt away
like sweet honey

Charles Pardales

Untitled 11

It's rained 3 or 4 times since I returned
I'm figuring the path of the river
Where it will flow and
With what speed
Guessing those that will flow with me
And those that will be caught
In the thicket of jungles and cities

The gray lays heavy
Scripts and tunes flow into my ears
But the fluid art sometimes applies
too much pressure
And they say this is supposed to be summer?

I slip beneath the vast wet desert
And watch it all pass by
on my way down

Drumbeats and piano strikes, a splash of
blood on the thin film over my eyes
The soft green twinkle of keys and
lilting purple of strummed strings float
to the surface like flowers among a
cloud of bubbles
What are you doing underwater anyway?

And the deep blue bass
Scanning the seafloor
A thick fat idiotic shark
Half-hungry/half-bored

As I reach the bottom the sand
dusts up around me and in a foolish
gasp, the sand lies and creates a coating
on my mouth my throat my lungs
And it leaves me back where I started.

Sydney Pilut

it's me, barely

I stare blankly at the bathroom mirror in front of me
I question if I should cry or fix my hair

it's 4 am and my curls are frizzy
and I'm saddened more by this than my lack of sleep

days and days turn into weeks
I forget what a solid night's sleep feels like

I forget the day
I forget the month

I'm so focused on this image staring back at me
I'm so exhausted I don't recognize it as mine

I pat down my hair and hope the frizz dies down
I go back to my room

the hall is quiet at 4 am
I'll try to sleep now

I'll try to sleep now

Jack Plowman
Loved

I loved dances

I loved swaying slow like
pendulums, as if we were in a
movie, and us on center screen

I loved seeing dogs, me being
able to point them out, and know
a response of excitement and
cheer would follow

I loved late night talks, no matter
how late

I, even for a little while, didn't
totally *hate* horror movies

No matter what we did, I loved
it, because
I
loved you

But it changed me

Those moments of loved formed
tears of love, which are way
different than tears of joy

These tears became slices down
my face, each drop a scar left in
my memory

Moments in your room, my
words of compliment and praise
left to silence, knowing no matter
what I say you won't feel
beautiful

Times when my love wasn't
Enough

The past attached to me, and now
moments of driving my car are
stained with you in the passenger
seat, sorrowing, questioning what
went wrong

The music we listened to has
become a trip down our journey,
but someone has messed with the
picture

It's distorted
Darkened
Broken

I don't love dancing

I don't love seeing dogs

I don't love late night drives

And I hate horror movies

I don't like to love anymore

Sidney Popp

If You Need Time to Think

if you need time to think,
it's either because you're trying
to convince yourself i'm worth it,
or that i'm not.
if it be the former,
push the blade in already—
the anticipation
of this stab to the heart aches
almost as much as your fake devotion.
if it be the later,
stop trying.
stop trying to convince yourself
that this can't be something amazing.
stop trying to push me away.
give in to this feeling.
stay.

Amishi Taneja
Ocean Blues

I can't seem to see you as you are.
A million and one feelings wave over me,
but in this small fragile bottled reservoir
that I'm ready to throw in the sea,
I find myself with the ocean blues.
When I finally throw it in the expansive space
and watch it sail into
the unknown, which may be my true saving grace,
there's something rather unsettling—
about pouring your heart out.
The fluidity of vulnerability settles
in the shadow of my conscious doubt;
the bottle is long shattered, its contents spilling
into the vast sea, with its own command and free will.

Anthony DiBello
My Eleven Neighbors

Joyce Fienberg, 75, Oakland
Richard Gottfried, 65, Ross Township
Rose Mallinger, 97, Squirrel Hill
Jerry Rabinowitz, 66, Edgewood
Brothers Cecil Rosenthal (59) and David Rosenthal (54), Squirrel Hill
Married couple Bernice Simon (84) and Sylvan Simon (86), Wilkinsburg
Daniel Stein, 71, Squirrel Hill
Melvin Wax, 88, Squirrel Hill
Irving Younger, 69, Mt. Washington

Eleven individuals whose Saturday morning began in worship and in fellowship.
Eleven individuals who fell victim to an unfathomable act of violence and hatred.
Eleven individuals whose names are etched into my city's history forever.

These names were entirely unfamiliar to me prior to the hateful act of terrorism which took place on the morning of Saturday, October 27, 2018, at the Tree of Life - Or L'Simcha Congregation in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood. Within me, however, I still feel as if I have lost loved ones. We may not have been from the same neighborhoods and we may not have shared the same faith, but sharing Pittsburgh as our city united us. Whether a

resident of Oakland, Ross, Squirrel Hill, Edgewood, Wilkinsburg, or Mt. Washington, all of Pittsburgh is one family and one community.

While I still struggle to comprehend how such a heinous act could occur in a peaceful neighborhood less than one mile from my high school, I know that our community will move forward. Historically characterized by hard work, persistence, resiliency, grittiness, and a can-do attitude, our city will work to move past this tragedy with an unending support for those nearest and dearest to the victims.

Pittsburgh is stronger than hate.

We will not tolerate such deplorable acts.

We will not forget the words of our beloved Fred Rogers: “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping...’ To this day, especially in times of ‘disaster,’ I remember my mother’s words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers—so many caring people in this world.”

I am confident that my city abounds in such helpers who, like me, will not allow this tragedy to be taken lightly or be quickly forgotten.

Erin Wakeland

Looking into My Backyard Fields

Like covering the coin moon with your thumb—its spill, blue: over pastiche green infinities I control a sum of the countless stalks that sometimes love and sometimes howl by the way the lamp *chiaroscuro*s my kitchen sway onto the window. There is always yellow and there is always green but at which glance does the light hit to see so far the expanse of life or death or death of life

Limitless, I go but three rows out. The coyotes of the harvest moon took Tux, but the blackberries all mine; scavenged sweetness opens equal.

The corn budded with me—translucent floss, prepubescent. Mom says I'm beautiful and/but makeup makes me look awake. It is by my imposed nature that my clothes fit just right. It is by me, through me, that I find all that isn't. My body is a topography of where you and I deviate.

It goes something like

Babydoll tees look even more stupid when you're not a baby. And ostensibly, dressing as an elegy to the past you is a form of mortification, pious as kneeling. I confessed all ten of my nine-year-old sins to a priest who stole my communion quarters. The guise of dove versus man insulated fake love. Into the open I dance, insular greens consume while the cranes head south.

Rashi Watwani

Fairy Tales: an Escape

i want to write about you like i'm in love
like i'm in the loveliest place on earth
and i wish you were here with me
like the roses are so red that they're unbelievable
and the romantic movies start to seem relatable

i want to write about you like i write about music
like i'm listening to the most tragic songs ever sung
and i wish you were a part of my symphony
like the melody is evergreen
and the with every sound we get lost in what the words mean

i want to write about you like i feel about food
like i'm eating the most divine dish on earth
and i wish you could dine with me
get drunk on wine with me
over-eat and waste your time with me

i want to write about you
and i can't
because i want to write about you like i'm in love
like i want you in my happy place
like i want you to share my music taste

like i want to split my meal with you
but the only thing i can say with my whole heart is
i loved when i loved you
when i stood beside you
sang songs alongside you
and the only meal i needed was you

i write about you like i'm in love
and you don't love me back
like nemo just keeps swimming
and the current pushes him off-track

i write about you like i write about music
and it just doesn't make sense to me
like the auto-tuned sound cloud rappers
who sound exactly like eminem and jay-z

i write about you like i feel about food
and i want you when i don't need you
like too much of you consumes me
and you're still the one i go to

but the only thing i can say with my whole heart is
i loved when i loved you
and then is not now
and now is real
because loving you felt like a fairy tale
too good to be true
so when i didn't get my fairy tale ending
i stopped writing about you
who knew

you would disappear into the mist like fictional characters do
tearing my heart in two
maybe i did live in a fantastical world
of grand gestures and love letters
the “when i’m with you, i’m better”s
the silky brown chocolates
and silky red dresses
and love confessions
which are all blessings
i am yet to experience

you see
we’re all blind
to the prospect of love
fifty flying doves
in the blue sky above
i know that because
as i lie down in bed
i constantly paint scenarios in my head
full of magic and perfect stories
and perfect storms and sweet nothings
that always “almost” suffice

tonight
i want to write about you like i’m in love
like i’m in the loveliest place on earth
and i want you here with me
but the only thing i can say with my whole heart is
i loved when i loved you
and right now
i simply love fairy tales

Rashi Watwani

Snowflakes

His eyes were laced with poison waters
But all I wanted to do was get lost in the depths of them
It wasn't that easy to fix us
This isn't cloth, and there wasn't any hem

I see the galaxies and remember how you
Loved me to the moon and back
Now you've probably gotten lost in the stars
How soon can you get back on track?

You were as constant as the northern star
Constantly in the darkness
Maybe it was the sun that burned us out
And now the memories are our love's carcass

He was the stars and every time he left
My sky was left in the dark
I know they said love bites but
Who knew that love had teeth like a shark?

But my eyes held endless constellations
Every tear I cried became a shooting star
When he saw it he sure did wish
For their love to go away; far, far and far

I said that I was lost in his eyes
For hours and days too long to count
But truth be told
I never wanted to find a way out

Our love was as beautiful as a snowflake
Sweet and delicate but falling to the ground
It never overcame the reality that
It would soon disappear without a sound.

Tommy Wiaduck

I'm Still Getting There

I've learned it doesn't matter which of the five w's (or the one h) it starts with, the question always finds its way back to me, like a sea turtle returning to its birthplace, swimming high on natal homing.

Only because I caught your eye, or ear, or constant need to obsess over anything different doesn't mean I have a response, or know the answer, or carry the confidence to find the perfect order of selected words to fall off your demeaning radar.

He told me, "Hey, just wondering, not to be mean or anything, but, uhhh..." and I *still* can't possibly decipher a positively-connotated connection between his scary bold interrogative (might I add accusingly direct, too) and his half-calf Nike Dri-Fit athletic-radiating white socks. It shouldn't be my fault I'm stuck like the cartoon cat frozen mid-air when it sees the scary overly-dramatized portrayal of the neighbor's mean bulldog and hung out to dry!

No matter how many YouTube videos I watch and morning mirror-speeches I give in preparation, I can never escape that pesky little question. I can dodge and I can duck, I can jump through hoops, I can spend more time rehearsing my masculine voice than reciting my prayers or practicing my Spanish, but I always have to give up something when the question comes along.

Usually, I can muster up the “I don’t know” or the “Umm, I’m just not really sure,” but only on the good days can I fire back and finish with a “Why do you care?” or a “but it’s none of your business.” And in the end, it doesn’t even matter. I really, for the love of God, do not know!

Sometimes, I think I’d rather return to the days of “Are you gay, bro?” and “Woo-hoo, you like that, dirty fag?” It can’t be worse than returning deep into that magical *Chronicles of Narnia* wardrobe, which I really just mean to be a closet, that morphed me into the mess I still have to deal with each day, right?

Even if I could travel back through mysterious loops and dilations of time, I sure as hell wouldn’t be there. I’d be jumping a little further back, to the days of my tan skin and beach-blond hair, when my little baby sister’s innocent brown curls and infectiously pure smile and I ruled the kingdom of Barbie and LEGO Friends that dominated our living room. Only here am I convinced it all went wrong.

The way I am, just as a T-rex is a meat-eater (no pun intended), however, is very different than the way I act, just as the T-rex in *Meet The Robinsons* has a very different demeanor than the T-rex in *Jurassic Park*. The “am” I’ve somehow managed to (more than not) accept, but these question askers have forced the “act” into an unending internal battle plundering my soul. This is the problem where I worry these unavoidable insecurities were ignited.

I don't like when you question my "excessive" hand movements and my stronger variance in duration of my diphthong pronunciations. It's like trying to walk in complete darkness without stepping on any LEGOs. I know they're there, but it's just impossible to notice them.

While you think that my flamboyancy is "fine," you forgot to reassure me the seven times I needed you to that you didn't even know about. This, in turn, has led to the falling of Rome in one single day, even more one single moment.

Just that quick acknowledgement right beneath my supposedly "unrealistically high bar for self-acceptance" has literally triggered another half-transparent layer of worry and guilt and shame and doubt only quietly sprinkled with brief respites of acceptance and hope. (That one took a \$30 co-pay and forty-five minutes in a windowless room).

However, while the "are's" have turned into "why's," I've also come to realize that, like the inevitability of April showers leading to May flowers, something good will come of it.

Thinking band-aids and ice could heal a plague that shouldn't have to exist today wasn't foolish, it was a final, desperate reach for the opposite endpoint of a wondrously lost mind: to be something I'm not.

Like a turtle bound for home, however, I can find
my way through murky waters towards something
much better than the weight of my own uncertainties.

While heteronormativity tries to drown us out,
I know that I'm still swimming deep down inside of myself.
Your heat-tracking questions may be limited to the
tone of your voice and the language of your body, but
my slowly developing understandings will someday
grant me the strength to free me of this unwinnable
battle against who I think I might be and who wish I could be.

Until then, my "Oh my God's!" and gender-stereotyped
crossed legs will withstand your curiosity as my confidence
is woven from the frizzles hanging off my pale cerulean
blue Mackinac Island long-sleeve into the promise for myself
I keep wrapped loosely around my neck.

Tommy Wiaduck

Skin's Surface

The soft, dull bumps and edges of jaded skin scarred
with pain, pleasure, past, and present.
The unforgiving lust for the relentless
flow of sacred release.
A cold breeze on a hot day,
Like a mindless shot in an endless dark.
Before the hidden sliver of a full, fallen moon,
I find myself feeling again.
The exciting games of youth retired
relived through my hollow mind and empty heart,
Yearning the findless seek
In a maze of my own grief.
The shallow gaze of a forced smile,
Disappearing amidst foreign regrets.
The ghastly cloud behind hazel eyes,
Marbled between joy and sorrows.
Stray petals whisked in a field
full of bones and flowers,
Craving the joyful moments
stuck beneath the paths of settled tar.
The detailed lines on smooth palms aged
by tight grasps on the intangible unknown.
The unexpected strength of a weed breaking through
the sealed cracks of my neighborhood street.

Tommy Wiaduck

Tranquility

Stop, breathe.

Examine your surroundings, absorb the atmosphere.

Close your eyes,

breathe with the wind.

Taste the dry air on your tongue, swallow. Feel the breeze
brush against your cheek.

In, out. In, out.

Listen for the sounds in

the silence, quiet but lurking. The way the dog used to

bark at the mailman, or the way the toy truck rumbled on kitchen floors.

Slow motion, frame by frame. Relax.

Remember.

Ocean waves crashing,

Forest leaves falling.

Dominique Witten

The Family Tree: An Outline

Inspired by Dianna Seuss's poem "Eden: An Outline"

- I. Biological mother doing cocaine (an unknown number of years)
 - A. Refusing the overly generous offer from the overly generous man
 - 1. Refusing the overly generous offer
 - a. Refusing the offer
 - i. ~~Refusing~~
 - B. The offer
 - 1. Perhaps, a momentary way to shush sounds of disappointment from her parents
 - a. Burnt pipe and used Band-Aid rest on floor
 - 2. Infants scream in back room
 - a. The big ones can watch the little ones
 - 3. Week-old pizza sits in crusted Tupperware
 - C. The taking
 - 1. Of her children
 - a. Travis lived for three days
 - b. _____ and _____ died before they could see her face
 - c. Another was scraped away (she once said she regrets this the most)

- II. Adoption of her forgotten children **OR** The Taking, Continued (either way, not her choice)
- A. Great Aunt Gloria
1. Arthur (after Grandpa), June (*definitely* not after Junebug), Elizabeth (after Grandma)
 2. Sturtevant St: Groaning with Gloria
 3. Canes, chains, and that branch from out back form obedient children
 - a. Violence is the only way kids learn respect
 - i. It's important to say Gloria loved the best she knew how
 1. Her forgiveness is still pending
- B. Auntie Kim
1. D'Antae (no idea), Dominique (originally Paulette; a rather unfortunate name)
 - a. Don't forget to mention that Auntie Kim already had a kid
 - i. Quinisha died at 25 from black lungs
 1. Kenny, her father, hung his dreams and himself in the garage
 2. Cardoni St: Cleaning with Kim
 3. Belts, yelling, and the white, braided extension cord form obedient children
 - a. Violence is the only way kids learn respect
 - i. It's important to say Kim loved the best she knew how
 1. She is forgiven
- C. Auntie Cookie (her real name is Cora)
1. Kennedy Alease (yes, spelled like a lease on a car or a house)
 2. At five months old, she crawled between bed and wall
 - a. And found heaven

III. Biological father (a different one for each kid)

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

G.

H.

I.

J. Roscoe?

Alexander Young
Deformed

In the deepest darkest woods,
Bring a warm blanket and lantern.
Beneath the midnight black pines,
Follow the helpless pathetic cries,
Until the shrieking calls take you
To the edge of a shady clearing.
There beneath the moonlight beams,
You'll find your abandoned thing,
Frail, deformed, once cub-like.
Take it home. Nurture it. Own it,
No mother could ever love this creature.
Feed it only red meat, but never too much,
For there's a lean, desperate strength
That only the pains of hunger can sharpen.
Wash and comb its filthy, matted fur,
But never let it grow long enough to forget,
The long, red scars that still cover its hide.
And as tight, lean muscle packs its fur,
You'll have your killing machine.
But beware, for the claws are sharp,
Both ways, when master becomes prey.

Alexander Young
Song of Sunrise

Across thrashing depths,
Bleeding waves cling
To the gore-soaked horizon.
With one last ray, a gasp of fight,
The obsidian shroud,
Drowns out the Light.

The ivory moon ruptures
From the crimson carcass' heart,
As the white Reaper King
Rests upon his skeleton throne.
The long-branched cackle
Recalls the bloody sight:
The whimpering Exodus
Of God's chosen Light.

But as Midnight reigns supreme,
One Songbird dares to sing.
In the struggle of Day and Night,
His yellow talons lift up the Light.

Over shimmering waves
The Beacon of Sunrise,
The Scorn of Midnight:
The Eternal Phoenix
Sings the Sweet Song of Sunrise
As golden trumpets serenade
The Return of the Light.

Teuta Zeneli

Galatea

I am in the thick of something, I think.

I wish my heart could sing
And I wish I could uplift
I am moved by people who can

I wish my heart would beat in tandem
With the drum that every light and organism
Adheres to

If I could sing and feel warmth
In my heart, synonymous with love
I would feel fulfilled

I wish my soul could speak
I want it to sing in colors
I wish it were something more than human

To be mortal
To be vulnerable

Disinterests me
My emotions are trapped beneath my breast, a songbird with a slashed throat
I feel a twinge
A shiver
A sliver of something more human than this
But it leaves.

Humanity does not particularly suit me
Perhaps it's the isolation that cuts
A blade dimpling my skin, threatening to tear

(Perhaps it's my shrinking waist
My diminishing meals
Withering the husk from the inside out)

Why?
Troubles pursue me, but I have never felt like a doll
Wet frustration climbs my throat

My brain is my own worst enemy
Tempting me with emotions that sing
With excitement
With life
And joy
Only to leave this shell barren for weeks.
To make me question the existence of my personality
To begin with

My mind betrays me.
Everything is so cold
I don't want him,
Pygmalion
My fingers are numb. I'm cold
Yet my palms sweat

If I love people
Why can I not love an individual?
I don't want to be alone
But I dread company

My soul thrums with something ancient
My body is young, but my clay bones are as old as civilization
My eyes watch everything with disinterest.

Seasoned by ruins and by millennia of
Spirit
Pygmalion's creation, with a defect in substance

This body feels a homunculus.
Tempted with humanity but just exempt
A tongue that can taste joy, but a stomach that cannot digest it

Glass eyes flit from tree, to jacket sleeve, to fiber of hair
Seen, understood, but not registered.
The songbird cries louder than ever, but clay smothers the sound.

Teuta Zeneli

La Ville de Mes Rêves

Le monde a tiré de la terre cette ville
En haut, en bas, pour faire les collines
Et si on ne fait pas attention,
On peut glisser du terrain

Dans le paysage de rien, précisément,
Cette ancienne ville, comme une tortue grise, pousée;
Un village dans une boule à neige,
Parmi les moutons, le brouillard, et la stupeur d'une fille ivre.

Les abats d'un mouton débordent dans le ventre rempli,
Et la fille, avec une jupe trop courte et ses cheveux trop bouclés
"Comme les filles écossaises." D'est dans ses yeux qu'on voit
La splendeur de ce monde tentaculaire et rocheux
La neige dans la boule à neige ne tombe pas
Mais l'air pétille, et baratte
Et les rues avec le pavé comme les dents d'un bête;
Acceptent cette touriste dans la bouche froide d'Edinburgh.

Teuta Zeneli

Open Letter to My Father

Babi, you made me cry recently.
The bottom of my heart burned with a
Heaviness and a cloying sting to my
Nostrils. A wet veneer of anguish
Clung to my eyelashes.
I thought I was choking.

The strangest thing is that I
Only feel your absence, the all-encompassing void.
Your pictures puncture my chest
And pilfer the small semblance of sanity that
stays.

And my heart hears you, and it heeds every warning
Take care of your health, of your faculties
Read while you live, and learn to speak
in tongues different and confusing

I think sometimes I can feel your entity
Like your blood surges through my serpentine veins
And I can revive yours with my vitality
When aunts and uncles see my face and they say
Jeton lives in his daughter
I want it to be true.

The books you brought from back home
I hold to my breast and bask in the dust that collected since before you left
And I can't read them, but I can feel in the browned pages
How I can feel your void in the vain attempts by telemarketers seeking your conversation

Even to this day, I don't know what conclusions to make
Your pictures cut me, and your things graze
The wounds already bloody, deepening the pain
I never quite got over you
And even though you never made
An appearance in my memories
I can feel I'm missing

Something profound.

Miles Stephenson
Wrong Way

FOREWORD: In 1910, Congress considered a plan that would bring hippopotamus ranching to the United States. Legislators believed this plan would fix two major issues: a national meat shortage and an invasive water hyacinth problem. They never went through with the plan, but if they had brought this gargantuan African mammal to the Louisiana bayou, we might have had the stories of “hippoboy” in the American South. Here’s one of their stories.

Lee woke to the rumble of the tracks under him like he had for a decade. He felt around in the dark for his matches. He struck one. It showed the dim corner of his boxcar, his shoeless feet, and his tattered denim pants. All his belongings were beside him in a leather trunk. Outside, he heard the train whistle and the brakes engage. He heard the booming voices of the bulls patrolling the railroad and the howling of their hounds in the morning dust.

Lee’s hand was trembling and he thought of a jug of wine. A drink was all he needed to calm his nerves, he told himself. This was what living day-to-day did to a man. He swigged his flask. Then he crept to the boxcar door and looked through the crack into the light. A bull passed in his pressed uniform with a baton in his hand. When he reached the caboose, he dragged back the door suddenly, as if he was trying to catch a man with his knickers down. He searched through the straw and in the nooks between freight, any place where an American hobo might be sleeping. A pair of hounds sniffed by Lee’s boxcar on leashes. Bulls smoked and talked about a weekend on the riverboat. When they left for the caboose, Lee saw his chance. He slid the door back and ran with his trunk under his arm.

“Trespasser!” One of the bulls yelled in pursuit. They shook their batons. One fired a gun and ripped up a plume of dirt under Lee’s feet. But Lee ran. He slid under a freight car and crawled out the other side. He hopped over tracks and ran into a warehouse and escaped out the back through a drain pipe. “Wherever this is, it’s hot as hell here,” Lee thought to himself, waving mosquitos as he hid in a bush by the river.

“Which way he go?” The bull huffed, planting his hands on his knees. The bullfrogs were croaking on the peat moss.

“I saw him hit the storehouse, let’s check there.” They lumbered off.

When his blood ran cool again, Lee crawled out and followed the river. Soon, he came to a one-horse town curtained by weeping willows. A snake oil salesman hawked his tonics to the passing wagons but didn’t offer one to Lee. From only a glance he decided Lee didn’t have the money. Lee pushed through saloon doors and settled at the bar, his forehead glistening with sweat.

“Just a whisky,” said Lee. The barkeep poured. “And some work if you got it.”

“You one of them railway boys?”

“An American hobo,” Lee raised his glass to that with a smile. “Ever since the South lost, I’ve been on the rails.”

“Looking for that Big Rock Candy Mountain?”

“My whole life.”

The barkeep laughed. That’s the place where the coppers have wooden legs and the chicken lay soft boiled eggs. That’s the hobo’s paradise.

“Well, Rancher Grooms been having problems with the lake cows. No man here will take the damn job ’cuz it’s too dangerous. If you got nothing else...”

“Lake cows. Hmm...” Lee spent the afternoon refilling his glass until he was loose enough to fall off the stool and coil up like a hose. When he got numb from drinking he thought of his father—the only person he had truly ever cared about. His father was the last cowboy. Imagine that? A whole way of life going belly up in one generation. When Lee

was young, his father had told him about the death of the cowboy. He was sitting among his steer in the smell of straw and dust when the final gold sun set on the Wild West. Big companies fenced their cows up in feedlots now and packed the cities with workers. Running steer across the plains just wasn't profitable; it was time to move on. Lee's dad told the rattlesnakes and the coyote. He told the prospectors sifting through sand in the canyon. He told the steer's skull, its hollow eye sockets looking back in disbelief, and then he told the hawks circling above. No one seemed to care. How strange, Lee's father thought. No one cared about the end of the cowboy.

When Lee came to his senses, he was out back in a mud pile. The barkeep was standing over him waving his arms around.

"What is it?" Lee squinted.

"You don't have any money to pay for those drinks, bum!"

"Bum? That's a city word. Where you from?"

"Charleston."

"You can take my leather trunk. That's all I've ever had."

The barkeep cursed him some and went inside for the trunk.

"You alright, Mister?"

Lee turned. A woman with a cowboy hat stood in the alley. She had hair of polished cinnabar and her hands rested on her hips.

"I'm doing better now that you're here."

"You're a drunken mess," the woman said, leaning down. She helped Lee out of the mud and to his feet.

"You're not from Louisiana, are you?"

"Just passing through."

"A drifter?"

"An American Hobo."

She smiled. "I'm Evelyn Grooms."

“Lee, but they call me Wrong Way.”

“Why’s that?”

“The rails take me here and there or never really anywhere. Can’t say I’m going the right way.”

“What about a job? Would that get you going the right way?”

“You got one?” Lee shook off his drunkenness. He couldn’t feel his fingers.

“Take a walk with me.” Evelyn took Lee’s arm and helped him along the trail.

They passed a general goods store with peach cobblers in the window and a butcher who was skinning the leathery tail of an alligator. She led him down to the bayou and across a footbridge that stunk of swamp cabbage. Finally, they approached a farmhouse with a stable and a well.

“This is my daddy’s ranch, Lee. We raise lake cows.”

Lee stood there drunk. Mosquitos swarmed on his arms.

“It’s tough work, but so is what you’re doing right now, stumbling about and fightin’.”

“How much you pay?”

“Not much. But we’ll straighten you out, give you a cot in the bunkhouse, and keep your belly full. My bread pudding and crawfish gumbo are known beyond the Mason-Dixon.”

“I’ve never seen a lake cow,” said Lee.

“Well, come on in.” Evelyn led him into the stables. “Another good thing about them is that you can ranch them on land that you can’t ranch steer on. They don’t mind the swamp. Hell, they live for it.”

She opened a stall door. A hippopotamus calf blinked his beady eyes in the light coming through the loft. Bristles sprouted from his snout and rotund rear, and when he yawned his jaws open to feed from Evelyn’s hand, Lee saw the beginnings of his mighty tusks. This was a wild, ancient thing from Africa, not fit for the lowlands of Louisiana. But when Lee looked at it, he saw a scene. He saw himself up on a handsome Appaloosa.

He was herding the lumbering animals through the lily pads like some John Wayne of The Nile, and he was laughing with wrinkled, sober eyes. He saw a new day so golden that not even the death of the cowboy nor all the casualties of the Civil War could darken it. He saw a sunrise.

“I’ll take it,” Lee shook Evelyn’s hand.

“Headed in the right way,” she smiled. “You should know, however, these aren’t cattle. One thing those congressmen didn’t think about was how aggressive these fellas can be. Last summer a bull hippo nearly took the arm off Beau the fisherman—”

“Evelyn Grooms, I’ll take it.”

“Alright, hippoboy. We’ll saddle up at first light.”

She showed Lee his bed with soft sheets that smelled like soap and gave him a pair of working pants and boots for the bayou. Lee slept like a stone without drinking that night. It was his first smooth sleep in 1912. Every night this year he had nodded off with an anxious suspicion of waking to a bull beating his skull in with a baton. He was a fugitive who had broken no laws, a man on the lam from his own soberness. Now he snored in a bunkhouse with a fireplace and a rack to hang his hat and enough grits and beans to last the winter.

Lee woke with hot blood at sunrise. He jumped up and ran to the door. He listened for a train whistle or a bull talking about the sinking of the Titanic. Then he realized where he was. He sniffed a vase of flowers. He felt the soft rug on his toes. He walked out into the yard where hens made their rounds. Evelyn was in her riding clothes.

“You look well-rested,” she said.

“I feel like I’ve just been born,” Lee rubbed his eyes. “Got a drink?”

“Nope. Today we’re just eatin’.”

Lee washed himself in a tub and broke his fast with eggs and lake cow bacon. The only thing he drank that day was lemonade, and when the shakes took him, he bit down on a stick and acted out the motions. Evelyn and Lee spent the morning corralling hippos on an islet as they grazed the purple flowers of water hyacinth. When a bull hippo thrashed

with a gator upstream, they lassoed him and led him back to the others. Twice, Lee was thrown from his horse when a bull charged, its tusks and guttural bellow inches from the saddle. But Evelyn and Lee looked out for each other. When one was being charged, the other lassoed and reared the hippo back. It was nice to have someone watching Lee's back. It was a feeling he hadn't had since he was a boy.

When Lee was a little scampering thing, his father told him that a man could move West and make a new name for himself. There was always some sort of rush to it: gold rush, Oklahoma land rush, fur rush. This was before automobiles and audits from the IRS, and he swore to Lee that all you needed was a log cabin by a stream and a dog at your side and the plains of America. Miners panned for gold and trappers skinned for furs and the Americans learned from Iberian vaqueros about how to create their own destiny on horseback. Then the skyscrapers blocked out the stars and asked the cowboys to pay taxes and the Wild West wasn't so wild anymore. The frontier died and the cowboy was buried and Lee's father took to the bottle and traveled the country by rail. Lee was born in a boxcar that was supposed to be heading east but was heading north. He was born the wrong way.

On Sunday, Evelyn and Lee's horses broke the water in the bayou. A group of territorial bulls had ran off and flipped a pastor's canoe before church. The town had wanted them shot, but Lee lassoed them one-by-one and locked them up in their stalls instead. There were six other males, a dozen cows, and a healthy litter of calves all grazing in the marshes. The elder of the herd was Taft, a long-toothed bull named after the President with white spots around his eyes. Lee rode among them from atop his horse, feeling taller than a skyscraper. The water was dappled with the yellow-green of spatterdock pads and duckweed, and silent cypress knees stood like sentinels near the banks. The swamp was a peace Lee hadn't known for ages. He lit a cob pipe and dreamt of a new Wild South.

He heard Evelyn scream. Lee wheeled his horse around and splashed over an islet. Evelyn was before the jaws of old Taft, her horse broken in two and floating in the water. Lee dug his stirrups in and before the hippo had thrashed Evelyn, Lee whipped Taft in the

face. The old bull turned and charged him, but Lee fired his revolver into the air and the animal fled. It erupted onto the bank, hurdled its weight up to the farmhouse, and took the road to town.

“Lee!” Evelyn waded among the lilies. “He could kill someone in town! We have to stop him.” She saddled up behind Lee on his horse and they galloped for the water’s edge. Night had descended on the town when the two-person horse cantered up main street, and only the storefront lamps stirred with light. Despite the wake of shattered barrels and posts and wagon wheels where Taft had charged through, there was a dead silence. They rode into the town square with their ears to the sky. A boom shook the earth like the clap of thunder.

“There it is, Earl. Blow it to Heaven!” A voice called down a side street. Lee lashed the reins and when his horse turned the corner, he saw what was left of the general goods store. It looked like a train had barreled through the storefront, the door and windows flattened to splinters among the floorboards. Taft was inside, thrashing through the food-stuffs. Another boom cracked the sky, so loud that Lee’s horse spooked and threw him and Evelyn into the dirt. It was the store clerk lighting sticks of dynamite and tossing them at the animal.

“Hold up!” Lee shouted. The man threw another red stick. It landed by peach cobblers and exploded bits of debris out into the street. “You’re damn near destroying the whole town!”

“No, but those lake cows are!” the store clerk said. His friend lit another stick.

“I’ll handle it!” Lee grabbed the dynamite and stomped the flame off the wick. Then he took his six shooter from his belt and ran inside with Evelyn.

This is not how it’s supposed to happen, Lee thought. This is the new frontier of the hippoboy in the South. There’ll be ranching and feasting and at night men will even have dreams of tomorrow. There will be expeditions like Lewis and Clark, and gunslingers in horse chases of charming lawlessness. There’s gonna be a town mayor with a mustache and no skyscrapers for a century. In their dreams, they’ll see a sunrise on a new America.

But when Lee's boot crunched on broken glass, he looked at the ruin of the store and the beast within and knew it was all a lie.

Evelyn crept down the bread aisle and took aim at Taft's eyes. "Lee, I got a clear shot on his spots!"

"You sure we have to kill him?"

"What?" Evelyn knitted her brow with confusion. "The bull's gone mad."

"But we were building something here, weren't we?"

"Yes, Lee. We were."

Lee's handle was trembling. He was thirsty like he had been in the boxcar for ten years.

"I'm taking the shot!"

Evelyn fired, and Taft reared with a bone-rattling roar. His tusks knocked over the liquor shelf and a bottle rolled down the aisle to Lee's foot. He picked it up. Evelyn fired again, the hippo bellowing. Lee took the cork out. She fired a third time and Taft had fire in his eyes. Lee brought the bottle to his lips and closed his eyes. Taft charged. Evelyn pulled back the hammer and fired the last hippoboy's shot in all of Louisiana.

In the morning, Lee stumbled to the tracks. He had a jug of wine in his hands when the train clacked by. A bull waved his baton and shouted for Lee to halt. But Lee ran. He caught up to a boxcar and pulled the door open and hoisted himself up inside. He crouched there, watching the tracks blur under him and feeling the engine of the train chug to the golden West. When Evelyn had said her goodbye, she gave him her cowboy hat and wished that he found the right way. When the town had all the hippos shot by sunrise, Lee was out in the swamp with a bottle, drinking until he couldn't feel his feet. Now in his boxcar again, barreling to a new place, he wondered if the American hobo would be buried next. He wondered if all great dreams have to end, and just like the death of the cowboy, he wondered if anyone would care.

CONTRIBUTORS

Savannah Ahluwalia is majoring in business administration at the University of Michigan. Her work is inspired by her travels.

Malin Andersson is an intended English major and music minor at the University of Michigan. Her work is inspired by everything around her—the good and the bad—and her writing is simply a way to make sense of all she observes.

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Alissa Asocar's future at the University of Michigan is really up in the air at this point, but she knows that there's a definite chance it'll involve English in some way. Her piece "A Hunger" was inspired by a love of medieval fiction and a lack of nutrients.

Alexis Aulepp is a junior majoring in communication studies and minoring in writing. She is also an LHSP Resident Advisor and an Editor-in-Chief of the LHSP Arts and Literary Journal. Her poem "Yin & Yang" was inspired by the death of her grandfather in November 2018.

Subarna Bhattacharya is planning to study public health with a minor in writing and political science. She has grown up with the vibrant traditions of her ancestors, inspiring every aspect of her life, including her writing. At the same time, her writing has provided her with an avenue to raise questions about these centuries-old practices and contextualize them in today's world.

Mikayla Bosma is majoring in international studies with a minor in Spanish at the University of Michigan. She is interested in the intersection of individual identity and familial affinity, which is what most of her work is based upon.

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Marcus Clark is studying psychology at the University of Michigan. His artwork is inspired by his interests and emotions so that he may use it as an outlet. He aims to one day make a big impact on the transgender community and the world alike.

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Anthony DiBello is currently enrolled in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts at the University of Michigan. His work “My Eleven Neighbors” was originally produced one day after the synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh’s Squirrel Hill neighborhood on October 27, 2018.

Mitchel Dipzinski is a senior graduating with a degree in linguistics and a minor in creative writing–poetry. The bulk of his work centers around his coming-out story as a gay male and tackles themes surrounding home, family, and self-image. Mitchel wouldn’t be able to write about what he does without the constant support of his loving family.

Laura Dzubay is majoring in English at the University of Michigan. She loves playing card games and the entire month of October.

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Mary Hepp studies communications and film at the University of Michigan, with dreams of working in the film industry as a cinematographer. She enjoys macro and landscape photography.

Niharika Kalia is pursuing a major in film, television, and media. Her work deals with her experiences as an Indian woman and aims to open up conversations on larger social and cultural issues through a creative format.

Christina Kim aspires to major in cognitive science at the University of Michigan. Her work is inspired by the harsh nature of the relationship between humans and the Earth that manifests in our society today.

Calibretto Kinstner is majoring in psychology and communications. He writes poetry when he is able to and draws on inspiration from his childhood and relationships to people.

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Anthony LaBuda has many creative interests including music, poetry, theater, film, and literature. He bases his work off of his everyday interactions, emotions, and thoughts.

Kirsten Lam is studying business and looking to pursue a minor in art and design at the University of Michigan. Her piece “The College Experience” reflects the orchestrated chaos of student lives when going through college.

Jack Lancaster is a class of 2019 graduate from the Ross School of Business and Sweetland Minor in Writing. He will work in NYC after graduation and will continue writing and submitting to journals like these.

Caroline Leary is a member of Art & Tech Club in the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program.

Justin Levine is majoring in film, television, and media at the University of Michigan. He enjoys long walks on the beach, helping underprivileged baby ducklings, and writing sonnets strictly in iambic pentameter.

Grace Livsey is majoring in economics at the University of Michigan. Her work is inspired by the beauty of nature.

Annalese Lohr is planning to major in mathematics and minor in music at the University of Michigan. Her work is inspired by her love for music and commitment to being a lifelong musician.

Grace Ma is currently pursuing a major in computer science–engineering as well as a minor in art and design at the University of Michigan. The painting “Dancing Sculpture” references “The Dance” (1897), a sculpture by Bessie Potter Vonnoh.

Ekaterina Makhnina intends to major in linguistics. She enjoys art, music, and writing, and is excited to have the chance to both work on constructing the journal and to be a contributor.

Makenzie McIntyre is planning to major in biology. Her work is inspired by those close to her, as well as personal experiences. Though she shows off her writing skills here, she also enjoys shredding down hills on her snowboard and is highly competitive in sports.

Annie Ning is a freshman at the University of Michigan who loves writing, drawing, cats, and astrophysics. She enjoys touching on common, abstract subjects such as death, immortality, human motives, and the universe, in ways that they haven’t usually been interpreted, and turning clichés on their heads.

Lily Nunn is majoring in biology at the University of Michigan. She enjoys writing and photography and incorporates aspects of social justice and mental health into her work.

Celeste Pan intends to major in computer science at the University of Michigan. Her work “Corner” is inspired by still life in her former art studio.

Charles Pardales is an immature butthead who tries to love everyone and likes to write sometimes. His work is inspired by everyone he’s ever met and everything he’s ever done.

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Dana Pierangeli is a freshman at the University of Michigan. She is considering English and communications, as well as music, as majors. Her collection “cityscape perception” was shot in New York City, a city that holds a special place in her heart and is where she plans to live after college.

Sydney Pilut is majoring in communication studies at the University of Michigan. She dedicates the poem “it’s me, barely” to Stefanie Frederickson for her constant encouragement in times of distress.

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Amishi Taneja is on the pre-med track planning to major in microbiology. Her poem, “Ocean Blues” was inspired by the experience of vulnerability and the process by which being vulnerable influences a person.

Erin Wakeland is a Lloyd Hall Scholars Program alum and is majoring in art and design.

Rashi Watwani, from Mumbai, India, loves only two things in this world—words and spicy Thai food. Fun fact: The first time she performed for a crowd was at Coffee with Carol!

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Alexander Young studies philosophy and evolution at the University of Michigan and has a deep affinity for the finer aspects of life—music, politics, and all things Shawn Mendes.

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Keri Zhang is currently undecided in the college of LSA at the University of Michigan. Her work is inspired by her humorous daily experiences and thoughts.

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