

THE CRUCIBLE

Earlham's Literary & Visual Art Magazine

I

2017-2018

THE CRUCIBLE

Volume III, New Style

Editors

Sunset Combs
Illianna Gonzalez-Soto
Maddie Gullion
Lilly Hartman
Ethan Pickett
Maddie Wallace

Selection Committee

Kate Buche-Pattison
Grace Mulamba
Zach Semel
Dorothy Weiss

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Faculty Advisor

Shena McAuliffe

Cover Art

“Pacific Street” by Graham Pines
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EDITORIAL NOTE

Friends,

You hold in your hands a finished product, creatively sprung from the minds of 44 talented Earlhamites and thoughtfully constructed over hundreds of hours of diligent work. You may hold this book lightly, but let the weight of its words sink into your shoulders as you read. Enjoy yourself, too, while you're at it.

We feel that the endurance of tangible artifacts such as *The Crucible* are of the utmost importance in this digital age. We hope that future Earlhamites will ensure the existence of this magazine for many years to come.

The *Crucible* has been in print intermittently since 1956. Although the magazine has changed in appearance and format, there are a few constants that the Editors have always known to be true: that this publication is a space for students to present their originality as a unified “Earlham voice,” that it represents a diversity of perspectives, and that it brings greater visibility to our community of creators.

To everyone who helped us reach record-breaking submission numbers, thank you for letting us interact with your work. To everyone reading this manifesto, thank you for supporting our artistic endeavor. To Shena McAuliffe, thank you for everything you have done for this magazine, this school, and this little group of aspiring artists and authors. We love you.

Sincerely,
The Editors

Please join us in a moment of silence.

Thank you.

KING MAX

Bea N'Daou

He ran away to
an island of monsters that
loved him so dearly.

Where is my island?
Or are you the monster who
is here to love me?

My thoughtfulness is
Gone as soon as I see you,
you are my island.



ESTUARY

Jakob Posti

silver gelatin print | 5x7 in

DARK HANDS ARE BEAUTIFUL, TOO

maddie gullion

my mother's hands are soft
and warm—like sometimes,
when she washes blankets,
she'll drape me in them,
cotton-soft and dryer-warm.

her nail beds are perfect—
little canvases for polish she
can only wear on her day off,
the smells of paint and acetone
in the air simultaneously.

delicate piano fingers pull notes
from thin air and push music
from achey, out-of-tune keys.
i sit on the stairs while she plays;
if she sees me listening she'll stop.

sage hands pour vinegar and
soy sauce without a written recipe,
serving me spoonfuls to taste and
tell her what she already knows
by smell and simmer.

she leaves notes and doodles
in many-colored inks with pens
and scrap paper on the counter.
her handwriting bends and loops
around gardens of lively flowers.

my mother takes my face in her
hands and calls me beautiful;
i reply with a smile—*i'm half you.*
that means you're beautiful, too.

GOSEUMDOCHI

Yeheon Hong

On a mountain pass near Daegu, a round bob of black hair got out from the Hyundai Sonata. She was young, slender—her face as rounded as the egg-shaped hair. She reached in to turn off the engine, and started walking towards M, cautiously, gently.

“Do you need some help?”

M peered out from under the hood of his silent Lexus. “Um.”

“Do you need a jump start?”

M fiddled with a couple of hoses. “I don’t think it’s the battery.”

M sighed and sat down on the ground. He took out his smartphone, but found that there was no signal. The woman, peering slightly, sat next to him. She reached out her hand. “P. You can call me P.”

“M.”

“Where were you heading?”

“Busan.”

P tilted her head. “That’s not too far from here.”

M remained silent.

“I wish I could help. I don’t know much about cars, to be honest.” P gazed out at the empty mountain passage and shuddered in the chilly wind. She glanced at her own smartphone, then sighed. “I could give you a ride. That’s probably the best option.”

“I’ll be fine.” M was not in a hurry. “I’ll wait for a tow truck to pass by or something.”

The two sat there in silence. A green car whizzed by, then the empty noise of winds filled the space between them. P tucked her hands under her armpits, and M pretended not to notice.

P broke the silence. “What brings you to Busan on a Monday?”

“My mother went missing.” M stared at P. “Last Friday. And just today, it struck me that I should go look for her. What a son, huh?”

P reached over to lay her hand on M’s shoulder, but he flinched away. She apologized.

“No, it’s fine.” M looked away.

P treaded lightly. “Are you not very close with your parents?”

“Obviously.” M frowned. “I was never the loving type.”

“Me neither.” P’s short bob of hair shook side to side. “I mean, my mother ran off when I was three, so I don’t know too much about what it means to be loved. And you know how lonely Korean men can be. Always drinking. Never around.”

M looked over at her. “Sorry to hear that. My parents were never really around, either. They separated as soon as I went to college.”

A red sports car rushed past them.

“Can we get in the car?” P asked.

M nodded and stood up, brushing the dust off the back of his pants. He opened the door for P, and the two sat, as before, side by side in the backseat of M’s Lexus.

M looked at P, who was examining the leather seats. “What do you do?”

“I write for the local newspaper,” she replied. “Nice car, by the way.”

“Thanks.” M smiled lightly.

Several seconds passed before M broke the awkward silence.

“You don’t have to stay with me, you know.”

P shook her head. “That’s fine. I’d rather stay here than go back to work.”

“Your boss doesn’t mind?”

“I’ll just tell him that I got lost or something.”

M tried to say something, but stopped himself short. He wondered why he was back here, with a stranger. Only one thing came to mind.

“Can we have sex?”

P turned to look at him. “Sure.”

The two undressed and made motions—vague, hazy motions that they learned from movies and pornography. Neither one really knew what they were doing, or for that matter, why they were doing it. All they knew was that it was the right thing to do. As M stared into P’s almond eyes and caressed her round, black bob of a hair, a massive surge erupted from his abdomen, and a flood of tears burst from his eyes. P, surprised, wrapped herself tightly around M’s naked torso.

“It’s okay, M. It’s okay.”

M sobbed into the nape of P’s neck. “I’m sorry.” M pushed himself away from P and put on his clothes. He reached for the keys, yanking it to start the engine, but the car remained as broken as it was before. Leaving P in the backseat, M went to the front of the car and fiddled with the mess of cables and tubes. His fingers fumbled in the coldness.

“Shit. Shit!” M kicked the bumper. He couldn’t stop the crying. It wasn’t the fact that his mother was missing. Nor was it that he bawled his way out of sex. It was the goddamn car that refused to move. He kicked it again, and again, frantically slamming his shin until the bumper groaned under the manic force of the bruised leg. M screamed into the wind.

P got out from the car, fully dressed. She approached him carefully, though with more caution than when she first approached him. “There are better ways of coping than beating yourself up for what isn’t really your fault.”

“Like what? Hooking up with a stranger in the middle of nowhere?”

“That’s not my point. Whatever problems you have with your parents, there’s no need to blame yourself for it.”

“It’s not about blaming, P. It’s about how broken I am, about how much my parents broke me, and how nobody is ever, ever going to fix this mess inside. Whether I blame my parents or not—none of it really matters when my mother’s gone.”

P stood there in silence. Then she neared herself to M. “Do you think someone else is going to come and fix you? Is that what you’re waiting for?”

“No, no. Don’t be acting like you know what’s right for me. We only had sex, okay? It doesn’t mean you know everything about me, or everything that’s good for me.”

P frowned. “Isn’t that what you wanted? You thought having sex with me would make it better?”

“Well, it doesn’t!”

“Do you honestly think you’re the only broken person in this world, M?”

P stared at M’s silent throat, the same one that she had gently kissed mere moments ago. M choked on his tears. He thought of his mother. The receiving end of broken plates and overturned tables. The other half of the jagged childhood of M, the half with once-full teats and soft lullabies. It was true: he’d been so caught up in his own broken self that he didn’t bother to think about how broken other people could be. His mother. And most of all, P. P’s slender body, her beautiful short bob perched on top, and her gentle voice—there was something broken in the way she made love.

“No.”



CO2 SALLY

Gaia Hendrix-Petry

ink and watercolor | 5x7 in



THE LAST DAYS OF SUMMER

Johanna Marie

digital photograph | 12x16 in

HER HUMBLE MAJESTY

Lily Cosgrove

I.

She stands here, firm and grounded.
This is home. Her roots have mingled
for half a century
with the wisdom of the dirt.

II.

Yes, how playfully she grows still
Hosting Squirrel Racing Tournaments
and the Sparrow Nesting Games.
The nicks in her skin make for
perfect insect audience seating
and her trunk houses the rest of the forest floor
who gather, huddled together
in this great camaraderie of creation.

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III.

Her daughters sprout below.
Hundreds of them!
Each one an inch high, smells of fresh earth and kindness.
They learn from their mother the spirit of hospitality
as every hopeful stem shelters a
shivering beetle or two
under their vibrant green umbrellas.

WHY CAN'T I SEE THE SUNSPOTS IN YOUR EYES?

ethan pickett

i saw you looking out the window of your house as i pulled away. i only made it around the corner before i stopped because i couldn't drive through the tears. there were remnants of you.

the picnic blanket in the backseat soaked in memories of the evening we slipped away from the world and spent the night in the train yard. where we tried to close our eyes and sleep but were too excited about each other to keep them closed. and the next morning when the sun should have been rising but was consumed by the clouds upon which we sat in the dewy dampness of the indiana spring morning. where we found solace in the solitude of making no distinction between where you ended and i began.

the slushy cup on the floor where your feet usually rested, a carcass remaining from the days when i picked you up from work and i vented my frustrations to the only other person who could speak my language and ask no questions. and you continually showed me the silver lining of having a shitty job while we stained our teeth blue. and we rinsed off residue of anger with laughter only the other could bring out.

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the forest green nail polish on my fingers from when we hung out with your little sister after she had just broken up with her girlfriend. she mentioned that painting nails was therapeutic so we lent her all 40 digits we had to offer to take up as much of her time as possible. we tried to give her advice as if we were experienced hands in love and love lost, but we were really just trying to provide some consolation for ourselves because we knew what was coming.

and here it was.

the long, dark hair that sprawled itself across the headrest and down onto the seat and seeped onto the pale blue shirt i was now dyeing darker as each tear fell from my face. they came from the drive we just took after you said your goodbyes to my family. the drive that i made longer by going the speed limit and forgoing all of the shortcuts i had learned over the years.

i placed my forehead on the steering wheel as the august sun beat down on the back of my head, burning this moment into the fabric of my being, never giving me a chance to forget its formative nature. years removed, the moments still mold me.

these eggshell walls don't provide me comfort anymore. you moved north so that you could see the lakes better. lakes greater than the ones we loitered by on long afternoons in state parks. or the ones we slept next to when everything became too much and we decided to get away for a minute.

the difference now is that i can't get away from it all. i am surrounded by the hair, the nails, the cups, the blankets. we will exchange "hope you're well" texts and never ask too many questions, even though we both wonder. we will have more sleepless nights, decidedly less pleasant than the ones we spent together. we will cook meals too big for one person because we're so used to cooking for two. we will take to silence as our mode of communication because once the train starts rolling, we are each powerless to stop it on our own. and we are afraid.

of ourselves.

of each other.

of showing too much.

BLUE HONEY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Dorothy Weiss

Baby blue and buoyed, drifting on the open sea.
A nest to all the riches,
spilling with squirming scaled coins.
The water drips like honey,
thick and sweet and gold.
The softness sings like sirens,
and they beckon to know for more.
Up and down and floating,
anchored by the sticky waves,
baby blue and buoyed,
a boat swims soaked in summer days.



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BOTTLECAP BOAT

Ethan Thompson

metal, dyed epoxy, sand, wood, paper | 1x1x1 cm

CYTOKINESIS

Lilly Hartman

Once, there was an Earth Mother. When the invisible web of thread-like fungus in the dirt grew so fast it could trap a worm shorter than a hangnail and digest it from the outside, that was her. When you looked at the bugs circling a streetlamp late at night and you swore they were huge fish, deep under water, swarming a submarine, that was her. She was the teeth that evolved from scales, and she was that one daisy in the front yard. She was the coelacanth caught in '38 after we were sure they had gone extinct with the dinosaurs, and she was when you snapped a piece of bark off a rotting log hoping to see a beetle or some larvae, and instead found a majestic momma skink and nine perfect eggs.

I texted her to see if she wanted to hang. When she got to my house on her 1980s Ironman bike, I was eating microwave eggs and trying to dance the merengue along to the *Shrek 2* soundtrack. I didn't hear her knock, but I smelled her come in and turned to see her giggling at the way I jerked my hips.

"You smell like. . ." She smelled like belly-button lint. Or the slime out from under my toenails after a bath. "Like coconut." There was definitely a ripeness to it. "Whaddya say we drink a coupl'a tall boys and throw around a Frisbee?"

"I feel like we always do that," she said. "I was thinking we'd go fishing."

On the way to the woods, Earth Mother pulled her bike along the outside of the curb. I walked on the inside of the sidewalk, brushing through the shrubbery and pretending not to mind. When she had her old bike I was able to ride on the handlebars, but that one got stolen at a party where this one guy was saying he wanted to peel his leg like a carrot. I think of him every time I look at the wiry root hairs coming off a carrot.

The bike rattled while we walked through the trees, having abandoned the trail. I looked up at the undersides of leaves that it felt only the two of us had ever seen. By the time I had given up on avoiding poison ivy, we were at the edge of the trees, where everything became dense grass, taller than Earth Mother. The last tree at the edge of the woods forked near the ground, and she wedged her bike into it for safekeeping. I imagined a bike between the limbs must be worse than a corn kernel between the teeth, maybe worse than sleeping in jeans.

Earth Mother says that in between your toes there are valleys with sparkling, colorful things, packed together and waiting to be remembered. Every time you find a new freckle on your arm, or burn a pan of cornbread, or don't know whether or not to hug someone, it lands in those in-betweens. Ahead of us was a wall of stems and petals: coneflowers,

milkweed, and big bluestem farther than I could see. I saw a butterfly. I was sure we were in one of those valleys.

“Look,” I said to Earth Mother. “A monarch.”

“Or an imitation monarch.”

“You can’t tell them apart?”

“If their predators can’t, I sure can’t.” She walked into the grass like it was a city fountain. Or a breeze. Not a whole lot of grass with bugs and stuff.

“Okay,” I said. I was afraid of losing sight of her. “Cool.”

I followed her in. I’d almost caught up when she stuck her palm out behind her as though she’d slammed on the brakes and knew I wasn’t buckled in. She nodded toward a gap in the grass where a snake loomed over five white eggs, oozing temptation.

“STOP,” I said to the snake.

“Shhh,” Earth Mother said over her shoulder.

The snake grinned with tiny, coffee-stained teeth. He slurped up his first egg like a Tic-Tac and swallowed it whole.

“LEAVE SOME OF THEM, AT LEAST,” I said.

The snake swallowed two more. He began to look like a bulging string bean.

And then I said “JUST LEAVE ONE,” but he swallowed them all, for he was big and they were small. I was, too, so he pretended not to hear me and went home with a full belly.

Earth Mother did the sigh she does when I say nerdy stuff at parties. “Couldn’t you have just let the man eat his brunch?”

We walked farther into the grass. The sound of cicadas wrapped me up like the first time I wore ear buds, and could have sworn I was standing in the middle of an orchestra playing the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* theme just for me.

“Pop quiz:” she said. “17- or 13-year cicada brood?”

“17.”

She kept walking.

“Was I right?”

“No idea.”

The Sun ate away at the skin on my shoulders, and I knew that flakes would float off me like cigarette ash by the end of the week.

“Hey, nerds,” said The Sun, while we stumbled toward her. She lay in the grass, her socks peeled off, hands behind her head, and a 24 oz. Value Pack of Craisins in her belly, which she had spent the morning tossing into her mouth one-by-one.

Earth Mother grabbed my hand and started to pull me away from The Sun, through an opening in the grass. “Your shirt’s inside-out,” she said to The Sun, who smirked as if to tell us that she didn’t care about such things

as “inside” and “outside,” and then picked up an ant that had just crawled onto her pinky toe. It bit her palm because it knew it was going to die. She put it in her mouth and crushed its mandibles between her molars like a stale peppermint. “Why do you try so hard?” The Sun asked Earth Mother.

Earth Mother groaned. “Why do you burn forever in the black unknown, with only the endless vacuum that is outer space for company?”

I didn’t mind The Sun as much as Earth Mother did.

“You don’t have to deal with Earth Mother’s know-it-all shit,” The Sun said. She picked Craisin skin (or ant mandibles) out of her teeth.

I didn’t know what to say to that.

“Cute,” said Earth Mother.

The Sun woke me up for a midnight snack once, unless I dreamed it. She was wearing huge pink curlers in her hair. We ate piping hot cinnamon toast and gave ourselves milk moustaches. I wondered what was on her mind that night that made her need me awake with her.

Earth Mother and I walked back into the grass. She parted a crop of woody stems to reveal a canoe, which was maintaining a canoe-shaped clearing in the grass. It was splintered and disintegrating. I wondered how far it had been carried from the last body of water it floated in.

Earth Mother sat in the canoe, so I sat, too, facing her. She looked out into the grass. “They’re beautiful.”

“Who?”

“The catfish. We’re gonna catch one.”

“What catfish?”

“Use your imagination.”

I imagined the grass pressed flat by the sky. I saw water moving in psychedelic waves like the air above the hood of a black car in July. Two fat catfish chugged along side by side, distorted by The Sun on the river.

A breeze came off the water. Earth Mother dislodged a squashed Miller High Life can from the hull of the canoe. She pointed it toward me so I could look inside. “Nightcrawlers were half off at the gas station.”

They lay tangled at the surface of the soil. She poked one. It shrank away and everyone in the tub rearranged themselves. I pinched one to pull it out, but it slid through my fingers, mucousy like roast beets gone bad. Earth Mother reached in and squeezed harder. The worm she held was iridescent under The Sun like a turkey feather.

Earth Mother held a hook in her other hand. Tiny hairs lined the nightcrawler’s segments, bristly like my legs, like a fly’s legs, like a catfish’s beard, like a carrot or the cone of a coneflower. The worm writhed between Earth Mother’s glitter-polished fingernails, avoiding the hook until she pierced and threaded its body. The worm took the shape of the hook, and blood that looked just like mine ran down Earth Mother’s hands.

“Thank you,” she whispered.

The worm deflated, a pink sac of slime. I imagined it might feel like Jell-O, like a raw egg, like a frog's skin just out of water, but I didn't want to touch it.

Earth Mother cast the hook into the grass, off a line wrapped around a stick.

We waited.

"I felt a tug," said Earth Mother after a while.

"Are you gonna reel it in?"

"No. Catfish have weird mouths. We gotta let it hang out and get stuck a bit."

While I waited I remembered the time it rained so hard we thought the forest would be washed away.

"Maybe the bats that live in the attic will drown," Earth Mother said that day.

"I don't want them to," I said.

Earth Mother blinked real slow, and said, "Well, maybe they know how to swim."

I imagined bats gliding like stingrays across a roof-filtered puddle.

The line jerked Earth Mother toward the edge of the canoe and she pulled. She wrapped it around the stick like the line of a kite, breathing heavily. I leapt onto the bow of the canoe to look out over the grass, knees bent to keep from tipping us out.

"THAAAAR SHE BLOWS," I bellowed for the coneflowers.

The fish crashed through the grass, flopping and splashing. Earth Mother pounced out of the boat and onto the catfish, who was all muscle, and had eyes like the gumballs of a SpongeBob popsicle and lips like I did the day I discovered my mango allergy.

"She's a BIG one," said Earth Mother, pinning the catfish between her knees while she flapped her red tail. I imagined the fish knew everything. She knew whether the cicadas were a 13- or 17-year brood, what time of day it was, the number of miles from here to The Sun. Earth Mother wrestled her into the cracking soil, pinning a fin down under each knee.

"I don't want her to die," I said.

"Me, neither." She pulled her dull jackknife from her jeans, unfolded it, and pierced the catfish's cerebellum, nostrils flared. They both fell still.

We cried while Earth Mother built a fire in the belly of the deteriorating canoe.

"Tell me the story again," I said, while she fileted the fish.

"Okay," she said. She collected her thoughts a minute and then said, "In the beginning, I held clay in my hands. I was lonely. I was standing at the bottom of the ocean, and there was EDM playing in the background."

"Last time you said it was smooth jazz."

"It was somewhere between the two, to be honest." She situated half

the fish atop the fire. "The clay was coated in sparkles that bound and unbound, and slid all over. Sometimes they made little sacs, or littler chains, though most of the time they didn't."

The slab of catfish shined in the heat.

"Eventually, the sacs were kinda cool."

"You could see them? Just with your eyes?"

"Of course. I saw them grow and shrink, explode and form again. Next thing I knew, the little guys were scuttling all over. They slurped stuff up and spit stuff out, and split in halves every chance they got." She began to roast the second half of the catfish. "They spread all over the world, getting fatter and thinner and longer and shorter. They learned to swim and walk and fly. Love each other and kill each other, too." We sat in the canoe while we tore at the fish and filled our bellies with her.

I licked the juice from my fingers. "Thanks for dinner."

I stretched over the gunwale and cracked my toes. And then I stretched too far, and there was nothing I could do but fall, and just keep falling. In the last moment my face was above the water, I looked at her. I don't think I said anything, just looked at her to say, "I'm falling."

And she just looked at me to say, "It's okay."

And then she jumped in after me. Shoes, jeans, undies, whatever. Drenched.

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At the bottom of the river, I sat cross-legged with my eyes open. The water was a carton of blueberries right out of the freezer, or driving barefoot early in the morning. I let a gush of loud bubbles out of my nose.

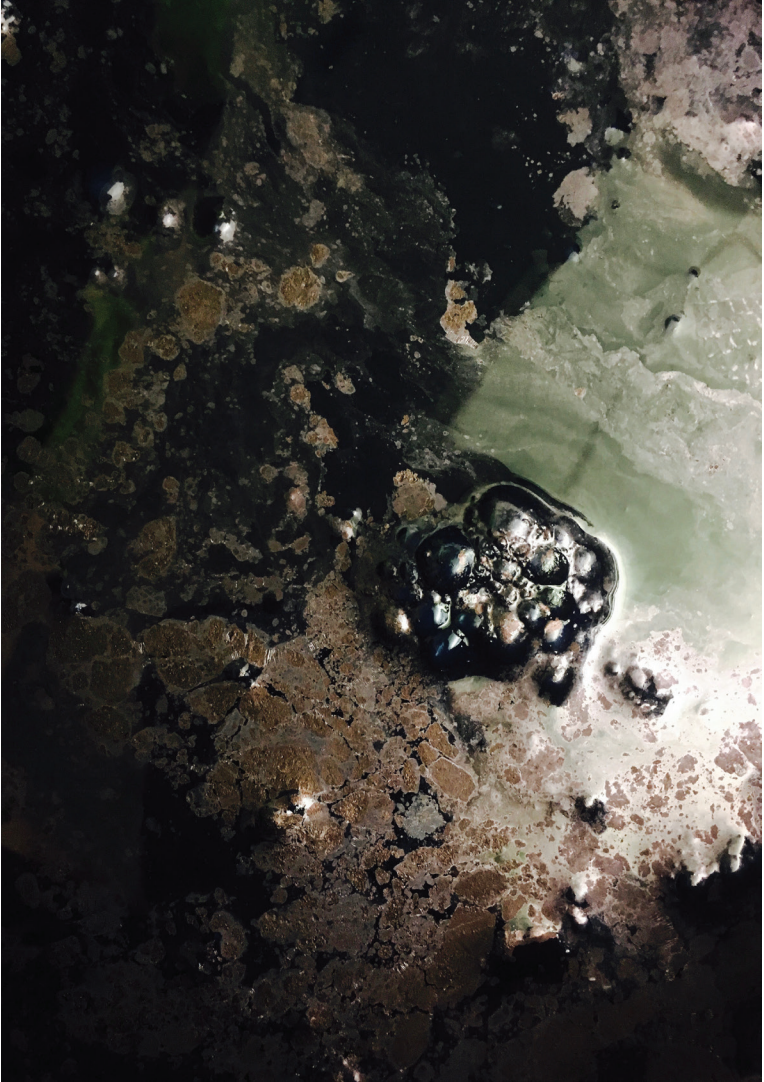
Earth Mother pulled toward me, a eutrophicated blur miles overhead. Crawdads scuttled across my lap and my hair bobbed around my face while I waited for her. When she got to the bottom of the river, she put her hands to my cheeks.

For a second, we were kids, having an imaginary tea party under the water. We would go home pruny, sit on the kitchen windowsill, tell plot-less stories, take care, take turns, take, take, take, grow up, go away.

For the first time I felt how small her hands were. They were a child's hands, and my hands were a child's hands, and the hands of everyone we knew were children's hands, just grasping and living and breaking and trying to get by and grow up.

Her hair floated toward mine. We each blinked at the other. Just for a second, I couldn't tell whose hair was whose.

And then Earth Mother picked me right up off the riverbed, like a slice of peach out of moonshine, and hauled me up toward the cicadas.



INDIGO

Natalie Gillies

digital photograph | 6x8 in

AFTER A NIGHT TERROR

Eliza Rehard

She flutters indigo,
one feather kinked.
I cup, finger-to-thumb, a flush
cradle, nudge tendrils tight.
Her sheeny beak

clicks, nipping and pinching
palmskin. Ravenous, I have

no seeds to give—bitter water
sprinkling a sharp tongue-slayer.
Pain.
I remember—
a bird? No—a lover?

A hand smooths curls
twisting my ear. I awake,
her eyes spuming deep my sinew
and marrow. A dream? I inquire—
she nods. Twilight: below
gnarled limbs,
we nested a sea-dark chick fallen
where she lay. Broken, deathbed
rotting leaves. You were screaming.
She coos the breath back into me.

Lips parted now—hot, skinsweat slipping
hands. Horror dispelled—
crimson, pink, ochre heat pulsing,
flesh and teeth.

Marigolds, or autumn
mums blossom these white blankets,
her mouth
engulfs. No color to name
a fugue of skin and amnesia,
again and again.

Disentangling,
we sleep, wings mended.

SOMETIMES

Maddie Wallace

there are
sometimes
when I look at you and see
someone elevated
past the primal point of being
perfection personified and
then
personifying.

you're not
done yet
this much I can see
that those
sometimes
are not times
to grasp onto in a dream
to cling to and
drink to
til you
wither into ink.

oh, wait
wait, wait
I gave up on
journaling

and some
sometimes
when I see you
seeing who I'd want to be
if the cards
aligned
the stars
had shined
and chanced for
chance to let us see.

but mostly then
just mostly
I find that you're a need
a simpering sort of thing
is this
this want, a constant clawing
sense
that *if only*
could not speak
that maybe then
those sometimes
would dispel a fantasy.

and then of course comes I
with my ever-wanting mind
searching for a
better best
but
finally redeemed.



SMALL PAPER KILN FIRED BOTTLE

Padgett Gustavson

stoneware, paper kiln firing | 7 in

FOUR LISTS

Kelsey Stratman

Things that look like dancing

Five men are working to strip a roof of its old tile. Four of them walk back and forth in their respective areas, scraping, peeling, lifting, hammering, and dropping black pieces of tar off of the two-story building. They are linked together with a cream colored rope and big shiny carabiners. A fifth man stands on the ground watching where the pieces fall like paper airplanes made by children out of thick black paper.

Do you ever think about the patterns that your fingers make as you type? Do you think about the fact that each language has its own signature on a keyboard because each language has its own letters and combinations of letters that repeat more than others? And that in thousands of hands across the world at any given moment maybe the same clacking rhythms are being typed at the same time?

He has to drive over the same railroad three times on his way home from his job. He says there is a branch of mathematics that deals with that very circumstance, and that apparently traveling over the tracks three times is sort of the same as only crossing them once. It's like some perverted nursery rhyme.

Circumstances of aloneness

I knew someone once who had plans to live alone for a while to try and write a novel. There seems to be this trend where young men couple off later in life so they have the opportunity to live alone in their twenties, working into the late hours, cooking for one or perhaps ordering in, and it makes me think of bare walls asceticism and potted plants and dust bunnies that hide in corners and whisper with each other, gossiping about their solitary human. *That seems*, I thought to myself when he told me, *like an incredibly disingenuous way to write.*

He was asked to leave the military academy after multiple infractions of the institution's Honor Code, which included personal infractions, such as a lied-about night of drinking, and failing to report the rule-breaking of others. He refused to resign and was "silenced," which is a practice in

which no one speaks to you or looks at you to pressure you to conform and leave. The silencing, and the not-leaving, lasted for two years. What sort of body did he inhabit in this time? What does a body look like in nobody's eyes?

She sat down in her boss's office waiting for her disciplinary review to begin. The three women filed in after her and joined her in the circle of chairs, waiting to look her in the eye until the younger one with the lip ring began to speak. *Never*, the woman started, *have I ever been talked to like that in my life. I cried all evening* she said, having failed to mention other salient details, such as the one which would excuse or explain the behavior of the woman being reviewed, who sat silently and wasn't asked to share her perspective. Insulting her parenting is, in her words, her Achilles heel, and she will always spit venom.

Things that I want to last but won't

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Every time I buy a pair of boots I walk into them like the rooms of a house. I knock on the walls with my ear pressed against them to check for sturdy support beams, eye the planing on the doors, look in corners for cracks and water damage. Every time I buy a pair of boots, after about 6 months, the soles start to fall away in the same place under my left heel, and I wonder again if my tread is too heavy for anything to withstand, if maybe I will always wear destructive grooves into everything I inhabit.

My skin is, as yet, smooth and taut, soft and pillowy. Every year or so I notice new freckles and moles, blemishes that don't fade as quickly as they used to. I notice new hairs and stretchmarks. My body is being revealed to me like stars in a night sky that's darkening, the contrasts becoming deeper the further you drive from the city, or like an apocryphal text held up to a light.

Though he arrived bearing flowers, that night was a hard one: I fell asleep crying because something had bristled against this old wound. I had never spent time before with what it meant to me, a girl who has been told by her mother all her life *It's not because of you and your issues with your Dad will probably affect you but it's going to be okay*. That night five daffodils blossomed one by one, standing sentinel above my bed, so fast you could see it happening. I woke up sneezing.

Things that pull me back down to earth

I will never be thin enough to fit into my mother's wedding dress, probably, even if I take up smoking.

My twenty year old sister told me this morning that she still has dreams about the cat that we had to get rid of when we were evicted again, a loss which I had been so callous about because I was hardening myself, and that part of my life I remember with an ice-cold gaze.

The letter I wrote for him arrived while I was with him. *I'm sorry*, he said, *I have to go to work, I don't have time to read it right now.* I woke up to a note that made me cry.

DESERT SKY — A SONG

Sunset Combs

G, Em; Capo 4th Fret

Verse 1

I have a dream of you and me, underneath a desert sky.
You show me the mountain that you climbed the day you were born and
the day you died.
And I tell you, “I just have not seen the stars shed this much light.”
You say I should see them from where you’ve been all these years, and then
we fly.

Chorus

And I see your mother—she has your eyes.
And I see your father—does he ever cry?
And I see your only brother, with arms open wide, praying to a god that he
thinks will rise.
Oh, is he there, with you in the sky?

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Verse 2

I ask if you’ve been watching us all this time, “What could you see?
When I would call out to you, could you listen but not speak?”
You say to me, “I cannot give you the answers that you seek,
because real life is not a dream, that’s how you lost me.”

Chorus

And I see your old lover—he has my eyes.
I see the house where you lived, where you’d smoke, and where you’d fight.
I see the place where you’d weep on your knees asking why, so many ques-
tions much like mine.
Do you remember all of this you left behind?

Do you remember me in the sky?



LIFE OF THE MOUNTAIN

Charley Drew-Wolak

copper, acrylic, enamel, wood | ~5x10 in



DISCOMFORT 14

ethan pickett

silver gelatin print | ~7x7

NORTH 12TH AND E

Lilly Hartman

Sulky rain slither
through ceiling paint. Undies
bare feet front door outside. Rain
heavy rain hard. The moon said Dance with me.
Deep water loud feet slap slurp concrete toes.
Brain moving too fast brain can't

keep up. T-shirt off yell swim yellow
orb above belly drench drink yellow zest
for life yellow frog intestines bright slimy mood
and cognitive effects of turmeric. Told
girl in yellow sweater yellow was favorite color now
it is. The goldfinch said Everything will be okay.
Wet eyes broken glass wash away body

clean. See rain see splashing see the girl
with the hole on the inside. The moon looked delicious
that morning. See the hole on the inside is full of raw
yellow truth sad not sad fleeting poems red clay
rain collected feathers collected goodbyes
see? There is no hole.

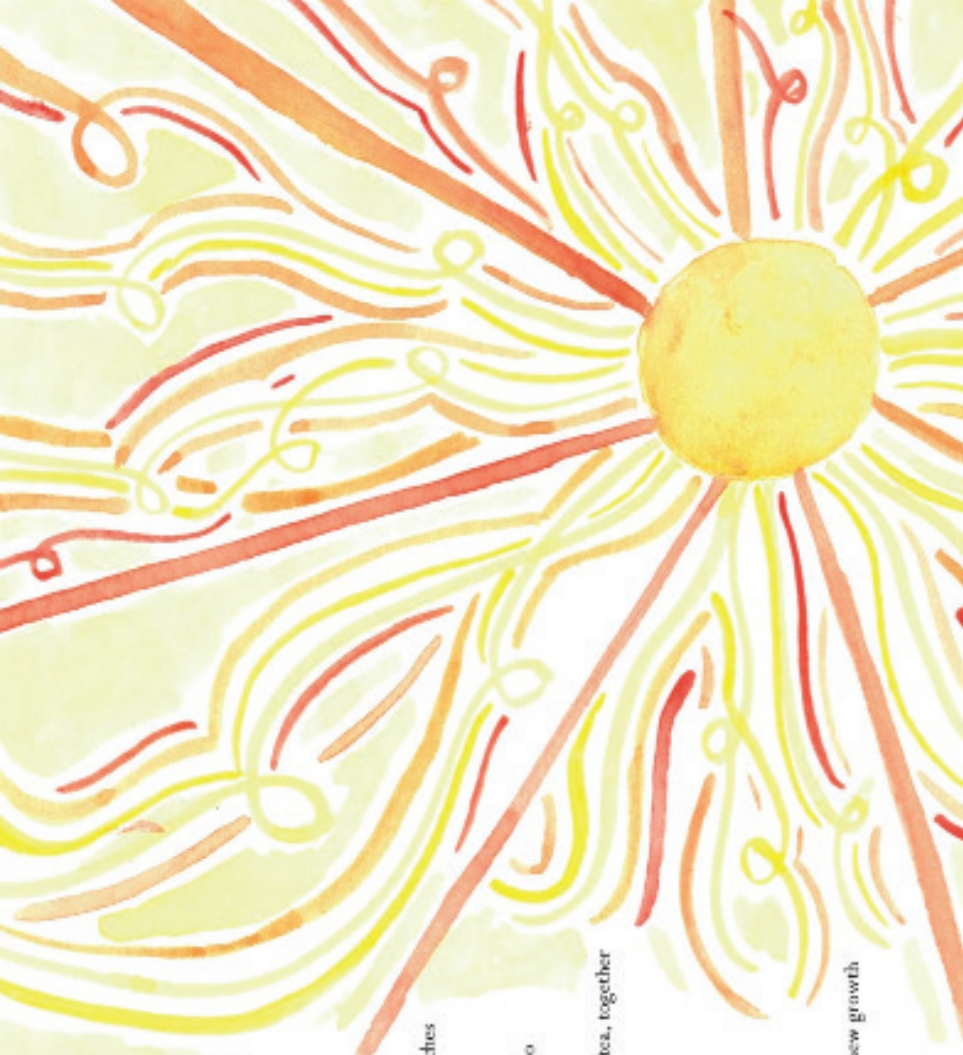
SUN AND ICE


Lindsey Gearin

in a room on the second floor of my home the windows look out into a barren canopy of deciduous trees planted by my grandfather, or someone before him in the distance, the lake resists being over-fled by a spring deep beneath the surface of the frigid water the sun shines through in the afternoon, bathing the furniture in a soft glow subtle warmth welcome in the winter chill

dark wooden shelves line the far wall full of children's books more weathered than the hardcover classics next to them a thick red rug lies beneath the old, flowery-patterned couches which are on the frumpy side of vintage, as I recall now, but lovely all the same a rocking chair sits next to the piano on the far wall, where my mum would sit while I played an allegro concerto over and over this was a joyful space, composed of nights spent reading and drinking chamomile tea, together

it was here that my parents broke the news regression should have felt like a slap in the face but instead, it just felt like an old tee shirt that didn't fit anymore. downplayed to protect us, or maybe just to pretend it was not earth shattering the layer of normalcy constructed by remission had made them courageous my father stopped the hormonal therapy that had blocked new growth and the cancer flourished, newly fertilized by the hormones coursing through his blood and feeding the cancerous cells like chemical compost





and then, radiation therapy
a stop by the clinic and chat a with the blonde technician
while she beamed a stream of electromagnetic poison
into a dot on his abdomen each morning
it was a part of his day as natural as
brushing his teeth in the shower or putting on mismatched socks –
which are not really natural at all

it's been four years since then
another remission,
another respite from fluctuation with chaos
and yet, illness has a certain aura
that hangs indistinctly in the air, like fog

last week, my parents gathered us together
to sit on the flowery patterned couches and talk, once again
the conversation was tense, artificial
and the atmosphere, unerving
I sat there on the edge of my couch cushion
among the books and old piano
and pulled my cardigan closer to my body
afraid of the overwhelming sense of déjà vu chilling my bones

but all is well
my fear, baseless
and given too much control

with remission comes a softer era
life is not quiet, but loud in a distinct way
tumbling with the rumblings of moving away and coming home
travelling with the joyful shrillness of morning coffee and hand-written mail
pulsing with the rhythms of our daily lives
above all, reverberating with the choice to ignore fear
in this era,

the symptomatology –
no longer overtaken by underlying dissonance –
resounds

HOW TO BE TRANS

Jacyn Gormish

You think. You have a lot of questions. You don't have the same questions as anyone else. You are embarrassed, or nervous, or confused. Maybe you ask them. Maybe you don't. Maybe they pound around your head trying to find a slot they fit into. Maybe they get tired of slamming a circle into a square, or maybe they push their way uncomfortably in until it almost seems right. The puzzle piece is the right color. The puzzle piece is not the right shape.

You itch. Like a rash, or that one spot on your back your fingers can't reach. You feel like something is there, or something is not there, or something is sometimes there, but you never see it. You live with a phantom until it's not unusual anymore, until you don't even mention the strangeness. Maybe you don't notice it anymore, or maybe you just don't comment, because really, what is there to say? You don't know what it is, until one day, you do.

You stop. You pause your breath, your mind. A little hiccup.

You breathe. Or you cry. Or you smile in a way you never have before. You relax. You change. You don't change. You exist again, or differently, or as though you have walked through fire. You are awoken; a dragon who has been sleeping restless raises their head, wings waiting to take to the wind.

You stumble. You run or you hide or you poke your head out like a gopher. You tumble forward and back, because you are young and you do not know what it is like to fly and the wind is fierce and was not made to be taken. You fight, or retreat, or curl up where it is safe and have a moment, just a moment, and wonder if that is enough. You are afraid. You have doubts. You think you do not know yourself anymore, or maybe suddenly you do, or maybe it is all in your head. You do not know how to be around others, do not know how to be around yourself, and every piece you fitted wrong comes loose and there is chaos.

You stand. You do not fall, or you fall and someone takes your hand, someone helps you up, or no one helps and you lie there and it hurts. Maybe you are broken. Maybe everything aches. Maybe it will never stop. But you push yourself off the ground, push yourself into the air, push yourself into a new world.

You fly free.



TWO ROSES, 2017

Ilfianna Gonzalez-Soto

silver gelatin print | 8x10 in



THE TOWN

Anna Mullin

digital print | 1757x2834 pixels

LEGS

maddie gullion

my skin forms bumps
in protest—
screaming in angry red
at the scrape of metal,
tearing away its only means
of self-defense.
i apologize and swear:
never again will i violate my own body
for another's viewing pleasure.

arising, awakening—
skin still
from last night's battle,
the quick prickle a revenge:
of protection,
i knew little. i am learning,
the hair grows back,
my human softness,
my spirit sprouts anew.

MY NAME

Phi Nguyen

When I was two, I stepped on a frying pan
Lying on the floor
Boiled oil splashed on my shoulder
My neck, my hand
Left me with furious scars on my skin
Like tree bark
My grandpa gave me the nickname of a hero
From a novel he loved
Whose skin was scarred like tree bark
Like my skin
He called me “Meo”
And everyone bitterly grinned.

Then people in my family started calling me by my nickname
“Meo!”

When they woke me up in the morning
“Meo!”

When they called me when dinner came
“Meo!!!”

When they told me off for breaking the sink
But in front of my friends, they would call me by my real name
Each time they called me, I became a stranger in my own home

I did not like
The way other people stared at my arm
When I wore T-shirts to school
Or the laughs
When I told them my story
When my soccer team took off their shirts to celebrate
And I was the fool with the shirt on.

My parents wanted to wipe off the pain
They booked a surgeon on the first day of May
“You will sleep when I inject this into your vein
And when you awake, all the pain will go away”

That night there was a snail crawling in my chest
Carrying a heavy question in its shell
When it reached my heart, it called my name
“Meo”

And then I knew
Without the scars, “Meo” would never be the same.

SISTER

Anonymous

You are standing across from me, holding a bucket. We are playing a game, one popular with the kids at recess this year—I throw something from the pile that I've gathered next to me, and you try to catch it in your bucket. If you do, we take a step back, and throw again until we miss or until we find our backs pressed up against the fences framing our backyard. We usually play with sticks, sometimes with Cad's nerf darts. Our use of stones was terminated last month when Mom witnessed a wayward shot hitting you in the face. You said it didn't hurt, but she made the rule all the same.

Today I can't find a stick, not in the whole yard. I'll admit that I didn't look very hard, but I'm tired and itching to start the game. Instead, I toss you my Greatest Fears. They sail through the air and land in your bucket with a neat thud. I pause. I like the sound. We take a step back, and I lob my Biggest Insecurities in your direction with my good throwing arm. Mom always said I should join baseball. I don't want to, though. The other kids on the team are snobs.

My Biggest Insecurities make the trip, so I try Clinginess and Neediness. They are pretty much the same shape, so I throw them together, one with each hand. You catch them; I'm impressed. You have to do a whole sidestep/pirouette thing for those. Oh! And I find a stick! It's too long to fit in the bucket so I use it as a bat, and send Intimate Memories and Expectations your way. We reach the fences but we're on a roll, so I scramble over, you push through the neighbor's hydrangea bush, and we continue.

By the time I get to Buried Anger and Resentment, you are two backyards away and I have fashioned a catapult from the stick and an empty yogurt container I stepped on. It's really cool actually; I glued them together with the mint gum from my birthday that I was chewing—it's alright, it had lost the flavor already—and I took the elastic tie from my shorts to use as the tension and release. I have to imagine that the bucket is pretty full by now, but you aren't struggling to carry it yet. So I keep going.

I launch Guilty Pleasures, Foolish Hopes and Deepest Gratitude, and I can't even see them land. You're just a speck! I wave and I can hardly see your arm windmilling back. We could keep on going—I call to you and you say you're fine—but Mom forces us to abandon the game for dinner. I watch you fly back through the yards with cheeks flushed and bucket bobbing, and when you arrive we peer into the bucket to inspect our blinding success. There they are, perfect little globes lined up together in rows.

“I want them,” I say. I don’t really know why. The bucket is heavy, and I don’t know where I would store them in the tiny room I have to share with Cad. But I feel a strange responsibility for the things. You, however, look furious.

“No!” you shout. “You threw them to *me*; I get to keep them!”

I shoot a retort to this obvious injustice, and we begin what Mom likes to call one of our “love spats,” all the way inside and to our seats in the kitchen. Not even the Friday Meal of spaghetti and garlic potatoes can calm this battle of ownership, although it’s our favorite. It’s only when Dad threatens to take the orbs himself that I give you the look and kick the bucket to you under the table. I suppose we will have to share this one.



COMING OUT

Mia Kaplan

batik and hand-dyed cotton,
ink jet print on cotton, felt | 3x4.5 ft

TANGERINE

Anna Malin

I thought for perhaps too long about
A land atop a sweet small round—
Couldn't be true. How could it be?
Who bore that fruit—the drooping tree—?
They guard the garden from raids in night,
They keep their stomachs full and tight—
They slam the gated parish doors
where ermined diocese plan their wars,
They never see us on the ground—
For in paradise, we make no sound
But it is us—

The tangerine menagerie,
built soundly on a fallacy—
That work and maybe, mostly men—
Could right the world of wrong again.
With glee upon assuming grace
They take throne amongst their holy race.
And from on high they throw their crumbs—
To wind and wave and starving moms
who bear the earth beneath their palms
and have naught but bitter peels for alms,
Who in due time, will plant that single seed of wrongs.



MIRROR

Madison Reynolds Graham
digital photograph



BIRD BRAIN

Lilly Hartman

mid-range earthenware | 12 in

BLUEBERRY PANCAKES

Becca Moore

Lying in bed next to me, she asks me her daily questions about the moon,
Talks about how bright the stars are.
Speaks in languages that only the gods can understand because beauty...it's
complicated.

Honey.

I hate to be so cliché because people tell me I'm turning into my mother
but I swear to

God you feel a lot like home.

You feel more homey than blueberry pancakes on Saturday mornings,
more familiar than my grandmother's perfume, more comforting
than my mother's arms after a fall on the playground.

She tells me I smell like a baby when I get out of the shower and I respond
with "have my babies."

They tell me I'm insane...that this is a honeymoon phase that will soon be
tainted with the furies of freedom but

Honey...they don't know you are my freedom.

Yours are the only arms that make being held feel like flying.

You are not holding me on strings.

You are letting my heart fly like a kite, letting your end slip out of your
hands and telling me, "Baby, I will be right here to catch you
when you drift back down."

My sister tells me I shouldn't talk about marrying her after just a few
months and I wonder how I could ever stop the word "forever"
from slipping out of my mouth because the lack of tomorrows in
my sentences and the absence of always seems like the greatest
sin.

Love me like our palms were accidentally superglued together by destiny,
laughing their way into conscious grasps.

Love me long into honeymoons, in and out of fairytale moments.

Love me when the laundry isn't done and the babies are crying and there
are bills to be paid.

For I will love you.

Like there are many yesterdays.

Infinite tomorrows.

I will love you if we have nothing but dirt beneath our bare feet because
you are my walls, my foundation, my mortar, my bricks.

Your arms are my feather bed, your shoulder my pillow, and I will rest easy
love...home wrapped around me gently, whispering "I love you."

XENOS

Illianna Gonzalez-Soto

Zigzagging through the blooming fields of flowers like gazelles do when they run from death.

Yet death was not in the books for this little boy in a red cap in fields of yellow, orange, and green.

“Xenos”—the greek root meaning “stranger,” which is what this boy was, in this place where he lived, which was not his home.

Where was home—not in this field where he was zigzagging, running, flying, to get away from the city where he lived, which was not his home.

Vexingly, the future had not death in store, but there are worse things...like living in a place where you are a stranger to strange places where you are not welcome (or at least you feel that way), and having to zigzag through fields in order to find release from the city, which was all concrete concrete concrete and there was no space to run like a gazelle. And if you did run like a gazelle across the cityscape you would look kind of crazy—the thought made him giggle.

54

Ungiving—the concrete concrete concrete city had no give, no give, nothing to give, nothing to offer, and how does anyone feel at home in a place that was ungiving?

Toast with peanut butter and bananas started to sound really good in this field of blooming flowers just outside of the city. He hadn't eaten since yesterday and toast was his favorite because it made him remember the home he felt he used to have, which had a lot to give, especially in the mornings before he went to school.

School, oh how he loved the school he used to go to because school meant seeing his friends and learning new words like “Xenos” and all about how fast gazelles run from danger which is 40 miles per hour and how after English and Science and seeing his friends he would go home to his parents and they would all eat toast for dinner since he loved it so much and they loved him and everything was great.

Remember that—remember that after a long school day and eating toast both for breakfast and for dinner his parents would say, “Good night

kiddo,” and after they left for the night, he would look through his window at the moon that looked so big and the stars which he wished upon for the thing he wanted most.

Quivering, his stomach was so hungry and so was he. Maybe he should stop running now.

Probably was a good idea, he didn't feel like being a gazelle anymore.

Oregon was his home. But Chicago had peanut butter toast with bananas and the moon and stars which were the same ones he wished upon every night before bed.

No. Maybe Chicago had the same moon and stars and toast, but it didn't have the same friends and vast open spaces where there was give and room to run and there wasn't concrete concrete concrete everywhere.

Maybe he should head back to where he lived...which still wasn't home, but he hadn't eaten since yesterday and maybe his parents were waiting there with toast.

Lucky...he always thought that would be a good name for a dog.

55

Kleenex— he could really use some because it was cold and he wasn't crying it was just cold outside.

Just outside the city. The train just a short walk from this field of blooming flowers...he was so close to ho-

Images of Oregon and vast open spaces...like the field he found outside of Chicago where he could go when he got tired of the city and maybe...

Home...what was a home? To him, it was toast, and the vast open spaces of Oregon, and his friends at school where he learned about gazelles, and the greek root “Xenos” which meant stranger...which was how he felt in Chicago but maybe...

Gazelles...they run really fast from death and danger and predators but he was just running from the concrete which he thought had seemed just as bad as death because moving from the only place you've ever known seemed like a death sentence.

Finally...the train was coming to his stop and he could eat peanut butter

toast with bananas and go to sleep because he hadn't slept since last night and running takes a lot out of you.

Eagerly, he ran through the front door, and there were his parents surrounded by boxes of Kleenex because "Where in God's name were you young man you can't just run away from home and not tell us where you were going and were you crying? You must be hungry—Charlie make the boy some toast it's his favorite—and you poor poor thing it's okay honey *it's all going to be okay.*"

"Don't cry...we know you miss Oregon but you'll see...Chicago isn't so bad."

Chicago was all concrete concrete concrete, but maybe it could feel like home.

Belong— that word he already knew from Oregon. Maybe he wasn't a stranger in his own home in Chicago. Because a home is where your heart is, and he had a heart because of course he did he was a human boy and every human had a heart, and his heart went with him everywhere he went...

56 And so maybe he did belong. His parents were adopting Lucky for him soon so that he could have one new friend in Chicago, so that walking through the concrete concrete concrete didn't seem so bad.



BABY T

Katy Morrow
digital photograph

give me care
and good sex
smooth like honey

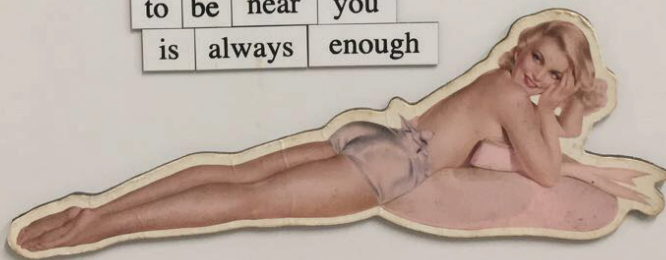
come intoxicate my time
I am your s
sit ing beneath
the giant warm light

stand firm and navigate all I am

introduce me to the know ing

we can explore
and grow in to us

to be near you
is always enough



THE BENCH

Della Walters

fridge magnets, digital photograph

WAIT, I HAVE TO TELL YOU SOMETHING

Zach Semel

A loose staple
it pricks my finger, briefly delaying the expedition
I resume my search

A spiral notebook
its amputated cover would be recovered separately

A mechanical pencil
its eraser eroded to a useless stub

Tube of chapstick
a preparatory measure

A therapy receipt
because my parents can afford it
and I'm no good at holding things in

A small novel
its pages glow yellow
I've reread it a dozen times, reviewing it like a plan

59

A sticky Snapple cap
the fear of vegetables is called lachanophobia

Everything is here except what I need

I can picture the piece of paper
carefully extracted from my notebook
folded into halves—no, into thirds—
blue ink bleeding through to the other side

She stands there waiting at her front door
smiling politely as I stare into the abyss of my backpack
begging for the letter I wrote to her to just *appear*
Like loose change materializing in a dryer

She asks
Can it wait 'til tomorrow?

I sigh
Okay.



BECOMING CRACKS

Jacyn Gormish

copper with ammonia patina and 3D-printed plastic | 7x3.5x3.5 in

MELATONIN

Maddie Wallace

I call him my azure-eyed
melatonin-induced
dream
His thick metallic blood threads black ice
into my sleep
It's silver and it's priceless
and I'll wear it
as a ring
It fractures from my pillow
into cupid darts
of sleet
And come masticated morning he
melts opaque
at my feet.

I linger in the memory with each frigid breath I breathe.

LATE JULY

Sunset Combs

She liked to take long walks. On evenings in the late summer months she became restless. Her room and her books and her movies and her music gave her less satisfaction and so she walked out her front door and among the houses. Within the houses lived the people who would die there in that town she became restless in. The trees all looked the same, as did the small fields of grass behind the schools, and the flowers along walkways to wreathed front doors. The cracks in the sidewalks led to the same places. She couldn't find an unexplored part of the town. She looked down at small yellow flowers, their patch of ground tilled, mulched; their stems pruned, their weeds picked. Did she thank God (god) for these flowers? No, the gardener. The wide-bellied man with red shorts and a sports cap, groaning as his knees bent, his wife watching from the shade of the porch, telling him just where she'd like them—a little to the left! She pictured herself, old, in a blue house with perfectly-placed pink flowers, a dressed goose, a pole with a flag—American. The sun was directly ahead at eye level and an uncomfortable sweat blossomed from her skin, covering her. Her clothes stuck to her in wrong angles.

62

The man beside her had been silent, his pace matching hers. Their hands latched together despite the pooling sweat and twisted wrists. Her thoughts were so used to her being alone. He asked what she would like to do next summer, and she looked at their hands, entwined like the stems of the yellow flowers should have been but weren't because they were not wild. They're not wild, never will be. So, are they real? Are they happy? What did God (god) have to do with it? Is he real? Is He (he) happy? What about the gardener who will die here? She looked down at their entwined hands and she knew what they were both thinking—together but not there. But where? How, together? They inhaled the heat and stepped on weeds growing in those sidewalk cracks that led to the same places.

Inside her chest, in that place slightly below her heart, she felt the restlessness of late July. The restlessness of the stenciled neighborhood, all that suburban green—trimmed and tailored. In the spot below her heart where she pondered and imagined and wished and denied the existence of a soul, she felt the wind and sand and river water and a place unexplored. And, beside that, snuggled close was the feeling of his skin in the morning and his heartbeat beneath her large palm and his heavy head on her chest and his voice close beside her in the evening after the sun had gone down. The feelings had built a home there in her chest and they intended to die there as well. She wondered if they had planted flowers there in that place below her heart. She thought to herself *If they have, they are wild; they are real.* And who does she thank for that place below her heart?

She looks back at the man beside her and kisses his cheek, tasting the summer salt of his skin.



63

THE STREAM

Emma Patterson
collage | 2.5x3.5 in



TOO MANY HANDS

Corbin Rainbolt
digital painting

HOBBY

ethan pickett

Collecting

We have always had a habit of finding things and pretending they belong to us. You just need to pick something. Then, one by one, those things will add up until you have gathered a sufficient amount. This amount is for you and only you to determine. Some may say too much or not enough, but the collecting is for you.

The variations of the same might get boring, but you will know where the differences lie. And you will know which are variations on variations and which ones are more original, or better than others. This expertise alone is worth the price of admission. When your home is bursting at the seams with variations of the same, that's when you know you've done a good job and that you can go back to work. Put your tie on, it's time to do *something*.

Knitting

Fabrication is ingrained in our DNA from the time we are born and we must work very hard not to lose sight of that. The husband and the children will enjoy the gifts that she brings them. The repetition of the movements of in and out and up and under and around will give her a false sense of security in knowing what comes next. This expectation is dangerous. The rhythm will stop eventually and no one will be prepared for it.

They will weep over their mother but she will not hear them. He will visit her every day, like the dutiful spouse that he is, but once he is done fulfilling his duty, he will return to the new flame who has larger breasts and a softer smile. She can't knit, though.

Sending

When we realize that leaving didn't fix everything the way that we thought it would, we decide to send letters to people in the past. The letters will contain memories so specific that it is impossible to be sure that the recipient will even remember that day. With this knowledge, he will happily write and send them anyway because it makes him feel better about himself.

They might look down upon him for doing something that looks like it may be intended for others but is really for himself, and it's important that he doesn't care what they think because they are in the past. Those people in the past haven't moved like he has, they would never understand this insatiable need anyway, so why bother?

He ties up his loose ends and never has enough money for stamps. He emails his boys to tell them to relay his love. They never will. And where he is, it will begin to snow. And he will have no one to sit by the fire and watch it come down with or to make a cup of coffee and enjoy the sunlight that bounces off of the ground with. But no worry, he has long since forgotten this loss.

Loving

This hobby is more consuming than most. People try it and often think they are experts. Be prepared not to be an expert. Here are the things you will need to get started:

- a pen and many sheets of paper
- a smartphone with a sufficient charge
- some blank CD-R discs
- a library card

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To succeed in this game, you must live far away from your teacher, with no immediate hopes or plans to move any closer to one another. You must message every single day, even if your teacher does not respond or tells you to fuck off. You must refrain from saying things that begin with the letter Y and lean toward letters like I or M or D. You must become so infatuated with the things you begin to learn that the rest of your life takes a seat on the backburner. You must forget to take a shower and turn in unfinished assignments and realize all too late that vegetables still exist and should be consumed.

You must keep your nose in a separate world (that's what the library card is for) and seek not to escape, but be sure not to wander too far in. If you do, you will fall. And you will not stop falling until you sleep or die.

Your teacher will have many students and it is important that they give each student different amounts of attention. One week, you will be tended to, cared for, the way that you like. The next week will be much different. Don't stop sending those messages, though. Even if you know you shouldn't.

Bleeding

This activity is for the one who deserved better. They will warn her that she is bleeding, but she must pay no mind. It will happen like this throughout the course of the day until she decides that enough is enough. She will unleash hell on everyone around her, but this will be entirely in her brain. She is a really good talker, though, so she is able to convince herself of anything. So, to her, this happened.

It won't stop, either. She will continue to bleed until there is nothing left for her to do besides that. After everyone before her is gone, she may wander a barren earth, blood still falling from every extremity and orifice. Before they died, many people thought she was looking for something, but she swears that off, too. It may have been true at one point, but her skills in speech have long overridden any fact there once was in her.

Trying

Sometimes, they will cross the Pacific Ocean on foot. They will disperse on their journey and will not reconvene. The smallest girl will sneak into the place where the decisions are made and be left to wonder how she got there. The tallest boy will miss the destination by inches and never know it, not for his whole life. One of them will end up frozen in a glacier. One will return to the leaf pile where he was born and lie down, trying to be unborn. None of them will ever be where they belong.

They will have to live out their fates and let their faiths decide what happens to them after that. Some of them will be happy, some of them will not. The man in the leaf pile will find comfort, but never fulfillment. The decision-maker will be left to wonder if she ever fulfilled any wishes of the people she claimed to serve. Loneliness will be the only indication that any of them ever belonged together in the first place.



YAK IN LADAKH

Ryan Wehb

digital photograph | 4048 x 3036 pixels

MADLINE NOELLE — GULLION

maddie gullion

i tell stories of my name with humor,
poking fun
at my first and middle—
a birthright pun,
when spelled.
at how my last,
by dictionary definition,
means a vile,
worthless person.

i should carry my name proudly,
named,
in pieces,
after my ancestors
and strong women before.

there is a piece i never share,
one i stow, hidden
in ancient layers of assimilation
and whitewashing.
the tongue-and-throat sound of ng,
passed from my mother's mouth to mine,
hung on my inheritance like
a gulp of water.

if i met another with my name,
i would ask them how they use it—
how they choose
which pieces to give away,
which pieces to save.

BLACKBERRIES

Bea N'Daou

i.
there's a baby bird
beneath the leaves of a blackberry bush
its sharp beak bursts the tart
precious fruit

ii.
when it rains I wonder if blackberry bushes
take raindrops and turn them into
berries filled with sweet water

iii.
the branches are bare now
a maiden with a blue handkerchief and
gentle fingers plucks them all
like harp strings

iv.
a bowl of cream
with dark gleaming jewels
the cream is heavy on my tongue
but the blackberries go down easy

v.
i don't like blackberries
i like sweet cream and apricot jam
blackberries—
they look sweet
but they aren't really

vi.
i like to think if my grandmother remembered me
she'd have tea with me and toast
with rich, sweet, blackberry preserves

vii.
i don't like blackberries
but
they're beautiful



UNTITLED PORTRAIT

Sulay Ranjit



FAIRYTALE

Phi Nguyen

stoneware and underglaze | 18 in

A REVERSE-CHRONOLOGY: ALL THE TIMES I KNEW WE WERE OVER

Zach Semel

8

She and I have been together nearly two years now. We go into the city for the day. A reminder that there are bigger buildings than three stories. A man selling his rap album on the street corner, nearly pleading. We were something I had once pled for. But, surrounded by sprawling industry, I become certain that we are outdated.

She asks me, sharply, to slow down, but I want to keep walking. I want to walk away and forget her, utterly. A teenager shoving away his father's hand as he walks out the door. A student boycotting his physics homework in favor of writing stories.

I can have what I want. I feel entitled to that: to things falling onto my lap even as I'm standing.

I want, so bad, for her to just be a faster walker.

7

We've grown to love each other, truly, but I'm thinking of her less and less. She's stopped reminding me to put on my helmet when I bike to the gym on Thursdays. The road is often iced over carelessly; I skid in and out of the bike lane, frankly remaining lucky not to have swerved into oncoming traffic or into a frozen snowbank. She's not so invested in my overcoming these obstacles, and that's not to say as much that she doesn't care about my safety; I just think she needs me less than I need her.

I don't know how to fix that. To re-brand myself as a necessity.

6

I've reached the age at which I am biologically pre-disposed to be brimming with angst. I document my self in stories told through the eyes of boys peering over the edge of adulthood. I give her something I wrote: my first real story. I can't find the words to tell her...so I rip out this page of writing from my notebook, and hand it to her. She places it on her night table with enough indifference that it floats off, nearly tipping over a tube of lipstick that's teetering on the edge.

As the sheet descends softly to her beige carpet, I grab it and place it back carefully so it will be ready when called upon to speak on my behalf. The page remains unheard on her bedside for weeks. Eventually, she picks it up and listens halfheartedly.

5

I come home from school after my first fight, having gotten my ass kicked. My best friend—he's chronically furious, channeling his anger into athletic superstardom on all but this day. The conflict started so suddenly, and before I knew it he'd lifted me up by my collar, suspending me above the white tile floor like a tennis ball over a dog's open mouth. As I looked into his squinting blue eyes, his boyish freckles grinning angrily under the fluorescents, it felt as if there was something within him that he'd learned to hate.

I don't understand it and I don't think he does either, but I want to help him. I ask my dad what to do, and he tells me: "You can't fix people; they can only fix themselves."

4

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I invited my girlfriend over to my house for dinner this weekend. My parents didn't like her. The dinner seemed to drag on in a vague way that I can't put together. I'm not sure if she talked too much, or just said the wrong things. After she's walked out the front door to drive back home, my parents project forced smiles and stay silent in that way that people do when you should know what they're thinking. When you're missing something obvious.

3

She's the detached sort who leaves me needing proof that she actually misses me. It's as if she wants to convince the world around her that if it all fell to rubble, she'd be fine. She's a 'survivor,' but I dislike being seen that way: as adversity for which to prepare.

2

We're dating officially, now. On Saturday nights, we watch a movie, then fool around. A disconnected crescendo, decrescendo. We're blank together, I think: though in a way I can't quite touch.

1

After we first kiss, she tells me that she's not a good person for me and, for a moment, I believe her.

[NOT] born this way

i was not born this way

i was not born a ~queer~

colonial, capitalist conceptions of gender, race, "ability"
stitched a blood-drawing language into my mouth
my thoughts

to conceive of myself as queer

i spit and draw crimson drops of love, of pride, of hate, of nausea
onto precious sheets of desperate paper

perceptions of my body

its physical appearance

its physical actions

cloaked by the only language i know

- English -

these precious sheets of ~~desperate~~ paper down in crimson
drawing me

i collapse

my flustered decks collide with the dark, warm, sticky substance

trying to soak the color 'back in



[NOT] BORN THIS WAY

AJ Tiedeman

excerpt from zine: "TFW You're
a WGSS Major"



SUPERBOWL SUNDAY

Kinsey Emerson

TAKING OUT THE TRASH

Mairead Blatner

In a September dream, mushrooms pushed up through his skin,
such strange colors.

Bound to happen, I know,
they were just waiting for the rain that falls,
bitter and tinged with orange,
at the end of summer.

A dumpster squats beside his house,
a big old house full of opinionated young people,
and trash sprouts in the lawn,
trash left behind by former tenants,
trash he said they couldn't sell,
but it's hard to guess what people will pick up from the side of the road.
Even sensible people fall in love with things they don't need.
And it was only natural that mushrooms should bloom for me,
misty missing on the windshield in the moments between hurry-scurrying:
driving home at dusk,
some Bob Dylan song.

Mushrooms grow because nothing stays as beautiful as summer in a hot
kitchen

or a cool walk-in refrigerator where we stood surrounded by boxes,
where he told me to tell the line cook to get her own fucking Russian dressing
and then apologized for being so
(paused, cast about, wiggled fingers)
candid.

Preserved in full color.

Blue shelving, waxy-white boxes, green greens, pink-orange Russian dressing.

Nothing Russian about it.

Nothing lasting about preserved.

Always best to be thorough, he said,
so a spot of mold condemned most things.

We were always taking out the trash,
lifting the lid of the paper recycling dumpster beside the restaurant
with all the broken-down boxes held against the side of his head.
I used to worry about looking incompetent
because I couldn't do it all by myself,
but between the two of us we dropped more on the ground than I did alone.
My motivation floated away
with the return of books and desks and conversations about My Future,
but I didn't chase it because he said not to care so much.

Just wait until college, he said.
You'll have an existential crisis,
but until then nothing really matters.
Sitting at a cafe table, sipping black coffee together,
I was late to class.
I didn't want to be an archetype of impressionability.
But I was seventeen and I sometimes forgot
that I could take out the trash by myself.



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IN AMMAN

Hanh Le

digital photograph | 3714 × 5571 pixels



LIFE IN DEATH

Sunset Combs

pencil sketch; digital enhancement | 800x800 pixels

DEAD BIRDS I HAVE KNOWN

Opal Harbour

1. Clara's Bird

The day after the neighbor kid's birthday party, balloons still limp in the street

It was smeared across the driveway like frosting

Red in the bushes and red on the rocks and red soaked into the ant mounds in the sun-baked soil

So much blood, like syrup, pooling and rolling

And painted across our cat's tawny fur, tacky around the corners of his mouth

My sister scraped it from the rocks and the gravel, hid her face from the children

Who walked up and down the street, calling a name that echoed off the rooftops, voices cracking

Until the light left the sky and the asphalt turned cold again

She would go to the parents' door in the morning

Apologize, offer money three times

But five summers earlier, it had been our cat, and their driveway, and their dog

They remember how much blood a little body can contain

This is a debt repaid

2. God's Bird

You took an hour to find parking, settled on a small street two miles from the protest

It was crowded even there

And I saw it laid across the brittle brown January grass

Flayed and picked apart

It must have been posed

Because the neck—no flesh, just bone picked clean—

Craned like a swan's, and not like a pigeon's

And the wings spread out in radiant array

Each feather in its place

You preferred not to look but

I thought it looked like an angel

3. Bambi's Bird

He didn't scream when it happened—he must not have
She never found the body
Just the battered old cage, and the sticky blood, and all around it reds and
blues and greens and yellows scattered through the pine needles
And two wings left caught between the bars

I could see something sickly pulling at the corners of her mouth when she
told me that the ermine in the garden looked plump that day

She'd had him thirty years before last spring
And the hunting rifle that hangs over the cellar door seemed enticing
But the ermine keeps the pigeons from the garden, she said
And he was old, she said,
And there'd been enough death that year

4. Your Bird

82 Barefoot in the garden, I nearly stepped on it
Threw myself back when I saw the feathers, splitting my elbow open on
the frame of the vegetable bed
But its little body remained unscathed, and I was glad because
We don't see buntings here much anymore

I called you, as I always do when I don't know what to do
Described the soap-bubble shine at the edges of the wings
Your words sounded like cellophane on the old landline
But I could hear the smile shape your voice as you told me:
Wash the blood off of my elbow
Clear a space in the freezer
Go back out with a pair of gloves and a ziploc bag
And you would collect it in the morning

The cat, suspect as ever, licked a paw as he watched me
I was gentle, so gentle, more gentle than I ever am
Its stiff foot caught the fabric on my sleeve
But I remember how soft the feathers felt against my gloves



SELF-PORTRAIT

Annalee Shields

marker & pen | 5x3 in

CONTRIBUTORS

Mairead Blatner loves chocolate and blues dancing, and sometimes wants to change the world. She is trying hard to be a real person in addition to being a college student.

Kate Buche-Pattison is a senior English major from Wisconsin who enjoys knitting, climbing, and eating cheese almost as much as reading and writing

Sunset Combs is a creator of music, art, and prose. She is an English major, but does not want to be a teacher (which she has to explain often). She cannot watch Heart perform “Crazy On You” live without crying and her best vacation was visiting the Mothman Museum.

Lily Cosgrove is a freshman, and recently began exploring the world of writing poetry after years of admiring the craft.

Charley Drew-Wolak is studying Computer Science and Art with a focus in 3D Fabrication.

Lindsey Gearin is a freshman and potential Math major from northern Wisconsin. She claims to be a morning person and loves chocolate, black tea, and being outside.

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Natalie Gillies is a photographer working primarily in the darkroom, with a particular interest in cyanotype, narrative-based work, and the historical implication of craft and its intersection with materials.

Illianna Gonzalez-Soto is a sophomore English major from San Diego. She enjoys reading and writing fiction. She takes delight in drinking too much coffee and binge-watching Netflix in her spare time.

Jacyn Gormish is a senior Religion major with a minor in Studio Arts, soon to head into the terrifying beyond. They use art to explore questions and feelings. They enjoy most kinds of creating and thinking. Also swords.

maddie gullion is a freshman hoping to graduate with some major/minor combination of Environmental Sustainability, Spanish, and Creative Writing. she is passionate about grammar—the em dash in particular—and the return to a circular economy.

Padgett Gustavson is a sophomore majoring in Geology and minoring in Studio Art. He is from Philadelphia but has lived in Oregon for the past four years. He is inspired by sustainability and self reliance. He has the audacious goal to one day be able to make or repair everything that he uses.

Opal Harbour is a freshman. She crawled out of a bog in Colorado one day and demanded that Alan Price allow her admission. Her withered husk can be seen drifting through LBC late into the night like a grim specter of death as she works toward a History degree. Please do not call the police.

Lilly Hartman is a Biology major and Creative Writing minor. She likes to make things out of clay, find cool stuff to look at in the woods, and do crossword puzzles.

Gaia Hendrix-Petry's only hobby is FaceTiming her dog back home. This is how she lives her life and thinks you should, too. Her studies show that this is the best way to spend a rainy Thursday afternoon.

Yeheon Hong is a sophomore English major. You will often find him in his room playing League of Legends, binge-watching Netflix shows, or generally being a melancholy shade in the corner.

Mia Kaplan is a senior pursuing a degree in Art with a Metals focus. Her work includes sculpture and jewelry inspired by geometric forms, natural imagery, and line work. She is intrigued by how we see connectivity in nature, ourselves, and architecture. Mia wants to encourage you to attend the Senior Art Show!

Hanh Le is double-majoring in Biology and Peace & Global Studies. She loves infectious diseases, talking politics, and photography. With her work *In Amman*, she is stepping out of her comfort zone and taking photographs of people she does not know. Even from afar, it still counts.

Johanna Marie is a senior Art major who loves photography, ceramics, and paper art. You can find her installing artwork and setting up crazy photo shoots in random places around campus. See more of her work on Instagram @johannamariart.

Becca Moore is a junior HDSR major. She strives to become a children's counselor, and to write her own book one day. Her work focuses on her personal experiences with mental illness, being LGBTQ+, and embracing the wonders of being alive. Becca hopes her poems can inspire, empower, and uplift those who read them.

Katy A. Morrow is a sophomore English major from the Willamette Valley in Oregon. She was introduced to photography through participation in 4-H. In addition to photography, Katy enjoys painting, sewing, and baking.

Grace Mulamba is a sophomore majoring in English. She's lowkey a passionate singer, afro-centric dancer, and, of course, a lover of poetry and admirer of words.

Anna Mullin is a sophomore Biology major and Creative Writing minor. She enjoys making art of all kinds in her free time.

Bea N'Daou is a freshman of Afro-Scandinavian heritage and enjoys writing poetry and short stories.

Phi Nguyen is a freshman majoring in Computer Science. He listens to 1812 and enjoys rescuing imaginary animals.

Emma Patterson is a sophomore Geology major with minors in Japanese Language and Sustainability. While she isn't taking art classes much at Earlham, she went to an arts high school and continues making art in her free time. Recently she has gotten more into collaging.

ethan pickett is a sophomore English and Visual Art major. He hopes you are well.

Graham Pines: In a landscape which has been disrupted, dismantled by man and greed, finding solace amid destruction becomes arduous. Forces uncontrollable push us beyond ourselves and our capabilities, begging us to question when we will return to truth. This is where to find Brooklyn's Graham Pines.

Jakob Posti is a sophomore Studio Art major.

Corbin Rainbolt works primarily with linework and colored pencil, and has recently transitioned over to painting using digital art programs. His pieces usually depict strange creatures and vehicles.

Eliza Rehard is a senior English major. When they're not reading or writing, Eliza can be found drinking an Americano and talking about how much they love bees.

Madison Reynolds Graham is a painter, writer, and photographer. They grew up in Denver. They are 20 years old. They are a Painting and Photo major. They like to explore themes of dissociation, illusion, dreams, aesthetic moments, and bodily existence through their art. They enjoy walking in the woods and trying their best.

Zach Semel is a senior English major who has sometimes quit caffeine. He loves reading and writing, is an avid NBA fan (and basketball player), and hoards bags of Hershey's Kisses year-round.

Annalee Shields is an Art major from Chicago, Illinois, whose focus is in Illustration and Fiber Arts. She finds inspiration in natural forms, the human body, and the physical and emotional similarity between the two.

Kelsey Stratman is a senior majoring in English and WGSS.

Ethan Thompson is a sophomore Geology student who enjoys rock collecting and wood carving. He has always enjoyed being around and on water, and is trying to capture that feeling in the tiniest container he can in *Bottlecap Boat*.

AJ Tiedeman: “I created [TFW You’re a WGSS Major] to put something into the world that I would have thought was pretty dope to come across as a queer trans Asian American kid. It attempts to complicate narratives of what being a queer trans Asian American may mean: internally and in interactions with others.”

Maddie Wallace enjoys reading and writing so much that she’s majoring in English. Despite that, she never has time to read or write. She thinks it’s important to know she’s only whistled once in her life, and it was by accident.

Della Walters is a sophomore from Berea, Kentucky, studying Sociology. She is interested in social justice, specifically surrounding working class and labor politics. Della is experimenting with magnet word art such as *The Bench* to make work that feels adaptable, as to capture the nuance new moments can bring.

Ryan Webb: “During my semester in India, I became interested in photography. The number of opportunities to capture diverse scenery and landscapes was overwhelming. *Yak in Ladakh* captures a unique facet of my experience. I hope you enjoy the scene.”

Dorothy Weiss is a first year student at Earlham College.

Kinsey Emerson

Sulay Ranjit

And Anonymous Contributors