



2020

ARTEMAS

2021

A STUDENT JOURNAL OF WRITING AND ART
AT YOUNG HARRIS COLLEGE

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Special thanks to Jo Barse for her generous support and funding in honor of Danny Barse, class of 1979.

Artemas, formerly *Corn Creek Review*, is created by and for the students of YHC and serves as a vehicle for their creative expression. *Artemas* accepts submissions of poetry, prose, musical composition, photography, painting, drawing and other art forms. Each year, the magazine is put together by a student group that gathers submissions, chooses the content for the magazine and designs the layout. The magazine's title is in honor of Rev. Artemas Lester, who established YHC in 1886.

Contact Faculty Advisor Dr. Gale Thompson (gmthompson@yhc.edu) if you are interested in joining the staff, securing an issue, or submitting your work.

COVER: "MANSFIELD" BY HANNAH-MARIE OWENS

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Foreward

We have powered through a world-wide pandemic for a year. At times it has been difficult with an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness, but through writing and art we have found ways to navigate these emotions. I hope that this issue of the Artemas is able to offer some light for the year we have been through. Although there were moments of indulging in laughter, figuring out how to navigate school online, and many emotional events that have occurred, it is important to acknowledge we made it. It saddens me to think of those lives lost during this pandemic.

The Young Harris College campus was also impacted by a difficult loss this year. It is with great honor that we dedicate this issue of the Artemas to David-akem Harville Smith. David's talent has touched this campus in ways that words cannot express. As a Music Major, David took it upon himself to explore the art of writing by taking an Introduction to Creative Writing course. While he was passionate about music, David also took the time to dig into poetry as well. The entire campus has been touched by his journey at YHC, and it is my hope that this issue can honor him.

Best,
Kate Greene

LIVI IOBST

Because I Was There

I looked really pretty
On the day after David fell.
I got to know him pretty well
Only because of circumstances,
Because I was there.

I felt bad that his water bottle broke.
I wanted to buy him a new one.
His glasses snapped on accident
That is too expensive for me to replace.

None the less, I helped pick up the pieces,
I held a light for him in hopes he could see.
That wasn't enough.

The day David died I waited
For the sunrise to cry.



HANNAH-MARIE OWENS

Holy Spirit

AVEL TRIANA

How to Go to College

Be sure to take the SAT early, in case you need to take it again;
shoot for at least a 1200, more if you think you can do better.
On the way back, notice the road workers in their uniforms:
offensive shades
of green, orange and brown.

Be sure to apologize to everyone that you lock eyes with:
the boy who's working, when he should be studying for the SAT;
the old man, the one who you think looks like your Papa Genaro.
At least, the pictures you have of him and the features you can kind
of make out
through the green and orange haze.

If you look behind him you can see the felt marigolds
and homemade paints Mama Glafira
spent her final days making, but they're garbled,
occulted by spots of crusty, blue ink.
They're there, but you can only see them if
you squint really hard, like my Gameboy
after my sister tried to clean the screen under the sink.

Memories are just as waterlogged as pictures
you can't remember Mama Glafira's voice,
because you only got to talk to her once,
and all you can remember is a joke about wearing a sweater
but not the punchline.
No smell, no memory of marshmallow skin and bony hugs to guide
you,
so as far as you know your grandmother was the cold orange glow
of the landline.
you all share the same weary eyes
and you all cry the same tears onto your chemistry study guide.
You'll wish you could take them with you,

cram them all into your tiny dorm room:
but you make sure those soggy echos burn bright:
Échale ganas.

BRI KEITH

Fall

I love the raked leaves in pumpkin patches
and apple orchards, friends drinking cider
around the ceremonial bonfire under the ombre sunset.
Nothing is better, in my opinion,
than holding a hot beverage whose fumes
ooze from the gash in the lid
scorching my shaking hands, peeling lips, and stone stomach.

Halloween, or better yet, Samhain creates glee
for my black tourmaline heart. The hanging
black lace on witches' hats, iron cauldrons
whose stirred ingredients are hidden within opaque liquids,
and crystals charging under the moonlight beam.
I couldn't be happier sitting in a dark room,
huddled underneath a mound of blankets
to watch a scary movie, as long as I have
friends to lean into singing "This is Halloween."
This holiday always feels like the last spark of light
before the bitter days enter, even after my exhausted body
was beginning to recover from a weeklong battle against
the Swine-flu,
I felt happy.

Following that day, is a downward slide
of get-togethers
and the debates on whose family,
whose house, and whose food accommodations will be made,
the sun's time among us begins to fade. The heat
that I always thought was too much
is fading, and I,
I thought it wouldn't bother me
spending days on the other side of the sun faded window,
but now, its cold glass does.

BRY MEISTER

Cautious Discovery

Coffee at Midnight

She doesn't pour her coffee, per se. It's more of a flying action; the lid of the pot clattering to the countertop and a vicious stream of hazelnut coffee burnt black lashes out into the chipped mug. This action is a consequence of her multitasking. In her left hand is a knife, spreading peanut butter on a slice of bread, and her hips sway as she dances around the counter. Frank Sinatra blares from the speaker perched precariously on the windowsill above the sink which is full of dishes.

Her hair is pulled back from her eyes and she smiles at me, wrinkles along her temple aging her young face. She sings along to Sinatra, waving the knife before dropping it into the sink and slapping another slice of bread on top of her peanut butter saturated piece. With a whistle, she shoves the carafe back onto the hot plate and heads towards the fridge, side-stepping the kitchen island with a skip. Tiny porcelain fingers wrap around the handle and I can feel their pads draping along my hairline, brushing against my ears and down along my collarbone.

The shivers along my skin fade as she lets go of the handle to grab the creamer, perfectly chilled, from the fridge and turns to add a single drop into the mug. After returning it to its spot beside the pickles and battered ham, she holds her hand out to me and I hand her the sugar container from where it sits on the counter beside me. It takes two small spoonfuls before she's content with the quality of her bitter savior. She's quiet now, leaning against the island, mug pressed to her sternum in between both of her palms. A whispered sigh escapes her lips before she's lifting the mug for a kiss, spilling the steaming liquid down her esophagus to pool in her belly.

Stone Mountain Lake

She's facing away from me, phone held to the sky as she captures the rolling sunset. Waves rock against the dock as the clouds

string apart above us. The threat of rain is prevalent in the rumble of thunder and subtle splashes of lightening. Her hair is highlighted by the periwinkle sky; strawberry curls pinned back in a tangle. She turns to smile at me, the flower I had plucked from the earth for her tucked behind her ear, golden as her soul. My hand reaches up to touch the matching flower she had tucked in my hair, to reassure myself it was still there. She holds my hand on the way back to the car.

A force to reckon with. Is there any other way to put it? She is but a force to reckon with. Her hands, small and thin, could grip the throat of a man twice her size and bring him to his knees. Her voice, sweet and lulling, could capture the attention of God and convince him to rewrite the galaxy. Her eyes, gentle and wide, fill so rarely with tears around others as her independence is impossible to implode.

I firmly believe in soulmates. They do not complete you, nor do they fix any part of you that you think is broken. They are there to remind you of your strength, to fight for you when you are unable, to show you kindness and respect when the world drowns you in malice and deceit.

She is my soulmate in every sense of the word. I may love others in my lifetime, as may she, but there will always be a time in which we find ourselves back together.

Parked

It's an ethereal feeling—tucked within her arms, her lips tracing drowsily across my shoulder and lacing over my cheek to meet my own lips in a gentle kiss meant to be drawn out, the sunlight just barely filtering in through the car windows. You think I make it all up, it sounds too good to be true, but I assure you. I assure you that she holds me like I am glass and iron; fragile enough to break if held too tightly, and strong enough to retain my shape and worth under duress.

She kissed me with a hesitation, the fear that I would slip away from her caress evident as I had pulled away too often in the past and she chases after me, reaching for the oxygen I had stolen from her lungs. She trailed her mouth down my shoulder blades,

pressed into my spine, nipped at the thick flesh of my hips, and lay pursed against the inside of my thigh.

I never thought I could be loved so heavily but here I am, seared into her flesh and imprinted along her skull. It's a hidden desire, a hidden worship on her bruised knees as she pushed herself up the length of my body to kiss my lips once more. She settles herself between my thighs and collapses in on me. Her arms curl around me in a whisper, her head pressed to my chest, my fingers in her hair and draping down her back. Her breathing loosens and the tension fades. We are no longer forbidden at this moment and she can relinquish her conscience to the solace of my heartbeat. I think of the years we've spent together and the years we have yet to come across. I will never tire of her smile, her laugh, her kindness. She is the sculpture of Aphrodite—beauty, grace, love, joy, strength wrapped in a single frame of freckled marble.

Sleepover

It's natural to her, the way her fingers card through the wet tresses of my hair. The soap slips down my back as she massages her fingertips at the base of my skull. I want to lean back, to rest upon her and feel the silk of skin against skin, but I stay in place so she can continue her work. The shower spray splashes onto my bare breasts, barring her from its warmth, but she does not shiver.

Drying off, she ruffles the towel along the base of my neck, gathering the twisted strands in a cotton grip. She laughs as I pull away, shaking my head to escape the towel's reach. Her laugh is high pitched and sharp, like the clang of an iron bell, but there's something soft about it—a muffled glimmer of rainfall, pattering gently on asphalt, between the cracks of the bell stand.

She reaches for her glasses instead of her contacts, shoving the clear plastic frames onto her nose, and clambers into bed. Patting the pillowed seat beside her, she silently requests for me to join her. As I do so, she pulls the thick blankets up to her chin and settles against my side, curling in to fit perfectly along my body. I brush her hair back the way she does to myself every so often, fingertips trailing

along her temple and dipping across the curve of her ears. She rests an arm around my waist and pulls me tighter to her, eyes scrunched shut in contentment and glasses pushed sideways with the force of pressing her face into my ribs. Here, we are together, and it is no longer a cautious pleasure. It is the deepest form of intimacy, I think, to allow someone to care for you so openly and so gently.



HANNAH-MARIE OWENS

Chaos

KATE GREENE

Birthday Party

I'm standing around a concrete table
underneath a park pavilion. The ocean
a few hundred feet away, but my sister is pushing
her lanky body down the slide, not caring
about getting her dark denim shorts wet
from the puddles left by the rain. My boyfriend
helps my stepfather plop battered fish
into the fryer. Three years I've been asking,
should I just call him dad? My lips
want to push the word out. Dad.
Giving him that title isn't hard.

Somewhere along the coast of Mexico
my DNA is buried in some undiscovered trench.
An abuela cooks tamales for her family. Her hair,
the inky black color I have tried so hard to hide.
An old photograph hugs the fridge. The corners
folded with age and a young man stands
in front of a raggedy home. His bushy black brows
lifted to the sky. The corners of his full lips chase
after them in a smile. His sister shuffles around the table,
dragging her slippers against the vinyl in a low hum.
Her children question their abuela. The rain slaps the ground
and everyone at the party huddles for shelter.

I am surrounded by my family, but somewhere
mi familia is wondering about me.
Mi abuela doesn't mention it as the children shove
forks full of food into their mouths. Mi tía dreamt of planning
my quinceañera, the one she always wished to have.
But the man in the photograph keeps smiling,
as if he doesn't know I exist.

JANERRA COPELAND

Spotlight

It's crazy to see how the white women are fluidly elegant.
The pure white dresses that shield the false innocence
that white women portray. But Black women are just exotic.
Exotic. Exotic. Exotic.

Our voluptuous bodies flood through the mind of the erected men.
A trail of ecstasy follows as we walk by the perverted men
that flood this earth.

Their jeans become tight with excitement to see how
dirty and freaky Black women can be.
Nothing to hold them back from slipping one hand into
their briefs and searching for one ten minutes video
to relieve them.

The ebony categories soar through with views on Pornhub.
Other categories fight for the spotlight but that box of light
shines on Black women.

Our voluptuous bodies flood through the mind of the erected men.
No way for this to end. Can't help the lost minds of overgrown
boys.

We are no longer wife material, but we have become jack-off
entertainment.

That wedding dress is not ours. Never meant to be ours.
The constant battle of defeating teen pregnancy.

We are no longer wife material but jack-off entertainment.

ELIZABETH SIGMON

Sweet Little Lies

We start every morning with our morning coffee, pour in some
cream, and a lie.

We lie in bed at night and when we toss, and we turn we tell
ourselves a lovely lie.

Innocence lost within a child, stolen when they learn they can
invent knowledge.

Sally's teacher is calling, she is in big trouble, she told the whole
first grade a lie.

Her parents wonder where on Earth she could have learned that
skill and why would she

When they try hard to hide their screaming and at night, but they
don't know Sally lies awake.

Where are you going, what are you doing, how are you feeling, are
you okay?

Going nowhere, doing nothing, I feel fine, I am fine, I am telling
you lies.

Parents reassure their children over and over: *we'll never leave,*
we'll never die, the world is safe.

They grow up, they get married, they have children, they learn the
truth, they continue the lie.

You can trust me, I'll never tell a soul, he says with a calm steady
voice and those deep blue eyes

And a shit-eating grin that gives you a chill, but you open yourself
up and you believe every lie.

And you promise yourself that he didn't break you as you bandage

up the black and blue.

Inside of you, trying not to think of all the times that summer
sitting and lying on the beach.

It's easy to forget, to get lost in things, watch a movie, take a bath,
and maybe drink some wine?

But it all comes seeping back in at the most peculiar of moments,
your old friend, *the* lie.

The pounding of the chest, the old drag of the heart
Crowing *You* are lying. *You* lied. *You* are a liar. *You* are a lie.

BRI KEITH

Goblin Cries

Do you hear the wrinkled goblin's tears
in the new-moon sky? The rocks that rattle
from every twitch and shake
covered in oil from greasy and calloused hands.
Their yellowed, curving nails clack and scrape through a mound
of items pulled apart. A doll
unzipped down through its concaved face
and up around between its scraped, limp legs.
But the pull tab for the zipper is missing
and there is no telling to when it begins and ends.
How long it has rested on the side of a road,
in a bed of grass, rain pelting the body,
and mud rolling over the sides
becoming an ant mound that has not seen
its small, shelled inhabitants for months.
Looking, watching with its black beady eyes
from behind the shrubs at the children
that tumble around like some acrobat practicing their skills
and returning to their parents in hopes of a reward.
Meanwhile, the goblin returns to its dark cave
with shiny findings wrapped in its embrace
to add to its pile that consumes the space.

JAMIE HICKS

*Nana's Pseudo-suite just off the Kitchen,
before she got "sober"*

Three crumpled cartons of Marlboro Menthol Lights, the soft pack, settle in the waste bin underneath the corner table. A half empty bottle of Johnny Walker Red hides under the sofa, tucked under the right dust flap, just within arm's reach. The sofa has been recovered. The clashing pink and blue stripes attempt to bring a friendly charm that sits heavy on my chest. The carpet, formerly tan, is now sticky and stained. Mold infects the fibers, popping up in quarter sized blisters that cluster in black mosaics. The "iced tea" glass lying in a puddle provides evidence for the innumerable spills. An Easter basket holds 12 novelty cups that live just to the left of the old box TV. The words *Bailey's Irish Cream* is carved in gold on the front of each one.

A hospital bracelet waves innocently from the bedside table. The nice kitchen scissors used to cut it off lay splayed open on the floor. The hospital bed, rented, sits to its left, pushed flush with the back windows. The back porch is just visible through the silver blinds, a graveyard of lipstick-smudged cigarette butts. Those blinds, I cut with safety scissors when this room was still a playroom. They sway haphazardly to the left, sunshine peeking through the blades I trimmed too short. They can't be opened, the string chopped off in my childish mania.

The crayon mural, my sister's creation, is half-obsured by the clothing rack we bought to make her a closet. The bright colors dull against the peeling white paint. My mother's lap desk sits perfectly center in the unmade bed. One of three oxygen masks hangs from the rear right corner. Electrical cords, oxygen lines, and the dog leash weave a maze across the patchy carpet. The dog bed lays untouched and blocks the bottom dresser drawer. The stuttered snoring emanates from under the bed instead, half matted white fur poking out from under the bed skirt. The whole room smells of alcohol and unwashed dog. The essential oil diffuser, with its oscillating lights, adds the faint

hint of lavender on top of the overwhelming cologne.

The cold drifts in from the crack in the French doors that never seem to shut right. The black insulation pocked with teeth marks extends a crooked hand outside. The aged off-white curtains follow the breeze and cast half-hearted shadows in the sunlight. A brass key dangles from the rod, its perfect silhouette left in dust on the top of the left curtain. I count three lamps, their shades all different shapes. The blue privacy curtains hang in the opening to the kitchen. Hemmed badly, they leave the bottom edge sloping until it drags along the wood trim separating tile from carpet. The washing machine thumps against the east wall, shaking the mirror perched on the dresser. The furniture is all too close together, a claustrophobic experiment in comfort.

Two emergency room blankets, the cotton kind that never keep you quite warm enough, rest folded on the arm of the blue chair. There is an empty pill bottle mixed among the clutter on the coffee table, it reads “oxycodone: do not take with alcohol.” The refill is quietly locked in the gun safe in my father’s closet. Under the bed, I count three empty handles, the glass reflecting the white glow of the headlamp. The overhead light bulb is dead, though the fan still spins. The dust itches my nose; the dog stirs and settles which clinks the bottles together. It’s a lower pitch and the sound reverberates. Dents, in the carpet, a memory to save where the dining room table once sat. Accompanied by the notch in the drywall, a prize won when the chair legs finally broke and sent Dad sprawling. The shelf which once held coloring books and bedtime stories now overflows with first aid, IV bags, and other medical supplies for the nurse who comes by on Tuesdays.

The drain greedily swallows \$103 of scotch, and the garbage utters a wheezing sigh. The scent of stale tobacco whispers from the bag as the top is drawn tight. The switch halts the fan with a resounding click. The blue curtains protest, grinding against the rail as they pull closed. Well-worn tires fling gravel down the driveway, a sound that tumbles and cracks. The doctor’s advice now neatly printed in my mother’s notes. I run the trash out and throw it in our neighbor’s bin. Yellow sunshine bleeds red on the horizon.

ROBERT DAMON-PUNDT

I Used to Turn Purple in the Sunshine

I used to turn purple in the sunshine
And, by choice, I was exiled and tossed
Into the belly of an ambulance.
Out of the soap bar-sized window,
The glow of the streetlights darted past me
Like snakes sliding across the night sky.
Ushered out and away, rooms to rooms,
Dragged and clothed, my waist was zip-tied
—O Mother of God, I am hungry!
I rested with lingering ghouls, flashing blues
And throbbing pangs, and I wondered
How my bones could snap with a quick jolt.
When I ate an apple, I ate the seeds, too.
Was there something beyond brand new?

BRY MEISTER

A Fetus is the Size of a Fig at Three Months

Ultrasound photos are not a direct translation of size. A fetus is miniscule, shrunken, and deformed in its growing state. The ultrasound zooms in and stretches the fetus' image in a bloated shadow. The grey and black smudge on laminated paper is, in reality, the size of a fig. Eleven and a half weeks in and the tiny, purple-skinned fruit is curled in on itself to fit the packaging. Tiny pink pellet seeds crowded together at the fruit's center, pulse with a rapid heartbeat. Tiny, stocky fists, not yet ripe for the plucking, raised to its blossoming bud of a head, prepared for its birthing howl—a cry to never be heard.

There's still an ache, an emptiness in the womb where it had been ripped from its roots. Destroying a self-made creation is not simple nor is it easy, but there's an understanding now. The tiny bundle in the tiny photo stuffed in my wallet is a reminder, a looking glass, of life before and after. One day, the photo in my wallet will be of a child, ripe and pink, bigger than a fig, nestled to my breast, tiny heartbeat pounding against my own.

AVEL TRIANA

Avalanche

Snowflakes are actually quite sharp,
nobody tells you that. I can feel each one digging
into my skin, sucking
my heat out like mosquitoes.
They're also quite heavy
a frozen phalanx blocking out the sun.
Oh, what I would give to feel your warm skin sear
mine one last time.

My mother would hold my hand
while I waited for the schoolbus,
and even though now I realize my tiny palms were icy
on her skin, she didn't mind
and I know you would love
to give someone all your extra heat and finally cool
down. O, my love, you don't know
how many hearts you could warm,
how many purple fingers you could yank back from the edge
of frostbite.

one last sip,
one more second with our energies
growing and glowing in Godzilla's belly;
The memories of you go down my throat like brandy
and for a second you hold me
and my muscles finally start resting
And even though I shouldn't, I start undressing
button by button
top to bottom
zipper crunching
denim crumpling
elastic snapping!

but the moment I realize that I'm still by myself,
I feel even colder than before.

ROBERT DAMON-PUNDT

A Confession of Prelest

I try to escape myself; I walk away.
I skulk off abruptly like a fervent mind
At the cusp of defeat, and try to find
A face, a golden legend, in the mountain.

A sign is an alpaca protected
By a shaggy yellow dog, galloping
With fur swinging from its chest. I am close.
How else could retrievers and alpacas look like dreams?

Ascending the icy black road, the sun
kissed every leaf and spiny stalk.
The white-capped mountains were cottoned
Like bristly chins coated with shaving cream.

*You don't know when the mountain ends
And the clouds start*, I thought. Not now.
All these scrambling thoughts will sweep away
The bliss and warm pockets of the moment.

My hands were stiff and indigo-stained,
Speckled red cheeks are tapered down,
And lips pouted, shredded by the wind,
And taste like pennies. Nothing's happening.

I desire and I boast—O Lord, have mercy.
I am unworthy and vain to tease a taste
Of something beyond mind and flesh.
Ashamed and sunken, I begin to descend.

Yet, staring off, stalking the green gaps,
A family of deer were nibbling

A path unaware, until I stepped closer.
The mother, the big one, glanced up.

Her eyes were glassy, her tail shivered,
And as the orange sun reached, the light clung
To her coffee-colored flanks and halted
at the bridge of her pointed muzzle.

That was it, that was the assurance:
A subtle nod of greater importance.

BRI KEITH

Anxie-Tea

Here, sit down and let me pour you some tea
to cleanse your body of flesh and shining soul.
While the rice vinegar is swirled to purify
like a lotus flower leaving the shallow waters
of decaying plants and sprouting mushrooms
to only recycle the bloom once again.

Drink this tea
of calming herbs dancing a ballad.
Let it fill you full till you overflow.
Spilling and sloshing over the rim
and bursting from the sides.
All will be fine.

Drink. Drink!
Drink before it cools.
The boiling bubbles will soothe
that swollen throat and stringed nerves.
You have nothing to worry.
All will be fine.

Take a moment to slow down,
and take a balloon breath.
Sip some tea
and let the steaming flowers and leaves,
the lavender, to soothe your soul
All will be fine.

KATE GREENE

A Chicken and Cheese Croissant

Some mornings our croissants were scorching,
so, I would use the car vents to cool them
before you dropped me off at school.
We would park in a lot down the road
and the Badcock Furniture truck
would block the morning glaze
from our eyes, a reminder of our inability
of never quite escaping our past.

Listening to morning talk shows
few words were shared between us.
It wasn't so much about sharing stories,
instead, it was sharing our presence.
Burning our tongues together. Watching
the droplets of rain race across the windows.

Sometimes I sneak off to a Burger King
to order our usual. I wished the food to be hot,
the joy of my taste buds burning in the fatty grease
and heavily processed cheese. Willing the sky
to turn a bluish-grey and let water fall.
Not wanting to ever escape the past of you.

BRY MEISTER

The Land of 10,000 Lakes

Do I still remember it well—
the flaky mud imprinting
on the bare soles of my feet;
running my calloused fingers along
the wooden slates of the cabin exterior,
caressing the burnished red peel of paint?

With a crunch of tires across gravel
and the cloaked coolness of the trees,
casting their shadows on the dirt road,
my mother steered the car towards the porch
where the hammock sways in the front yard
and the woodpile stands at a distance.

Gentle blooms of Lady Ferns,
Spreading Jacob's Ladder,
and Prairie Coneflower
string along the driveway,
claiming their stakes in the
gambling pit of survival.

A circular swing dangled on a coiled rope
from two thick Jack Pines,
just past the cardinal outhouse—
I remember slipping out the screen door,
making my way to relieve myself,
tripping over roots and stones in the dark.

A hose hung over the porch banister—
water would spurt and splutter from its lips—
helping me to brush my teeth.
Showers were the pouring of lake water
over the tops of our heads, with us giggling

and drying off in the sun in our bathing suits.

To wrap myself under the coarse blankets,
still saturated with the familiar scent
of my grandmother's cigarettes and Chapstick,
is a haven I can't reach just yet—
the 1,278 miles between myself
and my home is nauseating.

Instead, I dream of the aluminum dock,
stepping gingerly down its planks and
feeling the northern winds brushing my hair,
until I sit down on the edge
to dip my toes into Beatrice—
mine out of the 9,999 others just like her.

KATE GREENE

*My lover asked me not to put words in
his mouth,*

but I want to carefully place them on his tongue. I need to situate the word *lonely* at the tip, because it is so close to leaving my lips, but I cannot find it in me to say it. I need to plop *powerful* at the back of his throat, so he is aware of the strength he gives me as we fumble in bed. Stuck in the in-between, I want to carve *stay* in bold letters on the center of his tongue. The curve of the “s” will cut so deep he can taste the sweetness of the word in his mouth. As I run both of my hands up and down his bare back I place the word *exigency* on his cheek. It has been seventy-seven days since the first time I found him in my bed. My mind can't place the phrase *you saved me* in my mouth as I look at his body relaxed with pleasure. As soon as the moment ends, I run to the sink, knowing it will place the word *goodnight* in the air.

BRI KEITH

*I'm in Love with the Sun, but it's
my Enemy*

Glitter of the sun dripping off sloped roofs
into the curved rattling gutters dances in my eye.
The way it used to caress my back like a massage
burying away the speckled bumps that only crawl out of the grave
creating a warm tingle that quivers down through my small limbs.
I miss that.

I miss the picnics on patchworked quilts
and the shadow of leaves like puzzle pieces
over the pillows of squishy mounds of moss.
The shared lemonade from a pitcher
poured into glasses with chunks of clinking ice
that float in pools mirroring the sun,
that toxic corroding light directly above.
They say you should wear sunscreen every day
to protect you from those trespassing rays,
but who do you think I am? A vampire?
You're not wrong. My skin sizzles in the sunlight,
but now after many uncomfortable red nights,
my skin now feels like a hundred sand fleas
jumping around endlessly in the hot spotlight.

AVEL TRIANA

Real Cowboys Don't Like Rum

It's been a week
since we sipped on the same vodka coke
since you got drunk on courage
and lapped up my spit like it was vanilla ambrosia.
The words had been building up to a toxic level in your blood
so they snuck past your sleeping brain
and hitched a ride on the carbon dioxide in your lungs like
freighthoppers.
and before any law man could stop them,
the tracks were already laid
over your vinegar-soaked tongue.

You know most cowboys were either black or mexican
and that they were hella gay.
They were the kind of men that didn't care about bandits
who didn't need rum to say "I love you."
Vaqueros who rode
cowboys didn't care if some moron called them "buckaroo"
who cuddled
next to campfires under more stars than we'll ever get to see.
I wish you could be a real cowboy

I want to leave you choking on dust
but there are no horses to carry me away
just my fingernails galloping on *The Carrying*
and my heels are spring-loaded
but there are no spurs to jingle jangle jingle:
just rubber against carpet,
and so I throw lassos around the screams in my throat
just like my ancestors did
wrangling bulls
in the wild
wild west.

KATE GREENE

I am an Illegal

I was born in the American South.
My complexion is fried chicken,
but family looks like the flour before it hits oil.
I always received an *I would kill*
to be as tan as you naturally,
but I am an illegal, so I avoid the sun.
My natural black hair is glossy
like the tube I would paint my lips with,
but I am an illegal, so I pay
to have it stale and blonde. My black brown eyes
are beautiful in the sun with honey gold flecks,
but I am an illegal, so I don't make eye contact.
Momma and I would speak in my native tongue
so I could grow up with a little of my heritage,
but I am an illegal and it made White people
uncomfortable. In elementary school kids refused
to play with me because I was not Black or White.
They would always question *What are you,*
and now my response is, *I am an illegal*
because my skin tone is brown.
When I go to the grocery store, I try
to stay on my side of the aisle,
because one small mistake and I will receive
hateful rhetoric *Go back to where you're from.*
I want to say, *I am from here too.*
Instead, I begin to think maybe I am an illegal.

ROBERT DAMON-PUNDT

Narragansett

The waves were brutal that summer. All waves crash and consume, but these could not compare. I was around seven years old. My cousin, who was seven months older than me, and I battled those waves. We flung ourselves into the mouth of the ocean. It was a playful war, and we had our duty. With goofy smiles, we ran, splashing through the shallow waters. Our quick pace slowed to a heavy trudge, and then we slowly crouched down. Our heads hovered on the surface. Seagulls screeched all around us, flapping their wings acting as engrossed spectators. Like a line infantry, we huddled shoulder to shoulder and waited for a rising wave.

One wave, from the horizon, built itself up. It grew taller and vicious. When it reached us, all the sound disappeared: the seagulls, distant chatter and laughter, and other waves. The sunshine bled through the green, glassy wall with silhouettes of seaweed and shells. For a split second, the wave was a work of art, ready to collapse. The climax of the wave engulfed us. We crumpled under those waves. We tumbled and cartwheeled on the seabed under the whirlpool of sand and rocks jabbing our skin. The wave brought us to the shore and ran back, challenged the ocean again.

The beach was not our only attraction in Narragansett. My uncle, my cousin's father, and our nanna brought us to visit my nanna's aging father. We called him bubbup. As young boys, my cousin and I reached new terrain. Bubbup lived alone. His house was like a manor and was just yards away from the sprawling coastline. The house's interior, from what I could remember, was a realm of antiquity. The floors were thoroughly waxed, red, white, and beige carpets scattered the downstairs, a large skylight ascended into the ceiling of the kitchen, and a TV room plastered with bookshelves and paintings as well as a cozy nook window and an ancient leather recliner. In the early mornings, my cousin and I would travel from the upstairs guest room and visit bubbup, either perfectly asleep and

snoring or wide awake, and we would watch Animal Planet. The three of us would be so captivated by the big cats of the Serengeti or shifty-eyed lizards that we could not be bothered by nanna announcing that breakfast was ready.

The backyard was enclosed within a mossy stone wall. On top of the wall were corroded, green and gray gnomes. The back deck was almost dilapidated and had spiderwebs stringing between almost every baluster. We would shuck corn for dinner with our bubbup in that backyard. With cornsilk caught between our fingers and the three of us around a bucket full of husks. We just watched each other and smiled without saying a word.

The nights were vibrant, with laughter and storytelling. Under the orange-hued lights, I watched my nanna and her sister, May-May, making fried squash flowers before dinner on the porch. May-May demanded to be called May-May at a young age, without explanation. At that age, we never fully grasped her abrasive personality, nor would time aid in our curiosity. A couple of years later, she died an outrageous drunk. After dinner, we had Red Sox sponsored cherry vanilla ice cream and closed the night with a game of Skunk.

In the care of our nanna and eager to show us around Rhode Island, we went to see her cousin, Sandra. We dined on lobsters procured at a local seafood market. We got to go inside where disheveled workers darted around in white apron with shrilled northern accents. The gray concrete floors, cool and coated with a layer of saltwater, led to the way. We chose our lobsters from a clear container. Having the chance to look down into the container, I saw, beyond the dense ripples of water, brown and red abstractions. We felt proud of walking away with lobsters and funny, in a way, to have crawling creatures clicking and rummaging in a big cardboard box. Preparing them, my cousin and I took our honorary first opportunity, we plopped the lobsters into a boiling pot. They squealed as steam trickled through the vent of the lid.

We went to the beach again on one of the last days. The sea was cloaked in an ominous heavy fog and, the crashing waves were the only thing to be heard. We decided against getting in the water

and instead meandered along the shore. After some walking, we found a pit filled with seaweed and dried devils' purses. We picked through it and found the pale, lifeless shell of a crab, smooth and eroded by the seawater. When we left it and continued down the shore, we found another dead creature. It must have been a frog. Also beaten by the waves, the skeleton was bright white, and the skin was either blackened or translucent. I picked it up and analyzed it. It was the exaggerated eye sockets that gave it away, and the zigzagged hindlegs extruding. A sour smell clung to my fingertips for the rest of the day.

We left Narragansett in the final days of August. My cousin and I did not want to leave, of course. There was too much left unexplored, too much unknown, but eventually, that feeling passed. I remember overhearing the phone calls with nanna and her father from the kitchen as I watched cartoons. The conversations were just as cheerful as if he were speaking to her in person. Progressing into winter, after Christmas, nanna abruptly left to go back to Rhode Island. We learned bubup, the night before his birthday, died in his sleep. From the same kitchen, I remember my mother on the phone with nanna. The sobbing and the howling leaked into every room. My cousin and I just sat there, unable to understand. It was when we grew older and learned more about him and how dear he was is when the sadness crept in. Sometimes I think of the waves now, how they trampled us, and yet we persisted.

KATE GREENE

Wave of Emotion

A wave collides into us and suddenly we fall over;
belly laughter erupts from our mouth and I look
at you. Your lips part into a crooked smile
and I take in the moment. The smell of the salty
water burns my nose. I pause, wanting to remember
the way the golden light hits your rosy cheeks forever.

As we sink into the sand from the current your smile
breaks, *You're so lucky you remember our Mom.*
My heart shatters as quickly as the moment did.
I want to hug you, to say *You're lucky to have not.*
I assume it hurts less to not know what was lost.

Your face perks back up as soon as the next wave hits.
Yet, I am still sinking in. As you chase after the next
wave my emotions settle. I wouldn't put my pain unto you,
so instead I follow your childish wonder until it takes me under.



Young
Harris
COLLEGE



EST. 1886