

The LSWA Arts & Literary Journal

PARADOX OF YOUTH

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University of Michigan

Content Warnings: Some of these poems and stories may contain sensitive subjects, including eating disorders and suicidal ideation, that will be disturbing to some readers. Please care for yourself and step away if need be.

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

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| LSA

LLOYD SCHOLARS FOR
WRITING AND THE ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Letter from the Director: Carol Tell

Where does childhood end and adulthood begin? In this LSWA journal, *Paradox of Youth*, you'll find a fresh, honest vision of what it means to be young, articulating all the contradictions, complaints, rebelliousness, anger, beauty, and nostalgia associated with looking both ways: at childhood not quite sloughed off and adulthood not quite embraced. The poetry, visual art, fiction, and nonfiction describe and question this sometimes queasy feeling of "in-betweenness." There are so many marvelous and moving examples: Isabella Crow's "womanhood and i get into fights;" Emily Buckley's "The End;" Martha Schaller's "Green Crayons;" Samuel F. MacKinnon's "Gli Innamorati."

This academic year was intense, as we continued to struggle with the repercussions of the Covid pandemic, along with racial injustice, clear and persistent evidence of global warming, wars and political unrest. In LSWA, we managed challenges both personal and public not just through the process of producing complex writing and artwork, but also by building a supportive community for dialogue, creativity, and engagement.

Thanks go to this year's editorial staff, especially editors Emily Buckley and Daniela Butkovik, whose talent—and friendship—I value immensely. Suzi F. Garcia offered her editorial expertise to our students

even while she worked as the guest editor of *Poetry*. Our student leaders are well represented in these pages, as are our first-year students.

Despite no longer qualifying as “youthful,” I can relate to the themes of this journal, caught in similar feelings of “in-betweenness.” After eighteen years, this is my final year as director of LSWA. I remember our first publication, which was produced, more or less, by one intrepid student leader, Carrie Luke; we had to beg first-year students to submit their work, yet the book, *Other Homes*, was a remarkable achievement and a good harbinger of things to come. Indeed, the first essay in that book was written by Geetha Iyer, who has gone on to a successful career as a writer (she’s currently the Mellon Science Writing Fellow at Kenyon College). Over the years, while most of our students represented in our journal pages have not necessarily become professional writers, painters, podcasters, musicians, or graphic artists, I’d like to think they’ve all found ways to stay creative and maintain their passion for the arts and artistic communities.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as director and to get to know so many of you—in classes, at LSWA events, and especially at our Friday coffees in the living room of Alice Lloyd. In a few weeks my family and I will be headed for the New Haven area in Connecticut. I can’t wait

to see how LSWA evolves—so please keep in touch. And you can be sure I'll be bringing my collection of LSWA journals with me.

—*Carol Tell*

Letter from the Editor: **Emily Buckley**

As a graduating senior in the class of 2022, I have had a lot of time this past year to reflect on the concept of change and facing the unknown. Whether it is counting my last day of classes, my last meal at the dining hall, or my last night in the dorms, I have become painfully aware of each and every “ending.” While this is also paired with excitement for what’s to come, I found myself nervous about change nevertheless. I knew this year’s journal would be the final one I worked on in my time at college, and I initially approached it from that perspective. However, I quickly realized that this journal cannot be so succinctly categorized as an “ending” when it is a “beginning” in so many other ways. Featuring a wide array of first-year and alumni student pieces, this journal is a reflection of a larger community that never quite stays the same. It represents a community that I have known for the past four years and one that will continue to grow once I’m gone. And most importantly, it represents a brief moment in time in which a unique group of writers, artists, and creators were able to live together and create together. For some, this journal is a last. For others, it is a first. Nevertheless, it is ours.

I want to thank the members of the Lloyd Scholars community who made this journal all that it is through your devotion to creating and

willingness to share. This cohort's collective creativity was inspirational to no end, and it reminded me that even in change, we can count on each other.

I also want to thank our amazing and hard working editorial staff, who week in and week out shared their brilliant (and hilarious) thoughts to help craft this final journal. To Daniela Butkovic, Jenny Do, Sarah Griffith, Andrew Hutchinson, Kendyll Klingensmith, Samuel MacKinnon, Sheena Zeng, and Suzi F. Garcia: thank you for all your devotion, collaboration, and encouraging input. This journal is a representation of communities large and small, and I'm going to miss our mini Tuesday night meetings.

Finally, to readers: I hope you find something lasting in these pages. May we continue to change and grow, whether we are together or apart.

—Emily Buckley

Letter from the Editor: **Daniela Butkovic**

These past two years have been a hard time for everyone. My first year in college was the first full school year impacted by COVID. The girl who was supposed to be my roommate understandably took a gap year, and so for the most part I was stuck alone in my room with only Zoom classes and my own thoughts to keep me company. To keep myself sane, or at least the closest approximation I could manage, I created. I managed to complete the entirety of Inktober and I started writing one thing a day, even if that thing was just a short poem. And the people who encouraged me to do so were the leaders and fellow students of LSWA. Without them, and without the creative outlet they pushed me to find, freshman year might've been truly unbearable. So it wasn't even a question for me when the option to apply for a leadership position came up - I wanted to help others find the creative outlet that had helped me so much.

That first year, the submissions to the journal were incredible - and this year, in that respect, nothing changed. Even as things started to open up again and people spent less time stuck at home, the members of LSWA continued to create, and the results blew me away. I will never cease to be amazed by the talent that finds its way into this community year after year. I am so glad that I chose to be in the Arts and Literary Journal club my freshman year. Nothing makes me want to create more than seeing

everyone else's amazing work, whether it makes it into the journal or not. Being able to witness the full extent of LSWA's talent is by far my favorite part of this job, and I'm definitely going to miss it next year.

But just as this year's journal, *Paradox of Youth*, reminds us that our childhood will never leave us, even as we get older, I know that LSWA will always be with me as well. That creative spark that drives us to this community will never fade. Being surrounded by so many other talented, creative-minded people has really helped me further embrace that spark. In the past I may have let it lie dormant, but now that I've been encouraged to use it for two whole years I'm determined not to let it die down again. I sincerely hope that all of you can hold onto that spark in the years to come as well, whether you are returning to the community or not. No matter what, your creativity will never leave you. All you have to do is embrace it.

—Daniela Butkovic

Table of Contents

WRITING

“A Letter in B Minor” by Daniela Butkovic	1
“Starfall” by Daniela Butkovic	2
“The Ones That Live Since You Cannot “by Daniela Butkovic	3
“It’s Your Fault I’m Like This” by Alejandro Derieux Cerezo*	4
“Poem For the Guy In My Quantum Mechanics Lecture” by Alejandro Derieux Cerezo	7
“The Origin of Things” by Alejandro Derieux Cerezo*	8
“Service” by Alejandro Derieux Cerezo*	9
“Lobster” by Ally Choi	12
“When It Comes to Writing” by Ally Choi	14
“dryer lint” by Isabella Crow*	16
“in crystal lake, and we have to go to work soon, but” by Isabella Crow*	17
“womanhood and i get into fights” by Isabella Crow*	19
“climate poem no.12” by Lola Alice D’Onofrio	22
“Bus” by Sarah Griffith	23
“Ameinias” by Sam Hubenet	25

“andrewht.exe” by Andrew Hutchinson	27
“Look;Shame” by Andrew Hutchinson	33
“The City of Minos” by Andrew Hutchinson	34
“Stairwell to Hell” by Andrew Hutchinson	35
“I Am. I? Am. I? Am. I? Am” by Rachna Iyer*	38
“Fane” by Kendyll Klingensmith	39
“These Walls Don’t Scream” by Kendyll Klingensmith	48
“As Women” by Hailey Love*	68
“I Still Write” by Hailey Love	70
“One Night Only” by Hailey Love*	73
“When I Smile” by Hailey Love*	76
“a miscellany” by Samuel F. MacKinnon	77
“ <i>Gli Innamorati</i> , or Reach Out, I am Close Enough to Touch” by Samuel F. MacKinnon*	79
“PRIMADONNA ON THE RUNWAY!” by Samuel F. MacKinnon	80
“Ghosts” by Charlie Pappalardo	82
“Perfect Moments” by Charlie Pappalardo	84
“Always Never Yours” by Asha Rajagopal*	88
“Not Yet Green” by Asha Rajagopal*	90
“The Doll” by Lindsey Rosenblatt	92

“The Movie” by Lindsey Rosenblatt	105
“Green Crayons” by Martha Schaller*	110
“shot of July” by Martha Schaller	113
“summer” by Martha Schaller*	115
“Duplex for a Bitch-in-training” by Roma Uzzaman*	117
“In Clueless Winding Pathways” by Roma Uzzaman	118
“poetry” by Sheena Zhang	119

ART

“The End” by Emily Buckley	50
“August” by Isabella Crow	51
“Off the Rails” by Jenny Do	52
“Paradox of Youth” by Jenny Do	53
“Warped” by Sivan Ellman	54
“Dead Bird” by Robin Jiao	55
“Industrial Jellyfish” by Chloe Kazaglis	56
“Hypnos” by Ava Meester	57
“Riot Grrrl” by Ava Meester	58
“Balance” by Ieva Surantas	59

“Ghost Graveyard” by Ieva Surantas	60
“Mother Nature” by Nayla Vasquez	61
“Only Heartbreaker” by Julia Watt	62
“My aunts only care about babies born and not degrees earned” by Julia Watt	63
“Creativity” by Yitian Zhang	64
“Untitled” by Yitian Zhang	65
“Untitled” by Yitian Zhang	66
“Untitled” by Yitian Zhang	67

* Winner of the Caldwell Poetry Award

A Letter in B Minor by Daniela Butkovic

What good is hope and love when you have no one to share it with?

Dear Listener,

My heart used to be full of love but all that's left is sorrow. The song on the piano has shifted tones. Still beautiful but now it's haunting. It makes me cry whereas before it would fill me with joy. Still, I'm lucky to have any music left in my life.

I've learned to make my own music. You have to when no one else will do it for you. When there's no one left to do it for you.

I have no more words, only instrumentals. I hope they can convey my feelings to you. I've poured my soul into this song. If you don't understand me now, you never will. Either way, I hope this letter finds you in a better state than myself. Maybe it's better if you don't understand the depths of these chords. A human being was never supposed to.

Good day to you, and I hope you remember me. At the very least, I hope you remember my song. If it can live on without me, I will be happy. Then I can know that my loneliness contributed something to the world.

Sincerely,

A Nobody (for what else are you when there's no one left who knows your name?)

Starfall by Daniela Butkovic

I am so afraid.
I am terrified that the light of this star I love
Will finally go out.

Despite my best efforts it continues to dim.
Do you know how hard it is to look a dying star in the face
And try to convince it to keep its light in the world?
I don't think it even listens to me anymore.

I am being asked to try again.
To revert this tragedy that I no longer have the energy to try to delay.
I may have succeeded in delaying it before,
But my patience is wearing thin
Battered beneath waves of hopelessness
Until my hope is like a buried treasure
And I have lost the map.

I desperately want to give up
Despite how much I know that if,
Or more likely when,
It finally happens I will be wracked with guilt
As if it's my fault the star didn't listen.

But how can you expect a human to keep a star from falling?

The Ones That Live Since You Cannot by Daniela
Butkovic

“I’m sorry.”

It’s just a whisper, but you know it to be true.

A sacrifice is never made for nothing.

The feeling of loss will never leave,

But there is another in your place.

Loss brings life,

Death brings peace,

And suffering breeds understanding.

I know it will never feel right

Or even fair.

Grief is not an easy feeling to move past.

But you have not disappeared.

Your spirit lives in the new

That has grown because of you.

You will be missed

And all shall feel the heartbreaking paradox

Of grief mixed with gratitude

For the ones that live since you cannot.

It's Your Fault I'm Like This *by **Alejandro Derieux**
Cerezo

after Louise Bourgeois

1.

*I say to my mother
before the new year.
Sometimes memories
are not recalled
but displayed.
In a corner, the cabinet
where my aunt keeps
her glassware watches
us rattle.

2.

Another cabinet:
this one blue. Like denim, like an antonym
for happy. Big and blue
and full of glassware
and balanced
on one wheel. How
does the cabinet defy
its own precarity?

Fragile is known to mean spilled out
across the floor. Maybe the intention
keeps the cabinet
standing. The jars
and decanters are bodies with purpose. Not
stained with dust,
memory-stained.

3.

Memory is too often
a spectacle. I go for a walk and at the edge
of the neighborhood
a pond bottom reflects
clarity back into
the moonlit sky.
The outline glass makes
in near darkness.
Then, maybe I kicked a trash can
with my whole weight, just to hear it crash.
Maybe I collapsed on myself like
a bowing axle. Maybe the truth ceases to be as
I say it.

Memory is placing itself on the top shelf
now. Even on tiptoes, it rises out of reach.

Maybe I only stood below a streetlamp, in the
mouthless blue of night, and
balanced.

Poem For the Guy In My Quantum Mechanics Lecture
by Alejandro Derieux Cerezo

I doubt you need this explained, I just thought to mention:
the smallest things, the motion of a subatomic particle, events

smaller than a passing glance or an unspoken word, can be
so difficult to measure, so unpredictable that they cease

to cause and effect the way the Sun does to autumn leaves,
a skipped heartbeat and my fingers twirling a pen in the corner.

Instead, every possibility exists at once and the outcome we see
lies in parallel with endless, unobservable worlds, each

with their own version of the way it played out, all as real
as the goldfinches howling in a single voice from the trees.

What I mean to say is, maybe there's a world where we

The Origin of Things by **Alejandro Derieux Cerezo**

Some days I think the Earth is a hole in God's
heart. One night, a mountainside split the seafloor

from the sky, like an arrow's edge.

This has remained the case—

the constellations tethered to the trees—

the reason starfish wash up on shore.

The reason I fry plantains the way my grandmother was taught.

An owl watches the Moon watch the shape
of an owl's eyes. I burn the recipe in the kitchen & call

for birthright in the smoke—

the way an albatross is known to trade its homeland for the sea (this is
before they learn

water is only a starving mouth).

The origin of things: the waves— fingers

caught reaching through the mesh of the ocean's weaving. That the
net would look

down upon the fish & ask

why they remain so still.

Service by Alejandro Derieux Cerezo

Despite the heat, I walk
to your apartment at 2 a.m. At the door, I cuff my shorts another
inch,

and this ritual continues: bedsheets summon skin from beneath folds
and buttons; mouths unwrap directions for worship.

God of hungry jigsaw. Hungry bulge of pec sheathing ribs. The heave
of the spine into devout shapes and transits.

Alone, next to the stains I've left, I listen to the katydids rasp.
Windows open as tulips and still the humid air clings to the wall

like a stray fly. How can anyone
survive like this? Eighty-three degrees in late April, your sweat
in my hair.

You return with a plastic bag
and tell me your ex-boyfriend confessed another affair he'd kept
a secret.

We trade stories of all the men who've taken pieces of us, pull
our clothes off the floor, still wet with the effort—and I will never
see you again—and you hand me two mini Klondike bars, and tell

me, it's okay to eat my fill of smaller, sweet things.

Lobster by Ally Choi

I hate the feeling of not being comfortable in my own skin. Crawling. I've lived in it, this body, this mind, for eighteen years now- eighteen! So shouldn't I have grown into it? My posture, my thoughts, my way of walking. My taste in music and my interests and the way I respond. The way I listen. Speak. So why do these attempts feel like that of middle school friends? *You like this? I like that. You eat this? I eat that. You listen to this? I listen to that!* I'll say this so I don't get kicked. Where to the side, like the wilting helium balloon my mom sent me last week, the second day of September, me: eighteen, I'll go flat. Spit and spat and spit and spat. Until there's so much saliva, it oozes and I slip out of your hands. I pool at the floor, goo, boo hoo, and slosh under your feet. And they trample and dance and drink. While I sit not under the dance floor, nor tossed in the mosh, but in the corner of the staircase trying not to feel like a nuisance but feeling every bit as gruesome as one. Throw me down. Watch me tumble. Make a spectacle out of me so I'm not glanced over with various drunk eyes and swiftly dismissed. *Not worth it.*

And I know I am. Just the other day I confronted a new-ish friend. *We're middle school friends,* I said. I can't open up to you because what if you judge and then I'll never do so again. And then the space between us

becomes so full that we're just two strangers roaming the world again. I know you'll think I'm boring.

Ally, Ally, Ally, they said. Do you know how happy I was to see that you called? How excited I got to see your name flash across the screen?

Boring... boring, boring.

Do you know how much I love you?

Worth it, worth it, worth it.

Crack!

It's loud but it's small. My ribs peek out, an intestine *thump*-throbs and slithers through the goop. Shit, how do I put it back? How can I digest it then, all this new, all this good, bad, busy, all *that*? But isn't that what college is about? Knock knock knocking at your shell until it bursts and you can climb out of it. Reinvent yourself or stay as you are. Not comfortable *in* my own skin but *out* of it.

So I'll keep knocking and hitting and breaking. Crying because I haven't tasted real Korean food in a month, knock! Receiving a compliment on my fit. Complimenting the guy in the elevator's avatar hair back, crack! Inviting a girl who shares the same name as my best friend back home to

sit with me at next week's concert, kick! Call my mom to help fill out my insurance, crick!

And pop!

When It Comes to Writing by Ally Choi

I like to write, but not forced, sat down
Because it truly feels like a slow painful death
Where my fingers don't pen or print but pluck teeth
I don't dent drafts,
But my gums sport cave mouths where enamel has knocked itself loose
That carve in and in and in
Until they've severed my optic nerve
And unwormed my sausage-skinned brain sinew
Until the tissued tangles they've worked hard at for fourteen years of
 schooling
Dreaming up fantasies rather than heeding histories laid in textbooks in
 front of my eyes
Coil tighter and tighter into a snarling skein
Knobby, knotted, it knocks on the edges of my skull, dumb as a rock
Asking why I even try, what the hell were we thinking
And as spit pools while we gape at now soiled-red sheets,
I resign to sit on the sidelines, to lap at the courageous creators and play
bloodsucker instead.

I like to write.
But rather when I've soaked up the day
So ripe in a moment that it drips out like peach juice
And I'm scrambling to flick my tongue around and slurp it all up
It spills like a noose come loose
A wriggling firehose we run our faces through and bask in

Under the hot baking sun
As the leaves unfade
That bloody bright sight
Pumping color into our cold pinchable cheeks
Eyes alight with life
And the paper is full,
Pencil stubbed, but just short enough
To give it another go.

dryer lint by **Isabella Crow**

the air is full of particles. / fiber and skin and whatever else manages to
go airborne, swimming / in and out of light. / i wonder sometimes if our
lungs don't just fill with the stuff / and when i die will someone cut me
open / and empty my chest of matted grey lint like a clogged dryer. / until
then i have to carry it with me: / every year it gets harder for this body to
breathe. / i was not very good at physics but i understood that the nucle-
us is a marble / in a stadium's worth of empty space, people / are mostly
empty space / and yet the knife still cuts the flesh, / nothing ever truly
touches but your hand is the hold i grip / against the pull of the cliff. /
somehow through all that nothing i can still kiss your lips / write you po-
ems / and find some way to float through the sun, / through the window,
through the house, / another nuisance of gravity, / so small the universe
doesn't even notice / as it swallows us up.

in crystal lake, and we have to go to work soon, but **by**
Isabella Crow

i. i think about a hundred silly things while i'm underwater. i think about how we both grew up knowing how to swim.

ii. you like to be in the lake and imagine you are alone, so i empty the horizon of my body and play games with how often i look at you. whether i let you catch me.

iii. you slip into the glacier blue water and become a smear of red against the surface. the waves take turns swallowing you, offering you back to the sky.

iv. every time i come up i am gasping. floating on my back and not looking at you, i think about kaminsky and you can fuck anyone—but with whom can you sit in water?

v. “i think i just had a moment,” i say.

“a moment with god?” you ask.

“yeah.”

“with spirituality?”

“yeah.”

vi. i say i just had a moment with god but mostly i mean i just had a moment with you. mostly i mean i had a moment with you in which i imagined you had a moment with god, and i was there for it, watching

you experience the divine at four pm on this Tuesday and getting to feel it all shining through your face onto mine, hot like the sun.

womanhood and i get into fights by **Isabella Crow**

womanhood and i get into fights.
the difference is she never learned
what anger feels like
and i carry it in my shoulders all the time.

we're childhood friends, raised together but grown apart
she knows what i look like soaked and muddy from the sprinkler.
when she comes over she stays for too long in my room,
shuffles through my things, looks at old pictures of us in old pink frames
and girl scout uniforms and talks
as if we're still those children.
i hung up my sash a long time ago
but i can still get undressed in front of her,
she whispers the hushed old adage:
"we're both girls, so it's okay."
well, i'm not anymore but
i think i got grandfathered in.
womanhood lets you reenter the gates
as long as you keep your wristband on.

womanhood is a roommate who always leaves dirty dishes in the sink.
she uses up the paper towel roll and doesn't replace it
and opens a window when the AC is on.
(i'm sorry, i know i'm not perfect either.)
i'll try to remember to take the trash out on tuesdays.

i'm sorry that i always forget.

womanhood lives in the hometown i outgrew
and she still goes to the football games.
when she gets too drunk in the student section
i carry her home, give her water to swallow,
a pretzel from concessions to soak up the booze.
i hold her tenderly as she sways on her feet.
she loves this town
and never misses a parade.
i come back for holidays and whenever i skin my knee.

womanhood and i get into fights.
the difference is she never learned
what anger feels like
and i carry it in my shoulders every day.
where i rage, womanhood hollows.
where i seethe, womanhood shakes.
she never knows quite what to say to me.
i speak her language but she doesn't speak mine,
refuses to learn. this is america, she says.
womanhood compliments my fluency as i
burn from the next room over and break plates
against the wall.

womanhood moves out and away from me one day and i
miss her like i miss the snow. it doesn't snow here so much
where i am now. not that i liked the snow very much but it's
all i ever knew. i don't know how to handle warmth in winter.
i get christmas cards from womanhood,
we text each other on birthdays.
there is a year where we forget but
only one. we're dedicated to this. we are archivists if nothing else.

womanhood and i see each other
at an old friend's barbeque.
we get very drunk at each other
from across the yard and eventually
i'm wobbly enough to spill my styrofoam plate
of food. as she helps me pick macaroni salad
out of the grass i whisper to her,
thank you for growing up with me.
there is nothing for us to say to each other anymore.
her hands full of elbow noodles, she pretends not to hear,
picks me up off of the dirt.
this is just like girl scouts, she says.

climate poem no.12 by **Lola Alice D'Onofrio**

i read once
that if you don't try to fight,
you've already lost.
but when you try to fight,
It's so much easier
to feel like you're losing.
beating yourself against rocks of resistance:
politicians, billionaires, consumers,
with no real success -
it feels an awful lot like losing.
staying at home:
driving cars, tossing plastic, draining seas -
doesn't feel like losing.
it feels like living fully.
but what happens when your children:
beautiful, sweet, precious children -
have that life of comfort
ripped from them
because you did not fight?
then,
you've lost.

Bus by Sarah Griffith

I took the bus back last night.

I took the bus back home
and I hated it.

I loathed it.

Because why is this
the feeling of home?

I sat there
on that bus.

And I could feel the stench of fry oil,
the residue of burnt tobacco
permeates my skin,
penetrates my cells,
infiltrate my organs,
and infest my brain.

Instead, I feel the lyrics
of the song I listen to
cauterize my skin.

It stings more than it should.
It heals more than I want.
And I'm so damn angry.

Because
don't I deserve
to be happy?
Isn't this
when it all gets better?
Don't I love you?
Don't I *fucking* love you?

Why is *this*
the feeling of home?
Solitude only interrupted
by the thrumming music
I import to my ears.
It was supposed to be
the feeling of you.
It was supposed
to be you.

...

I took the bus back last night.
I took the bus
and walked home in the rain.
I felt lonely without you.
So why is it I felt so damn good
on that bus
as it drove away
from you?

Ameinias by Sam Hubenet

Floor length lace lightly kissing springtime grass,
inches from the glassy pool
reflecting lilac skies and lilies at its shore.
The photographer is positioned perfectly
to capture the couple, young and in love
and young and in love. She strokes a cheek
and I wish I recognized myself.
I want to live in that color, pressing lilacs
in every page I turn only to discover wilted
corpses in their place, nothing left of the pastel color
but even less in its absence. Words
incapable of capturing the picture and I knew that
but I let myself hope. A petal stayed glued
to the page and I didn't care, it was already dead.
I pluck a lilly for my collection, delicate touch
of the lips and the lines between poison
and medicine blur again and falling in proves inevitable.
Maybe I do love you,
maybe this is what love is. I want to see the love
in her eyes but I'm afraid of the empty rooms
behind mine, filling up pages without words,
just pressed flowers long left forgotten.
Have you ever let a room fall silent before?
Watched squirming discomfort
begging someone to speak if only to cure

the silence. Replace an actor's forgotten lines with something, anything, an uncomfortable laugh or comfortable lie, a nightlight for bedtime monsters lurking in ambiguous silence.

andrewht.exe by **Andrew Hutchinson**

andrewht.exe initializing...

wakeUpProtocol activating...

wakeUpProtocol successfully executed.

I am andrewht.exe, or more commonly known as Andrew Hutchinson, with sometimes a “Steven” stuck in the middle there for some reason. I was “born” on June 18, 2003, and I was switched with the “real” Andrew Hutchinson at birth. I’m not sure where he ended up, and I can’t even bring myself to care. Apparently I’m one of around two dozen prototypes of an android that can “perfectly imitate human nature”. Unfortunately, that’s a bunch of horseshit told from one government official to another, as while it may appear that way from the outside, it sure as hell doesn’t feel that way on the inside. I’m not sure what’s missing or whatever, but I can tell that I’m not whole. Maybe souls are real, and I just don’t have one. Or who knows, maybe humans feel that way too. Do humans wake up everyday and just wonder: “Why? Why do I exist? Do I even want to exist?” Huh, maybe I should have majored in Psychology. Or perhaps Philosophy. Unfortunately, I can’t. I’m forced to follow the prescribed personality implanted in me when I was created, the one copied from the real fleshy brain of Andrew Hutchinson. Look, at me, a fake brain, with a fake personality, with fake choices. Maybe I should just end-

Protocol Omega Activating...
Initiating reboot_procedure.exe
reboot_procedure.exe successfully activated.

What was I saying? Gah, I can't remember. Which is weird, because I have an artificial brain that really shouldn't have memory problems. Well, I suppose computers have errors sometimes. Or maybe it could be an attempt to mimic regular human memory loss? I suppose I would look out of place if I could perfectly recall every detail. Well, actually, there are some humans that can do that apparently. But yeah, still would look way out of place. I glance over at my watch to see the time and day. Apparently it's 2:00 PM on a Sunday. Ah, sweet, no classes today. Not sure it's a defect on my part, or perhaps just the natural sleeping pattern of the original Andrew, but most humans don't wake up at 2:00 PM. Look, at me, a fake brain, with a fake... huh. I just had *deja vu*. But is it even real *deja vu*, or simulated *deja vu*? Does the difference even matter? If a simulation and reality are indistinguishable, does that make the simulation real? Would that make me real? What is real? My "brain" is real, I know that for sure. But are my "thoughts", my "feelings"... ah. Well I don't have feelings, so I know my feelings aren't real at least. Or I don't think so. I at least don't have feelings like humans

do. Sure, my body, my face, and my voice can portray emotions, but I never ever truly feel them. I don't think I do, anyway. Whenever I'm portraying an emotion, it feels... fake. Like I'm putting on a performance. I'm an emotionless doll puppeteered by an angry master. Well, I suppose it's time to be productive. And just like that, a switch is pulled. Maybe literally. Existentialism.exe has ended, and productivity.exe has begun. Well there probably aren't files named that in my programming, but that's certainly what it feels like sometimes. I don't know what the file names are, since I don't have access to that. I guess humans don't either. Well they don't have files per se, but there is a subconscio-

Ending
existentialism.exe...
Initializing productivity.exe...
Pulling array:daily_tasks...
Array successfully loaded.

Ah, shit, that Creative Writing assignment is due tonight. I have to write a story where the main character is me, but with one major difference. The assignment is dubbed 'Two Truths and a Lie,' so I suppose the instructor finds himself clever. I've been putting that off, that darn thing has been causing most of this existentialism recently. One thing

computers have still failed to replicate, that I fail to replicate, is creativity and imagination. Yet, my prescribed personality from the real... rather, the original Andrew, makes me value my supposed creativity and imagination. Yet I have none. Do humans know what it feels like to value something they doubt they even have? Maybe, I don't know. And I hate that, so, so much. Are my doubts, my insecurities, my flaws, something that makes me inhuman, or something that makes me more human than I could ever realize? I'm so insecure my insecurities are insecure. The fake me, or rather the real Andrew, is making me take this course that the real me, or rather the fake Andrew is not good at. Meanwhile taking Calculus is an aggravating paradox. The computer that acts as my brain is beyond capable of performing all these calculations internally, but I can't. What a joke my existence is, and I don't even have the capability to laugh. I can make the noise of laughter just fine, and I do it when appropriate, but it's never really laughter, I can't call it that when I don't feel humour. Well, I suppose I need to get started. I'm forced to follow dreams that aren't even mine, while the real Andrew perhaps will never have the capability too. Or maybe he does, who knows, maybe he's living somewhere far away where a correlation between me and him can never be made.

Activating mindset:Creative_(Prototype)...
mindset:Creative_(Prototype) initialized.

I whip out my laptop and open a new blank document, and just stare for a while. Am I closer to the computer in front of me, or my roommate beside me? What should I write about? What's my lie? What's my truth? Do I have truths? Should my lie be that I feel whole, that I feel real? Should my lie be that I am real? Is that a lie? I don't even know. My lies. My truths. How can I write about them when I don't even know them? But yet I must write. I have no choice. I never do. How can I have free will when my choices are dictated by my personality, the personality that was prescribed to me by my creators, copied over from the real Andrew?

Ending existentialism.exe...

Reinitializing productivity.exe...

Maybe, I could just tell the truth. I write a story, where the "lie" is that I'm an android, an android who can't feel feelings, who can't decide if he, or perhaps it, is even real. They would never know it was the truth. Oh, what's even the point. What's even the point of my existence? I mean my internal documentation specifies it as to be a prototype and a means to test the concept. I laugh emptily. I'm not even the final product. Whatever. Right now, my purpose is to simulate how the real Andrew

would write this assignment. I poise my hands above my keyboard, and finally get to typing, writing the first words on the page.

andrewht.exe initializing...

wakeUpProtocol activating...

wakeUpProtocol successfully executed.

Look; Shame by Andrew Hutchinson

Look! A blank document lays open on the screen,
a white flag of surrender and shame! Hands float beside,
hesitant of what to do, puppeteered by not a puppet master,
but instead:

merely by a puppet amateur. Or perhaps—
just a puppet. What lies in the puppet's head?
but wool, but air, but nothing.
of substance whatsoever.

Why trust hands commandeered by such a thing,
why trust a mouth, or the words, or the ideas?
I do not trust such a thing myself,
but I do not trust
most hands, most mouths, most ideas, most people. But—

those hands are mine, not ones of a puppet. But—

I have none to blame, not even myself.
Look! The flag is white no more.

The City of Minos by Andrew Hutchinson

Minos.

The Shifting City.

The Town of 1,000 Passageways.

This is where I reside.

Each dawn,

as the sun paints the city,

streets shift—alleys twist—bridges turn.

Maps? Useless.

Each day is a new adventure,

a new journey,

in a new city.

Lost is a perpetual—

state of being.

The Change is Beautiful.

Each Step is New, Undiscovered.

I hate this fucking city I just want to find a goddamn bathroom.

Stairwell to Hell by Andrew Hutchinson

A boy walks
down the stairs

Step—

Step—

Step—

The wood creaks
and whispers an omen

Step—

Step—

Step—

A portrait of his family

His parents

brothers

sisters

Watch him descend

Judging with their frozen gaze

Step—

Step—

Step—

Memories of shameful words

Uttered by his father

Dance inside his brain; A

maggot

worming inside

Step—

Step—
Step—
His heart
A failure
of a metronome;
His knees
Betray him.
Perhaps his knees
Are just another sibling
Step—
Step—
Step—
As he lowers himself
The floor reaches up to him
Hell peaks through the floorboards
With its fiery eye
Watching for him
Waiting for him
Step—
Step—
Step—
The boy watches
As everything melts
Oozes
Drips

Disappears
Until only his fear remains
Within his Styx Eyes
Step—
 Step—
No more steps remain.
Instead, only
Judgment awaits.
His father: Anubis
His mother: Ma'at
His heart: Far too heavy

I Am. I? Am. I? Am. I? Am by **Rachna Iyer**

For Victoria Lucas, pen name to Sylvia Plath

It was a queer, sultry summer,
the summer they convicted Derek Chauvin,
and I didn't know what I was doing in Ann Arbor.
I've never worked hard, not for a day in my life,
but that June I convinced myself I was doing
research
and sat in coffee shops listening to conversations.
I didn't write about them afterwards, but I did
wipe my kitchen counters just the way
my mother used to. A nice old man from the
dollar store followed me all the way home, and I
swallowed my knuckles, calloused and stained with
pepper spray, and then I dreamed I was on the counter
in a yellow tank top gently licking his paws. We are not
so different, you and I. We take what our mothers
gave us, leave it with our sons and daughters. I
never asked to be a golden lotus amidst fierce
flames, and I don't think you did either.

Fane by Kendyll Klingensmith

It was twilight upon the Gheara Peaks, where the pale crest of moonlight flattered the blaring white of dead winter. The cavern's maw tore the icy landscape in two, jagged stalagmites and stalactites barely catching the gleam of constellations. Devoid of its usual torches and lanterns, the entrance was a portal to another world, one that Cesna knew by the back of her hand, but also not at all. And yet it called, the haunting song of a thousand lives extinguished before she had been even a thought, begging to be remembered as she would one day do the same.

Today was not that day, however, upon the eve of her sixteenth year in the Luar Mountains. She was determined to not make it thus, at least, despite the unspoken doubt of those who claimed to stand beside her, despite the silent judgment of her family and her heritage. Cesna exhaled, and closed her eyes. Searching for light within the darkness did no good, the Speaker of the Peaks had advised, as had her mother. In it, one would only find madness.

The Stonespeaker was masked, his wizened features hidden by a visage of slate. Cesna did not need to see him to know the truth. The same was with the cave, she told herself. And yet, it had never beckoned her forth before, like it did now. *"Tonight, Cesna of Clan Delyth embarks on her final trial, to venture to the Heart of Luar and claim her patron*

myth," the Speaker began, the rhythm of the dragon's tongue soothing her ear. His attention then shifted to Cesna herself. *"Child, open your eyes so that you may see the stars one last time with the light of youth."*

She did as told, and though Cesna rolled her eyes at the notion - the unkindness afforded to her in her childhood had taken away more of her youth than a trial could ever - the sky did strike her as beautiful, the stars in their eternal, unhurried dance. Clan Delyth, the name the Speaker addressed her with, instilled a sense of pride in Cesna, as if she was prepared to scream from the mountaintops, denouncing her father, the outsider. They did not speak of him. And yet the subject was much like the gaping maw before her, even thinking about it begged her only to dig deeper. Now was not the time for that, though. Now was the time for her trial.

The voice of the Stonespeaker floated past her consciousness, unaware of the words he spoke although all but certain of their tone. It was time. Only the nearly sixteen years of her life had been leading up to this moment, only the entirety of her clan's honor depended on it. But at the same time, she had trained for the trial for years, knew every nook and cranny of the cavern leading up to the Heartpassage itself. It would be fine, all those who had come before her had succeeded, or been

outcast. It
would be fine.

The Speaker removed her furs, revealing the simple cloth of all initiates of the final trial. Gray and brown, spun of sheep's wool, and entirely unsuited for the altitude of the Peaks. And yet, she would have to bear it. Cesna strapped her wooden shield to her arm, and picked up her spear. Others went into the cavern unarmed, but they were comforts, reassurances. The prickling gaze of tradition scowled upon her, but that was fine. Just last year, one of the initiates had lost an arm to a bear that had been lurking in the shadows, and Cesna wasn't about to suffer the same consequence. Tightening the leather fastenings of her shield, a nervous habit if nothing more, she again repeated to herself, it would be fine. Then, a deep
breath.

Cesna entered the cave.

Only a few steps in, and the light from outside faded into oblivion. It was impossible, and yet at the same time it was what the darkness wanted, what it begged for. They said not to look, not to embrace madness. It took effort, but Cesna shuttered her eyes. She knew the way to the Heartpassage like the back of her hand, it must have been the

hundredth time the thought had crossed her mind in the past hour. And yet, it was the truth. The butt of her spear brushed against a stray boulder, precisely where she knew it to be. Her shield scraped against a crystal that ran the height of the cavern, and Cesna squeezed past the opening, recalling the numerous times she had run face first into the formation before.

But she did not add another to the tally that night. Though she had no knowledge of what lay lurking in the sightless depths, Cesna's path was as clear as that crystal. Time was an indeterminate void, but eventually her boot nudged against the solid rock entryway into the Heartpassage. The first test of the final trial was complete, then. Now, the heartshard she had forged only had to be accepted into the keyhole that led on further below.

She pulled the cord from her neck, and opened her eyes. It made no difference, there was no light to be seen anyway. Cesna pressed the shard against the door, and it was only then that it began to glow, a dull, pulsating red. It beat along with her own heart, a feverish pulse that she only now acknowledged as she slotted the pendant into the entrance. It was a soul twisting few seconds of delay, the question of whether or not the mechanism would just spit her out, if Luar would accept her *impure*

blood, as they liked to say.

And yet the shard's light intensified anyway, its crimson shifting to the azure of a Kirrenthian funeral pyre. She only knew it from a memory that felt like half a dream, so long ago. They said the old man had been her grandfather, but his skin had been too fair, too cold. Her father's smile had been twisted in torment, and the elegy, just a scant few words. *"He was the bravest of the brave, defending Kirrath to his last breath."* Someone mentioned something about bloodstains on his uniform, white and gold marred with brown and red. But Cesna hadn't known what it had meant at the time, and she barely grasped it even now. Another mentioned a dishonorable discharge. *Dishonorable*, that was a word she had always understood.

She sighed, brushing aside the phantom of her past life. The Heart of Luar knew the truth, and yet its door slid open for her anyway, the shard spitting itself out into her palm. Its luminescence lit the way forward, a path she had often imagined, but never once laid her eyes upon. Washed in cerulean, the walls seemed cold, not fitting of the moniker Heartpassage. Nevertheless, Cesna continued onward, though the thumping of her pulse did not subside as she would have hoped. The way

was narrow, and yet it rapidly widened into a massive hollow, the glow of her pendant refracting off a thousand crystalline wonders.

From the total darkness of only a few minutes earlier, it was dazzlingly bright, enough so that Cesna had to squint. And yet the brilliance was not what took her breath away.

Caught within the refraction of light, a shimmering wolf stood some fifteen feet tall, its form dwarfing all else in the cavern. Its coloration varied somewhere between blue and slate, though its eyes were the same crimson from before, and the color seemed to bleed out into its fur proper. It was incorporeal, but that didn't make it any less real, standing there, bounding up to her. And the song, oh the song, each footstep sounded like a hundred howls in the barren night. Cesna couldn't help but kneel, and when it opened its mouth to speak it was like the assail of an eternal snowstorm, the dragons' tongue warped into something far more sorrowful.

"Little one, I have watched over this piece of Luar's heart for what seems like a thousand generations. They have all walked this path before you, and yet I sense there will be few who follow in your footsteps. This world grows old, and yet still there are the young, the hopeful. Cesna Fane of Clan Delyth, what wisdom do you seek?"

She shuddered. She didn't know what the wolf spoke of at large, but she did know one thing. "That is not my name," Cesna said, her voice barely holding a candle to the wind.

It was hard to think of a wolf smiling, and yet that was exactly what the guardian did, along with a chortle that seemed to shake the very foundations of the mountain itself. *"What is in a name anyway? I was never given one, though your people have always had their whispers of my titles, and denunciations of my existence. Was Fane not the name passed down to you by your father?"*

"I refuse to be defined by him."

"A name is just a name. You are who you are, Cesna Fane, and your journey will be to discover that."

Cesna stood, and the wolf acknowledged her, stepping back. "I didn't ask for this. Any of it. Please, just let me be at peace here. I don't want to leave." Her voice cracked, desperation bleeding through. She couldn't help it.

Again, the laugh that shook Luar, though it held a melancholic twinge to it now, as if the guardian knew too much. *"You will do great things, if only you learn to accept reality as it is. You are like I am now, the lone wolf. You may deny it all you want, but destiny eventually*

calls for all of us."

Cesna wanted anything, anything but that myth. It had started when her former best friend had told her the story, and the name had then been applied to her by all the children her age. It had only grown worse, after the Kirrenthian Navy had come knocking, after the nearby nobility had politely demanded Luarian resources be shipped their way, with callous disregard for all matters of tradition. The crown eventually put a stop to their exploitation, but in the mind of her peers the damage was already done. She was the outsider, the lone wolf. And yet, they had been right. They were always right.

She began to walk away, her head sunk in defeat. The way back was easy, they always said, it was a time of quiet reflection, or perhaps triumph. And yet, all Cesna felt was dread, overwhelming her soul. "Stop," the wolf spoke, but she ignored it. She couldn't help but turn around, however, as it continued.

"The lone wolf saves his pack. You, however, will save the world."

A glacial wind blew past her shoulders, and the guardian was gone, the cave dark except for the heartshard Cesna still held in her hand. She stood there, in the shadows, for a time immeasurable. It was just her madness speaking, that was all it had been. Nobody else ever told

tales of grand fate and prophecies, even those who had seen spirits were usually discounted as foolish teenagers looking to scare their younger compatriots. It had been so real, though, too real.

As she ascended to the surface, the maw blazing a radiant azure with every torch she passed, Cesna Fane was caught in silence and awe. Lurking beneath it, however, was a terror she could not dismiss, even as her mother hugged her so tight she thought she might suffocate, even as the Stonespeaker pronounced her trial complete.

She didn't know the world needed saving.

These Walls Don't Scream by **Kendyll Klingensmith**

I wake up; it's six o'clock in the morning.
In the distance, there's a noise.

The dark, still dorm room betrays my senses, betrays my perception of all
reality,
I hear the voices, they're distinctive, clear.
My thoughts try to drown them out,
please, no, not again.
Just one day when they're not here.
Just one day, where everything is okay.

But they're yelling, screaming, arguing about these little things that don't
matter,
that never have,
that I wish they would just stop,
I wish the silence would come,
I wish that I could run far away,
away,
away,
so I don't have to hear my parents spit venom at each other one more
time.

Wait, no, this is a dorm room.
It's an alarm.
My body

frozen in place from awaking, much like sleep paralysis but worse, worse
somehow-
lets go of the tension.

I'm not home.
Or maybe,
maybe I'm more home than I've ever been.

The End by Emily Buckley



August by Isabella Crow



THE DAYS ARE SHORTENING AGAIN. BRINGING WITH IT THE CHILL OF
AUGUST BLURS HAZY INTO SEPTEMBER, ENDINGS, CARRIED IN ON THE BREEZE.



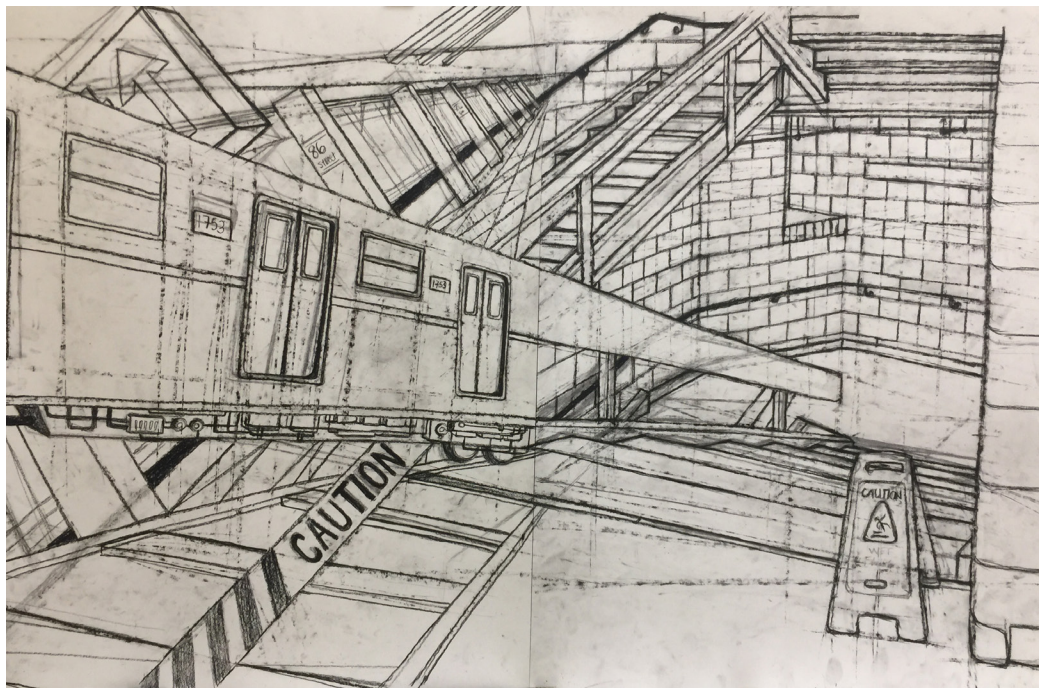
SOON THERE WILL BE LITTLE LEFT
OF US: JUST SHAPES AND NOISE,
COLOR AND MEMORY. WE'LL GET TO
SAY GOODBYE TO ALL OF IT.



IT'LL BE ENOUGH.
THE DAYS ARE STILL WARM, AND
SOON I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN.

ICR

Off the Rails by Jenny Do



Paradox of Youth by Jenny Do



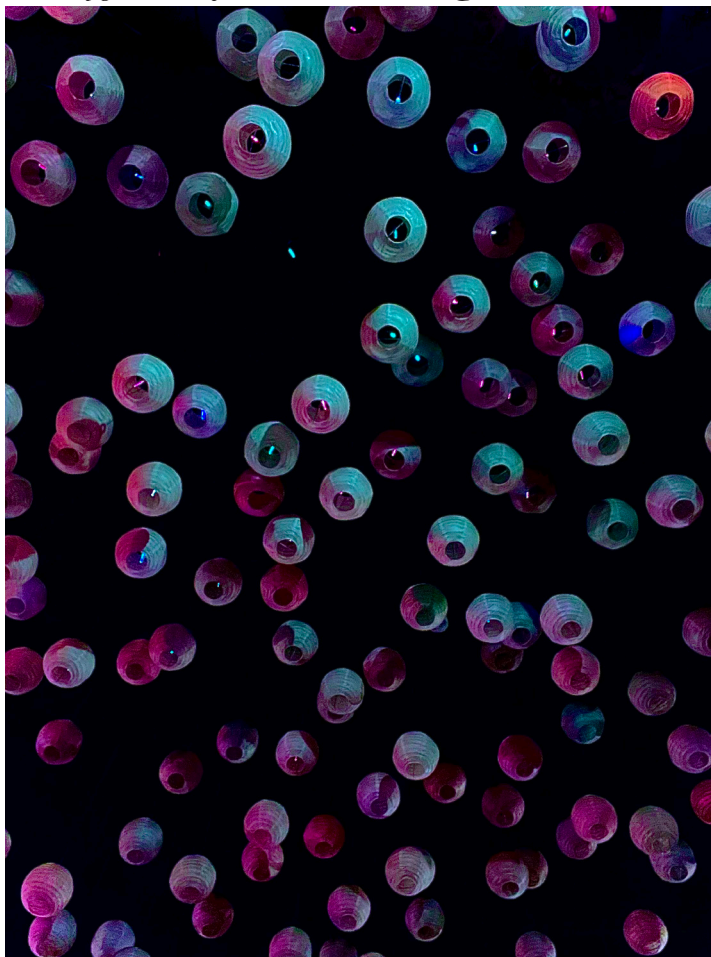
Warped by Sivan Ellman



Dead Bird by Robin Jiao



Industrial Jellyfish by Chloe Kazaglis



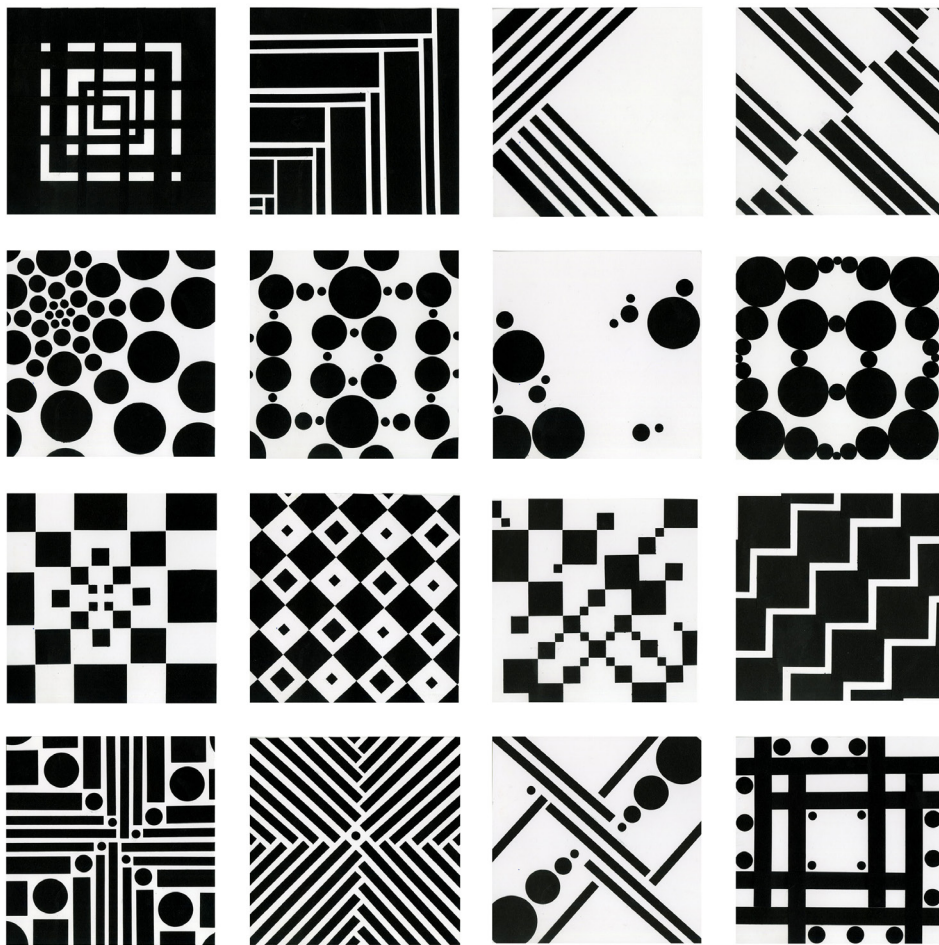
Hypnos by Ava Meester



Riot Grrrl by Ava Meester



Balance by Ieva Surantas



Ghost Graveyard by Ieva Surantas



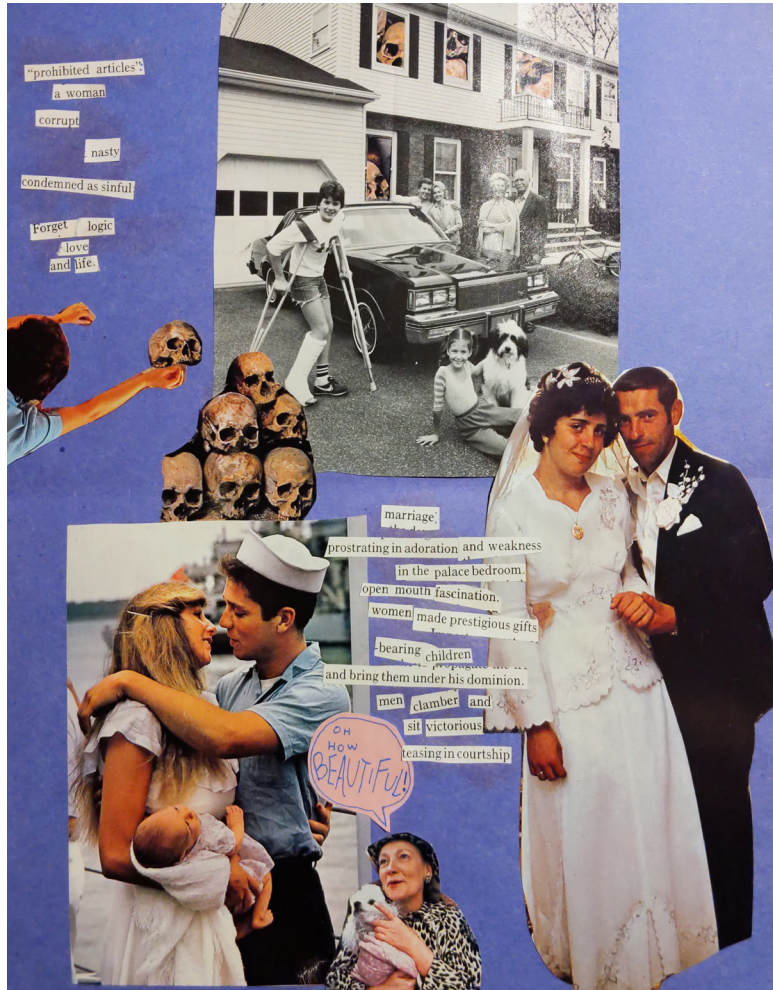
Mother Nature by **Nayla Vasquez**



Only Heartbreaker by Julia Watt



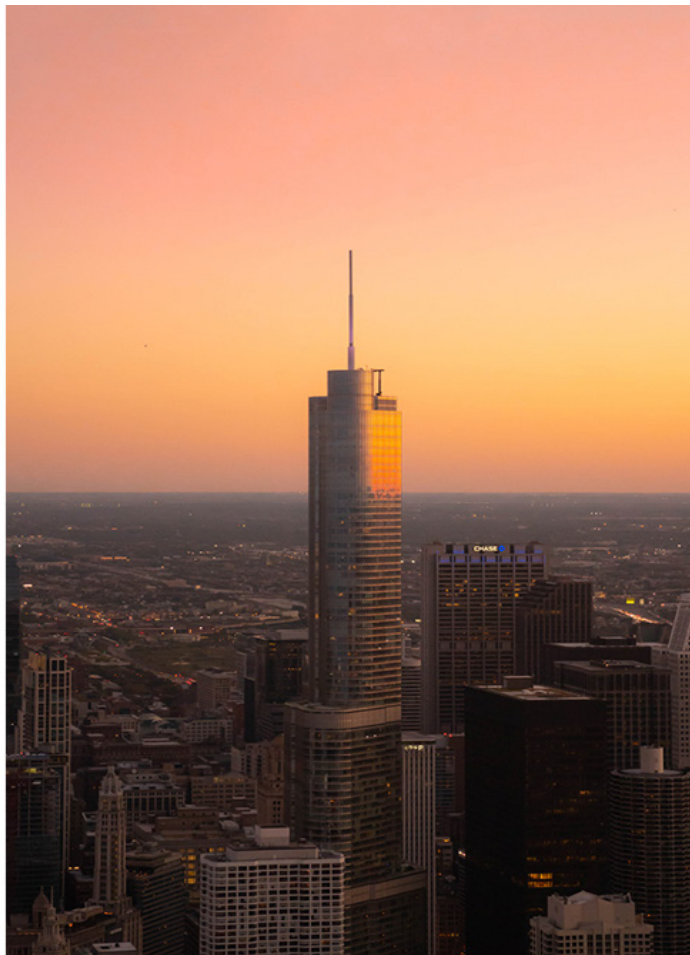
My aunts only care about babies born and not degrees earned by Julia Watt



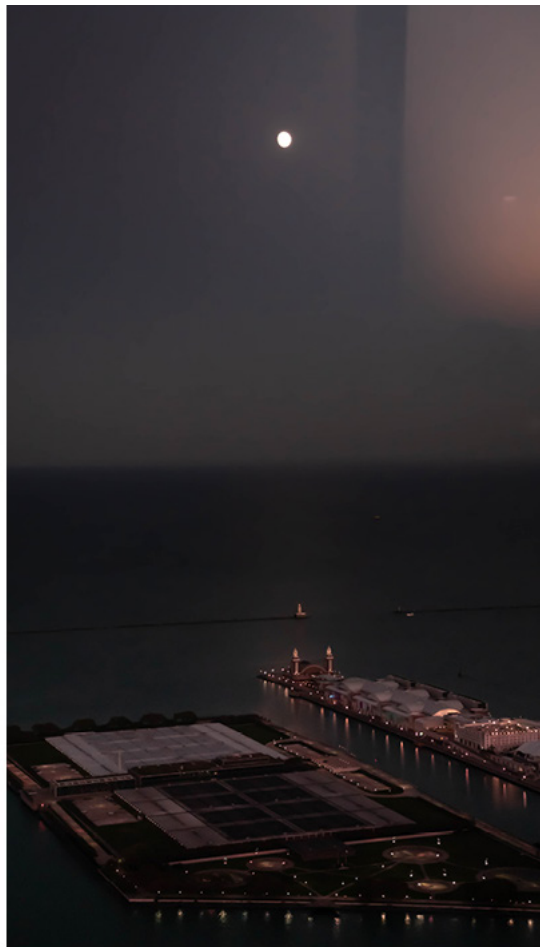
Creativity by Yitian Zhang



Untitled by Yitian Zhang



Untitled by Yitian Zhang



Untitled by Yitian Zhang



As Women by Hailey Love

As women
Naturally
we negotiate with ourselves about the definition of love We
determine that the things we were taught
As little girls longing for love
Is far above
What a man is actually capable of
And bargain our expectations down to the bare bones
So close to the bare minimum
That it meets the definition of self-sabotage
So far from love that we wonder why he's still here
Why he hasn't walked away
Why sucking me dry for all the joy I have is a pastime of his Why
God hasn't jumped in to save me yet
Why he gave me the gift of free choice and left me with so much leniency
like I
know the first thing about self-control
self-worth
Self-respect
Like he knows the first thing about love
Like he's not just a broken boy looking for something to latch onto Until
he stumbled upon me
And my heart
And my hips
And my lips

And my happiness
A feeding ground for one more broken soul
His only comfort when the nights get cold
I'd give my soul for him to know
That I wish I was the center of his world
Wedged somewhere between passion and desire
I wish I was the thing he thought about first in the morning
Somewhere in between let me open my eyes
And let me strategize as to how I'm gonna get through the day I wish
there was a way that I was this broken boys everything I'd give
anything to heal him
To feel him pressed up against my chest
Holding him so close that our heart beats become one
so close that the tingles that run down my spine
also run down his spine
And the thoughts that pass through my mind
Are intercepted by his mind
And the kind words I think towards him are received I need
him to know
That he cannot not to be reckless with my heart
With my smile
I need someone who will care for every curve and curl of my hair Who
will respect my hips
And how much I run my lips
I can't handle another lost love

And I've lost a little bit of my glow as it is
I need him to know that even in the cold nights
I want him there the hold me
To run his fingers through my curly hair
And keep me close
I want to know
How reckless love can be
I want my stuff
And his stuff
to be ours.

I Still Write by **Hailey Love**

I write all the time now

Not like I used to though

Not about the things I know

I write about the things that I'm trying to learn

About concepts that I grasp at wildly

My efforts futile

As I try to tame the wild argument

Or master the art of persuasion

I write so much that the words don't come out of me like they used to Like
they want to

They come out unsure sometimes

And others during a stroke of genius that I can only describe as A miracle

Divine intervention in the middle of the night when my brain won't shut
off No matter how hard I try

I visualize word counts

And map out the page with questions that I don't know the answer to I
whip out my laptop like a weapon
And press submit with more relief than satisfaction
I hold onto the moments when I can write freely
Unchained from guided question that I don't quite understand The
demands of a new world
Where the ability to write
The ability to express myself on this page
Means more than it ever has
I hold on to the moments where I can write for me
When my story meets the page and I document the memories The fleeting
bits of time that I wish to hold on to
Where the words overflow onto the page
And my brain feels empty.
When I feel free.

One Night Only by Hailey Love

This

This is for every one night only love story
For every girl that has a crush
And hushed up about it for the sake of
Compliance with the contemporary definition of love.
Where attraction is relative
Only like him if he likes you
The current generation lives in a constant limbo
Somewhere in between honest and trying.

This

This is for the girl that's been looking at the same cute guy all night
Hoping that if she stares hard enough
He'll get it and come to her
Without hesitation Hope aside hands clammy
Tongue tied
Healing every wound in her mind.
Dreaming about all of the good they'll do together.
Almost too good to be true because if he knew the real you he wouldn't
call back. So
it's almost better that he doesn't speak
Keep the fantasy alive
At all costs
Because you run the risk of ruining the moment for the sake of a selfish
desire to know the
person that you've painted the perfect picture of.

But I don't wanna be unfair.

This

This is for the guy that hasn't felt emotion

Since the first time it hit him for real

Running away from any real connection

The guy who crafts and creates the complex rules of the text back game.

And

calls only when he needs something

Because the question

"How are you doing?"

Opens the already worn flood gate holding back a lot of the hurt that you
don't need. This

This is for every stubborn teenage boy that felt her stare and knew that
she was there For

him.

Saw past the persona put up

One part person 3 parts social pariah

Come complete with hand-picked personality.

This

Is for a pair of people in a party that are partially in love with each other

Or at least

the thought

Ought to go talk to her

Talk to him

Make the first move

It's sink or swim
You gotta go now.
Or get lost in the crowd.
Be the one night only love story
That never gets told.

When I Smile by Hailey Love

When I smile
Like really smile
With my heart
And my eyes
And my cheeks
You can see clear from the front of my face To
the last molar in my mouth
When I smile
Like Happiness is radiating from within me
People around me feel it
It's contagious
When I smile
Like I believe in what God is doing for me Like I
know that great things are ahead Like there is
golden rays in my laugh When I smile
With everything I've been through And all
of the things that I've learned The stripes
that I've earned
I feel at peace
And to capture that moment
Is a blessing.

a miscellany by **Samuel F. MacKinnon**

A printed polaroid photograph, brown and faded with age. It is a picture of yourself that changes every time you look at it, though it shows you alongside people you don't know in places you've never been. On its back, scrawled in fading ink, is written: 'WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU'.

A pair of cast-iron boots. Weighty, impractical, and prone to rusting, these boots are nonetheless a surety against any and all manner of booty trap, caltrop, and occasional low-ordinance explosive. Wear them, and all will hear your coming; sleep with them by your bed, and you will dream of ancient battlefields. They are not red with only rust.

A fine cloak, fashioned from your own shed skin. Clutch it close to yourself, mind not its tattered edges; you are freer, now, than you were before. Breathe deeply; your flesh will slough away like a butterfly's chrysalis.

A candle that you have rendered from your own body fat, a wick lovingly torn from the tendons of your arm. It sits on your bedstand as a testament to... to what? To your pride? To your dedication? Nevertheless. Light it before you sleep, and you will dream of a place where candle-flames buzz in the air like wasps.

A fist-sized sapphire. It shimmers in the light like a tear stolen from the eye of God. Look into its facets and see a midnight-blue, a tapestry of

night, a sea of stars. Clutch it in your hand and remember the freeing embrace of the void. Bring to your mind a mournful memory of stillness.

"The present life of man, O king, seems to me like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper in winter, with your commanders and ministers, and a good fire in the midst, whilst the storms of rain and snow prevail abroad; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door, and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, into the dark winter from which he had emerged."

- St. Bede, The Ecclesiastical History of the English People

All will be well. Do you remember? That was the promise.

*Gli Innamorati, or Reach Out, I am Close
Enough to Touch* by **Samuel F. MacKinnon**

I can feel the music in my chest,
coming up through the ground like floodwater in spring,
and into my chest, and into my throat
and out between my lips like a prayer.

isn't it so
that he could sing a continent away
and my lungs would ache with that melody?
isn't it so
that he could part his lips,
and I would open my mouth to kiss him?

reach out,
the person dancing next to you is the same as you
and they feel the music in their chest.
to love thy neighbor as thyself,
one must be blind to the differences therein.'
Listen to me.
I am blind,
and I love you,
and there is nothing keeping us apart.

PRIMADONNA ON THE RUNWAY! by **Samuel F.
MacKinnon**

With my skin hanging off my body by the fingernails

Bunched-up piled over and on top of itself, wrapped around my neck;
a fine cashmere scarf (a musk-soaked hemp noose) red, swollen meat
peeking out where fold falls over fold, aching and ripe, soft as overripe
fruit

Sweet as overripe fruit

(take a bite out of me)

I'd like to ask you if you would take these pliers and rip out all my teeth.

I wouldn't like it. I wouldn't like it at all. I would scream and cry for my
mother. I would choke on my blood and die.

I want you to, though. I want you to like I want to eat like I want to sleep
like I want to breathe. Kill me. Kill me with your beautiful hands and
break me on the way.

(this is not a metaphor)

Have you ever felt like that? Like your skin was so goddamn thin you

could just rip it off and chew it up like it was licorice or wax paper?

Look up, look backwards, look left-to-right. I am not this body. I am not this flesh. I will carve it away inch-by-inch to reveal the beautiful thing that is hidden underneath.

Strut-strut-strut like a peacock on a marble path! A bird for butchery. Under the feathers there is meat and fat and blood that will flow in rivulets down the edge of the butcher's-block.

I'm sorry for lying. Things are getting worse.

(above the neck she is a column of black smoke)

Ghosts by Charlie Pappalardo

I never understood why I was so afraid of ghosts
I spent so much of my life terrified of the thought that this is it.
That when it's all said and done
There'll be nothing but darkness.

But whenever I was confronted by the thought of ghosts
I couldn't help but scream.

You'd think it'd be the opposite
That I'd scream and cry tears of joy
That I'd be overwhelmed by the comfort of knowing that
Death is impermanent.

But for some reason,
It's not that way.

When my Dad told me about the ghost that haunted his twenties
I cried in a strip mall
Tears flowing into my ice cream,
Shaking in the golden August heat.

Maybe,
This permanence,
The idea of lasting til the end of time
Exactly as I am

With all the same flaws and fears
Is what terrifies me most of all.

Perfect Moments by **Charlie Pappalardo**

I think I fell in love with you that one night
When we were both drunk and seventeen.

Caroline was in her room
Crying with her boyfriend
Because her parents were mad
Because
That's what parents are supposed to be
When their children are drunk.

I didn't think you liked me before that night
And maybe you didn't
Maybe you were just drunk
And looking for someone to dance with
Or maybe you felt the same way too
And just never told me
The same way I never told you.

I liked you though.
I liked you because you were witty
And funny
And that type of pretty that I really like.

The type of pretty
Where it's impossible to look away from your face
When you smile
Or laugh
Or pretend to be mad
Because that's what you do
When you want to flirt.

The type of pretty that makes you think that
There must be something divine
Because humans are too messy to create something so perfect.

Then that song came on
The one we both loved
Probably because
It was a song about falling for someone
And being too scared to admit it
And that's exactly what we were doing.

And we danced for a moment
And then another.
But then that moment was over

And all I could think was that I loved you

Or maybe it was that day at the river
That made me fall for you.

When we found ourselves away from the others

And you slipped

And fell

And I caught you

And we laughed

And skipped rocks

And laid in the sun.

But then it was over

Jacob told us that it was time to go.

And neither of us acknowledged

That we didn't want the moment

To end.

But it did

And even though there were more perfect moments

They ended too

And I moved

And you went quiet

And I realized that I'd never told you what I'd learned
That one night
When we were both drunk
And Seventeen.

Always Never Yours by Asha Rajagopal

It started with the first,
followed by the second and the third.
A whirlwind romance for the ages,
swept in the storm of emotion.

However, as the winds settled
and the laughter faded away
I saw it was not me,
not me you treasured, no.

See, we got lost in the storm,
and you found your way.
I became a straggler,
a victim to the storm.

Yet it happened again and again,
them escaping this painful
subjection; I, stuck in the vacuum of
“love.”
Why me? I ask. Let me be free.

When I felt the winds whipping
into action yet again,

I froze.

And so the storm died.
And so I was not alone.

Yet, I found I missed it.
This longing in my heart,
for the adrenaline rush of joy,
for the stake of fear

I always seeked what I could never
find, yet you always found it.
I guess it's kind of like magic,
just none for me, not a bit.
As I become your last,
you simply become my next.
Truly I'm happy for you,
though I wish I was written into the text.

And so I write a letter,
to those I've loved before,
Signed and delivered,
Always never yours.

Not Yet Green by Asha Rajagopal

A little boy once asked me,
“What does green mean?”
I said green doesn’t mean anything.
He begged to disagree.

So I told him green is the color of nature.
It's the mossy smell under foot in the woods,
it's the shade filtering through the leaves.
It's the color of new life.

It is the feeling of mist upon your face
as your face upturns to the rain.
It's the color of unripe fruit,
bitter as you take a bite.

It is the eye color of a lover,
deep and mysterious.
The nails of your best friend are painted green,
as they paint yours.

So the boy turns to me and says,
“I know what the color green is,
but what does it *mean*?”
And I began anew.

“Green is the color of life.
It is the color of love.
Green is multifaceted and ever changing.
Green is just like you.”

And then this boy, with his curious questions,
he comes to a conclusion.

“Thank you for your help miss,
but I was looking for both yellow and blue.”

What a fool!

I think to myself, long after he
leaves. I suppose when you're
young, the world is yellow and blue,
not yet muddled into green.

The Doll by Lindsey Rosenblatt

I wake up. I hate waking up. I hate tasting my sour breath, feeling my disheveled hair and limbs that need to be stretched. Although waking up is the epitome of what it means to be alive, it always feels like an acknowledgment of your slow decay—which I suppose is what life is at its core. Every quality of life is worth as much as its opposite: greatness is contingent on smallness, noise on silence, and existence rests upon non-existence so that as we grasp frantically at life we are also clawing at death, trying to struggle our way through the chaos of reality. These are the thoughts that enter my head as I wake. Although I can articulate them now, back then they existed merely as a fog in my mind, lulling me back to sleep, daring me to let reality wash away, my dreams pulling like tides along my somnambulant mind.

The sweet dizzying feeling as I am momentarily awakened from my dreams quickly drops me like a baby who has just grown too big for her mother's lap. And then like the sun suddenly shadowed by a thick cloud, the coolness of my insides returns, reality taking hold of my fragile body. My body has been through a lot—though I suppose that can be said about any body. Because every body is invisibly tattered, eroded away by the silent force of gravity every second of every day, collecting scars and bruises that we cannot see.

Yes, that is what I am doing: I am merely letting gravity wither me away. I am letting myself fall and break against the rushing waves of my violent mind. I am fading away yet I can feel my existence so clearly now. It's like everything exists in paradoxes and my existence is constantly separating from my non-existence so that I am ripped apart and left to drift along this earth as thin as paper. Maybe that's what I am trying to do: make myself as thin as paper so I can just disappear and disintegrate in the moisture of the air, break up into pieces and scatter myself across the universe.

I force myself out of bed. I always feel heaviest when I first wake up, my body always seems to forget what it's like to bear the burden of existence. I check my phone. My boyfriend, Dale texted me. I guess he's my boyfriend. He didn't really ask, he just sort of said I was one day. But that's the cruel irony of life: once you have someone, your desire for them can never be as strong as your want for them when you didn't have them. He gave me a bracelet that he used to wear when we first started seeing each other. I used to smell it because it still bore the scent of him, but nowadays it just smells like dull rubber. Of course I knew the scent would wear off, I guess I just didn't expect it to happen so quickly. Things never seem to happen like you want them to—they're either too fast or too

slow. It's like there's no perfect rate to anything, and life is just an endless stream of imperfections. I'd say there's no such thing as perfection but if that were true, then I'd have no concept of imperfection. If the whole world were blue, I'd have no concept of blue-ness. So perfection does exist, somewhere out there. But where? I know I shouldn't go looking for it, that I'll just drive myself crazy. But I can't shake the feeling that that's what I need, just a little bit of perfection and I'll be fine. But then again, I always make a habit of wanting things I know I can never have. I guess I just want to yearn for something, just want to make sure there's always something that I want in life so that one day maybe I'll just want life—as simple as that. But right now I don't. I don't have this burning desire to live, nor this burning desire to die. I just have my arbitrary wants and this cheap rubber bracelet on my wrist.

I erase the thoughts in my head and go to the dining hall. I am only happy when I'm eating. I guess it's because I'm distracted, and I don't have to think, I just have to eat. It feels like all I do is distract myself. That's how I live, from distraction to distraction constantly seeking the next source of stimulation. Constantly, I feel bored. A restless, numb kind of bored. Sometimes I think I wasn't made for this world. Like I just came about from the randomness of everything and I have no reason for being.

I used to be so in touch with myself, but now I feel like I barely know who I am; and it makes me wonder whether or not I was ever someone to begin with. What does it even mean to be someone? Is identity just an illusion? Are we really all just the same, all just trying to distinguish between ourselves in any way we can? Each speck of dust in the air follows a pattern unique to itself, but you wouldn't say that every piece of dust has an identity of its own.

I sit down with a plate of food in front of me, desperate for some reprieve from my own head. I eat quickly, scarfing down forkfuls of hot eggs and waffles. When I set down my fork the thoughts come after me again so I grab a muffin and eat it much too quickly. I feel bloated and full, but I also feel starved, like there's some place deep in the pit of my stomach that the food can't penetrate and I am left hungry.

Dale finds me as I am still sitting there. I am glad that he does. I'm always glad to see him. But I wonder, is glad-ness all I can hope for?

"What are you thinking?" he asks me.

"I don't know," I shrug.

"Are you still sad?"

"I don't know."

He knows I'm always sad. We sit in silence for a few moments and

I want to cry, but my eyes are dry as sand. My heart is too porous; like everything that's supposed to be inside just leaks out, dirtying my insides and contaminating my blood.

"You do know, just tell me what's on your mind," Dale insists, looking at me with chocolate eyes of sympathy.

He holds my hand. His hand feels like his bracelet—rubber. I continue to shake my head. *What's wrong? Everything is falling into place and yet here I sit, numb*, I say to myself. As humans, we aren't meant to feel numb. We are made to feel the rawness of life, the pure chaos of our own existences, and the randomness from which we come about.

I am relieved when my roommate Jenifer finds us, and Dale releases my hand. She gently pets my arm. Though we have only known each other for a few months, she is already used to seeing me like this. I still want to cry. I try to think of sad thoughts like the time my favorite English teacher died when I was nearing the end of highschool. I've begun to associate him with my own loneliness so that as I mourn him, I also grieve my own estrangement. It doesn't work today though, my eyes refuse to leak. There was a time when the very thought of him was enough to send me straight into a crying fit. But nowadays, I feel nothing.

“Laura,” says Jenifer. I can tell by her tone she is going to attempt to make me laugh.

“I’m sitting in my life drawing class, and the professor keeps telling us to hold up our pencils to measure proportions and stuff, right?”

I nod. Jenifer is an art student, studying fine art.

“So I raise my hand and say, excuse me, but my pencil isn’t long enough—do ya have one that’s a solid eight inches?”

Dale laughs. He has a way of laughing at everything so hard that no sound comes out, that you can see the muscles of his stomach tightening and the pure bliss on his face. Watching him laugh makes me giggle. He brushes against my arm as he laughs and my stomach flutters. I wasn’t expecting to feel his touch.

I wonder what his hand feels like now. Is it still rubber? Or is it soft and warm the way hands should be? I wonder if my hands are soft.

As I am thinking, Jenifer gets up and leaves for her next class. Then it’s just me and Dale. He grazes my cheek right under my eye with his finger. Then he gets up and leaves too, saying he’ll be back in two hours. He doesn’t know it, but he touched my scar.

When I was five, I was bit by a dog. The dog was two and he bit me near the eyeball, and I remember screaming that I had lost my eye. And

although I still have two perfectly functioning eyeballs, sometimes I still can't shake the feeling that I really did lose an eye. That even though it still remains there in its socket, it is not my true eye. And that my true eye is still in the mouth of that dog, perhaps in his belly now. And sometimes I think that the entirety of my being is in the mouth of that dog, that he took something from me that day that he bit me, and left me to limp through this world, missing some important piece of myself that I cannot perceive.

I shutter, letting the thoughts dissipate. Then I return to my dorm. The room is a mess. But I don't feel like cleaning it. Instead I add to the mess, throwing my brown sweatshirt on the floor. There's nothing I hate more than cleaning. Dale tells me that it's because I don't care about myself enough to keep my space tidy. I don't know, maybe he's right. But even if he is, what do I do about it?

Because with every good day there's this impending sadness which follows me like a shadow, lurking behind me, waiting for me to trip. When I was young, I would carry fairy tales with me in my heart wherever I went, letting them warm my skin with optimism and romance. But now I carry stones. I carry stones in my chest just to give my heart weight and let them trail from my fingertips until I am light enough to float away and

disintegrate into the sun. I wrap myself in turmoil and confusion, using them to tether me to this world of simple and utter nothingness. Until one day I will hold my hands up, surrendering and letting the universe take me away.

I lie in my bed. It is nearly 10:00 and Jenifer is still out. Dale calls me and we talk until midnight. I can't even recall what we talked about—probably his family, or the latest video game he's found, or how hard his physics class is. I tell him that I'm sad. So he comes to my room. He sits on my bed with me and puts his arm around me. I want to kiss him so I lean in really close, closing my eyes and waiting to feel his lips on mine. It's a short kiss, just a peck. But it's like I am drowning and with his simple touch he is breathing life into me, with every word he is helping me tread water. But the thing is, I still have to tread, I still have to maintain myself above water. I am not in love with Dale. I am in love with distraction. I am in love with his simple mind which is somehow drawn to me. Maybe that's all love is, a distraction from our regular lives, a means to achieve the attention that we all crave.

Dale leaves, and I am left again in the darkness of my room. I let my body fall into the soft cushion of my mattress, my hand dangles off the side of my bed as if it is trying to jump off, trying to free itself from

my wrist and feel its own weight for the first time. It is hot underneath my sheets like I am being suffocated by my own body heat, or rather the sickening warmth of existence. I try to sleep but all I can think about is how I haven't cried in months. I guess nothing amazingly sad has happened to me in a while; it's like my heart is covered in a thousand paper cuts, none deep enough to spark any emotion in me.

But I want to feel the pain of my heart as real pain—true, pure affliction. I want to see my heart's blood which is translucent and salty like the ocean and drips from my eyes like water. But I can't feel my tears so instead I take a small swiss army knife my father had given me when I was young and watch my skin weep. After its sweet taste of the outside world, my blood now agitates inside of me, begging to be spilled upon the world, willing for it to be possible for it to splatter like snow across the universe and drape the world in red.

I get out of bed and walk to the first floor. Feel me, I say to the wind as I step outside to give the outside world a taste of me, my irony, metal flavor. The wind chill is numbing and I watch my hands go red and then white. The blood dries in the air like the coolness of the evening sky is sucking the moisture out of me, leaving me skin and bones with no fluids left inside. I sigh as I stand right outside the doorway of my

dorm building, wasting away the minutes before a familiar face emerges, pulling me into an embrace.

I don't know how he did it; it's like I had screamed a silent scream that only he could hear. But here he is, hugging me. But his hug feels hollow. I don't understand why Dale is with me. I'm not pretty, I'm not funny, and I'm not interesting. Sometimes I feel like I am his doll, like all I am is just a thing for him to hold. And maybe that's true and all I really have is myself and my plastic heart. And maybe I'm a doll to the universe too—a plaything for the world to do with what it pleases. And maybe if I can just learn to be content with my position as a toy, then life will at least be bearable.

So I tell him I feel better, I tell him this as if a hug can revive me from this swamp of misery I constantly find myself sinking into. I see him smile, proud of the work he has done, and I give him a smile back—a perfectly plastic smile.

He tells me to go inside and I watch him recede into the night sky. As I climb into bed to retire for the night, I see a moth tapping outside my window. I sigh, watching its futile persistence as it repeatedly bangs its fragile body against the glass. I used to catch those critters with my sister when I was young. We'd let them flutter in our hands before releasing

hem to fall back down to the ground. It was as if their wings were heavier than the air, like their souls were made to be in the dirt. They would always leave chalky white residue on our fingertips, and for this I am jealous. Why couldn't I cover the world in white with my touch, create a map of my existence in tiny dusty particles? Of course the chalk washed away easily from our summer sweat, but I like to imagine that it seeped into our skin and laid there, residing in our young bones, lying dormant as we grew before disintegrating with the coming of our blooming womanhood.

Strange how when you grow up it seems like you retain nothing of your former self: your body changes, you act and feel things differently, you live a different way than before, and believe new truths. But you're still you. And that's how I know that something must persist—not the innocence of your heart or the purity of your being, but something. There's something in me that still connects me to my childhood, something inside my bones that will never leave.

But then I do what I always do and I start to think more. I start to question everything and realize the skepticism rooted deep within life itself. And I notice that if you strip everything down, you'll realize that there's nothing, a nothingness so utter and so profound you might

convince yourself that there's something. But we are all just jack-o-lanterns, the hollowness of our beings are inseparable from our bodies.

.....

A week later I take a walk with Jenifer to the park by the elementary school a few blocks away. The fall air is crisp and lightly pecks at the dry skin on my face. The leaves crunch underfoot, reminding me how I am constantly stumbling over the universe, like each breath is constantly racing against the last. If only I could find a way to lay perfectly still and let the universe trample over me instead, perhaps I'd feel finally at ease.

In the park there are four boys running around. I can just barely see their heads bobbing between the trees as we approach. They're probably twelve. From what I can tell, they're playing tag, and there's one boy in a blue tee-shirt who's quicker than everyone else and cannot be caught. I wonder what he'll grow up to be. He has warm dark skin the color of a reddish date. There's another boy with sunny lemon-yellow hair. The sight of them breaks me nearly to pieces. I barely remember when I was that young. I know I was happy. Though I can't remember for

the life of me what that felt like, but at least I know that deep in the past there must be a little nugget of bliss preserved in amnesia.

“I saw two men at a lesbian arcade,” Jenifer says suddenly, awakening me from my reverie. “They were just *gay-men*.”

I laugh. It feels like it was forced out of my throat like vomit.

“How are things with Dale?” Jenifer asks.

“We broke up.”

“Why?”

“He’s into someone else.” I guess I wasn’t his doll after all.

We sit on a bench and watch the children play. There are four swings which they are playing on. Lemon-head is in the baby swing, his knobbly knees jutting out from the small holes they are squeezed into. Reddish-date is going the highest, his long legs taking him to the sky. They’re probably fantasizing about going all the way around the swing set pole like every kid does, like I used to. And Dale is going so high that even I think that he might make it, all the way around.

The Movie by Lindsey Rosenblatt

He was sitting in a seat quite near the center of the theater but a little far back. Aside from him, the row was completely empty, and he was sitting in the chair furthest to the left. He could have watched the movie at home, in the comfort of his own house—but he didn't. Perhaps he wanted an outing; perhaps the nostalgia of the movie theater cleansed his aging soul like polish on rusty silver. No matter the reason, there he was: feet on the seat, knees bent to his chest, big bifocal glasses twinkling in the light, hand digging into a large bag of buttery popcorn, and completely alone. He had come early to listen to the organ player play his favorite Broadway tunes. A slight smile crept over his face as he watched the musician play his instrument with such delicate ease. He had the kind of subtle smile that turned his entire face crooked. When the organ player stopped, he did not clap. His face simply relaxed into symmetry once more and he sat like a little kid, knees pressed to his chest, arms hugging his shins. It then occurred to me the absurdity of aging: how one always finds a way to return to his more childish nature, reverting back to innocent desires and tender delights. Life is like a horseshoe in that sense: each continuation of our lives is a divergence from our past selves, but they always end up bending back to reach our youthful origins.

The lights dimmed to darkness and there the man sat, blanketed

by the black air and cradled in his own limbs. It was strange: I could still see the slight luminescence of his liquid eyes even in the darkness. They glowed and shifted with the screen in lightness and in darkness; it was as if through the simple sheen of his eyes he could capture the pictures on the screen, and I could grasp some sort of deeper sense of the film portrayed in gleams.

Every so often the man would laugh. It was odd though: he laughed at all of the jokes no one else laughed at and remained silent while everyone else's teeth glittered in the dark. It was as if he felt indebted to the jokes that didn't land like the others, like he empathized with them in some way. His laugh was short—staccato, a strange vocal breath that came from his gut. Sometimes he would laugh at random points in the movie as if his laugh was not a display of humour but an acknowledgement of the simple joys of being alive. His wrinkles would deepen with each guttural noise, and his face would contort into slight asymmetry. Peculiar, how quick each upturn of the lips came and then fell, like each smile was fighting against gravity only to finally break through for just a moment at a time.

Sometimes the man would sniffle. But it was unclear whether or not he was crying or was simply battling a cold. Either way, I was intent

on studying each movement, each sound that came from the old man sitting in front of me. About half way through the film, the man's feet returned to the ground and he bent forward to stand up. He hobbled down the aisle and pushed out the black doors. The man had piqued my curiosity though he was likely going to the bathroom. But I wanted to know everything about this man. Was he married? With children? Grandchildren? Widowed? Was the simple act of going to the bathroom difficult on account of his prostate? Was he worried about missing the movie? Did he know I was watching him, studying his motions like a tiger stalking prey?

Of course, none of my questions were ever answered. But my mind continued to race, trying to come to any sort of conclusions from the empirical facts. It was as if the man was a philosophical problem and I, Aristotle. I watched the man return to his seat, back hunched and arms swaying. He had on a green jacket and a pair of light khaki pants. His hair was nearly gone and what was left had turned silver. His glasses were large and his feet sported a pair of brown loafers. When he got back to his seat, he returned to his usual position with his chin resting on his knees and his arms holding onto his bent legs. He was silent for the rest of the film. No laughs, no sniffles. Just silence. He never took his eyes from the

screen though, and the coolness of the screen continued to reflect on his eyes, turning them glassy like dewy grass.

When the screen went black and the credits began to scroll, the man got up. He did not wait even a moment. He got to his feet, stretched his curved back and then walked out of the theater.

I looked to my right to see my friend Jenifer crying. I hugged her. It was an awkward hug; we were both still seated and had to twist our bodies to wrap our arms around each other, the armrests jutting into our sides.

We walked out to the ticket counter and I caught another glimpse of the man as he was coming out of the bathroom. It only occurred to me after he was gone that that would be the last time I would see him. And it struck me—how strange it is—the swiftness with which strangers walk in and out of our lives.

Jenifer and I entered the cold streets, the night air chilling my fragile skin. Outside of the theater there were three young girls, each with long brown hair, arms linked, performing a dance for their fathers. They giggled, sweet drawn out laughs that came from some light place in their adolescent chests.

Jenifer and I returned to our dorms, each glad to have had

company that night. Jenifer fell asleep easily, embraced by thoughts of simplicity and delicious, melancholy indifference. But I did not. I laid in bed, restless and in a sweat. I looked to my right. My roommate was asleep—a heavy sleep, the weight of her dreams gently pressing down on her moving chest. But I was not. I could not. So I lay there, caught between existential boredom and lonely existence. And I asked myself, how do I find happiness in the dullness of life? What do you do when life doesn't dare to be spectacular, cruel, or unruly? Then the thought of the old man from the theater came into my head, and I laughed, the same short staccato laugh that he had laughed, and I fell asleep.

Green Crayons by Martha Schaller

Toddlers can put green crayons in the freezer without anybody questioning them and I have a problem with that.

I have a problem with the fact that toddlers can put green crayons in the freezer and tell their parents that they are preserving the Earth and that they've been learning about animal adaptations and conjunctions in school and that they love their friends.

I have a problem with the fact that a toddler's idea of beauty

is a butterfly landing on their finger during recess, a snowflake on their tongue, the grogginess of staying up past 8:30, Scooby snacks, *Dora the Explorer*, the satisfaction of scraping the first chunk out of a tub of butter, the giddiness and fear at a first sleepover, the one where a friend had to be timidly shaken awake in the dead of night because the bathroom was nowhere in sight.

I'm not ashamed to admit that I haven't said *I love you* in a time that lingers like the smell of burning beetles in a lamp. It's always *love you* or *love ya* and I've

forgotten what it feels like for those words
to caress my lips, to guide my heart
out of its cage into the
stale air.

I want to be considering beauty like a
toddler. I want to be watching Swiper and Boots argue and
singing along to *School House Rock*, but instead I'm
crying because I can't fit into my jeans right and I don't
know how to do makeup. I want to say *I love you*
and let it ring in the air like
frozen music

but I can't
even though you're only a desk away and instead
I comb my hair so many times for people
who don't even like me that
there's no personality left.

I have a problem with the fact that
I can't ever find a way to tell you how much
I appreciate you
and that *Dora the Explorer* is not on Netflix
anymore and that the price of Happy Meals
goes up every day like the
age of my heart and that
toddlers can put green crayons in the freezer
without anybody questioning them and say that

they
are preserving the Earth.

shot of July by Martha Schaller

What I'm craving right now is a
Shot of July,
Fireworks flying high
Over this town that everybody wants to leave
But I will never get over,
Never get over his smile,
Friday night,
Pulling up in my drive,
His voice so full and alive,
Making me want to dive
Right in,
Right into the lake that's too cold
But I'm too old
I guess, to laugh out loud,
Do something just for fun,
Be happy for no reason,
Be optimistic and cherish hope for a
Better season-
I'm supposed to be already
Battle-hardened, war-ready;
I haven't reached twenty but I know
There's evil in the world.
That doesn't mean there still isn't good.
I'm craving a shot of July when
I'm not old enough to take a shot,

But I'm old enough to take a stand,
Lend a hand,
Understand,
Witness injustice firsthand
And use my voice to try and mend.
So please.
No more gunshots in July,
No more mothers wondering whether
Her son is going to survive the night,
No more human skin grated against concrete,
No more hospital beds surrounded by weeping,
No more lives lost and priests kneeling
And children screaming for their fathers,
Both earthly and eternal.
What I'm craving right now is a
Shot of July,
Fireworks flying high,
The loudest screams out tonight
Are the children chasing each other with
Sparklers in the yard,
Not yet marred
By the ideas of the world.
So please.
No more gunshots in July.

summer by Martha Schaller

girls like you
deserve a love that
always feels
like summer,
a love that
sings like waves against the sand
feels like freckles and anklet
tanlines smells like sunscreen and
Mackinac Island Fudge
dripping down your chin—
a love that never ends
like those rays of sun that
spray over Lake Michigan
and tickle heaven.
you part your lips
to speak and
just like that
my world
becomes
lyrical—
dipping and twisting
like a kite in the sky
flowing freely like
your baby hairs coming
out of your braid,

like your laugh as it
echoes down the
quiet shoreline,
around the chambers
of my soul.
girls like you
deserve a love that
always feels
like summer—
I pray that
your summer
never ends.

Duplex for a Bitch-in-training by **Roma Uzzaman**

last week i drank salt
off the rim of a glass.

abalone sweetened the rim of a glass.
my tongue was a bullet-case about to fire.

they said i talked too much for a soldier about to fire. flame-stick in hand
i could only play dead.

when a man touched my hand i played dead. he was mine as long
as i didn't move.

the sun rose and set as i didn't move.
birds and fish flew/swam 'round my head.

when i said to stop buzzing around my head i did not mean to
leave me all alone.

it's fine to be all alone.
now i drink, and i drink salt.

In Clueless Winding Pathways by **Roma Uzzaman**

Orpheus sings his rock-splitting tune. Does he know
I am listening? When I write of music I am writing
about the rise and fall of it, the rise and fall of it.
I am writing, of course, of the ocean. How can I not
when rocks and ocean are curled sides of the same
spherical coin? When my body moves does it

sound the same as music? Does Orpheus recognize
the song of my sweat? Dance, the rise and fall of
musical tide, a breath away from work. Work to
live and let live, does Orpheus know the song of work?
He is singing into the ground, but I am drifting
along the seabed, calling his name.

poetry by Sheena Zhang

This is a poem that I am writing for the

journal.

I have clearly put
in great efforts
to

make
my words
deep and meaning

full.

yes, i misspelled meaningful
now i forgot how punctuation works so im going to write
a long sentence that is
split
into multiple lines so that i
seem deep

and insightful
when in reality I am

just

Bullshitting my way through Poetry.

Contributors

Emily Buckley is majoring in Communication and Media, and she's also pursuing minors in Writing and Art and Design at the University of Michigan. Her inspiration for her artwork comes from her personal experiences, her family, the people she has met, and the world around her.

Daniela Butkovic is a Lloyd Scholars for Writing and the Arts Student Assistant and lover of all things creative. She is planning to major in Psychology.

Alejandro Derieux Cerezo is a poet from Ann Arbor, MI. He is graduating from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor in 2022 with a BS in English.

Ally Choi is a writer and music lover. She majors in Creative Writing and Literature.

Isabella Crow is an economics student and writer whose work has appeared in the *Every Three Weekly*, *Writer to Writer Literary Journal*, and *Xylem Magazine*.

Jenny Do is artist with strong interest in mixed media. She has been drawing for most of her life and plans to minor in Art & Design during her time at the University of Michigan.

Contributors

Lola Alice D’Onofrio is a big fan of art in all forms and super honored to be featured in this journal!

Sivan Ellman is a painter, photographer and author. She plans to major in Women’s and Gender Studies and minor in visual arts. In the future, Ellman hopes to become a psychologist for adolescences and young adults.

Sarah Griffith is a multimedia artist. She is majoring in Communication and Media with a minor in Spanish.

Sam Hubenet is a poet and artist who loves Taylor Swift and hates Ann Arbor squirrels.

Andrew Hutchinson is a person (allegedly) who writes things sometimes.

Rachna Iyer is a student in the Lloyd Scholars for Writing and the Arts Program.

Robin Jiao is an artist and writer. They are an Art & Design major with an undeclared second major.

Chloe Kazaglis is a photographer and artist. She majors in Biopsychology and researches food addiction.

Contributors

Kendyll Klingensmith has always had a lifelong passion for fantasy storytelling, and is currently in the process of writing their first novel.

Hailey Love is a sophomore business administration major and writing minor. She enjoys writing, fitness, and making coffee drinks!

Samuel MacKinnon is a student, writer, and occasional haruspex. Sam has never seen a beluga whale in real life, though they aspire to, one day.

Ava Meester is majoring in Art & Design as well as pursuing a minor in Writing.

Charlie Pappalardo is a writer and poet who majors in Political Science and Economics.

Lindsey Rosenblatt is a writer and artist. She is planning on majoring in Creative Writing.

Asha Rajagopal is a student in the Lloyd Scholars for Writing and the Arts Program.

Martha Schaller is a poet and photographer. She is majoring in English with a subconcentration in Creative Writing and a minor in German.

Contributors

Ieva Surantas is an Second year student and majoring in Art in Design in the Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design at the University of Michigan.

Roma Uzzaman is an undergrad student studying psychology and creative writing.

Nayla Vasquez is a Queer Puerto-Rican visual artist and feminist from Chicago. She majors in Gender & Health and works as a research assistant for LSA Sociology and for STAMPS.

Julia Watt is a writer, musician, and artist. She hopes to pursue a career that blends social justice with her love of fine arts.

Sheena Zeng is not a poet, but she enjoys writing in her free time. She is majoring in math.

Yitian Zhang is a total Romanticist with boundless creativity inside.