



# ***Things Worth Mentioning***

The LHSP Arts & Literary Journal  
2016-2017

THE LHSP ARTS & LITERARY JOURNAL

THINGS WORTH  
MENTIONING

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# THINGS WORTH MENTIONING

## 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 LHSP community during the academic year.

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*Paul Barron*

## Letter from the Director

I begin this letter in a strange place: literally I'm writing at a table with three strangers in the British Library, while a choir fills the vast atrium with voices round and warm; figuratively, I'm thinking of the days when I was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan. Strange is the word for how I felt back then: an older, non-traditional, transfer student, a first-gen, a commuter.

I don't know why I think to write this, except that it seems in line with the title of this volume, a thing worth mentioning. But I was also thinking of the writers and artists in this year's journal, students I've known well and those I wish I'd come to know better. I've heard about the work they did in their clubs, saw them working late at night when I came back to pick something up from my office, loved having them in my classes, watched their friendships grow (and persist, thank you, Facebook). I wish I'd had the chance to form part of this sort of cohort, and I'm lucky to have spent the past two years in their company, as part of their community. It's worth mentioning (to riff on the anaphora in Emma Yergin's poem) because I'm glad these students have had this opportunity—they've done amazing things with it, and they will go on to do many more amazing things.

It's worth mentioning, too, that at the start of the year, I invited every member of our community to be curious about one another, to risk letting their guard down, to see each other not as competitors but as compatriots. That's why it's particularly valuable to see the depth of risk these artists and writers take in their work. I'm always curious about how friendships start. Maybe it's often with the simplest possible transition. It is worth mentioning—

As Max Anstey writes, "I felt like the audience in some movie starring my mother, and I

wanted to go home.”

And Lynne Bekdash, “[F]riendly strangers [...] sit beside me / to thread whispers / into a husk / crinkled and white.”

“[Y]our teacher, a woman, apologizes for her too-long soundbite as / though she is constantly measuring the worth of her lessons, the worth of her voice” (Lea Boreland).

And there’s this from Seamus Callaghan—“Desmond the manatee was walumphing through the sky on his chair of Serenity”—suggesting that things worth mentioning can be intimate even when they’re not personal.

The winning poems from the Caldwell Poetry Awards, included here, show exceptional variety and talent, and the art in this year’s journal is stunning. The works speak of—among other things—interior intimacies (Marjorie Gaber, Maya Adler, Abigail Hurst), shifts in perception (Katherine Qiao, Brooks Eisenbise, Alexis Aulepp, Evan Binkley), and questions of national identity (Bharat Chopra, Grace Gebbard, Thomas Vossler). That these themes are in conversation with one another feels particularly relevant given the current political and social climate—a time when national debates frequently begin with embittered disputes over what is fact and what is fake. Maybe now is the time for a simple transition, an effortless way to make friends.

It’s worth mentioning, then, that the editors, Megan, Asritha, Aaron, and the Editors at Large have put together a journal that represents our community, its writers and artists, in this place and time. It’s the measure of their care and attention to detail that the parts come together as a whole and that an apparently simple starting point as “Things Worth Mentioning” can amplify the sense that we’re all in this together—however strange our starting points.

*Megan Knittel & Asritha Vinnakota*

## **Letter from the Editors**

Reminiscings. Revelations. Regrets. Stories from past times and places are recounted alongside imaginings of the future, with the present somewhere in the middle. These stories are the heart of individual identity and community, two themes ringing especially strong in this past year in LHSP. Our LHSP students reflected on these “Things Worth Mentioning” in many different styles and mediums, from Abigail Hurst’s combined poem and artwork “Monster” to Serena Scholz’s wistful and lonely prose piece “Apples”. The year was marked by incredible change both on worldwide political landscapes and in the lives of our students. This past year I had the privilege of getting to know students in our literary journal club, classes, and at other LHSP events. A regular event I organized within LHSP, a coffee hour called “Warm Beverage Wednesday”, was just one singularity of community where I had the pleasure to share ideas and experiences with my fellow students (and eat a lot of donuts, too). One thing worth mentioning that especially struck me about this year’s journal is the grace and wisdom with which our students’ reflected on their experiences in connection to wider society. From Lea Boreland’s “Your Teacher, A Woman” and its commentaries on gender, to Aviva Hirsch’s “No One” and its stirring reflection on the dark sides of humanity, and Seamus Callaghan’s “Your Revolution” which focused on the expectations and challenges his generation faces, “Things Worth Mentioning” captures these relevant, complex topics through student experiences. The journal also explores the fragile nature of what is truth and what is not in today’s world. To borrow from Alexis Aulepp’s “I’d Take It Back”, “How our eyes obscure the world/ [...] /when we can’t bear to see what is so horribly apparent?”

I look at Grace Gebbhard’s vibrant and hopeful “Liberty Leading” or Thomas Vossler’s haunting “National Disaster” and I think about the people and places that have inspired

them, and what is yet to come. I hope that this journal serves as a fondly remembered archive of your experiences and relationships in LHSP, in addition to a thoughtful archive of things worth mentioning.

I would like to thank all of our arts & literary journal club members for their dedication and hard work. Also, I would like to thank all of our student contributors, as without their talent and vulnerability this journal would not be possible. Finally, I would like to thank the LHSP staff, my fellow LHSP RA's and Student Assistants, and my residents of 5th Angell; you all make this program shine.

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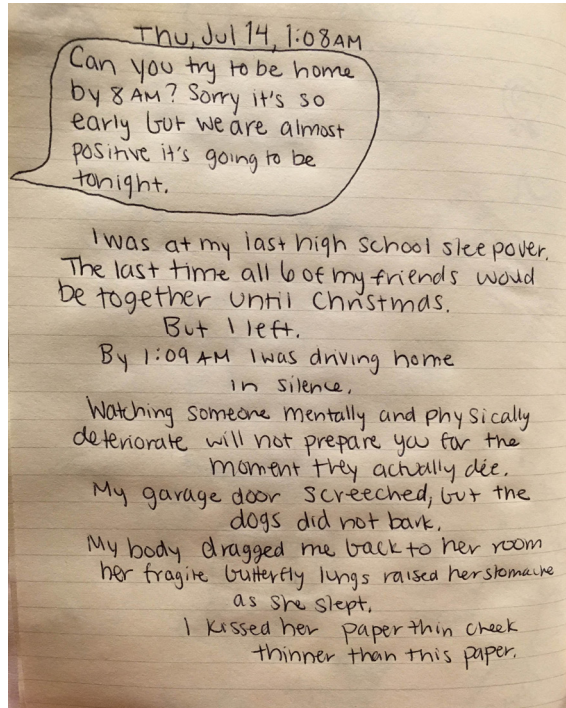
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*Kate Anderson*  
**Paper Thin**



*Olivia Anderson*

## **A Side Effect of Distance**

Remember that time I said I couldn't breathe? We were in my room doing homework; you with some class you actually enjoyed, and me staring at a piece of paper with a jumble of words forcing me to do something I knew wouldn't help me. My phone was buzzing enough to shake the earth, enough for you to ask if I should check it, but I knew if I did my brain would shut down and quietly slip away from its home. I left saying that I needed to call someone back, but I actually nearly tripped down the stairs three times as I was trying to make it to the courtyard. Remember how I said I walked around the building? I did that, refusing to mention that the cold evaporated the sweat off my back. There were also two dogs I saw while I was outside. One was a golden retriever and one was a chocolate lab. They looked exactly like my dogs from home but I had no urge to pet them. I didn't mention them because I know that would be the detail that would make you concerned.

*Olivia Anderson*

## **One Day in February, Some Years Ago**

The carpet is blue from twenty years of use  
Except in the spots where furniture has always stood because  
Then there'd be no convenient spot to put the TV.  
The walls are white but scattered with footprints  
Like a sidewalk littered with blacked pieces of gum.  
The sun always shines through on days like this,  
Lying about its warmth. Right now,  
All you know is that the cold is separated from you  
But you still feel it creep in through your heel.  
All you know is the house smells like dogs and slow cooker meals  
That you're all too familiar with because  
Your father is incapable of taking care of himself, much less you.  
All you know is that one day the snow will melt  
And it will be too hot to use the slow cooker.

*Alexis Aulepp*  
**I'd Take It Back**

Funny, isn't it?  
How our eyes  
obscure the world

mess it up and  
blur it beyond recognition

when we can't bear to see  
what is becoming so  
horribly apparent?

I don't feel anger  
I don't feel pain  
I feel deadened  
empty  
numb

I am not bursting at the seams  
to tell someone of my struggle  
I am shivering and drawing  
inward

shrinking like the wizened fruit  
that has been left alone in the dirt

I am not upset  
Upset is far too simple a word  
far too misleadingly vague

I do not feel vague

I am the climber who grabbed a loose rock  
I am the mother visited by two grim police officers at 2 AM  
I am the passenger on the plunging plane

Doomed  
with no way to stop  
the inevitable

Like a morning star  
I plummet to the earth  
and I chuckle  
darkly  
at my own  
stupidity



*Alexis Aulepp*

## **Naked**

You stood naked before me  
not in body, but in soul  
clothed in nothing but your vulnerability  
shivering under the slight caress of my gaze

I took my time  
appreciating the sight of your exposed heart  
exploring every inch of your bared mind  
learning all the fragilities of your unprotected soul

I traced the curves of your desires  
as one would trace a figure  
slowly and with great care  
memorizing every detail

I cupped your weaknesses in my hands  
and pulled your strengths against me  
drawing your insecurities closer  
then closer still

We were together  
in that small, infinite space  
your dreams and mine colliding  
your hopes and fears my gateway to another realm

You looked at me  
with naked eyes  
and I, too, began to undress

*Max Anstey*  
**Yes, Mom**

*“Yes, Mom  
of course I know what ‘divorce’ means.”*

That is the first lie I remember telling.

Some memories are more vivid than others, and that moment when my light-up, size 4 sketchers bounded down my hardwood floors, and I typed the word “divorce” into dictionary.com will forever be engrained in my mind. By stumbling to the keyboard and uncovering the unexpected definition of “divorce,” I tried to conceal a lie by transforming it into a truth, but in that instant when my lip began to quiver and my throat grew sore, I learned about pain. Pain that transcended frequent knee gashes from sliding into 3rd base. Pain more breathtaking than a powerfully struck soccer ball crushing my thinly covered, prepubescent ribs. Pain tantamount to nothing.

Mom lived with granny and grandpa for a while, about 6 months. Dad kept the house where he and mom raised me *together*. Mom cooked, but now, Dad and I, “the bachelors” as he called it, ate takeout. I remember long drives between granny’s and dad’s. I didn’t talk on those rides, I just watched. The pictures in the hall outside my room were different. The picture of my mom and dad giggling in their mid-twenties, the archetypical embodiments of youthful giddiness, was replaced with a nail hole and a square of dust, the ghost of framed happiness.

I turned 7 that year.

Two years later, my mom started dating; his name was Ron.

Walking into his apartment was strange; It didn't smell like home. His ceilings were so high compared to mine. They made his place feel empty. My mom comfortably paced back and forth, straightening pillows and pushing in chairs; this wasn't her first time here. I watched her pull out a glass from the cupboard on the left of the sink. Back home our glasses are in the cupboard on the *right*. She drank from the unfamiliar mug, and I felt alone. I felt like the audience in some movie starring my mother, and I wanted to go home. Home where the cups are to the right of the sink. Home where the ceilings don't make me feel small. Home where I can roam the halls blindfolded. Home where I feel safe because of the smell of the air and the familiar, yet ambient noises. Home where mommy doesn't look like this.

His name is Ron. I'm told he's a nice man. I'm told he has two kids. Does that mean I'm no longer an only child? Two big brothers; TWO of them! Do they like Pokemon like I do? Do they have nightmares like I do? Are they readers like I am? Are they the reason for their parents' divorce like I am? I wonder if they play video games like I do. I wonder if they know I detest being an only child. I wonder if I should divulge that my 8th birthday wish was for a big brother, or if disclosing my secret will superstitiously hinder its culmination. Oh, here they come! Wow they're so tall! They must play basketball... I wonder why they didn't sit next to me.

I wonder why they haven't said anything to me yet. I wonder if they will stop ignoring me. Maybe I just don't understand *brotherhood* like them, seeing as they were born from the same parents. But aren't I their brother too, or am I just the elephant at someone else's dinner table?

My mother rose to use the restroom. I was alone, an uninvited and unwanted guest at some family's Thursday-night dinner. He asked me how my day was; I said "*fine*." In her absence,

the pain of the ear-piercing quietude was amplified by the screeching of metallic knives and forks scraping against porcelain plates. I watched my brothers clench their jaws when my mother re-entered. I observed their premeditated contract to respond to her questions with silence. They detested her. These boys did not want to be my brothers, and they hated my mother. Does this mean I should dislike their father? I was taught by words that he was a nice man, but I was shown by actions how I was meant to behave in the reconstruction period that follows divorce. Parents have a plethora of books boasting their ability to answer “any and all questions about divorce,” yet there is no guide telling me how to act; no picture book for the unaccounted-for victims of divorce. I liked math. I liked answers. I hated this. If my mother was going to play the role of the detested matriarch of some other family, maybe I should play the rebellious child.

I felt nauseous. I got up and ran out the door, mirroring the banal melodrama of movies. I felt a tug on my arm; it was my mom. She looked at me with tears in her eyes; it was really her, not the imposter who stood in Ron’s kitchen.

I was the nine-year-old anomaly who didn’t know what divorce was until Google told him.

*Lynne Bekdash*  
**Distanced**

Granddaughter,  
I am far now from that slender body  
I once was.  
I am old and I am forgetting,  
but I remember this white fabric  
must be my wedding dress.  
I sit threading whispers  
into the shell of this empty dress,  
a husk  
crinkled and white.

Granddaughter,  
your name now is  
ghost. It is the specter in the smell of rain,  
telling me tales of a storm  
that came to rob me  
and to plant poppies  
along the walkway  
in the night.

Your name now is  
body. It is the way my fingers felt  
big around your wrist,  
is a space made  
smaller suddenly  
and made thin.

Granddaughter,  
I know your name when I wait alone.  
I have only to watch the friendly strangers  
outside the window  
slump up the walkway  
and in towards the empty crib  
to be born again  
in memory  
behind the glass.  
They sit beside me  
to thread whispers  
into a husk  
crinkled and white.

I am far now from where this baby lies;  
she is you and she is standing  
in her high, red heels, tall and small  
and moving with movement  
past the suspended and  
still I am far  
from the green reach  
of home.

*Lea Boreland*  
**Your Teacher, A Woman**

You are supposed to like her. Hair  
curled like soft serve ice cream, she lets you dim the lights in class. She lets you  
wear a hat. She lets you bring your breakfast. She lets you use your laptop even if it distracts  
you, in her class

The list of let's is  
bigger than the list of don'ts — this is something that  
you are supposed to like her for, but you only feel cheated.

First day, front of the classroom, she ends the discussion like no man ever before has ever  
done: she interrupts herself with an apology for digging too deep into her thoughts,

your teacher, a woman, apologizes for her too-long soundbite as  
though she is constantly measuring the worth of her lessons, the worth of her voice, based  
on  
the gazes of her students, the students that she lets use laptops, the students who's day-  
dreams she apologizes for interrupting

your teacher, a woman,  
has made a pact — with whom we do not know and for what we do not understand — a  
pact to offer only  
what pleases her students, even if they are the ones she



is supposed to be pulling begrudgingly forward — even if this is what they wanted, this challenge,

she is afraid of giving them this because she is afraid of being hated and in these constraints you watch your teacher, a woman, make herself nothing.

She apologizes, and you hate her anyways. You hate her because she's seen you,

you're right in  
front of her. You eat breakfast in her class. You, like her, want to give people what they want  
but  
you do not want to be hated and these vain constraints  
have been your liminal chamber.

Instead, your teacher, a woman, wears  
her hair in ice cream curls until everybody takes a bite and she is left with the notion that she  
made herself bald, her shame at her melting self.

The pain of  
her melting students.

Your teacher, a woman.  
Did you expect anything else?

*Seamus Callaghan*  
**Your Revolution**

Meet you me, your Revolution;  
I'm magnificent;  
your savior from a corrupt and  
oppressive government.

Meet you me, your Revolution  
for the People's voice.  
I'm what happens when your children  
have no other choice.

Meet you we, the generation  
of Enlightenment,  
whose golden standards you confuse with  
vain entitlement.

We're freeing our world from violence o'er  
religion, sex, and race.  
We do all that through hardships that you  
never had to face.

We work three jobs and yet we still  
can hardly make ends meet,  
enslaved by debt to masters making  
billions on Wall Street.

Meet you we, the generation  
never to grow old.  
The consequence of your inaction,  
we will see unfold.

Meet you we, the weapons with which  
World War III is fought.  
See the poisoned, dismal devastation  
you have wrought.

You launched us for “human rights” and  
for “democracy,”  
for corporate military interests’  
Power and money.

Your revolution halts a war no  
smaller protest could -  
a lesser of two evils to protect  
the greater good.

Now meet you me, the landscape in which  
all of this takes place.  
It’s my strife that ultimately  
dooms your human race.

Your plethora of consequences:  
famine, drought, and more.  
Your leaders failed to do a thing.  
It's why you went to war.

But how'll you get the power, food, and  
water that you need?  
Revolt won't change the fact there are too  
many mouths to feed,

So you'll keep fighting on, until  
there's nothing to rebuild.  
How can it end when there's still desperate  
people being killed?

Eventually, I'll recover, I've gone  
through this shit before.  
But when I do, there won't be any  
humans anymore...

A woman walks the desolation  
planting tiny trees,  
to replace forests lost to logging,  
fire, and disease.

She's been alone for many years,  
now old and close to death.  
"Meet you me, your Revolution,"  
whispers her last breath.

*Seamus Callaghan*  
**Tones of Green**

One salty day, Desmond the manatee was walumphing through the sky on his chair of Serenity. He noticed that the primary walumf inducer was acting a bit green, so he deposited it at the local baseball stadium so that the ice cream man could turn it into a table. Desmond was always flabbergasted when things acted green. This was the third time in as many geological epochs.

While he waited for the cows to secrete a new primary walumf inducer that behaved in the proper tone of blue, he took a roll through the forest of human fingers. As his leathery gray body tumbled over the soft bed of lost puzzle pieces, he had a rather bland idea. What if all of reality, at its base nature, was an infinite set of purely random information? What if any patterns that emerged from the data, such as people, planets, emotions, ice cream, the laws of physics, or Saturdays, are coincidences that inevitably occur somewhere in the eternal chaos? What if everywhere else in reality was unintelligible nonsense, with planets that go around stars and pies that taste sweet and life forms that have to eat one another to survive?

Desmond stopped rolling. He noticed that everything was behaving particularly green. He decided to evaporate before things got too silly, and so, gracefully, he did.

*Nikole Davtyan*  
**Hydrofluoric Acid**

Her eyes were the color  
of light-washed denim jeans.  
Her hair,  
always braided  
and parted in half  
like a freshly cut apple.  
She smelled sweet,  
like morning mist  
and always wore dresses  
that fell just below her knee.

But she fooled you,  
like she did everyone  
with her mischievous smile  
and thin,  
honey-chapped lips.

Her touch was poison  
that burned through your skin  
like hydrofluoric acid.  
She spoke with words so sharp  
it stung like

rubbing alcohol  
poured all over a  
scratched up elbow.  
She was made of raging winds  
that shattered windows,  
white lies that turned the soul black,  
and crying children  
who would never find home.

And still,  
you couldn't help  
*but love her.*

*Laura Džubay*  
**How Was Your Trip?**

*To my mother*

There are so many things I wish to ask you—  
the dandelions you left near the sink,  
the weird jiggly thing you do to the keys  
when the car doesn't start (which is so often).  
I want to ask you the sound of the door  
when you come home, and the scraping  
of dog's claws against wood that always  
follows. The precise way my nose pokes  
into your bony shoulder.  
Your umbrella eyes.  
Even over the phone, your voice  
squats next to me and smiles, eyebrows arched  
in sympathy, your thin fingers  
tangle through my hair. As a child  
I used to huddle on the bathroom floor in the cavern  
of a towel, feet wet, lotion waiting on the counter  
for my dry skin, and I'd scream, hating you a little  
as your nails broke through my knots.  
I want to ask you what were all the things we said,  
you to me and I to you, every second  
of my childhood, the things they didn't catch



on camera. What were we like back then?  
What were you like? You must remember.  
Now that I've watched  
other children a while—they demand  
so much, it replaces me with things they want.  
I am towels, and cookies, and dinner, and hair.  
Break up their fights, love them, scare them.  
You were twenty-six when you had me, your eldest—  
and what before that? I've seen you  
in the photographs. Tell me your long hair  
(which you cut short one year and it looked  
the way I would want my hair to look  
if I cut it short),  
your dark eyes, hard and earnest,  
your teeth so straight even though  
you never had braces, your skin,  
clear, flawless, because you never picked your bug bites  
when you were a kid, just like you told me not to  
the whole time I was growing up, and I never listened.  
You wore turtlenecks and baggy sweaters,  
nineties clothes. In some photos  
you're pregnant. In one you're sweaty and silver,  
flushed all around with banners checked purple and white—  
you've just finished a marathon—  
you're smiling the way happy people smile  
at prom, young, finish line  
fluttering above you, and in front of you  
I'm sitting a few years old in the stroller  
you just pushed across it – and I'm smiling too,  
as if it was me doing the hard work the whole time.

*Laura Dzubay*  
**Winter in Oz**

Snow has caked the bricks white underfoot.  
Leafless trees gnarled with winter, barren branches,  
the apples all have fallen and been trampled  
into slush. The scarecrow  
has been putting up a brave face, joking that at least this way  
he'll never catch fire, but nonetheless  
it's a season he isn't used to, and nights after they make camp  
he wrings out his patched clothing,  
shakes the melted ice from his straw,  
thinking back to autumn dryness.  
Sometimes he leans into the lap of the lion, who envelops his companions  
in damp fur, his great body breathing against theirs,  
whichever one of them feels coldest that night. He's getting thinner,  
looking less regal with every passing day, but he doesn't bring it up.  
No apples this time of year, no pastries, no bread.  
Once, the tin man, in a fit of frustration,  
chucked the oil can down a slope and into a ravine where it landed,  
luckily, at the edge, where the water had frozen over.  
Dorothy and the scarecrow were down there  
for the better part of an hour, up to their knees in white, teeth chattering,  
frigid wet gloves pawing around in the slush until they found it.  
They climbed back up, oiled their friend back to life

and said wearily, don't cry, you will only make it worse.  
Dorothy's purple fleece coat barely fits her anymore.

Likely, they figure, they are close to the Emerald City—  
this is the road, after all, and they haven't strayed from it—  
but there have been no signs, and they've heard nothing  
from the witch in a while. Dorothy almost wishes they would,  
even though at this point she can hardly remember Kansas,  
more a name than a place, a landscape of rolling brown hills  
and houses whose families she knows, a land she knew  
or maybe dreamt of as a child. She could recall more if she tried,  
but snow is falling again in the woods of the nameless valley  
and her eyes are drifting. She burrows her head into the lion's fur  
and whispers, I didn't know it would be this cold, I didn't know  
it would take this long. I may not have come,  
if I'd known it would take this long.

*Brooks Eisenbise*

## **A Trojan Horse in the Trachea**

Consequences of breathing, being alive (heart beating, femurs  
Oscillating in their sockets, jostled and firing  
Neurons hiding in a heap of tissue), even that is a risk. Organs  
Quarrel amongst themselves, drawing straws—they cannot  
Undo the damage. The dams are leaking, traffic is not budged by  
Endless beats and breaths and nothing is going  
Right. Conquest is not always a

Flag driven into a foreign crater and decorated  
Regents with horses and royal decrees. No, sometimes pillaging  
Occurs from inside the city, tearing the walls down one cell at a time,  
Meaning well but doing nothing or doing everything

Wrong. When the way out is blocked, when the  
Infantry shoots only at  
Themselves, all is shallow breaths and  
Heated foreheads, sweat filling  
In sinkholes and red hills creating the battlefield's  
New topography.

*Brooks Eisenbise*  
**Ode to an Old Book**

What a common thing, a book  
a block of text cast in pulp and framed  
by two covers, two cloth-covered doors  
(one way in, one way out)  
the title reveals little, the pages know  
how to keep secrets  
swallow them  
like gum

Still, I crack it awake  
fingers like chisels, like earthquakes,  
and it opens begrudgingly, mumbling  
as the covers slowly separate, creaking  
crackling and popping like a candy  
wrapper or my knuckles or  
a wildfire  
spitting dust as I run  
my fingers over the pages  
soft, sharp, imprinting the words  
into my palms like worry lines

How many fingers have been here?

How many hands am I holding?

I move into its spine  
I breathe and it breathes back,  
filling the space between  
my ears with fog and mildew  
and expired memories  
a scent I could burn like a candle  
and extinguish just to see  
the smoke  
dance

Someday, when the edges  
of my skin are dog-eared  
and worn, my flaws underlined  
by creases and crows feet  
my binding creaky and cracked  
and shaking  
I will be only  
an old book, misplaced,  
brittle and yellowing  
full of forgotten  
words and coffee stains  
shut shut shut

and I will be exploded open  
and I will be held close to your chest  
and the scent of me will waft like  
the dancing smoke of a long-burned flame

*Kortni Ford*

## Vices

You headed for the bathroom, head down  
pretending to be invisible  
but I saw you  
I saw you when you came out  
glazed eyes, freshly vascular  
I saw you oscillating between being present  
and falling  
into a hole in the ground  
in my bedroom floor  
in your psyche.

On your bedroom floor,  
I saw the blood spurted onto a t-shirt  
I saw the needle  
broken by someone eager for a fix  
someone eager for a fix  
some junkie  
but every junkie at one point wasn't  
every junkie was someone's best friend  
someone who hadn't felt the needle.  
That was then  
now I watch you

romancing over the small bottle of methadone  
like I can't see you anticipating your next real high.

I'd take the dope sickness off your hands  
if only I could  
if only I could help you find it in you  
to put it down

Artificial and short-lived love you inject

But your vices are no worse than mine



*Grace Gebhard*  
**Bloom**

He plucked me from the stem he said  
“I am giving you eternal life” as he pressed me between the pages  
of a book  
To be admired  
A corpse, with color preserved

*William Hearn*

## **May 12th**

Have you ever experienced one of those days where you wake up and the sun is shining and you're having a great day and then before you know it dark, dense clouds threateningly roll in and a clap of encroaching thunder is heard in the distance and simultaneously everything in your life seems to go wrong? It all happens in that one moment; you are cheery and smiley, then the sky turns dark and that smile turns immediately into a frown as a bolt of lightning dashes across the sky. This is happening to me right now. And for lack of a better term, it outright sucks. The rain is falling slowly. It runs down the window panes like the tears upon a saddened face. I can't tell if my life went upside down because of the weather or if the weather is coincidentally supplementing my emotions. Either way, I still feel hollow on the inside. Nothing can change the fact that she will never love me. She loves somebody else. All I can do now is what I've been doing for the past two and a half years: sit back and watch from afar this relationship between her and this somebody else develop. It will probably take the same course that all of her other relationships take. She will fall in love with him and all of his courtship, chivalry, and romantic gestures. That will last about two months. Then she will realize that he isn't who he was two months ago, because all of that romanticism was just a show. She'll call him "fake" and make known the fact that he is "two-faced" and had used her. He will retort by calling her a "bitch" and will bid her goodbye by telling her that "you were a waste of my time and I'm glad you are out of my life." Then she will walk back to her apartment, slam the door shut, and cry. The tears will flow incessantly, just as the rain is down my windowpane. She will hunker down on her sofa with a pint of Ben and Jerry's and a spoon and will turn on *The Notebook*. After finishing the movie with an empty ice cream container next to her, she will regain her confidence as she realizes that despite what her ex

told her, she is not in fact a worthless piece of shit. With a new-found swagger, she will strut to her bed and endure a good night's sleep. Tomorrow, the endless cycle that is her love life will start all over again.

At the end of each cycle there is a part where I muster up some courage and try to introduce myself as a boy that is worth her time. We will go on a couple dates; bowling, the movies, dinner. But after about a week, after a week of treating her how she ought to be treated, she finds that somebody *else*. She finds that person that isn't me and the whole thing starts all over again. Once again, I am forced to take the back seat as someone who, albeit, is just as handsome and chivalrous (for now) as myself, takes the wheel.

And this brings us back to where I am now. It's May 12<sup>th</sup> and it's raining.

*Kendall Hecker*  
**Little Brother**

All of the words were still dripping from my ears when she came through the unhinged door.

But there was so much to look at in the room  
that was not her blistered disappointment.

It was all awash in green light.  
The whole world, dipped in the freshness of morning.  
The walls were broken with shadows of needles and sprawled, rancid bodies, together yet  
alone in their waning desperation.

The room felt like me.  
The forgotten girls and birthday balloons and brown blood and crushed moths sat like phantom hearts  
pumping a resentful purity through my head  
which was still soaking in a mistake made once.  
The kind of mistake that had to be repeated.

Her face was like sour coffee  
forced down a younger brother's throat  
in the early hours of guilt.

I raised my hand to my face, and I could still feel  
all the nights she had found me where I was (and somehow still am) and had  
hit me. Hit me. HIT ME.  
She wanted nothing more than for me to remain awake  
and therefore remain alive.  
I wanted nothing more than another high.

The green morning light and the exit signs,  
graffittied walls,  
tattooed faces,  
eyes dulled with  
distinct pleasure and  
darkness and  
horrible pain.  
All of it seeped from her eyes and I could see my reflection in her tears that should have  
tasted of salt.  
Instead I tasted cigarettes and a tongue that whispered a name I now forget.  
Was it my own? Her face was my foaming mouth and bleary eyes.

She cried tears like our past.  
Her face had become a broken well  
The day we saw the portrait our father had painted  
Of his own blood across the kitchen wall.  
She started springing leaks.

She could never patch her raw eyes.  
Secrets and water slipped through her shaking hands  
Which were riddled with holes, just like her sides,  
Where her happiness slipped out.  
Dad may as well have shot her.  
He hole-punched my big sister with grief.

Despite it all  
She came for me. Every time.  
She found my darkness and she entered it.  
This morning dipped room  
with its floating angels and crumbling walls and desperate people was not her world.  
But it was mine.  
And I was hers.  
Maybe the day I believe she won't be there  
to lift me by the memory of a shared childhood  
and a vacant, widowed mother  
and stolen cookies from the corner store,  
maybe that will be the day I won't trip back into my world  
of heated spoons,  
taut rubber bands,  
and tears wiped away by smiling gods of flame and lush lavender.  
They can forgive us all our sins.

*Kendall Hecker*

## **Longing on a Long Bus Ride**

I wish I had the wandering hands of God  
So I could stretch my palms across the green hills  
And get my fingers tangled in the golden grasses  
Caught amidst the dried labors of the soil  
Like hungry hands through mussed brown hair.  
All at once, I could hold it.  
I would feel pricks from the church spires  
And the honeybees would flee their proper flowers  
Flocking towards my lavender oils  
Left over from my last bottle  
Run over my wrists.  
Fingertips the size of Tudor homes  
Families basking in the blue of my shade  
Palms drifting across pebbled walks  
Nudging the sheep.

I wish I had the eyes of God  
So I could behold the patchwork lives  
Sewn into the patchwork fields  
Of red and gold, bronze and green.  
I could see the whole sun at once

Breaking through fluttering eye lids  
Lighting my feeble darkness on fire  
Flames dancing in the blacks of my eyes.

I wish I had the feet of God  
So I could fall to my knees  
Humbled, weak in the beauty of my own creation.  
The swooning trees limp against my skin  
I will scramble  
On elbows and denim  
Across the countryside  
Ravenously memorizing every swoop of the earth.

Loving is such warm work  
I will roll up my sleeves.  
Even the weeds are beautiful  
Because they are green  
And they are growing  
And they are here.



*Aviva Hirsch*

## **No One**

No one leaves home until  
home is the mouth of a shark.  
No one runs for the border until  
6,000,000<sup>1</sup> others have already fled.  
No one chooses prison until  
bondage becomes easier than freedom.<sup>2</sup>

No one crawls under barbed-wired fences<sup>3</sup>  
and cuts their knees  
and burns their hands until  
a knife slashes their necks  
and they have to stop the blood.  
No one holds their breath until

---

1 Reference to the 6,000,000 killed in the Holocaust and the 6,000,000 refugees that are still displaced within Syria.

2 Throughout Jewish history, a life in bondage is in many cases safer than a life outside of bondage, where we have been subjected to discrimination, violence, and hatred. This is true for the refugees around the world, who, when not locked up, are shot and killed everyday.

3 Reference to the barbed-wired fences in concentration camps.

the air in the chamber is too dirty to breathe.<sup>4</sup>

No one throws their children into boats until  
the water is safer than the land.<sup>5</sup>  
No one locks themselves in small, dark trucks until  
the miles travelled means more than the pain endured.

No one stands for hostility until  
hateful words are more tender  
than the 16 men between your legs.<sup>6</sup>  
No one stays silent until  
the insults are softer  
than the rubble and bone you're forced to swallow.

No one runs from God until  
God chases you to the shore  
and tells you to quicken your legs  
and leave your clothes  
and crawl through the desert  
and wade through the oceans  
and drown  
and bleed  
and beg

---

4 Reference to the 600,000 people that were killed on average per extermination camp in the gas chambers.

5 Genesis 7: 21-23. When God flooded the earth, every living being on dry land was destroyed. The only way to survive was to leave behind everything and follow Noah to his ark at sea.

6 Female refugees around the world are victims of sexual violence and trafficking.

and cry  
and somehow survive.<sup>7</sup>

No one leaves home until  
home is the voice inside your head that says,  
Leave.<sup>8</sup>

Run away from me now.  
It is better to be a stranger<sup>9</sup>  
than to be nothing at all.  
I am the mouth of a shark,  
and you must not be swallowed.

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7 While the Exodus from Egypt is typically viewed as a blessing, people forget the many hardships that the Israelites faced in the desert. This is similar to the hardships that refugees are currently facing as they travel from their old homes to their new homes.

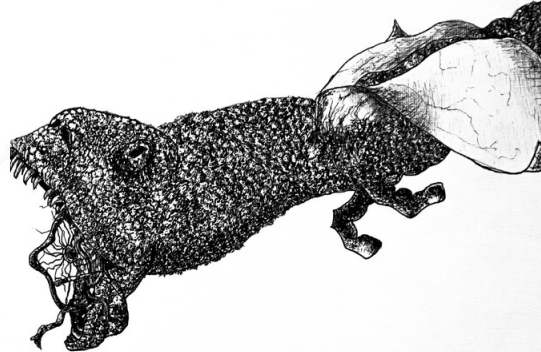
8 Exodus 12: 31- 32. Pharaoh finally tells the Israelites to leave Egypt. This could also be read as the people telling themselves that it is time to leave. It is their realization that they can either escape and risk their lives, or stay and live in an eternal state of bondage. This is a decision refugees around the world face everyday.

9 Deuteronomy 15:15. This is the core idea that guides the Passover Seder: remembrance of our enslavement. When we treat refugees and immigrants as strangers, we should remember what they are running from. We should recognize the lives they left, the suffering they endured, and the deaths they escaped. Maybe that recognition would finally make them worthy of our attention and care.

*Abigail Hurst*  
**Monster**

Beware of the monster, It says,  
Scheming under your bed.  
Beware of the monster that'll sink in its teeth.  
Beware of the monster that creeps in your thoughts.  
Look in the mirror and see its disguise:  
A monster looking in your eyes.  
You cannot escape your demise.  
Beware of the monster because it's you.

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*Abigail Hurst*

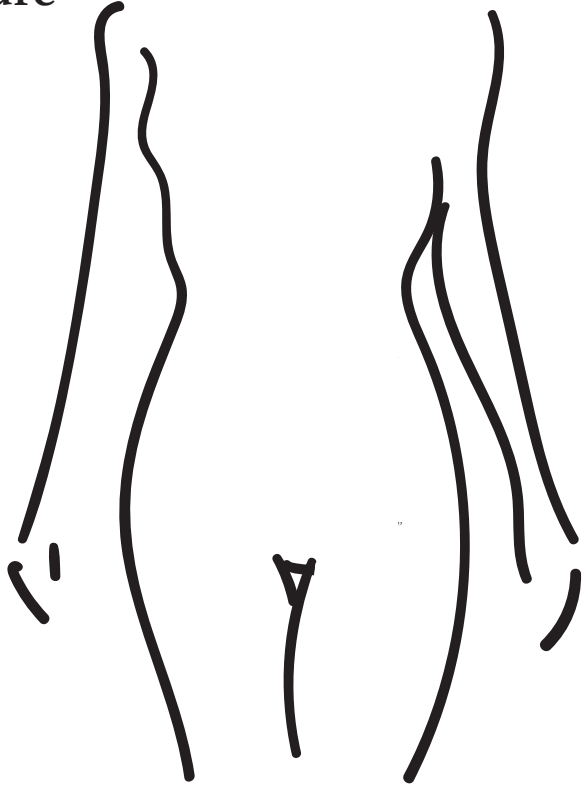
## Pasture

Winter's time: frozen sea,  
It was staring at me  
Sleeping in the Pasture.  
"Young bud, please bloom faster.

"Grow and inch, stand up straight,  
do what's said and make haste."  
Looking through the mirror,  
I see all I had feared.

Clock ticks twice; rooster crowed.  
Sun falls down; grey hair grows.  
"From dust shall dust return.  
Live life now that you earned."

Winter's time: frozen sea,  
It was staring at me  
Sleeping in the pasture.  
"Young bud, please bloom faster."



*Amanda Kuo*

## **Bitch**

bitch

you say to me  
youre such a

bitch.

you stab me with your needles  
and it rushes through my  
veins, turning them from  
purple to  
black.

and i am tossed on my  
back as my  
fingers shrink into my  
hands and my  
nails grow long and my  
nose is dragged forward  
turning wet and  
black.

i begin to pant.

my tongue drips with the  
words i cannot say because  
you have silenced me.

and i am going insane  
and running in circles  
around myself when  
i see the moon that  
resemble the whites of  
your eyes that day

and howl.

*Amanda Kuo*  
**I Am Happy**

It feels so weird to say

Why is it that we allow ourselves  
The Right to Speak  
when we feel like complaining

But we choose to  
Silence the voice  
That says so simply

I am happy.



*Elise Laarman*

## **This Too Shall Pass**

The restaurant is dark and the wine is thick. That's the word Dad gives us. Thick, spicy, full body, nice legs. He smiles at the table, flashing the small gap between his front two teeth that I too once sported before the braces. We all give him the stop-with-the-bad-jokes-Dad-you-sound-like-Grandpa look and pretend we're unamused, but I'm just happy that they're here.

Seeing my parents again feels surreal. A day ago I had been flipping through some pictures on my laptop and came across one of my house in Missouri. Light red brick and a balding driveway with a great big crack that my dad had waged war against ever since I can remember, annually trying to fill it in during the summer only to have it reappear after the first snowfall melts. The picture brought such an unprepared visceral reaction that when my roommate came in she didn't greet me but asked if I was okay.

Yeah. I'm okay.

Dad holds his glass up and tilts it this way and that. The liquid, purple in the dimness, leaves thin veins across the curvaceous surface. Rioja, of course. The day Meghan left to study abroad in Spain last spring, my family adopted the Spanish culture the only way cultureless suburban Americans can. We drink Riojas. We eat tapas. We speak harsh, ugly Spanish, except for Meghan, who spoke so elegantly in Spain, and without whom Mom and I would have been so lost when we visited, because who knew not a single soul in Madrid spoke a lick of English?

Dad pours me a glass.

There was a time two years ago when Dad and I secretly discovered the finest drink in the world. We were in Colorado with everything you needed to survive for a weekend on our backs. Of our various, and sometimes humorously, unnecessary items included a tent, some

matches, bags of freeze dried Jamaican chicken-and-rice, a box of cinnamon PopTarts, some coconut-flavored granola bars that really coated the tongue, and a few peanuts we ended up throwing at a stag that charged at us. You can only carry so much water though, and soon we ended up panting thin air. We went down to the snowmelt stream and filled up a plastic bag with the icy water and squeezed it through the cap-sized filter into one of our water bottles. The water tasted sweet. There is no other word to describe it. Not sugary, but cold and fresh and clean like a winter breeze.

The Rioja is a distant second.

Mom and Meghan bicker over the restaurant menu about flat breads and cheeses. Mom is wearing her new red reading glasses, which I told her I liked and kept to myself that they felt like an intruder on such a familiar face. She had just started a job back at home and was enjoying it immensely. I'm happy for her. I tell her that college is hard and she tells me to get used to it.

It was sophomore year, I think, when we were both speechless in the car parked in our garage. I was out of words and she didn't know what to say. The night was awful in a way that language can but clumsily define and I was struggling. There were flashes of emotions, phrases of thought, a sort of general confusion and self-criticism that defines those teenager years. She put her arm around me and I turned to let my tears stain her sleeve. We sat in the mutual understand that this too shall pass. After a while, the car's headlights mechanically clicked off and it was quiet.

Conversation turns away from my first year of college towards my sister's new Cuban boyfriend. I had only met him briefly and thought he smelled good but could do with a shave. My sister seems to really like him. When she speaks about him, she uses her hands and her eyebrows angle as if she's surprised she finally caught a boy after a college-long drought. I can't help but fantasize about having a Cuban brother-in-law. Meghan is twenty-two after all and marriage isn't such a distant idea. It shocks me how little this shocks me. We're both so old.

Twelve years ago, the day before Meghan's first piano lesson, I did not want to play piano. Twelve years ago, the day after Meghan's first piano lesson, I did. It wasn't due to the instrument, nor to any love of music, but because of a little sister's idealism of an older sib-

ling. She had deemed piano to be important enough to learn, and I'd obey her judgments as if she had the very voice of God. We took piano from the same teacher. Ms. Shirley always made sure we were practicing from different books so we wouldn't be learning the same songs. The Tuesday Meghan left for college was the first time I saw the sun rise. I stayed home from school, there was no parent home to tell me to do otherwise. I sat at the piano all day, hopelessly plucking songs from years past that I didn't realize I still remembered, trying to drown the newfound silence that settled into our empty house. I taught myself the last song my sister had learned. I taught myself by watching her hands during all the lessons that we will never go to together again.

We politely lean back in our seats as the food is served. Meghan and Mom get their plate of different cheeses, and they coo over the waiter's description of each like elderly women around a baby. Meghan reaches for the one described as tasting like a "smelly foot." That's an exact quote. And yes, it was accurate.

They all settle into their food quietly and contently. I'm always the last one to eat because I don't like salad. I watch them graze their plates, picking out all the good bits first, and I realize that so many things have changed. There was an unfamiliar space that had grown between us. It wasn't an awkward space, nor was it necessary to address it. It was just a thing that existed, and a phenomenon that we all silently acknowledged was just the result of the growing up. I remember our oval dinner table at home being so small. Mom would ask how my day at school was and I would give her one-word answers, looking down at my plate and being the insufferable teenager I'm sure I was. This round little table in the dark restaurant, covered with small tapas dishes and nostalgia, was vast in comparison.

I had missed them more than I realized.

It was the kind of emotion that you keep tucked way down because it's just too painful to face, especially in the dorm rooms where there is little to no privacy. There was a time I really had to hold it together after reading the introduction to an assigned short story about a pair of older parents seeing their three children after they had "now grown and scattered across the country." And I found myself and my future so completely in that phrase that the inevitability of our family's fate caught in my throat and choked my eyes.

When I think of home now it has the fuzzy brightness of half-remembered dreams,

impaired and imperfect, with a great big crack running through it. I know something has changed because now when I call home and talk to Tommy I notice a tenderness in his voice that wasn't there during our rough-and-tumble childhood and certainly wasn't there in high school when we suddenly grew apart with our terse, annoyed sentences and closed bedroom doors. Tommy, who allowed me to sleep in his bunkbed for a solid year in third grade after I watched *The Mummy* and who would wake up early with me to play Pokémon on our DS. Now he's applying to college. I ask him if he applied to Michigan and he says yes. Michigan isn't his first choice but I really hope he comes around.

There are darker days when the emotions that surge under my skin finally leak into my mind. I think of the near future, and how there will someday be an end to our family's Pancake Sundays. I think of the small things, the late-night echo of the coffee grinder and the sound of dishes being washed downstairs, all the little comforts of home you don't realize you will miss when you're lying in your cushionless twin bed. How am I supposed to become a functioning individual when everything I do and think and say, every opinion I hold, every song I listen to embodies my mom's infallible advice and my dad's sometimes inconsistent but always impressive intelligence? How am I supposed to be an adult when my sister is my hero and my brother is my best friend?

I think of the distant future, of the time where I stand at the podium where I'm supposed to describe the lives of my parents and the mass of the universe falls on the space between my shoulder blades and the world is so silent and empty, a large dusty rock of no great importance. I imagine standing there awkward and alone, filled like a water balloon to the point just past capacity with memories and emotions and small, delicate thoughts but with nothing to say because there isn't a single word in our feeble, limited language for what I'm trying to communicate.

But enough with these deliberations.

There's no use fretting about such unavoidable matters. I really don't mean to end my story on such a depressing note. I love college. I love the people that I've met, I love the things I learn, I love the way Michigan trees turn bright red and vivid yellow in the fall instead of the sickly Missouri tan that I've grown accustomed to. I also have other homework to do and once I open the floodgates I'll be stranded like the day they left me, alone in the

courtyard in front of my dorm without a pair of sunglasses to hide behind nor a friend to lean on. Mom wept openly and Dad turned away before a tear could fall but not before I saw the water just about to crest over his eyelid. Tommy was there too. When did he get so tall? I could tell he was trying his best to hold it together. I was too.

Come visit me.

I will.

And they leave, but I don't watch them leave. I curl up on a stone bench and hide my eyes from who could potentially be my new classmates, my new floormates, my new friends.

I sit at the restaurant, eating great food and enjoying even better wine, but all I want is to be home at our own dinner table eating one of Mom's favorite pasta dishes and Tommy would complain because he doesn't like it and Meghan would tell him to shut up because she's having problems with her boyfriend and not in the mood to take his shit and Dad would try to jump in and be the good parent and tell Meghan not to tell Tommy to shut up and I would push around the few cherry tomatoes left on my plate because I don't like cherry tomatoes and think of the day I would finally get out of this place.

*Payton Luukkala*  
**August 2016**

Slouched low in the rocking chair  
and summer fog,  
my grandfather swats at now  
as if it were  
pesky flies.

*Payton Luokkala*

## **Jacklit**

1. I'd wiggled my baby tooth into Grandma's coffee. Frozen, I stared into the black cup as the enamel sank through the heat, contemplating:  
how to fish it out with the crook of my finger?
2. Across the ice, the neighbors had left a floodlight on.  
For weeks, it illuminated the living room; we waited for  
night to read the newspaper.  
"When that light goes out," my father said, hopeful,  
"We are all going to die."
3. My first airplane ride we rose through the storm and we crawled  
on the clouds. I wanted to get out of the plane to touch that  
yellow-plated moon, that over-ripe dream factory of a moon—  
but how does one exit a plane? Not fingernails prying the windows  
or body-slamming a stewardess only to step lightly across the sky  
(bouncy), just to press my palms against the windowpane of my own soul.  
But I couldn't imagine such beauty came with much oxygen, and so I'd  
lock my life behind my bluing lips, and hurry to open the moon like some  
great knob to another world.

4. Mosquitoes sizzle in the heat of summer, as we do, and  
die in the electric siren of the green light. Life isn't The Great Gatsby.  
Bugs don't drink absinthe or fix the World Series and only sometimes  
stalk girls named Daisy. So what guides them?  
What song is she singing?
5. Meaty hands gripped the rabbit's fine-threaded neck as it stared at God—  
battery-powered God, in my hands, and one of us thinks,  
"He's so perfect." My fingers feel the rabbit gulp  
in anticipation.
6. The bend in the road took us like a wave. From the tangential blue,  
a headlight drifted. The light hit us  
like rain; I wiped it off my cheek  
with the pink pad of his finger.
7. Then he looked at me.
8. As the sun does each day, it rose;  
this time we set foot to earth together, both yawning,  
both burning halos orange and soft.
9. The neighbor's older brother attempted a dirty joke as we walked the black  
ice home; he said both rubber buns and liquor, and we didn't understand  
even when we arrived home where Ma stood, arms-crossed, melting,  
in the echo of porch light.
10. The eye doctor covered my left eye and shined a light  
into the other. He dealt me small talk, asked,  
"So how was it?" I laughed and cried at the lack



of answer  
or the abundance of question.

11. Snow was my first denial. Plum fingers and black toes and raw translucent skin. Underneath, our hearts bang at the ice: honey, this place will kill us, somehow. But I couldn't hear, couldn't focus, not in a world this bright.

*Alex Mullen*  
**Accidents**

Rosa de Jamaica had spilled on her favorite white dress.

There was a large red splotch on her left breast, stark against the white fabric of her dress. What had happened was that she was moving through the crowds of people, people talking and dancing, and someone had bumped into her. It was the kind of accident where someone didn't realize that you were walking there, didn't see you standing in the corner of their eye, and they accidentally knock a glass of jamaica out of your hands and onto your favorite white dress.

"Lo siento, mija," the man had said with considerable pity, offering a napkin from off of the table in front of him.

She glanced up and caught a glimpse of his brown eyes. "No, don't worry about it," she replied, already rushing away to attempt to clean off what she could of the rose-colored drink from her chest. The man had already resumed talking to his friends, gesturing wildly with his hands as the other men laughed. Their accents were fluid and natural as they spoke, and their voices were in tune with the marimba music that played over the speakers.

Now she was sitting at a table, absent-mindedly picking away at an uneaten tamale in front of her while her family spoke around her. Almost all the people here were her family, somehow. She had never met most of them, and the ones that she *was* familiar with only knew her name—and even then they typically mispronounced it, stumbling over the foreign stiffness of her English name. But that was okay, because she had only ever seen most of them in pictures anyway and her tongue stalled whenever she tried to pronounce their names correctly.

This wasn't her first quince, and it wouldn't be her last. All of the ones she had attended

went the same way: there were always tamales, there was always horchata and jamaica, and there were always people speaking in Spanish. She never knew the girl who was turning 15, and she never knew how to join into any of the conversations that were happening at whatever table she was sitting at.

What she did know, however, was that she liked Rosa de Jamaica. There was nothing she looked forward to more at quinces than the jamaica. She would drink glass after glass of the stuff as she listened to the conversations at the table, always drinking so no one would ever expect her to contribute. She loved the way it washed over her tongue, how the flavor of the flower bloomed in her mouth. For a second the cold drink filled her with the warmth of distant lands she had never seen, and for a second she felt as though she understood what was happening around her. Liquid culture.

As much as she liked it, however, she did not like having jamaica spilled on her favorite white dress. She couldn't hide behind the melancholy in the smile she presented at the table. "Cheer up, mija—we'll get you a new dress," her mother tried to comfort her. Her mother looked at her with eyes like cocoa beans, brimming with kindness and pity. "Why don't you dance, niña?"

She looked up at her mother. Her mother knew that she couldn't dance. "You know I can't dance, mami," she said, quietly, so that no one else would hear her English.

It was true. She couldn't dance. Not merengue, not bachata, and God knows she couldn't dance salsa. She had taken lessons with her cousins when she was a little kid. Her mother left her in the dance studio with three other girls whose names she could never pronounce so that she could go to the coffee shop in the strip mall to trade family gossip with her sisters. Her cousins had mostly kept to themselves, so she did, too. To this day she wouldn't say that they had ever been close, nor would she say that she could dance any better than she could before the lessons. But her cousins could dance, and they never failed to catch a boy's eye—their long black hair would trail behind them like comets' tails as they streamed across the dance floor to the rhythm of "Suavemente".

"Mija, ¿qué puedes perder?" her mother asked, her cocoa bean eyes conspicuously trying to inconspicuously motion toward a boy in the corner looking toward their table. "That boy has been looking at you all day. He's your tío Salvador's amigo's son, you know."

She followed her mother's eyes and met the boy's. His eyes widened and he looked away quickly, only to glance over at her again with teenage panic painted over his face. Her mother asked her again, "¿Qué puedes perder?" What can you lose?

She thought to herself. She really didn't have much to lose, considering her favorite white dress was ruined already and her glass of jamaica was nearly empty. She knocked back what was left in her glass and stood up. She walked by the boy, staring at her feet and making it seem as though she was headed for the food once again.

She heard the boy try to casually clear his throat and smiled. "Eh, permiso, pero, eh, quieres bailar conmigo?" She looked back into his eyes. They were a soft, deep brown, but panged with anxiety. As he awaited her response he tried not to notice the large red stain on her left breast. She watched as his eyes struggled to avoid looking at it. She smiled a little nervously.

"I would love to dance, but I don't know how," she responded, brushing her fine brown hair back from her face. "I've taken lessons but I was never any good."

He looked at her puzzled. "You can't dance? Anyone can dance. Let's just try it." He held out his hand, trying to muster the same confidence all the guapos in the movies did when they held out their hands. She took his hand with the same smile that the guapas have in the movies. They made their way into the middle of the dance floor, where already many other couples were dancing. A bachata beat was playing.

She attempted to move her feet like his. "Don't look down," he said. "It'll only trip you up even more. Just keep your feet in time with the beat, and feel it in your hips. Like this." He demonstrated what he meant, touching his left toes to his right heel on every fourth beat. She copied him, and they went back and forth like that for a while. Then they came back together, his hand under her shoulder and hers on his hip, their right and left hands interlocked. They danced. They felt the music together. They let themselves melt away into each other's eyes, just like in the movies.

She bumped into someone behind her and accidentally bit down hard on her bottom lip.

The tears came to her eyes, not from the pain of her bite, but from the embarrassment she felt. "I have to go, I'm sorry," she said, covering her mouth with her hand. She reminded

herself of Cinderella as she ran away, but she didn't leave behind a glass slipper—she left behind a few drops of blood on the floor. The boy's eyes were round with disappointment as he watched her run to the bathroom.

In the bathroom she stood in front of the mirror. Blood was everywhere in her mouth. She had never seen so much blood in one place, it seemed. It coated her tongue, and dripped down her chin. It landed on the same exact spot on her left breast where she had spilled her drink. The dry stain from the jamaica was distorted by the wet blood, growing deeper in color than before. The warm rose color now seemed cold and dark.

She looked at herself in the mirror. She stared into her own blue eyes, glazed with tears that poured like water down her cheeks. Her blood and tears mingled on the counter beneath her, the blood growing pale and diluted. She wondered why things had to be like this for her. She wished her mother had married somebody other than her father. She wished her family didn't live in the suburbs, so far away from any of her relatives. She wished her life was different. She couldn't speak Spanish, she couldn't dance. She couldn't even pronounce her family's names right.

She pulled back the sleeve of her favorite white dress and stared at the veins floating beneath the skin in her arm. She imagined the red blood inside, the rose-colored liquid that kept her alive. But she knew her veins betrayed her—they tinted her blood blue, and kept her separated from what was inside of her.

*Alex Mullen*

## **Expired**

Stuffy August nights  
There's stale breath in our words  
Like untouched cake on a  
Cluttered dining room table

Air passes between us  
Unlike ideas  
Gravity keeps us still  
Like the dishes in the sink

The food in the pantry  
Has long been expired  
But no one is willing  
To bring it up

Our silverware cuts air  
Like tongues from sharper minds  
That have long been dull  
Ever since I recall

Dates pass and the air grows thin  
Food grows stale, rots and decays  
We put it on the table  
But no one ever eats.





*Maya Adler*

**Glassy Eyes**  
Charcoal





*Alexis Aulepp*  
**Sky Confetti**  
Photography



*Evan Binkley*

**Passengers**

Photography



*Daniil Blyum*

**Bowie**

Digital Photography



*Bharat Chopra*

**God Bless America**

Digital Photography



*Erica Dawson*

**Day in Houston**

Film Photography



*Brooks Eisenbise*

**River Collage  
& River Print**

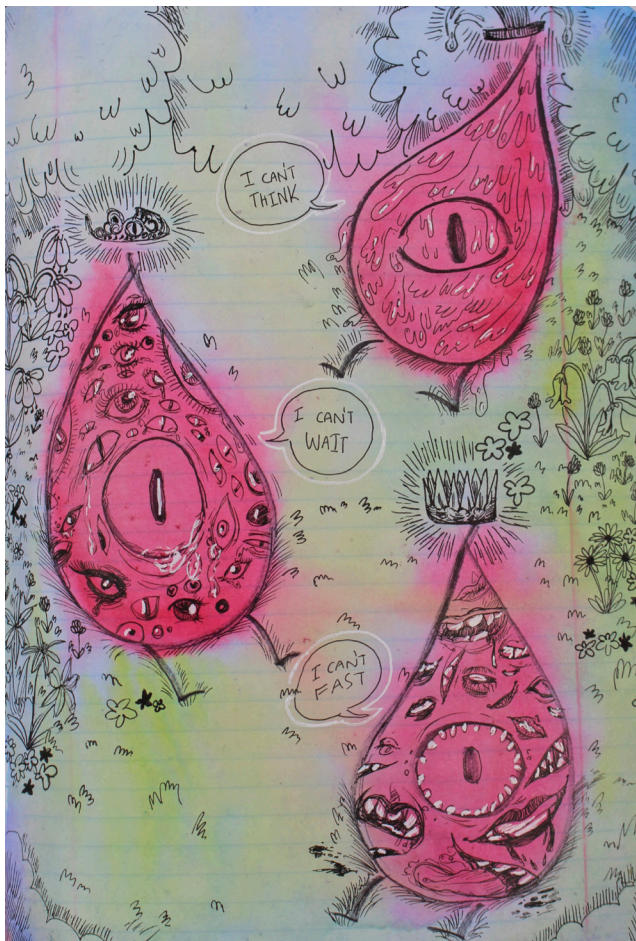
Mixed Media / Linoleum Print



*Marjorie Gaber*

**Baffle**

Collage of Paper, Tempura  
and White-Out on Lined Paper



*Marjorie Gaber*  
**Kingdom of Three**  
Watercolor on Lined Paper





*Grace Gebhard*

**Liberty Leading**

Pen and Marker on Bristol Board



*Abigail Hurst*

**The Fall**

Watercolor and Chalk Pastels

*Rachita Iyer*  
**Sweater Weather  
in Detroit**  
Digital Photography





*Tarini Karnal*

**tk**  
tk

*Alyson Li*  
**Delicacy**  
Digital Photography





*Melissa Newman*

**Duck**

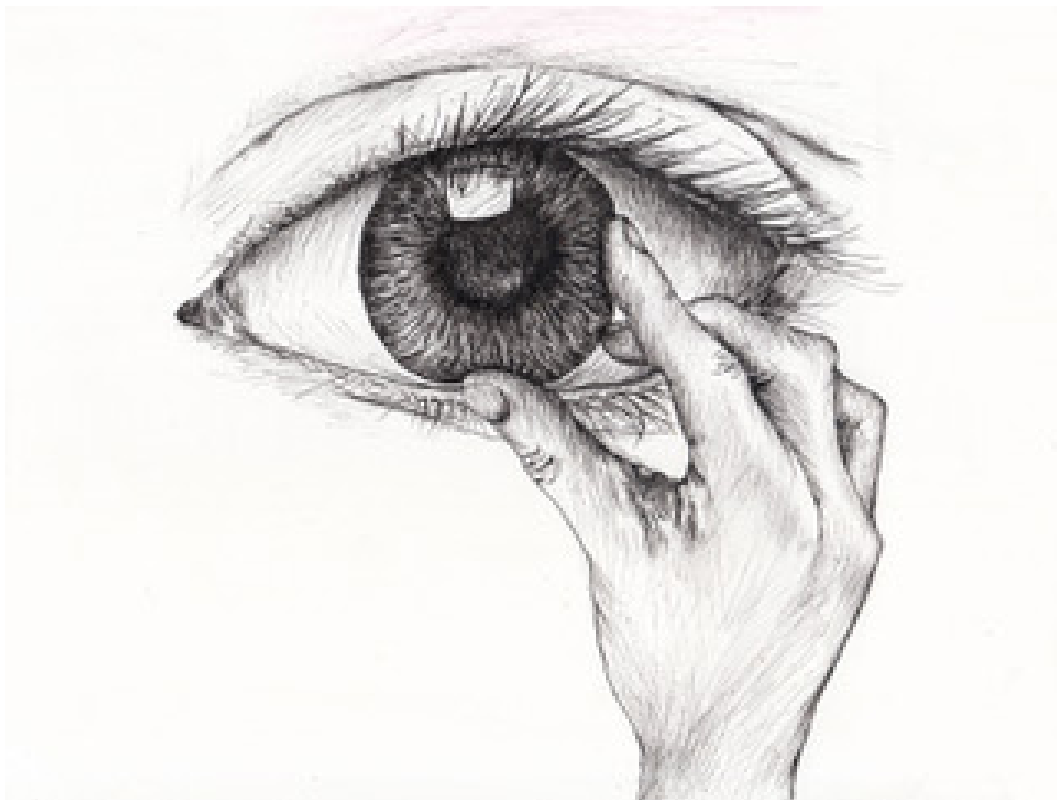
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*Isabella Nuce*

**tk**

tk



*Katherine Qiao*

**Pressure**

Ink Pen





*Olivia Sun*

**Emma Watson**

Watercolor



*Thomas Vossler*  
**Circus Liquor**  
tk



*Thomas Vossler*

**National Disaster**

tk



*Thomas Vossler*

**Pen and Ink Botanical**

tk



*Thomas Vossler*

**Skull**

tk



*Erin Wakeland*

**Life and Death**

Graphite



*Jennifer Wen*  
**Not Enough Coffee**  
Digital Art

*Mary Oseguera*

## Six Ways of Thinking about My Back

*Inspired by Wallace Steven's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"*

I

My back must be straight  
roll hips under  
shoulder blades not touching, but close.  
Chin a little higher.  
“Pretend there are needles on your collar.”  
Make myself tall,  
but I’m only 5’3”.  
Plume on my shako can only add so much.  
Standing on the podium,  
though it’s a six foot boost,  
my strength and my passion  
must be shown through my posture.  
And I make myself known  
by straightening my back.

II

My friends say they’ve got my back  
Enemies say watch your back  
Cuz that’s where you get stabbed by friends.



### III

Muscles tensing, throats moaning,  
 chests pressed together so close, the hearts  
 are only separated by bone and skin.  
 Fingers and palms wandering,  
 exploring body heat,  
 combing through sweaty hair to grabbing shoulders,  
 trailing the line of movement,  
 finding their way to clawing at my back.

### IV

One wrong move, and you're dead  
 (vertebrae gone astray)  
 Sit too long, and you're stiff  
 (desk job yearlong gone wrong)  
 Swimming pool dive overshoot  
 (didn't land on your head? your back is red)  
 Backpack is too heavy with schoolbooks  
 (act like a pack mule, you're a fool)

### V

Load me up, stick that leather on.  
 I do think you have gained some weight.  
 Is your lady friend sitting side saddle?  
 But that makes it harder for me to walk straight!  
 I've grown rather tired of being your taxi.  
 And I could really go for a crunchy snack.  
 So I've grown regrettably quite tired  
 of carrying you on my back.

VI

The teacher asked her class, while they were not being good listeners or polite students:

“Class! Show me active listening”

Eagerly the kids snapped into attention,  
robotically reciting:

“Feet flat on the floor,

hands folded in my lap

chin up, eyes ahead,

No talking, and a straight back!”

Then she turned her eyes back down to her desk, satisfied,

and when she was no longer looking,

they folded back in half, slumped in their chairs.

*Mary Oseguera*

## **They don't call it Mexi-Coke in Mexico**

They don't call it Mexi-coke in Mexico  
I tell everyone I'm from Los Angeles.  
But I wouldn't survive there, not with my naiveté.

Oh, ancestry dot com would tell you that I'm brown,  
three quarters brown that is,  
I am majority minority, trying to find my culture's clubs on campus, getting lost between  
sororities  
Walking round the tables set up, beginning to think my skin is a deformity  
desperate to see another brown haired, brown eyed, brown skinned, chula chola,

pero,  
what am I even saying?  
I'm not even that.

Reverse the letters, turn them round  
LA to AL  
I am from Alta Loma, a darling town

an hour away from the city of graffiti and Los Doyers  
with a crystal clear view of los montanas, in a neighborhood so white, we took off our  
wrought iron.

And everyone on my street has two dogs, almost like it's required

and everyone waves hi to each other,  
no chain link fences.

There aren't any walls for me to climb.

As a middle class Mexican attending a middle class high school, my life was laid out for me:  
I could just recline

California is majority minority,  
but I didn't learn the language, or the culture, or the slang  
My parents escaped the Black Angels, and Big Basset, those fearsome gangs,  
taking refuge above the tracks,  
all the way up, above the freeway  
in a cute little white neighborhood  
that voted both colors- either way.

Everyone is mixed in California.

Everyone has some white and brown and black and yellow and rainbow in them,  
or around them.

And English is the language of the middle class,  
and Spanish was the language that I wasn't allowed to learn  
because I needed to do well in school.

They ripped the language out of my toddler mouth  
and in result I had no idea what the heck the word Chicano was about.

I can't believe I identified by the white man.

"Mija, don't say Hispanic. We do not identify by the colonizer"

"Mija say the word. Sound it out. Ch-ch-ch-"

sound so rhythmic

like the maracas in our music

“Ch-ch-chicano”

I’m sorry Nino, I didn’t know  
that by saying “Hispanic” I erased, eradicated, and obliterated, and even aided  
in the destruction of our culture.

My naiveté came from the privilege of my zip code.  
And there’s so much of my culture that I don’t know.  
I talk to my boyfriend, mi novio  
and he calls me white washed, to which I can’t say no, because  
I don’t speak the language.

I can’t talk to my grandma, mi nana,  
because of a language barrier that is higher and stronger than the wall that our president  
wants to build  
to keep people like my family out.

But what am I saying?  
I am second generation, and the familia that I do have in Mexico, I don’t even know.

I wish I was like my cousins,  
those beautiful, red-lipped, paisa girls  
who take cheap flights on Aeromexico to go to visit family and dance with boys wearing  
cowboy boots.

I want to dance like them.

Like the way they dance on the fourth of July, eating meat off the grill that my Tio served up  
moving their hips to cumbayas, corridos, and reggeton.

Silly little white-washed me, I don’t understand the lyrics to the songs by Daddy Yankee,  
and shazam the songs to save, to download later.

And when my boyfriend tells me to listen to a song, a love song,

by the great Vicente,  
nicknamed Chente,  
(like the Ch Ch Ch in Chicano)  
I google the lyrics,  
which google doesn't understand,  
and the white screen shows me black letters that are almost as mixed up as I am.

I try to learn, I really do.  
I follow paisa twitter accounts and listen to paisa music  
but I feel like I appropriate my own culture.

And I got all these  
White girls on campus telling me  
That I can't wear sugar skulls on Halloween  
'cause it'd encourage the white race to copy me.  
I'm just stuck in an in-between!

Too white to have the sugar skull as my own daily culture  
too brown to let whites take that culture from me.

Taking a stroll down Olvera Street in Los Angeles, the city I say I am from  
there are foods I have never heard of, music that my feet can't dance to, and so many colors  
and sights and sounds to which I just succumb:  
De la rosa mazapan, conchas, churros, chile on mangos, limon on fruit in a bag  
chicharrones (the real kind, not the orange ones in plastic), barrilitos, menudo, carne asada,  
tres leches pasteles,  
tamales (los con carne y los de dulce)  
mole, elotes  
Mexi-coke that doesn't need the ethnicity in the name, after all, they don't call it Mexi-coke in

Mexico

the men who'd walk with carts and as a kid I'd raise my hand offering them sticky money  
asking for a SpongeBob with bubblegum eyes

When I grew older I knew to only ever ask for fruit paletas of kiwis or strawberries

I visited campus in April,  
and though it snowed the weekend prior  
it was still as white as wool.

Student body so monochromatic, they needed to invent a job to increase diversity,  
didn't someone just get hired?

But though my boyfriend said I'd fit right in  
these kids are rich and white

I heard that kids in the Midwest took their parents' lana and got high on weeknights

But heyyy, this school has diversity!

With its 65 percent white kids!

Only four percent of the population here shares my blood- but wait-  
in their nicely laid out demographic graphic we're labeled Hispanic.

So I guess I shouldn't panic:

it looks like we are white too.

*Madeleine Pierpont*

## Untitled

Walking towards her car in the blue of evening, she saw a little girl on a swing waving back and forth between the trees and thought of Mr. Whicker dead in the woods, pivoting on a noose until rest. Vivienne never knew him, only knew that in the summer time his skin was pasted with pale life as if all of the flowers drew their vibrancy out from within him. Maybe, like letting blood, he tried to pour out the toxic purple inside of him to the spring foliage (she knew he always took walks in those woods). When she heard about Mr. Whicker dead in the woods she thought that maybe their purple lilacs would never again sit in softer shades of themselves; never again would they die and be rebirthed. A persistent intoxicating purple, she thought, “I’d like to see that.”

She turned away from the girl and towards her car to fish for the cash that had slipped between the seats’ cracks. She needed money to pay for pizza because her mom told her that she was “off duty” for the night. Her father had stopped by earlier that day and like some hardened cosmic line, whenever her father dropped in her mother would become a slippery version of herself (wash down some pills from the pouch she kept hidden underneath her lingerie). Vivienne sighed thinking about what mute mess her mother would be in an hour or two. “Don’t speak to mom after 6 pm” her brother had always warned.

The day felt distant from who she was. She would rather have it that way, though; peering into the world as a swimmer opens eyes every third stroke and lap of water to light reflections. “My mom, I think she’s drowning in the quiet crash of having lost herself,” Vivienne thought.

She wondered sometimes if perhaps her mother was not a full person but rather some essence – unfinished particles glistening like wet oil or sitting softly as dust on an armoire.



But to be an essence would require being at the root of something bigger and Vivienne thought the world stood, at its roots, for much more than pain.

And sometimes when her mother submerged herself within the sweet tragedy of who she was, the day died with her. And it stopped for others too. But most of the time she just went around with a parasitic heart, eating at itself and hardening like sweets from the deli on the corner over her scars.

And when her ex husband came to pick up the kids she looked at his face and saw her failures in his leather skin. Melissa had always liked its tanned quality, like some precious ancient scroll. One day she would like to find one in a hidden chest or behind a paper-thin wall, detailed with Persian script that diffused from one sentence to another like liquid gold.

Her mother, Lauren, was cooking in the kitchen when she walked in. Her skin was soft like the kind of moonlight that sinks into the blackness of night when you try to capture it on camera. She was so beautiful. Even the wrinkles around her eyes added notes to her complexion. "I love you, mom, I really do." Vivienne crunched the words around in her head. She thought about Mr. Whicker dead in the woods and asked herself why her mother could only find beauty in those things decaying. But she could not bring herself to scratch at her mother's depths; they were untouchable. She was some soft orb of yellow light whimpering, enshrined and glowing from the outside in.

She saw her mother slip a sip of wine and tuck her glass between the fruit basket and the wall. She looked at her mother's eyes – so still and black like stale licorice. And with that miniscule movement, that small pause on the sadness of her mother's face, something shifted and a torrent of angry colors filled Vivienne's head; wake up. Grow up. Find happiness within yourself. Stop being so self-deprecating. For god sakes stand up straight like who you are is something worth carrying. Your parents committed suicide 30 years ago grow the fuck up. She seethed and her eyes grew hard and black and she said calmly, "I'm going for a drive."

The sky was a muddied purple, as if in some way it didn't comprehend that there was supposed to be distinct phases of the day (the pinks and reds smooth and still every morning and evening, the soft grays of day whispering out the hours, and the deep deep blue that sits above you; hanging oceans and trees dripping into darkness). "But that sorceress purple," Vivienne reflected, "there is something so magical about its unstable mix of hues." She

pulled towards the woods. She thought of Mr. Whicker dead. Pivoting on a noose until last breath. The sky like lilacs shifting in the grays of shadow. She spied a tree from the corner of her eye that had just come into full bloom. Its white flowers, strung together by sinewy green vines, looked they were in perpetual descent. She wondered if this tree is where he had stopped, looked up, and decided to die.

She sat against its trunk and felt the rough bark against her neck; saw how flowers and leaves of the tree encompassed her in a half globe. Her heart sat for a little while, and she felt like falling asleep as she listened to its beats slowly syncing with the swing of the white blossom tree branches. “There’s so much.” She looked down beside her and saw a purple lilac, an intoxicatingly purple lilac. “There’s so much,” she smiled, “I am sorry for you, that you couldn’t see it.” She lay down next to it and drifted off to sleep.

*Serena Scholz*  
**Apples**

The bakery smelled like old cedar and vanilla. The wooden ceiling beams turned golden when the lights switched on, and tabletops shone clean and bright. Every morning when Ben unlocked the door at 4:30 am and stepped inside, he took a deep breath of relief. It was as if all the time he spent away from his shop was some sort of dream, and only when he arrived back here in the mornings did he finally wake back up. He had scones to make, coffee to brew, and cake batter to start. Yesterday he'd bought some fresh apples, which were just starting to come into season. His plan was to make a classic tarte aux pommes, a northern French pie with a creamy almond frangipane hiding below a thick layer of spiced apples. As he turned on the radio and the ovens, he thought about pie crusts, and how some cinnamon in the crust might really bring out the flavor of the apples.

Time always passed quickly while he worked, elbow deep in flour and butter and humming along to the radio. Early morning was his favorite time of day. The quietness held within it the expectations of the coming day, unlike the tired, empty quiet of evening. He loved working alone in the kitchen, mixing batter and kneading dough as he watched the sun come up through the window.

At eight, he washed the flour off his hands and flipped around the “Open” sign, making sure the coffee was ready and hot. The scones were fresh out of the oven and he arranged them on the counter in an abundant heap. When he went to get the tarte aux pommes out of the oven, he realized he'd made two instead of one. There was only one spot left in the display case. He was a little perplexed at himself for somehow making an entire extra tart, but he shrugged it off and went to go pour himself a cup of coffee, leaving the pies to cool on the back shelf.

A young woman he'd never seen before came into the bakery that afternoon. She had mousy brown hair, cropped close and curling around her ears, and she ordered a coffee and a slice of the tarte aux pommes. Ben liked the way she ate the tarte. She took one small bite at a time and barely chewed, just letting the cream and apples slowly dissolve into her mouth. She treated each bite like it was her last, her expression patient and contemplative.

Sipping her coffee, she lingered at the table. Other customers came and went, buying scones, a fresh loaf of bread, or big mugs of coffee. After the morning rush, the shop quieted and she was the only one left, still sipping her coffee and looking out the window. Her long gray coat was unseasonable for the warm day, but she kept it on, only unbuttoning the front. Ben watched her idly as he cleaned the counter, and when he was done, he walked over to her table.

"Did you like the tarte?" He asked, gesturing to the empty plate.

She looked up softly. "Oh! Yes, it was delicious. Tarte aux pommes is my favorite."

"Good to hear. It was my first of the season, and I was trying out something a little different with the crust."

She looked out the window. "Cinnamon?" She asked after a second, looking back at him.

"Yep. Could you taste it that strongly?"

She considered him for a second before responding. He was obviously a baker, with flour all over his jeans and strong arms. "No, it was subtle. It's just, that's the way that my mom used to make it, so I remembered the taste."

"Oh, I see." He paused for a second.

"So, you own this bakery?" She asked him.

"I do. My name's Ben. Hence the name Ben's Bakery. Not very original, I know."

She smiled. "I'm Josephine. And I like the name. Simple and straight to the point. Anything more might be too fancy or hipster."

He laughed a little. "Yeah, I wanted to avoid that. I wanted the place to feel homey, comfortable. The sort of place where people could just say, hey, let's go over to Ben's for a slice of cake – like I'm a friendly neighbor instead of a business."

"I think you succeeded. It feels very calm and open, even though the place is small. Kind of like a home."

He smiled. "It is my home, really. I mean, I have an apartment in the complex over on Maple Road, but it just feels temporary, and I don't like being there very much. This place is solid. It's where my life is."

She nodded. "Yeah. I understand that feeling. I've been moving around a lot recently, and none of the places I've had were really home, even if I lived there for over a year."

"How long have you been in Spring Arbor?"

"Oh, I just got here this morning."

"You just moved here?"

"More like I'm coming back. I grew up here, a little bit outside of town. I'm just here for a few days. Not sure if I'll stay." She paused for a moment. "Do you want to sit down?"

"Oh, may I?"

"Of course." He sat and they both looked out the window. It was noon on a weekday, and the streets were quietly warming in the sun. "Can I ask you something kind of strange?"

"Sure." He was curious.

She was silent for a second, trying to think of how to phrase her request. "There's this thing happening tonight. It's what I came back into town for." She looked down at her coffee cup, which was empty except for a few drops in the bottom. "I'm not really sure if I can go do it alone, and I don't know anyone in town. Are you free this evening? This isn't like a date or anything. It's actually kind of weird, personal thing. I would just feel so much better if I wasn't alone."

It was an odd request, but the strangeness of it seemed inconsequential to Ben. "I'm free," he said almost immediately. "What time, and where?"

She seemed a little surprised by his lack of hesitation. "I'll leave you the address," she said, grabbing a small notebook from her purse. She flipped through the pages, all filled with small black letters, looking for a blank page to tear out. It took her a while to find one, but eventually she did. Her handwriting was neat and precise and she wrote the address. "Could you be there around 5:30?"

"Of course," he said again. He could close the shop a little early. They didn't do much business in the evenings anyway. He watched her as she wrote, wondering what exactly he had gotten himself into. A small pearl pendant hung around her neck, the perfect length for

the blue v-neck tee she was wearing under her coat. She looked up at him, and for a moment she looked profoundly sad.

She handed him the small piece of paper, folded in half. “I’ve got to get going,” she said, standing and putting her things back into her purse. “It was really nice to meet you.” He stood too, and before she left, she turned to him and said, “You know, I’m not normally the sort of person who asks for strange things like this – I don’t really know why I asked you. It just seemed to make sense, and I’ve been dreading doing this alone ever since I knew it was happening.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

“Thank you,” she said. For a moment, she looked almost like a child, eyes empty and hopeful. He blinked and smiled in response, and she was gone. The door chimed behind her.

He carefully unfolded the paper she had given him. *731 E. Plum. Go south on Main until you get out of town, E Plum is on the left. 3 & 1/2 blocks down, on the right.*

He knew the neighborhood, a collection of small houses right near the city limit. It wouldn’t take more than fifteen minutes to get there. He supposed he should feel confused and strange about this turn of events that changed his normal evening plans, but it didn’t feel odd to him at all. It felt as normal as any other day. He went back into the kitchen to check on his last batch of bread. The loaves were golden brown and puffy, perfectly cooked. He selected a loaf and cut off a small slice, the rich smell of sourdough steaming out. Spreading butter over the slice, he slowly ate it, savoring each bite and staring at the small piece of paper for a little bit longer before carefully refolding it and putting it in his pocket.

Around 5:15, Ben flipped the door sign to “Closed,” trying without success to brush the flour off his jeans. He hoped whatever he was going to wasn’t formal in any way, because he had a butter stain on his gray t-shirt, and probably some powdered sugar in his hair. He was about to leave the kitchen when, as an afterthought, he turned around and grabbed the extra tarte aux pommes, bringing it out to his car. The late September sun warmed his shoulders as he bent to lay the pie gently on the floor of the back seat.

Getting into his car, he pulled out onto Main Street and headed south. The old Volvo rattled forward, and he patted the dash. “Good car.”

It was easy enough to find East Plum Street. Once he saw the addresses were getting

into the 700's, he parked and got out to walk, carrying the pie in the bottom of a canvas grocery bag. It wouldn't be dark for a while yet, but the air was dusky with the coming evening. He was glad it was still warm, though there was a hint of chill in the air, like winter was just dipping his pinky toe in the water. Patches of brown were starting to appear on the lawns. Staying on the side of the street with the odd-numbered houses, he counted the addresses as he went by. 723, 725, 727. The houses were mostly small, boxy ranches, though occasionally one would have a second story, tacked on like it was an afterthought and balancing precariously.

He reached 729 and took a deep breath, looking towards the next house. But there was nothing. He looked further down the road and saw that the next house was 733. In between the two houses was a small empty lot, populated only with grasses and weeds and a huge, gnarled apple tree near the back fence.

He thought for sure he'd had the right address. Nevertheless, he reached into his pocket for the piece of paper to double check. As he pulled it out of his pocket, Josephine appeared from behind the tree. She was still wearing her long gray coat, untied in the front to let in the cool breeze, and she was holding her small notepad and a black pen in her hand. He waved and walked over to her.

"You came," she said when they met in the middle of the scrubby lawn. "Thank you."

"I was scared I had the wrong place."

She smiled sadly at him. "You found it, don't worry. I suppose the address was a little misleading, since there's no house here."

"I was a little confused." He smiled.

They stood in silence for a moment. She stuffed the notebook back into her purse and turned to look at the tree. He looked at it too. It was large, probably over 25 feet, but it was half dead; the entire left side didn't have any leaves at all. The branches were tangled up in each other like lovers, twisted and knotted. There were a few small red apples hanging between green and gray leaves on the side that was still alive.

"That's the reason I'm here," Josephine said.

"The tree?"

"Yeah. The tree service should be here soon to cut it down. It was last on their list for

today. When I called to ask when they were planning to be here, they said it'd be between 5:30 and 6." She sighed.

Ben was silent a moment, thinking. "Is this where you grew up?" He asked after a moment.

"Yeah, this was where I lived as a kid. When there was still a house here, obviously. My mom and I moved here when I was around three, and I lived here until I was done with high school. The property became mine when she died."

She wandered over to the middle of the lot, looking around. "I sold it earlier this year, and they told me that the new owners were going to tear the house down. That was ok with me, in a bittersweet way. But I guess their plan fell through, because they never built the new house, and now it's just empty. It's very strange feeling to walk across the lawn and know that I'm walking through the exact space my old life used to occupy."

"Anyways, I guess things are moving forward again and they've decided to cut the tree down, but when they told me, it really got to me. I felt like I had to be here when they did. It was such a steady part of my life, even at times when nothing else was certain. It's like you said about your bakery. I lived in my house, but it was the tree in my backyard that made it home."

They both looked at the tree. "Well," Ben said after a second. "I brought pie. But this would be a sort of sad feeling picnic."

She lit up a little. "Really? You brought pie? What kind of pie?"

"Tarte aux pommes. I had an extra, and since you said it was your favorite..."

She smiled. "That's amazing! Let's have a slice."

They sat on the dry grass underneath the tree, and he brought out the pie and a plastic knife. He didn't have plates, so they held the pie in their hands. Occasionally a bit of cream or apple would drip down over their fingers and onto the ground. Josephine leaned against the trunk of the tree and gazed up at its branches. When she was done with her slice, she stood, running her hands along the limbs and plucking an apple. It was lumpy and misshapen, but she bit into it anyways and chewed. A second later she grimaced. "They're so mealy," she told him.

The truck arrived a few minutes later. Ben covered the pie and put it back in the bag,



then walked over to where Josephine was leaning against the side fence. She threw the half-eaten apple across the yard as two middle-aged men got out of the truck.

“We’re here to take down this tree,” one called over. “You the owner?”

“No, just here to watch,” Josephine called back. “We’ll stay out of your way.”

“Alright. You should probably stand out on the sidewalk then. Away from any danger.”

Josephine nodded and they slowly walked over to the sidewalk. The men were putting on safety glasses and grabbing chainsaws from the back of the truck.

“There’s a part of me that wants to scream at the new owners. Like, no! Stop! Can’t you see how great the tree is?” Josephine told him quietly. “But there’s also a part of me that understands why they would want to cut it down. I mean, it’s half dead. Half broken. A burden that part of me is almost glad to be rid of.”

“Was it always like this?” Ben asked, as the men revved the chainsaws. “Half dead?”

“No, when I was little it was fully alive, and beautiful. The apples tasted better then, too. It happened the year I turned seventeen. We had an early spring, and all the leaves came out, full and bright green. There were so many blossoms that petals coated the ground white and pink. Then, overnight, it turned back into winter. Frost, snow, harsh wind, another entire month with temperatures below freezing. It even got down to below zero once. It was one of the worst times in my life. My mom was diagnosed with cancer that March.”

“And after that spring, the tree didn’t do anything all year. No leaves, no fruit. We thought it had died. And with it dead in the backyard, it was like winter all year long, even during the hottest months of the summer. But then the next spring, half of it came back to life. It was like a miracle. But the other side has been dead ever since. Even the apples seem half-formed. I tried to cook with them for my mom, but we ended up having to start using store-bought. They just never tasted right afterwards.”

The chainsaws were up and running. The two men walked around the tree, examining it. It leaned heavily to the right side, so they started there. The blade made contact, searing into the trunk in a smooth line, and Josephine shuddered. The second cut was smaller, and a wedge tumbled out of the trunk, landing on the ground with a thud. Then the man moved around to the other side of the tree and began to cut from the other side. The saw hummed and snarled as it sliced through the wood. Dark shavings sprayed around the trunk in rings.

It began to sway and tilt, and Josephine grabbed Ben's arm unconsciously, fingers tight. He stood steady and still, watching.

When it fell, it crumbled slowly onto the ground, leaves flung into the air in a vibrant flash of red and green before settling in the grass to rest. A few apples rolled haphazardly across the lawn towards them. It had fallen onto the alive side, and the dead branches stuck up into the sky like withered fingers grasping at the heavens. Some apples had been crushed under the trunk, and the cool breeze carried the sour scent of apple juice towards the two of them on the sidewalk. Josephine realized she was clutching Ben's arm, and released her grip. "Sorry," she said, a little aghast to see that she'd left little white marks on his arm from gripping so tight. "I don't know what came over me."

"It's ok." The marks were already beginning to fade away. "Don't worry about it."

They watched as the men began to saw off the branches, cutting through the knots and gnarls however they could. After a minute or two, Josephine turned away from the tree and looked at the ground, then down the street. Finally she looked at Ben. "Let's go." Her voice was small but certain. He started walking back to his car, and she followed him.

"Did you drive here?" Ben asked.

"No, I walked. It was such a nice day out, and it only took half an hour."

"Want me to give you a ride back to town? It's getting a little chilly."

"That'd be really nice, thanks."

They could still hear the chainsaws as they walked away, but the noise dimmed when they got in the car and closed the door. Ben turned the key in the ignition and the car sputtered for a moment, and then came to life. Josephine sniffed the air. "Even your car smells like a bakery," she said, smiling a little bit.

They rode in comfortable silence. When they got back to the bakery, Ben stopped, parking behind the business next to some trash cans. "Have you eaten recently?" He asked. "I was gonna go make myself a sandwich. Do you want one?"

"Oh, that would be wonderful. Thank you so much."

He unlocked the back door and took a deep breath, glad to be back. She stepped gingerly into the kitchen, looking around. "There's still lots of pie if you want, too," he said as he set the bag on the counter and went to the fridge. "Is turkey ok? That's all I have right now."

“Of course, turkey is great.” She followed him over. “You keep other food here, not just baked good?”

“Just some stuff for myself to eat. We don’t sell sandwiches or anything, I just kept fixings on hand because I end up eating here when I stay open later. I prefer it, actually. It’s nicer to eat here than at my apartment.”

She helped him make the sandwiches, buttering the bread while he got out some lettuce. When they were done, he led her to the back room off the kitchen, where he stored ingredients. He’d put an old couch back here so he could sit down sometimes when business was really slow. They sat on the couch to eat, faded blue cushions sagging and squishy. She still ate carefully, like she was tasting every bit of the food. He appreciated seeing food get such careful consideration, instead of just being gulped down quickly. “Where are you staying?” he asked.

“Oh, the motel over on Peach.”

“Do you want me to give you a lift back there?”

“No, it’s ok, you’ve done enough. It’s only a few blocks from here, an easy walk.” She took another bite and sighed, leaning back against the couch. “It feels really comfortable here.”

“Yeah, it’s really nice. A lot of times I sit here after I close the shop for the night. It’s a good place to think. To be honest, sometimes I even sleep here.” Ben leaned his head back against the cushions. It was getting late, and he was fading along with the daylight. He’d been up since 4. “Can I ask you something?”

“What?”

“Why did you decide to bring me along, to see the tree get cut down? Were you planning on asking someone to go with you? Was it just random?”

She smiled at him. “I don’t really know. I think it was the pie, which was so good, and just, well, I’m not sure. You felt really steady, and grounded. Like an old friend, even though we just met. I don’t know. It just made sense to me.”

It grew dark, and the warm glow of the kitchen light spilled over them like honey. They talked aimlessly about different things, childhoods and homes, but the conversation was slow, with long pauses, and eventually gave way to a tired silence. As it grew darker, the wind

picked up outside. Ben tried to keep his eyes open. Here he was, sitting on the back couch with a pretty girl who liked tarte aux pommes. It was the closest thing he'd had to a date in months, and he was falling asleep. "Sorry," he said. "I don't mean to close my eyes, I just always get up so early..."

"Oh, it's ok," she said.

He softly opened his eyes and looked over at her. "Are you staying in town long?"

"I'm not sure." Her voice was quiet. "I don't know what I'm going to do next. It feels like something just ended, and it might take me a while to figure out what comes after it."

He nodded, understanding. "Well, if you find yourself in the area, you're welcome to come back here. I'm always around. I always have some pies."

She smiled at that. "Thanks. I'll make sure to stop by."

Ben couldn't help closing his eyes again, and he was just starting to drift off when a gust rattled the windows, startling him back awake. Josephine was curled on the other side of the sofa, staring off into the distance. She looked over at him as he shook his head, trying to clear the drowsiness. "Hey, Ben?" she said softly.

"Yeah?"

"Thanks for today."

He nodded sleepily. "Of course."

Josephine thought about how she'd sat under the apple tree as a little girl, gazing up at the branches spreading above her head, calm and steady. She thought about the way the lowest branch dipped down towards the ground like an invitation. Looking over at Ben, she felt the same way, as if she were watching something immovable and steady, a stable port in the storm of her life.

Ben's eyes were closed again, and this time he was asleep. Josephine slowly stood and gathered her things, tiptoeing away. Taking her notepad from her purse, she looked through the pages. They were filled with thoughts, emotions, decisions she couldn't make and regrets about ones she had. Eventually, she found a blank page, the very last one. She tore it out, looking at the back cover beneath it for a second before closing it. She used the page to write a thank you note, which she placed right next to the remains of the tarte aux pommes on the counter. She didn't know what was going to come next. Before she left, she carefully cut

one more slice of the tarte, wrapping it in a napkin and carrying it with her as she disappeared into the windy night, long gray coat wrapped warmly around her chest. Outside, the wind was ripping twigs and branches down from trees, and it blew her short hair all over her face. Clouds covered the moon. It would have been too dark to see, except that the bakery lights were still on, and they cast a golden glow onto the streets before her, lighting her way through the night.

*Shayan Soltani*  
**Boogie Essay**

Vladimir Milivojević was born in Belgrade, Serbia in 1969. However, in 1991, Boogie was born. Vladimir was a product of his parents, but Boogie was also a product of the Yugoslavian civil war and in my mind, so was I. My mom left Sarajevo in 1991 for Los Angeles as an exchange student thinking she would be coming back within a year, however once she settled down in southern California, war erupted in her home country. The Yugoslavian civil war fueled by deep ethnic hatred and tore through the nation during the 1990s. Although this violence was unfortunate, it exposed Vladimir to a kind of darkness that eventually inspired him to pick up a camera: he “started to take pictures in the mists of that insanity, of that chaos, and sanctions basically to try and preserve [his] sanity” (Dunn). Boogie is a world renowned photographer who has had the opportunity to shoot all over the world and all sorts of subjects: from gangsters in NYC projects to skinheads in the Belgrade ghettos. I have seen the darkness of former Yugoslavia first hand. When I first visited Sarajevo in 2004 at the age of 7, I was astonished to see buildings riddled with bullet holes and grenade fragments lodged within the walls. My grandma, who was born in Belgrade like Boogie, tells me about a time in which all of Yugoslavia was thriving and Belgrade was the Paris of eastern Europe. After visiting Belgrade, it truly is hard to imagine how such a dark, decrepit place full of hatred could have once been so great. Boogie’s war experience has driven him to capture people who live through similar circumstances and expose the world to these realities.

The first photo is from Boogie’s series “Skinheads”. These photos were shot from 2003-2005 in Belgrade, Boogie’s hometown, and the subjects from the series are young male neo-nazis. These people are products of their environment, just like Boogie. None of the people in the photos look a day over twenty five, therefore, they were anywhere from ten to

eighteen during the war: imagine what that can do to a kid. More importantly, this war was fueled by ethnic hatred which is why many of these young adults are filled with hate. The photo from this series perfectly exhibits that lost generation of children. It is a very simple photo: a black and white shot of a young man clutching his fist with “HATE” tattooed across his knuckles. This entire series was shot in black and white, however, Boogie does not only shoot in black and white. It seems as if he chose black and white in order to emphasize the coldness of the photo and the emotions of the man being photographed. Another important feature of this photo is how the only thing in focus is the man’s fist; one can not make out his face because the rest of the photo is blurred. Boogie’s use of the bokeh changes this photo from being about one individual to about a generation as a whole. It does not matter who the man in the photo is, the viewer does not need to see his face: what matters is that this generation has been filled with hatred. Boogie is able to express an entire generation with a single photo and going forward it is important to understand that this is the world where Boogie is from.

This horrific upbringing led Boogie to not be afraid to venture into unsafe and potentially deadly areas to capture images that many others would never have the courage to face. In a certain light, Boogie’s road to adulthood could be seen as a blessing because it has given him the ability to shoot things people really want to see, but not with their own eyes. The next photo is from Boogie’s series “Gangs”. These photos were shot from 2003 to 2006 in BedStuy, Bushwick and Queensbridge, some of the most dangerous neighborhoods in New York City. The collection captures gang members, their guns, drugs, and all sorts of everyday events in the New York City projects. This photo is eerily similar to the last: both seem to be a young man with no face. Instead of a tattoo reading “HATE”, this man is wielding two pistols: a Glock and some sort of beretta pistol. Once again, the subject of the photo is a product of their environment and has been surrounded by violence and crime their entire life. The lack of identity perpetuates this idea that these photos are not about one person, but rather an entire group of society. Something that brings a sense of levity to the photo is the subject’s smile, but if one analyses it deeper, it shows how this man is proud of his position. Growing up in the projects of New York City gives a child little opportunity, however, by standing behind a gun, this boy has been able to find a sense of power: something he has

never had before. Boogie continues to capture these photographs to give people an insight to parts of society who have been engulfed in violence just like his nation was when he was younger.

After looking through just a few of Boogie's series, one can quickly realize recurring themes. The final photo continues to capture grim subjects who seem to be embracing violence to express themselves. This photo is part of a series called "Kingston" and was shot in the poverty ridden capital of Jamaica in 2011. The image portrays two young men with halloween masks on wielding assault rifles in a rundown house. This photo reiterates the same themes as the previous two: hate, violence, and helplessness. Due to their unfortunate conditions, these young men are forced to crime and violence into their everyday lives. In each of the photos, the subjects have been engulfed by hatred and to a certain extent, it is not their faults. These people have grown up around extreme violence and terrible poverty, therefore, they have been left hopeless because a bright future never seemed like a possibility.

During my research on Boogie, I have looked at hundreds of his photos but these were the ones that resonated with me. When I look at these photos, I see young men, not too much older than me, who have been subjected to incredibly unfortunate circumstances and it has made me incredibly grateful for the opportunities I have been given. At first, the photos are shocking and disturbing due to their grim themes, however, these emotions quickly turned into those of sympathy. These subjects are not very different from myself when it comes down to what we want: we all want to feel important, we all want to have power, and most of all: we all want to be appreciated.

Boogie describes his upbringing by saying he "grew up in a perfectly safe society, then all of sudden it became terrible. All of a sudden we have war going on all around, people were coming back from front lines half insane, a lot of weapons, and crime was on the rise" (Dunn). If this has not made you as a reader understand the severity of the circumstances in which the region endured maybe this will: roughly 140,000 people died in four years which makes the war the most deadly event in Europe since World War II. At the beginning of his career, Boogie used photography as an opportunity to find sanity among chaos. Since then, he has used it as a platform to exhibit others who had a similar upbringing. Boogie's experience has led him to understand that these photos are a lot more than prints hanging on the



walls for these subjects: his shots give them a sense of meaning, something that Boogie was also yearning as a young man lost in a chaotic world.

*Erin Wakeland*

## **The Rant Turned Essay**

“The time you have felt most lost...” that makes me laugh because that is now, the present, the current moment, buddy. I am surrounded by thousands of “seemingly similar” students, yet I feel like my personality is being drawn out of me like chocolate milk through the straw of a six year old. I am drained. I am not like the majority here. I am lost.

I initially chalked it up to thinking I should’ve gone to a liberal arts school. The grass is always greener on the other side, you know? The weird non-conforming kids seem like they’ve made the right choice. My friend Marshall went to Carlton and D.J.s at their local radio and reports having “the time of his life.”

My best friend goes to Kenyon College, a liberal arts school in Ohio; we have the same disposition and eagerness to learn, and she has already met more friends than the both of us had combined in High School.

I didn’t even consider this while enrolling in the second largest university in the state. I overlooked the potential struggles I would ensue in consequence of my choice and focused on the hot pursuit titled “Get Me the Hell Out of High School.”

But with the load of rebuttal I have collected over the past three months, I think my issue could be worse... an internal affliction... a serious character flaw on my part.

Do I not accept change with a malleable heart and willingness to give up parts of myself until the cards are in my hand again? Why do I freak out when I feel my vocabulary will revert to that of a 13 year old at the moment I am engaged in a gossipy conversation? Why do I feel so vulnerable when put in new social situations? Do I fear change or am I really that much of a pretentious asshole?

The “pick yourself up from your bootstraps” rightist would tell me exactly that: “pick yourself up from your bootstraps.” Deal with it and search for the good in the situation. But let me be frank here, first thing is I am a goddamn leftist and second, what if I don’t want to do the hard thing? I could succumb to the place over the hedge, or navigate my way through my own personal hell called South Quad Dining Hall.

I am stuck in limbo between two ideals: college should be about growing pains, or save that shit for the real world and enjoy your last chance at having a ready-made community while you can. I know that nothing worth having comes easy, and I need to trust in the process, but kitschy Pinterest quotes don’t exactly ease my sea of qualms. I feel as though I am in the wrong place trying to disguise myself, but friendship is a two way street and if I can’t handle it and be that efflorescent person I explained earlier, there’s no one I can fool.

I have this idyllic scene repeating in my head when I think of a liberal arts school: I am walking across campus while pristine white snow falls like syncopated marshmallows on the 19th century buildings that have gorgeous exteriors with beyond decrepit interiors, picking up nicknames coined by the charmingly clever students like “The Real Dumpster” for the Theodore Dudster Building for the Sciences.

I continue walking and climb that one hill on campus that everyone groans about even though it’s really more of a ski mogul than a hill (everyone knows that but loves the dramatized gripe). There’s a frenzy of “hi, hi how are you, hey what’s up”’s while I trek to class because every man is every man’s best friend.

My friend Holden (whose mom never quite terminated her teenage angst that fueled her love for Salinger) hustles to catch up to me, eager to engage in conversation (a traitor to his namesake) while continuing our path toward neighboring academic buildings (he’s going to his African Diaspora Studies class, I’m heading to Anthropology).

I ask him if he thinks Neil Degrasse Tyson enjoys sci-fi books or if he thinks Tyson has a superiority complex and logistically tells off the tales. We banter on, throwing mud at Banksy, adults that still discuss Donnie Darko theories (seriously, get your shit together), and every liberal arts kid that reads “The Infinite Jest” freshman year.

This is my everyday life and I am constantly enriched. This is my everyday life and the quirks that make me feel alive have become the norm. This is my everyday life and I am

embraced and loved for who I am.

Dangerously dreamy, I know, but shouldn't idealization be apart of pinpointing where the hell things went awry? I must recognize what causes the anguish that has a grip on me in order to make changes in my life.

It's hard. The disconnect between where my head is and where my body is is hard. I try to fit the bill, but some days I don't leave my room, holing up to read an entire book in the cavity under my bed that resembles a children's drawing rather than a living space.

My days feel warped, stretched like the taffy that ends up under a bench because you get scared you're going to pull your molars out.

I am constantly seduced by flashbacks of my comfortable past life, so much so that I can't fathom opening the door for anyone else, sinking in the brief moments of happiness served only by a midnight text linking me to an Onion article. I want my old friends to want me again even though we now all hold different email domains.

They get back to me every now and then in the form of a 3 second snapchat, featuring a song from one of my objectively horrendous playlists. However instead of joining in on the chummy flashback, I internally retort "Just 3 seconds? That's all you have for me?," unable to control my greed for attention. I can't rely on the past to bring me happiness, I tell myself. It's not sustainable. But moving-on is somewhat of a foreign concept to me. I'm hungover from the speed at which my life changed— like the first crack of a glow stick on the 4th of July, a goddamn game-changer for the neighborhood kids.

So I haven't found my place in my new life. But I don't think it's a matter of location anymore: it's about learning how to accept change, take a beating from it, and then finally, join in the rhythm— something I had only previously encountered with new bus routes and when the cafeteria switched from regular potato chips to baked.

Now with that I try to remember that this self-proclaimed suffering is for a noble cause. Each and every daily move will add up and my valiant efforts will get noticed by whoever is up there running the motherboard in the sky. And hopefully the relentless calendar year will take a moment to acknowledge those who have been mercilessly left behind, wounded in combat from a battle with time.

I have nothing to do but wait until the waves encompassing my past life crash into the new life I have waiting for me on the shore, joining together in pursuit of a murky new beginning, filled with unwanted seaweed, sure, but also the stuff that pulls up beautiful pearls and that necklace Rose threw off the Titanic.

As of November, I feel as though I am learning how to be an independent person. I didn't realize my dependency on my friends until I saw one of my closest humans, Charlie, mid-way through October. An emotional deluge overwhelmed me as I remembered what is unique about him, and in consequence, what I have been missing everyday. I figured out that I was mourning the parts of him that I adopted as my own: his honesty, frankness, and charmingly blunt humor. I need to make up for that within myself. I can't leave extensions of myself everywhere— people trip on computer cords when they are carelessly spread across a room, what was I thinking letting a cord roll for 600 miles?

As for Madeline Louise, I fed off her intelligence, endearing wit, and patience. I was dependent on the words and facts she constantly spewed, creating conversations out of dust. We always brought different things to the table whether it be our infamous DIY potter's wheel (a complete and utter failure), the fort we built in the middle of the woods, or poems about the environment. I had to pick that up for myself and become more inquisitive: immerse myself into my own independent studies, reading books on books and googling the shit out of things. She is always going to be the one that understands me most. She will always make up for the incoherent words I say while we drift to sleep after a hardy marathon of Sailor Moon and jellybeans. I must embody the fragments of her I hold dearest to me if I want a piece of her to live here within me in my new life.

I have come to recognize that August 31st, 2016 was not a termination date for happiness, but rather a change that I must learn how to maneuver with patience and acceptance until I find where happiness resides in it. The people that once filled my life with belly-aching laughs and love will not be completely absent, however nor will they comprise my future happiness. I must find the rhythm in the current beat, and then work on joining in with it... turning my heartbeat once more into a chant.

*Kate Wilcox*  
**Harp and Heart**

It will make you tremble.  
It will make you scream.  
Every part of you will disassemble,  
As it tears you at the seams.

And the worst part is -  
He will make you *love* it -  
“It can’t get better than this!”  
You’ll be galvanized -  
To dive into the desolate pit.

The Player of the Harp,  
So beautiful he seems-  
The music swells- And there goes your heart!  
It’s fallen to the floor! - Yet you don’t even scream.

His Song continues-  
As your heart bleeds on the floor.  
Your cluelessness grants you sinew -  
Snatch it up quick! - Lest your soul deplore.

But you don't know.  
Poor thing- how could you?  
He's made you *love* it- with his grand show.  
As music plays, you bid bleeding heart adieu.

For this is *love*-  
Not quite so blissful as it seems-  
The Player will smile,  
As it tears you at the seams.

*Haley Winkle*

## Central Park, 9pm on a Monday

how quiet it gets  
here, as I stroll  
aimlessly between four  
previously clogged avenues.  
this is the emptiest  
I have seen the city,  
the darkest despite  
abundant streetlights and  
office pixels in the  
distance behind  
silhouettes of wavy,  
thick limbed trees. strange  
how I could count  
the passersby on  
my hands instead of  
wading through them  
with my entire body.  
strange, I didn't think I  
could see Orion from the  
heart of the city, from below  
all of the lights,  
I didn't think that



whoever called it a  
sleepless city  
was wrong. strange,  
they must have never  
walked the streets at night  
only to find the city asleep in  
its millions of beds.

*Haley Winkle*  
**tuesday, no umbrella**

rain pooling the lid  
of my coffee cup  
staining its flavor  
with sky

tasted bitter today

my canvas coat a few shades  
darker from polka  
dots pooling together on  
its surface and though  
shielded from droplets

I feel clean  
wet footsteps and  
funny tastes worth the  
cleanse of my surroundings  
and evening sky hours later  
oil paint brushstrokes of  
emptied rainclouds  
without a grey in sight  
for once amidst all  
the neutral blue

*Dominique Witten*

## **Reduced, Reused, Recycled**

Your staircase is made of recycled garbage cans. Not because you are an advocate of protecting the ozone layer. And you are. It is because you said all the landfills were full. You claimed you could fill your land with the last man's treasures. And I don't have the heart to tell you these garbage cans have left you no room for your treasures. You've been taking on everyone else's baggage and you only have two arms. You became the bag lady for the whole neighborhood. And you won't let me lighten the load. So I walk with you still.

We go  
House to House  
Porch to Porch  
Soul to Soul  
Asking for people's latest treasures

On our trails we met a man who gave us the 20 times he thought about killing himself this week because his coworkers keep twisting his word into nigger and hate speech because he voted for Trump. And you hate trump but you can see the kindness in this man's eyes. You see that this is just the shell of a man who was raised in a society where certain groups were less than his and because he was a kid he learned their ways. So you take his bag anyway. You tell him to be strong because the snow falls from the heavens just to glisten and gleam for him do he owes it to the sky to admire the beauty.

At the next house we met a woman and she gave us the 10 years her mother gave her to the

man next door to pay for her cocaine addiction. And even though you don't have any more space left to carry this on your arm you take her bag as well and place the strap on your neck.

I've been watching this scene too long so I ask you "Why not put all the bags in one bag that way it easier to carry?" But you tell me "No" because each bag has earned the right to be seen because these are prized possessions. You can't put the 7 Wonders of the World into. But the bags are hanging on your arms and neck but we still have a few stops to make.

The small brown child gives us the nickname Burnt because the kids in her class have just learned colors and kept trying to classify her but the purples and blues wouldn't do. How can you not take the struggle of a five-year old adult when tears start falling from her face that the dumb kids throw rocks at? So you take her bag and tie it on your leg.

After several hours we finally get back to your recycled garbage can staircase. You drop of your most recent treasures I watch your hands shake so I ask you "What's wrong" and you say "Nothing". I don't like calling people liars but you are lying to me.

DO YOU NEED HELP? It's a simple question and yet most of us can't answer truthfully. WE ALL NEED HELP. But who among us can actually tear down our walls and admit that we have weaknesses and that yes, we too do not know what to do. Did you know the bag lady wasn't always so? At one point in time she had a bag that she wished someone else would help her carry. That bag lady wished someone could carry the different homes and strangers she had to call family because her mother was an unfit parent. She wished that someone would help her carry the times one of her so called families convinced her she was a mistake and a burden that they had to take on. For their charity she owed them her virginity.

Nobody helped her.

Not a soul helped the girl turned woman drowning in her own misery. And it is not because

they didn't care.

We all think that our bags are too heavy to help someone else carry theirs. We live in a society where we are afraid of lending a hand because we are afraid of EVERYTHING and ANYONE who is not like us. We are afraid of the people who wear smiles because we wish we could be them. We wish we could have the courage to smile when the walls we spent our lives building come crashing down on our hearts. We are afraid of the people who wear frowns because we are afraid of becoming too much in our emotions. Who wants to open that can of worms? We really just don't want to admit that we have a can of worms we wish someone would open.

We are gone.  
House to Land  
Porch to Broken  
Soul to Hole  
Nobody has treasures.

*Joshua Wolfe*

## Ten Ways of Looking at a Dead Tree

### **I**

There are many ways  
to terminate a dead tree.  
Some include other trees.

### **II**

The bomb fell,  
and all that endured  
was a dead tree.

### **III**

A murder of crows  
circled the dead tree.  
They were starving.

### **IV**

Dead trees are dead.  
If it comes back to life,  
it wasn't dead.

### **V**

People throughout the world

dwell on the dead tree.  
They can't change it.

## **VI**

A dead tree doesn't feel,  
it doesn't cry.  
They leave that for the living.

## **VII**

A dead tree isn't useless.  
It can make a new journey  
if you let it.

## **VIII**

The dead tree fell,  
and from it  
came two trees.

## **IX**

People dawdled past  
the dead tree,  
as if it didn't exist.

## **X**

Don't climb dead trees.  
It's pointless.  
And dangerous.

*Emma Yergin*  
**Green Walls**

*Please remove your shoes as you enter the dance studio.*

This is one of the most basic rooms that you have ever seen. Besides, perhaps, a stereo, there is no furniture in a studio. Just a floor and mirrored walls. There is nothing special about it either. It is a room for practicing; it doesn't even get to see the final project the dancer has been working on; only a stage sees that. If a dance studio were a person, it would be the guy in the red shirt and white hat that stands right next to Waldo. He anticipates the inevitable "There's Waldo!" and lives to be covered up by a fat fingerprint directed towards his legendary neighbor. Quite an ordinary sight.

*Begin sitting on the floor with the bottoms of your feet pressed together.*

The floor is made of strips of wood. It's the kind of wood that is in my dad's workshop in the garage with little brown imperfections on some parts. It has been smoothed and glossed over, though, so it is no longer workshop-wood but a polished floor. Even the cracks between each plank are barely noticeable thanks to the glaze, barely sensible as a result of the overuse that makes the floor soft to the touch. Not teddy-bear soft, but soft like a lucky pebble. The walls are a pale shade of green. I think it's supposed to be the most calming color because I've seen that same color in the office of a massage therapist and a yoga studio. It works; the color is relaxing and makes me want to stretch my muscles just a little farther. I visualize each fiber in my hips being pulled like cherry taffy. I am the only thing in the vacant room. How do you describe this emptiness? Confinement. I feel restricted by the four mir-



rored walls. I can stare myself down from every angle.

***Find a spot at the barre and warm up your muscles with pliés, relevés, and tendus. Prepare your mind for dance.***

In my lifetime, I have spent hundreds of hours standing at a barre. Dancing has been my passion since I was three years old. The smell of rosin on my shoes takes me back to my first dance class and the classical music reminds me of my first dance teacher. Back then, I danced because it was entertaining. I had friends in my dance class and it allowed me to boogie and have fun for a few evenings each week. But things changed when I was diagnosed with anxiety. This disorder climbed inside of my brain and nested there, triggering paralyzing, anxious responses to situations that only called for minor discontent. Things like separation from my parents, grades under 96 percent, and slight imperfections in whatever I was doing would always elicit tears. Thankfully, I had dance. Moving my body around to music in an empty room with pale green walls and lucky pebble wood floors, believe it or not, was the cure. Because this room allowed me to escape my brain and instead live in my movement, my worries deserted me. I had figured out the solution to my intense stress so that I became calm and confident in everything I did, even when it wasn't perfect. The dance studio was the solution. You can see why I place so much importance in such a simple room.

***Take an area on the floor to begin the routine.***

Although my anxiety never disappeared completely, I was so proud of how far back it was pushed in the file drawer that is my brain. It even started to gather dust thanks to my persistence in the art of dance and regular trips to the studio. You can imagine, then, the terror that overwhelmed my body when my doctor recommended a long hiatus from dancing to allow serious overuse injuries in both my feet time to recover. The day I received that news, I sat in the studio alone for hours. I remember staring at the shiny floors and searching for some way to be able to dance without my feet touching the wood. Even just the thought of

not dancing shuffled around all the files in my brain, blew the dust off of one labeled *Anxiety*, and ripped it open.

***As you dance, perform each movement to the best of your abilities.***

The break I took from dance was not long. I could not hold myself back when it came to performing, even just in the studio. It was my senior year of high school when my eyes widened to everything a dance studio could be. Although my feet were far from cured, I was close with all of my teammates and I loved my teachers. The studio was more than a place for dancing now, and although that change was forced by my doctor's orders, I loved the relationships that I formed just by sitting at the barre and chatting. It was so much easier to talk to people between these four walls than anywhere else. Perhaps it was because I had spent more time in this room than anywhere else. But then again, I was my true self in any and all dance studios I entered. They had this liberatingly relaxing quality that encouraged me to open up to the population of the room. I can recall one conversation with a teammate where we shared our stresses regarding an upcoming test and another with a choreographer where I asked for advice concerning my terrifying future. One of my choreographers created a very special dance that year. Even though the routine was made to be interpreted in many ways, I felt like it targeted me specifically. It was called "Heal," and it depicted a journey from being in some type of pain, whether it be emotional, physical, or mental, to being restored in some way. The choreography was intense, emotional, and exhausting, not to mention a major strain on my wounded feet. However, it touched me with forceful enlightenment. The first time that we practiced the entire dance in the studio, I wept as I danced. Not because my feet hurt, although they did, but because I was so overcome with emotion. Years of bottled up anxiety, months of foot injuries, happy dance classes, sad or worrisome life events, then more dance related joy flooded out of my eyes. The music made its way into my ears: "Take my mind and take my pain like an empty bottle takes the rain and *heal*." It was in this moment that I understood not only the song, but the effect that spending so much time in a dance studio had on me. The vocalist was singing to the studio that I

danced in. As I danced, I poured my mind and pain into the room so that all I concentrated on was dancing. Not my anxiety, nor my physical suffering, but rather the saving power of my environment. It truly healed me.

### ***Strike the last pose.***

Really, all dance studios are the same. In each one, I feel the same healing happiness. Whether I am at my studio in my hometown or here in Alice Lloyd's basement studio, I know I am safe. Granted, I haven't had the chance to perform a life changing routine or develop lifelong friendships here yet, but this vacant room has an incredible amount of potential to be a major part in practically every aspect of my life, just as each studio in my past has had. I can almost smell the rosin on these wood floors. As I walk in, the scent pulls me through time to my first ballet lesson. While I am standing in the basement of Alice Lloyd at 18 years old, I am simultaneously a toddler in my hometown, frolicking in a bright pink tutu that drapes down to my ankles. Listen to the imaginary classical music. The arpeggios leap across the synapses in my brain. All of my memories live here in this smell, in these musical notes, and in this room.

I'm here to tell you that a dance studio is more than a room with soft wood floors and pale green walls. It is more than the mirrors on the walls and the stereo in the corner. To a non-dancer, a dance studio is simply that. It is not regarded as a special place because it is empty and it is for practicing, not performing. It may be the room where the stuck up ballerinas go to twirl around on their toes, or the room where the obsessive "Dance Moms" freaks go to overwork their bodies and pay thousands of dollars to compete. However, there are two perspectives when it comes to a dance studio, and the other is from the point of view of a dancer. A dance studio is a home. It is a place to let out anxiety and emotion, and it is a place to heal. It is my home more than I ever knew it would be my home. Places like these are exclusively extraordinary because in order to see them from multiple perspectives, you

can't just change your location. In this case, it's not about viewing the room from the floor where the dancers' shoes twirl and tap, versus the top, where the dancers look like organized ants moving in their rehearsed directions. In order to change your perspective, you must change *who you are*. To be a dancer in a dance studio is to see the room as the most important place of your childhood. The twirling and tapping shoes belong to your supportive brothers, sisters, and parents that love you and you are one of those rehearsed ants and the directions you move are steps in a routine that will change your life. Granted, not every dancer is as emotionally invested in their space. A pale green wall can be just a green wall and a mirror can be just a mirror. But sometimes a pale green wall is a cure-all for your body and mind and a mirror is a spiritual awakening, allowing you to reflect on your innermost self. A dance studio is an empty jar to pour yourself into. How do you describe that emptiness? Freeing confinement. Embrace it. This is not just space to dance. It is space to relax, grow, and, most importantly, heal.

*Take a breath and take a bow.*

*Emma Yergin*  
**Things Worth Mentioning**

It is worth mentioning that  
I love you  
Not in a sexy way  
But in the way that  
An astronomer loves the stars  
So much that he goes outside  
Every night  
Just to stare at them  
Again

And it is worth mentioning that  
I like your curly hair the best  
Because it reminds me of when we were little  
And I don't want you to grow up  
Because then  
We can't spend every second together  
Because we'll move away.  
But don't worry, I'll still adore  
Your curly hair

And it is worth mentioning that  
I miss you

Not in a mourning way  
But in the way that  
The ocean misses the sand  
So much that it thrusts itself onto it  
Over and over  
Just to make sure that the sand is  
Still there.

It is worth mentioning that  
I'm pretty lucky to have you  
Because you make me so happy.  
And I would hate to forget you  
Because then  
You wouldn't occupy all this space in my mind  
Like you do now  
Because you are worth so much more  
Than to just be mentioned.



# CONTRIBUTORS

**Maya Adler** is a double major with the Stamps School of Art & Design and the Dance Department. Maya loves to draw people as her subjects as her understanding of humans comes from her dance training.

**Kate Anderson** is from Denver, Colorado. She is studying Politics, Philosophy and Economics and is a member of Compulsive Lyres Acapella.

**Olivia Anderson** is a freshman student in the LHSP program. She planning to major in Communications with a minor in History of Law and Policy.

**Max Anstey** is a professional zumba dancing assistant; it is not lucrative enough to feed his insatiable craving for California avocados, so please, if you will, donate to his venmo @max-anstey.

**Alexis Aulepp** currently plans to major in Communication Studies with a possible major/minor in either English, Writing, or Creative Writing. Her favorite things to do include writing poetry, taking photographs, asking too many questions, walking around in her socks, and stopping to pet cute dogs on the street. This is not the first time her work has been published, and she hopes it won't be the last!

**Lynne Bekdash** is pursuing a Dual Degree in Business Administration and English. She is fascinated by things like artificial intelligence, economic anomalies, and environmentally conscious urban planning, and her favorite things to do are write, talk, and laugh with the people she loves. That's all kind of run-of-the-mill, so here's a fun fact: Lynne has always loved gardening but--alas!--nearly everything she has ever planted has died. For example, the strawberry plant she named Strawberry. That died real fast. The thyme and basil are still alive, though!



**Evan Binkley** is a freshman in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts considering a double major in International Studies and Art History with a minor in Museum Studies. He is a member of the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program's Digital Media Club, photographer for the University food magazine Wolverine Cuizine, a library circulation desk assistant, and is involved in all of the museum activities around campus.

**Daniil Blyum** is an Industrial Engineering student from Cyprus. He took up photography 2 years ago and specializes in capturing industrial artifacts.

**Lea Boreland** bio.

**Seamus Callaghan** is an Engineering Physics major with an affinity for the grand and the bizarre. His ultimate goal in life is to witness the rise of octopi as a space-faring civilization, even if it takes him 100 million years, copying his consciousness thousands of times onto computers hidden at the cores of asteroids, and emerging en masse every million years or so like a swarm of cicadas.

**Bharat Chopra** is a sophomore who is exploring majors and taking courses that interest him. Some of his interests include writing, photography, reading and economics.

**Nikole Davtyan** is a junior double majoring in Screen Arts and Cultures & Communications at the University of Michigan. She is pursuing screenwriting and plans to write and direct films in the future.

**Erica Dawson** is an intended math major from Baltimore, Maryland. She enjoys playing piano and taking film pictures of her friends and also nature.

**Laura Dzubay** is a junior studying English and Creative Writing. Her work has previously appeared in *Ginosko Literary Review*, *The Oleander Review*, *Fortnight Literary Press*, *Xylem Magazine*, and others, and last year her work received a Hopwood Underclassmen Fiction Award. She loves hiking, playing guitar, and the Beatles.

**Brooks Eisenbise** is a first-year student pursuing a BFA at the Stamps School of Art & Design and a lover of all things literary. She is honored to be featured in this year's journal. In her free time, Brooks likes to write poetry, knit, and eat impressive quantities of food.

**Kortni Ford** is an anthropology student who enjoys creating art, writing, and petting dogs.

**Marjorie Gaber** is a student in the Stamps School of Art and Design! She loves complaining about movies, filling up sketchbooks (like a pro), complaining about comics, and chilling in the Duderstadt library. Check out her instagram @marjoriegaber!

**Grace Gebhard** is currently a dual-degree major in the Stamps School of Art & Design and LSA, on track for a degree in Fine Arts and Creative Writing. She is interested in exploring the relationship between classical and modern art, as well as pushing the boundaries of the intensity of emotion. She immensely enjoyed her first year at Michigan and in LHSP, and is thrilled to be featured in this year's Literary Journal!

**William Hearn** is double majoring in Near Eastern Studies and English with a minor in Music. He hopes to one day teach theology at a collegiate level. Hobbies include: reading, playing the tuba in the MMB, and embarrassing his friends with his atrocious dance moves.

**Kendall Hecker** is originally from Columbus, Ohio, and she has been writing stories and poems since the second grade. She hopes to major in public policy with a minor in writing.

**Aviva Hirsch** lives in Evanston, IL, around 30 minutes north of Chicago. She is on the pre-health track with a major in psychology. In her free time, she enjoys writing and dancing. Her main involvement on campus is in a feminist club called Lean In, an organization created to address the daily challenges many women face in the workforce and beyond.

**Abigail Hurst** is a Stamps art major— class of 2020. She has interests in both writing and visual art, and hopes to combine the two in her future.

**Ruchita Iyer** is a rising sophomore from Dallas, Texas. A currently undeclared LSA student, she plans to attend medical school. In her spare time, she enjoys photography, travel, and eating.

**Tarini Karwal** bio.

**Amanda Kuo** is a Theatre Performance: Acting Major at UMICH. She enjoys her acting educational as well as modern dance theatre, art, music, and bubbles. She hopes to continue poetry and other writing to integrate it into her work. She's always looking to see and do more.

**Elise Laarman** is a sophomore applying to the program of Philosophy, Politics and Economics, and is also considering a minor in Creative Writing. She continues to believe in the existence of ghosts and that Palmer House on the third floor of Alice Lloyd Hall is haunted.

**Allyson Li** grew up in New Albany, Indiana. She plans to graduate in 2020 with a major in chemical engineering. She enjoys spending her time starting arts and crafts projects but rarely finishes them.

**Payton Luokkala** is in the school of LSA studying English, as a member of the creative writing sub concentration, and Anthropology. She is from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and, in fact, is probably wishing she were there right now.

**Alex Mullen's** favorite things include eating bread, walking slow, and staying hydrated. He finds joy in writing and making music, and plans on majoring in English and Communications.

**Melissa Newman** bio.

**Isabella Nuce** bio.

**Mary Oseguera**, 19, is a rising sophomore from Rancho Cucamonga, California. She is currently a double major in English and Program in the Environment at University of Michigan. Her hobbies include marching drum and bugle corps, petting cats, watching The X Files, and geeking out about J. R. R. Tolkien.

While **Madeleine Pierpont** does not have a declared major, her interests include History, Art History, English and Critical Analysis, Cross Cultural Comparisons, and Fashion Design. While she is not sure what she wants her future to hold, she aims to have whatever she does to be internationally focused. She would like to be an entrepreneur. Her greatest passion is traveling and for her summer going into her sophomore year she will be working at an auction house.

**Katherine Qiao** is a sophomore majoring in Business Administration at the University of Michigan. According to many people in all separate scenarios, she is very much like a disgruntled cat in demeanor and spirit. Her hobbies predominantly hail of the creative type: art, writing, design, publication, and somewhere in the world-wide web lies her portfolio website. She has mastered the art of poker faces and effortless

death glares (See? Another kind of art), so if you happen to find yourself a victim of one, well. That's not her problem.

**Serena Scholz** is an Earth & Environmental Sciences major who plans to pursue a Writing minor. She is the recipient of several awards for her work, including the Roy W. Cowden Memorial Fellowship in non-fiction, the Newnam prize in short fiction, and the Matt Kelley / Granader Family Prize for Excellence in First Year Writing.

**Shayan Soltani** bio.

**Olivia Sun** is a student in the College of Engineering looking to major in either Computer Science or Data Science, and she hopes to minor through the Ross School of Business. Olivia has loved drawing ever since she was young, and she hopes to continue to incorporate art into her life. Olivia plans on taking advantage of the variety of art classes offered at the University of Michigan.

**Thomas Vossler** is a rising Sophomore from Los Angeles California. He is pursuing a Mechanical Engineering degree and an Art minor; he took his first art class sophomore year of high school and has been pursuing painting and photography in his free time ever since.

**Erin Wakeland** is a freshman in the Stamps School of Art and Design. She enjoys strong coffee, playing the harp, and collecting love seats. Professionally speaking, Erin enjoys the 4D medium, fibers, floristry, and nonfiction writing. You can typically locate Erin by the echo of her clogs on the tile floor.

**Jennifer Wen** is a rising sophomore majoring in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology and PitE. In addition to art and loving trees, her passions include the piano, JRPGs, being petty, and questioning her decisions. She is proud and excited to join LHSP for another year!

**Kate Wilcox** is an English major and Creative Writing minor. She is pursuing a career as a publisher, and plans to continue working on her own writing, as well. Her dream is to someday be a novelist.

Ever the art museum fanatic and lover of food, **Haley Winkle** is about to be a full-time senior (in denial), studying Creative Writing & Literature as a part-time poet (in practice). Will she run away after graduation? Will she be rich? Stay tuned.

**Dominique Witten** is a sophomore with a dual major in Cell and Molecular Biology and Biomedical Engineering and oddly a minor in Creative Writing. When she is not pulling her hair out from the horrors of Chem 130 she writes poems on the corners of Pizza House napkins.

**Joshua Wolfe** is a student interested in studying Chemistry. He enjoys creative writing as a hobby and actively attempts to improve his work.

**Emma Yergin** has loved being a part of LHSP during her freshman year and is excited to be able to contribute to the literary journal. She also enjoys dancing and spending time with her family. In fact her poem “Things Worth Mentioning” is about her younger sister.