

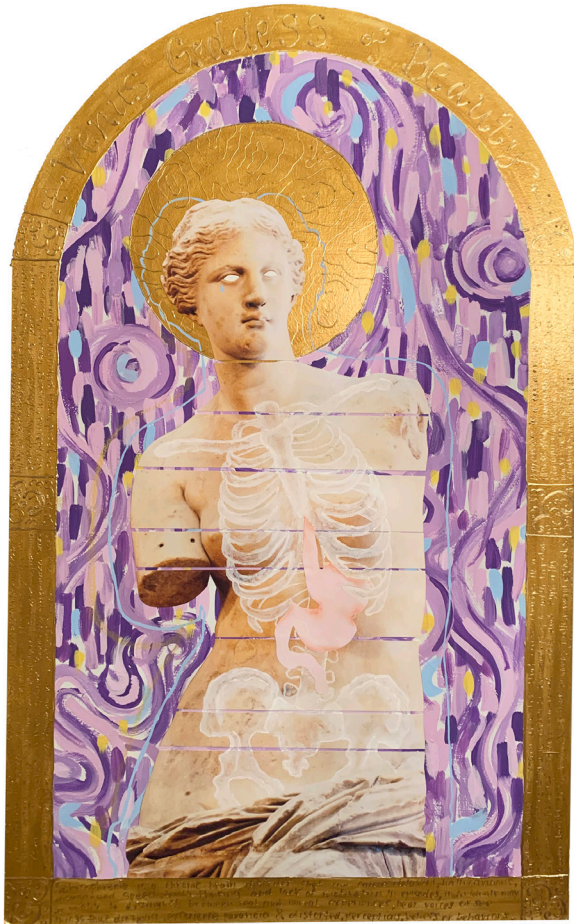
2021

# ARTEMAS

2022

A STUDENT JOURNAL OF WRITING AND ART  
AT YOUNG HARRIS COLLEGE





Hannah Cooper, *Venus*

2021 ARTEMAS 2022

A STUDENT JOURNAL OF WRITING AND ART  
AT YOUNG HARRIS COLLEGE

Special thanks to Jo Bearse for her generous support and funding in honor of Danny Bearse, 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 produced by a student group that gathers submissions, chooses the content for the magazine, and designs the layout. The magazine's renaming is in honor of Rev. Artemas Lester, who established YHC in 1886.

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

# *Staff*

## EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Lakota Graham  
Elizabeth Sigmon

## ART EDITOR

Hannah Elliott

## EDITORS

Addisyn Clapp  
Skylar Sears

## FACULTY ADVISOR

Dr. Gale Thompson

# Table of Contents

<i>Forward</i> . . . . .	8
HANNAH COOPER, <i>Flowers of the Spirit</i> . . . . .	9
ABRAM MILLER, <i>Normal Bird</i> . . . . .	9
BRY MEISTER, <i>What I Didn't Know Before</i> . . . . .	10
CALEB CAMUS, <i>Spring</i> . . . . .	12
WILL JONES, <i>The Modern Creation of Adam</i> . . . . .	12
KARAH SHEA, <i>Balance and Control</i> . . . . .	13
ANNA-REECE THOMAS, <i>Untitled</i> . . . . .	13
ADDISYN CLAPP, <i>heav•en</i> . . . . .	14
JULIANNA PEREZ, <i>The Wild West</i> . . . . .	15
MARY GRACE NELSON, <i>Tower</i> . . . . .	20
MARY GRACE NELSON, <i>Metamorphosis</i> . . . . .	20
ELIZABETH SIGMON, <i>They Found Her Body</i> . . . . .	21
ELIZABETH SIGMON, <i>Atypical</i> . . . . .	24
WILL JONES, <i>Safety vs. Defense</i> . . . . .	25
DELANEY THOMPSON, <i>Untitled</i> . . . . .	26
DELANEY THOMPSON, <i>Untitled 2</i> . . . . .	27
TAYLOR WYATT, <i>Water Bucket</i> . . . . .	28
ABRAM MILLER, <i>Ted Likes This One</i> . . . . .	29
EMMA ANDERSSON, <i>Manifestation of Connection</i> . . . . .	30
HANNAH COOPER, <i>Muse no. 2</i> . . . . .	30
INDY AYERS, <i>Fusion Cycle</i> . . . . .	31
HEATHER TAYLOR, <i>Serpent Queen</i> . . . . .	32
ELIAS GODMAN, <i>What it's Like to Feel Young</i> . . . . .	33
CHAYIL APONTE, <i>We Are What We Are</i> . . . . .	36
ELIAS GODMAN, <i>Tiger-cats Breed Wildflowers</i> . . . . .	36
AARON KING, <i>Divina Commedia</i> . . . . .	37
LAKOTA GRAHAM, <i>Things I Remember</i> . . . . .	38
REBEKAH CULPEPPER, <i>Smoke Like Velvet</i> . . . . .	40

HANNAH ELLIOTT, <i>Burn Out</i> . . . . .	41
ESAUl MAURICIO-CASTRO, <i>Esaul Castro's Self Portrait</i> . . . . .	42
HANNAH ELLIOTT, <i>Tornado Warning</i> . . . . .	43
KYLA RIVERS, <i>Julia's Portrait</i> . . . . .	44
BENJAMIN BRAGG, <i>Woodland Watcher</i> . . . . .	45
ZACK DAILY, <i>To Become a Poem</i> . . . . .	46
BRIANNA KLEIN, <i>Rains of Wrath</i> . . . . .	47
KARAH SHEA, <i>Untitled</i> . . . . .	50
JANERRA COPELAND, <i>Shot-Down Rainbow Coalitioner</i> . . . . .	51
JANERRA COPELAND, <i>Burned Out</i> . . . . .	53
LAUREL SANFORD, <i>Portrait of Rihanna</i> . . . . .	54
INDY AYERS, <i>Shades</i> . . . . .	55
CHAYIL APONTE, <i>Remains</i> . . . . .	56
CORISSA PRITCHETT, <i>Unspoken</i> . . . . .	57
ZACK DAILY, <i>Ashy Potato</i> . . . . .	58
ADDISYN CLAPP, <i>Sweet Tea in the Summer</i> . . . . .	59
BRY MEISTER, <i>My Nighttime Perusal of Holy Ground</i> . . . . .	63
MARY GRACE NELSON, <i>The Opposite of Love</i> . . . . .	64
REBEKAH CULPEPPER, <i>Stuffed with Lies</i> . . . . .	65
MADELINE STUDEBAKER, <i>Liminality</i> . . . . .	66
ASHLEY HOPE SMITH, <i>Mu•sic</i> . . . . .	67
JESSIE MCCULLOUGH, <i>Bailey's and Joe</i> . . . . .	68
BAILEE KRAEMER, <i>My Depression</i> . . . . .	69
BRY MEISTER, <i>In Honor of Bradstreet</i> . . . . .	73
KATIE D'AMBROSIO, <i>1814</i> . . . . .	75
LAUREL SANFORD, <i>An Escape from Reality</i> . . . . .	77
BENJAMIN BRAGG, <i>The Old Man</i> . . . . .	78
EDIE WALLS, <i>Home Looks Like a Road Trip</i> . . . . .	79
CHAYIL APONTE, <i>Acathexis — LODGED</i> . . . . .	81
ALI HILL, <i>As One</i> . . . . .	82
ALI HILL, <i>Time Will Tell</i> . . . . .	83

# *Forward*

*We were together. I forget the rest.*

—Walt Whitman

The last two years have felt like an endless stage of liminality. Trapped inside this infinite loop that started in March 2020, a future that exists outside of getting through the week feels unreal. We have carried so much, grieved unimaginable losses, and are still recovering two years later. Maybe you're still mourning the plans you made that never came to fruition. Or you are missing the person you were before you went into isolation as you attempt, every day, to get to know the person who came out on the other side. Maybe you're still bitter and jaded about the happy ending you feel was robbed from you. The things you were so close to accomplishing vanished overnight and have yet to reappear. I see these feelings of loss reflected in each selection in this year's collection of student work. I also see hope and joy leftover from the wreckage that not even our darkest moments could kill. I think it's important to acknowledge that, too. We made it out alive, Hallelujah! We will continue to survive as long as we continue to make art and cling to each other for life as we struggle to make sense of it all. If I learned anything in these past two years, nothing in this life makes sense, and nothing in this life matters if we don't have community. I am so thankful for this beautiful mountain community, full of artistic souls, and I'm so proud of all the art we have made together through this time in our life. I can only hope you are half as pleased while reading this collection. I hope this issue stands as a time capsule for this extraordinary time in our life, and I hope that one day we can look back grateful and proud that we were still able to make so many beautiful things when the world felt so ugly.

*Elizabeth Sigmon*

Co-Editor-in Chief





Hannah Cooper, *Flowers of the Spirit*



Abram Miller, *Normal Bird*

BRY MEISTER

*What I Didn't Know Before*

is that the little sisters from *Bioshock*

weren't meant to be human –

instead they were drawn to squelch along as sea slugs,

or tick across the ocean floor as crabs.

The idea of crafting them

as wheelchair-bound canines

existed as well at some point.

(But we can all understand why that hadn't been done, right?)

The decision of what design to use

had been made in order to create

an ethical dilemma for the player:

granting them the ability to choose

if they would take or save the little sister's lives

in the simple click of a mouse.

(It should be a hard choice to take a little girl's life, right?)

When I was twelve, I held a blade to my wrist,

watched my skin split along a seam,

and flattened my tongue against the trench

to taste what living was meant to be like.

Crimson copper and iron flooding

against my teeth, coating my gums,

and slipping along the roof of my mouth

reminded me of cut grass, split ends,

a sheared sheep and cotton sweaters.

(You have to destroy something to find a little growth, right?)

I spent hours looking into the mirror  
questioning if I still wanted to play,  
if I needed a power-up or boost,  
in order to keep going.

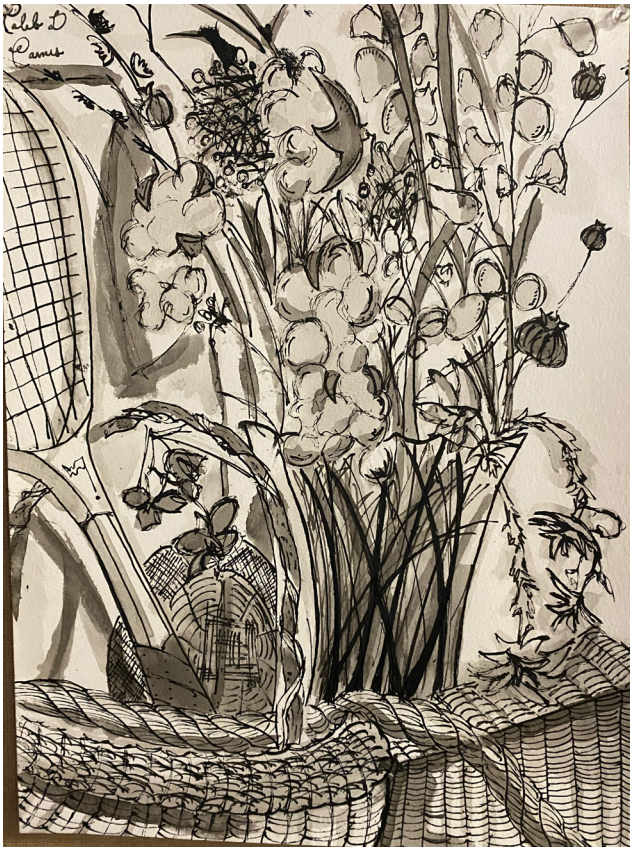
There were nights I stayed up too late,  
eyes burning from looking at the bright screen  
game over flashing over and over and over,  
until all I saw was puckered pink scars  
lining my wrists like the 8-bit hearts  
that kept Link fighting Ganon for decades.

(Because we all know wars aren't won in a day, right?)

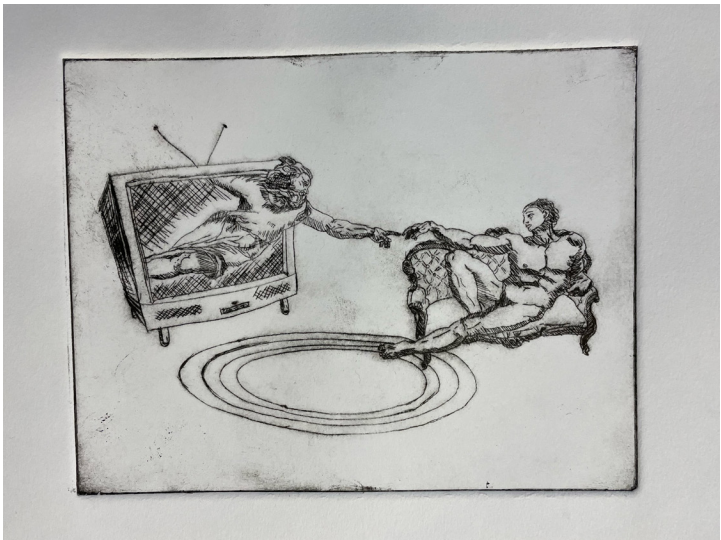
So, I took my time,  
playing on easy for a while  
and building up experience points,  
until one day I switched on the console  
and found Peach had escaped the castle  
all by herself.

When I play *Bioshock* today,  
at twenty years old,

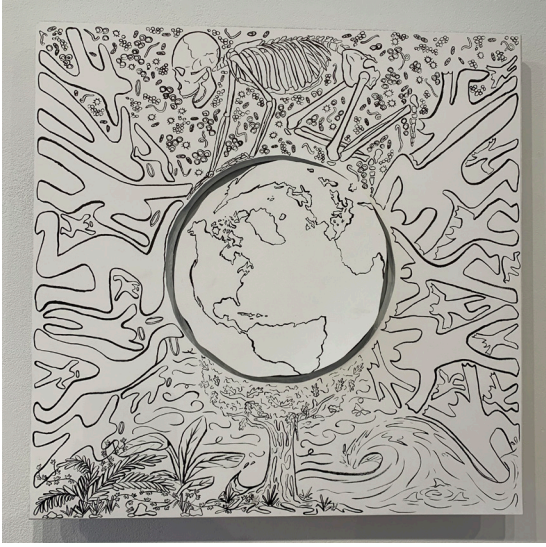
I don't hesitate to save the little sister's lives,  
and I question why it was so easy  
to almost give up my own.



Caleb Camus, *Spring*



Will Jones, *The Modern  
Creation of Adam*



*Karah Shea, Balance and Control*



*Anna-Reece Thomas, Untitled*

ADDISYN CLAPP

*heav•en*

**heav•en /-/ n.** 1. Gathered with friends, family, and familiar faces, enjoying each other's presence as the summer sun sets. We point up at the stars, believing that each one is an angel. Whispers pass between us about what our angel looks like: do they have puffy white feathers and rosy cheeks? Will our angels stand behind a benevolent God whose arms are open wide that beckon me into the rolling hills of heaven? The place where the daffodils, peonies, and rosebuds are in eternal bloom. The place where we enjoy the fruits of spring without sniffly noses and scratchy throats. 2. After we draw our last breath, a final resting place. The grand home of God, as in the birthplace of seraphs and the absence of sin: will God beckon me past the pearly gates with open arms despite the sin that has marred and scarred my body? / the sin that has carved imposter, liar, and fraud into my skin / the skin of sin that sizzles when my fingers grace the worn leather of a Bible / the sin that brands my skin / the bubbled blisters basking in the presence of the Divine / the scars of sin that separate me from the worthy / the believers / the sin that only left scratches and bruises on the backs of the repenters / their sin will vanish with time and penance / the sin's claws did not sink deep enough into their flesh / my sin does not balk from the gospel of Matthew, Mark, or Moroni / my sin chews up their stories of a savior / spits it at the feet of their redeemer / the sin has sunk its teeth into my neck / swallowing / gulping down my hope, peace, and innocence / time will heal all wounds / heal your heart / restore your hope / but my sin cannot be cleansed by the Jordan / the salt has already been spilt.

JULIANNA PEREZ

*The Wild West*

I emerged from my cot with a light shiver and a yawn. Sod walls provide shelter and needed shade, yet hold little warmth overnight. I was greeted with darkness and stiff joints as I stumbled towards the wood stove. A fire soon sparked and greedily licked at the crumbled bison patties and dried grass.

The view presented from the thin slit window depicted dark horizon rimmed with black ridges of distant mountains like torn edges of ink-stained paper. Sparse forest and winding rivers began off to my left, though the dawn had yet to reveal their beauty. Sheltered by a squat hill on my eastern side, my house was relatively protected from the worst of the dusty winds. The sun soaked into the walls during the late afternoon hours, so it remained cool until noon but kept me warm while I ate supper. My plot of farmland rested farther away from the hill and remained light saturated from sunrise to sunset. Hopefully come the end of the season, my harvests would be grand.

I tossed the remainder of a patty into a metal bucket near the stove to keep it dry and crisp, the perfect tinder. Funny that there's a scattered abundance of the natural fire starter, but I've never seen the beasts that leave them behind.

Stomping my feet that tingled with sleep, I thought about a man I once saw draped in an enormous bison-skin coat that rendered him regal. A yawn silently begged for a hot pot of coffee, though as I scraped the bottom of the tin of fragrant ground beans, I realized I must soon make the day long ride into town. While I was there last, a young boy babbled to me about men planning to build a great iron horse that would gallop across the west at fantastic speeds, connecting one coast to the other. I chuckled, because no horse made of iron would ever make tracks through here.

The tingle of sleep crept up my legs and refused to cease. Out of curiosity I brought my fingertips to my knees, and to my astonishment, they tingled too. I hastily pivoted to face the window again, fearing I had mistaken the storm clouds of a twister for mere predawn darkness.

All I saw was a brightening twilight sky freckled with the remainder of stars.

My horse, Bunker, whinnied then and another thought quickly urged me through the door without my boots, a button-up shirt haphazardly thrown across my shoulders, gun in hand. I feared a war party of raiding Indians would crash through my fenced-in plot as the ground vibrated. My heart pumped as I spun around, trying to catch sight of something or someone and my grip tightened on my weapon. No mounted band of painted warriors were yet in sight as I dashed towards the corral, prepared to flee. Bunker dug into the ground and his eyes darted skittishly towards something over my shoulder.

The ground rumbled as if both warriors and twister were headed right for us, and a thrum filled the air. I twisted to look and saw a wall of dust; the sight was as if the paper ridges had sprung to life, bobbing shapes spread across the horizon faster than the torrents of a flash flood.

The ground quaked now, and I shook all over. I was truly afraid that my eyes would fall right out of their sockets as I focused ahead. Hundreds, no, thousands upon thousands of buffalo were charging and bellowing, rattling the earth to its very core. Even the devil down below must have heard the clamor. The golden dawn fell on their massive, furry backs as they sped by; the noise now deafening, the wind determined to rip me from the earth I stood on.

Images pulsed in my mind—the regal fur lined coat, price tags fastened to buffalo hides, a paper flyer advertising the delicious taste of their fire-roasted meat.

I blinked rapidly while I marveled at the great beasts that groaned and grunted, their burnt umber fur dipped in sunlight. Animals of nerves and fibers, living and breathing, crashing forward on the plains.

My gun slipped from my grasp, and I dared to step closer to the roaring rapids of hooves, horns, and hide. So loud and close were these incredible creatures that they seemed to run straight through my head, in one ear and out the other, trampling every thought in their path. I was close enough that a step or two would bring outstretched fingers in contact with their thick bodies rippling with folds of muscle as the strong scent of musk whirled around me.

Their bellows were tremendous; I gasped for breath, I dared not



to blink. Wild eyes met mine for the briefest of moments, their depths churning with the freedom and brutal survival of this wild west we called home.

I stood frozen for who knows how long until the herd passed, melting back into still horizon ridges. My heart pounded, my chest heaved, and sweat poured into my eyes, mingling with tears and dirt that stung so fiercely. Head pounding and ears ringing, the broadest smile on my face, I laughed and laughed, God now knows my insanity because I wished the pain would never leave me.

\*

“C’mon, Jackson, you really don’t gotta go.” Rudy begged. I ignored him and tightened the burlap strings securing my packs onto a small, sturdily built and handsomely painted wagon that trailed behind Bunker. I threw myself into the saddle numbly, and nearly fell off.

“Yeah, Jack, now er’body and their second, hell, third cousins are rushin’ out here. There won’t be much land left for long, see?” Maverick hurriedly said as he pulled something out of his pocket.

I rounded Bunker to face the two men, good friends of mine, and blankly glanced at the crumpled paper. It was a grant that gave each person who bravely ventured out to the west 160 acres if he could keep up the land for five years.

Maverick lowered the paper and exchanged a worried glance with Rudy. They had tended their land for about three years now and were quite well off. I had just sold every inch of mine.

“Yes, I know.” I quietly responded. Rudy ran a thick leather glove over his dark bristly mustache and raised an eyebrow in confusion.

“Well then you know with all this here business, you’re bound to get rich! Plus that beaut’

of a locomotive that connects us little folk all the way to them big cities will bring goods we’ve never seen before!”

He nodded and Maverick chimed in, “And you’ll like all these folk running around because with them veterans come their daughters and wives who bring their younger sisters ‘long for company. You know it, right, Ru?”

Maverick jokingly elbowed Rudy in the ribs who laughed in

agreement. Rudy had met Sadie May, a hardworking girl who was steadfast but charming; a perfect match for Rudy if they continued to go steady. I nodded and turned the corners of my mouth into a thin smile for reassurance.

“I’m sorry but I can’t stay here anymore.” I breathed, shaking my head. Maverick and Rudy’s faces fell as their gazes left mine.

“Not because of you, of course! I am truly glad that I’ve met you both, and I consider you my closest friends. Even though Rick, you could use a bath more often.” I grinned.

Their heads lifted at that, and Maverick chuckled, his dirty blonde hair swaying across his eyes.

“Aw, you know how expensive soap is now, plus with all this workin’, ain’t nobody got time for washin’.” he said airily. We chuckled nervously and sat in awkward silence as our horses swatted flies with their tails, stamping their hooves impatiently.

I couldn’t bear the brutal slaughter of the bison, with which came the submission of the west I so loved for its unbroken spirit. The railroad had cut across the plains like a silver hatchet, and it was a fantastic sight, but their lines of cars bristled with men that shot buffalo without batting an eyelash until countless wasted, skinned carcasses lay rotting in the sun. So many you could smell the stench for miles. The devil apparently had grown tired of the beasts running over his roof and sent such greedy men to quiet the land. I fear it’s been done for good.

The shiny engine’s rumbling couldn’t comfort me, and without the creatures, the land seemed lonely and eerie. I had realized, only after their disappearance, why the Natives worshiped them, and I grieved for their loss. I wanted to get away from this disappointment while still clutching the good memories I had left.

I raised my head to look at my two dear friends, trying to burn every inch of their faces into my memory like an iron brander. I inhaled a shaky breath.

“Listen, Rudy, I hope you go steady with that girl, she seems like a keeper. I want to thank you for all the help you have offered, especially when Bunker here got sick.” I said.

I patted Bunker’s thick brown neck and scratched him behind the ears. “Maybe you’ll even start making saddles like your father did. And if you do, send one my way.” I smiled, trying to lighten the mo-

ment.

“You betcha I will, Jack.” Rudy nodded and his eyes were rimmed with moisture. He cleared his throat and complained about the dusty wind.

“And Maverick, I have no doubt you’ll find someone too. If you ever start that cattle ranch, you send for me, and I’ll ride all the way back out here to help you wrangle longhorns.” Maverick grinned in agreement.

“We just might have to drag Rudy along though, if he’s settled by then.” I joked.

I made an act like I was lassoing him in order to drag him down to Texas, and Maverick followed suit, but his horse shook its head and neighed in protest.

We stayed there together, laughing, and I knew if I stayed a moment longer that I’d never leave, so I turned Bunker to the distant railroad ahead and urged him forward, wagon creaking behind us. Rudy and Maverick flanked me on either side, their horses eager to move. My heavy heart sunk deep into my chest as I glanced back at that sod house. I knew I’d never return to stay, not unless the west surged with furred brown waves once again. I looked on either side of me, and remembered every mischief, every kindness and every hardship that bound our trio together.

Tears fell to my saddle as I halted Bunker’s walk.

“Thank you for the wagon. I’ll be back soon, alright? Faster than that engine can travel across the west.” I whispered.

My friends nodded; broad hats tipped so I couldn’t see their faces. Our arms interlocked as hands were solemnly placed on shoulders in a final gesture of farewell. It all ended when Rudy hit Bunker’s rear and sent me lurching towards the still horizon, onwards to begin a new life in the city. All I had to do was follow the iron horse’s tracks.



Mary Grace Nelson, *Tower*



Mary Grace Nelson, *Metamorphosis*

ELIZABETH SIGMON

*They Found Her Body*

*After Gabby Petito's murder, September 2021*

They found her body; they found her body.  
They found her.  
I'm not sure why the world has stopped turning  
and I am still paused on that phrase,  
seeing and the CNN news blast flash on my screen  
over and over again  
as if nothing else matters. A woman is dead.  
She's not the first promising young woman  
who chose the wrong lover,  
got screwed over,  
and was left dead in a ditch for the FBI to find.

The details of gruesome, graphic murders of women my age  
soothe me into a good night's sleep.  
Just like they never existed, their horrific last moment  
prophesied  
for the sake of my fucked-up lullaby  
That their bodies were meant for anything more  
than being  
dismembered  
and tossed out  
like the parts of broken mannequins that I used to take out

with the trash on the street,  
creeped out by the ghastly crime scene  
I left for the garbage collectors  
to clean up the mess for me.

Maybe it's because she was only a few months older than me  
that made my hands shake as I hear another ring of *they found her  
body*.

Maybe it's because she documented her cross country  
adventure for the world to see—  
her smile was convincing, his love seemed sincere—  
that made my chest pound white to the tune of *they found her body*.  
Wanderlustful young women on YouTube type “#goals!”  
through their bitter resentment as they watch  
another tiny golden body  
have the guy, have the ring, have the world and its wonders,  
absorbed in self-pity and unaware  
that one of those wonders would soon be stained in her blood.  
They peered at her in envy, they watched every step she took  
in those cheap rubber flip flops that were tactlessly discarded  
just feet away from where *they found her body*.

And with the final rising of her chest, the slow drain  
of the glow of her body, the kind of glow  
I would kill to possess, she went from the  
girl with the guy, the girl with the ring, the girl with the body,  
the golden girl glowing in Grand Canyon,  
to the dead girl with the Hulu Documentary.

Some girls really can have it all.

They found her body.

Now the six consecutive days of 24-hour news coverage  
will slowly fade to an end  
until the next golden girl goes missing  
and the cycle begins again.

America's favorite past time, let the worldwide  
game of manhunt begin to find her body.

They found her body, they found her body, they found her body  
is a song and I cannot get it out of my head.

I have a body.

I, too, have a body

My chest drums out a woeful hiss and cries

"I'm alive, I'm alive, I'm alive."

I have a body and so much more

it breathes, it sobs, it loves, it feels, it mourns.

She did, too. Someone made her just a body.

Maybe we all did.

ELIZABETH SIGMON

*Atypical*

Maybe everyone knows,  
maybe everyone has always known  
about the ache you feel  
from the stares of children  
as you stood in the corner  
playing ball with the wall  
and the wall kept winning.  
It will remain long after you've left  
those haunted fluorescent halls  
that smirked at you every weekday morning  
as you run into the wall for the fifteenth time  
while your head was in the clouds  
your eyes glued to your feet.  
You leave that place behind,  
lock it in a dark closet inside your mind  
you hope you'll never be able to find  
so you will never have to feel that ache again.  
But you do every time a friend  
notices your floppy hands for the first time,  
your impulse to touch everything in sight,  
concrete textured walls and its holes  
that beam so bright



and how you can never walk in a straight line.  
The ache comes back to remind you  
that there are some things  
you simply can't outgrow.



Will Jones, *Safety vs. Defense*



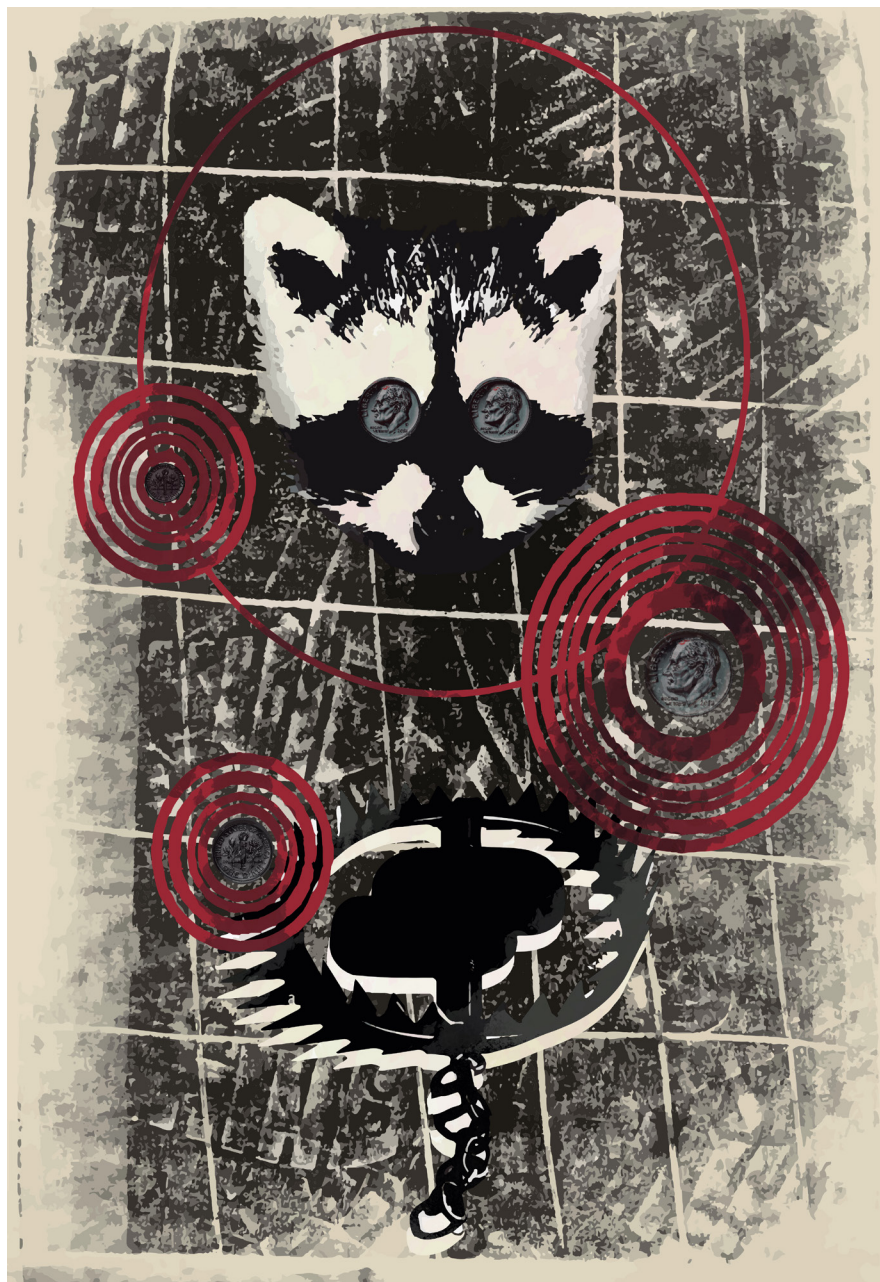
Delaney Thompson, *Untitled*



Delaney Thompson, *Untitled 2*



Taylor Wyatt, *Water Bucket*



Abram Miller, *Ted Likes This One*

EMMA ANDERSSON

*Manifestation of Connection*

Standing barefoot in soft and sun-heated sand, hearing the lapping of waves pulsing with the song from the blue tit, greenish, and black-bird sitting in the trees behind the blanket and backpacks—here, I become one with nature. The tall peaks on the other side are dressed in their summer shroud, and a light breeze ruffles the mirror image in the water. My dress plays in that wind against my bare legs and when I close my eyes, I can feel how the world engulfs me. Leaning my head back, I notice the rustling in the forest from a curious mouse; the blanket of lavender wrapping itself around me; the taste of strawberry still fresh in my mouth; and how the entirety of the world continues its course and I, an observer, get to be in a tiny part of it. I can feel the Earth spinning, swooping me off my feet, and carrying me with the wind across the water.



Hannah Cooper, *Muse No. 2*

INDY AYERS

*Fusion Cycle*

At first, it's just a spark.

A chain of electrons

zipping

through

the

core,

Hidden under

layer

upon

layer

of hot, molten

plasma.

They

travel

for millions

of eons

Until

finally,

eventually,

They fester into a core of spent energy.

It surfaces

in the resounding, raw, blaze

of red and yellow

orange and white

against

clashing

clamoring

and

through

the light years

of

space

and void.

It stretches out

a bird taking flight,





ELIAS GODMAN

## *What it's Like to Feel Young*

“Would you come to my funeral?”

Annalise looked away from the book in her hands, up to where Carla was laying on her bed. Her eyes were directed at the ceiling, undoubtedly counting the glow-in-the-dark stars all over it. She liked to do that when she was thinking. And when she was high. At that moment, she was both.

“Carla, what?”

“Would you, Annalise, come to my funeral?”

The second time she said it didn't make it any less jarring to Annalise, and she frowned. She moved from where she was on the floor, moving across the rough carpet on her knees. Her arms rested on the edge of Carla's bed and her chin rested on her arms.

“Of course I'd come to your funeral,” she said quietly. Carla glanced at her, her mismatched eyes gentle. Annalise smiled, holding up her right pinky. “I pinkie promise, Carla.”

Her friend grinned, linked pinkies with her, and turned her gaze back to the stars on her ceiling. Annalise stayed next to her until her knees ached, deep pops sounding as she stood. She crawled into the bed next to Carla, finding her hand once she was settled. Carla's free hand patted along her nightstand for the abandoned joint, taking a deep pull of it without moving her gaze. Annalise didn't even know if she had blinked in the couple minutes that had passed.

“Why did you want to know if I would come to your funeral?” Annalise asked, shuffling so she was facing Carla. She shrugged once, brushing off Annalise's question. That wasn't an answer, though, and Annalise kept nudging. Finally, Carla heaved a sigh and put out the weed on her nightstand. It was one of many burn marks on the wood, and definitely not the last one.

Carla's voice was soft as she spoke, her eyes closed. “I guess I'm just really in the sky right now, don't really know where my brain was going with that.” She sighed once, then kept talking. “I feel like I'm older than I am, Anna. Like I'm an old lady in a young body and it's all going by faster than I can handle.”

Annalise nodded, watching Carla's tan face. She knew the feeling—once they were out of high school and in their new life chapters, it felt as if the world was on fast forward. "You're not the only one that feels that way," she offered up. Carla's one green eye opened and met her gaze, though she hadn't turned her head. "Jackson told me he feels like that too, and I know everything feels like it's going faster every day."

Carla's eye closed, a smile stretching her lips thin. Annalise squeezed her hand once, a gentle show of support.

They were both quiet for a few minutes, Carla's eyes still closed. Annalise almost expected her to be asleep with how deep her breaths were. But the other girl spoke up, confirming that she was still awake. "Let's go to the beach, Anna," she offered. Both of her eyes were open, and her smile had grown. Annalise let out a laugh at the idea, looking at her watch.

"Carla, it's midnight."

"I know, let's go to the beach. I want to feel the water on my feet!"

Annalise watched her best friend tumble out of bed and onto her feet. She reminded Annalise of a tornado when she had her mind on something, spinning around the room and leaving a mess in her path. But she was a lovable tornado—one that she was almost incomplete without.

As Carla moved around the room and chattered, Annalise caught her reflection in the door mirror. Her hair had fallen out of the bun she'd wrangled it into, the deep teal strands sticking to the lip gloss still on her mouth. She met her own almond eyes and gave herself a smile before standing. Carla moved around her, pinching her skin lightly to make her laugh every time she got close enough. In return, Annalise gave her little slaps here and there—enough to have her laugh but not enough to hurt.

They walked together out of the apartment and to the parking lot, hand in hand. Along the trip, Carla had managed to convince a group of their friends to join them. They weren't the only insomniacs wanting to crash the beach, and Annalise found that her car was packed to the brim with excited college students. As they drove, Annalise felt her worry for Carla disappear. The girl lit up like a star, twisting around in the passenger seat to joke with the others and

laughing until she was crying. The Carla that spoke of funerals and feeling older than her body was gone, replaced with the Carla that Annalise loved so deeply.

It was a half hour drive to the beach, one filled with laughter and music and terrible jokes. The entire way, Annalise's hand was clasped in Carla's, the other on the steering wheel. She was the last to climb out of the car once they had parked, watching with a smile as her friends sprinted across the sand to the water line. The shrieks and shouts that followed not a minute after confirmed her belief: the water was freezing. She found a spot on the sand and settled on the blanket she brought, enjoying the crisp air coming off the sea. Her eyes closed after a minute, a sigh escaping her.

Carla joined her an hour later, breathless from being chased around the shoreline. She laid down, damp curls making wet marks on Annalise's jeans.

"Still thinking about your funeral guests?"

Carla blinked slowly before shaking her head with a smile. "No, I'm thinking about better things now," she murmured. Annalise nodded, leaning down to kiss the smile on her best friend's face.

"I'm glad. You had me worried, tornado."

Carla's laugh sounded against Annalise's mouth, their hands linking in the sand as their friends ran in the sand around them. One of them shivered from the breeze coming in from the ocean, and they pressed closer under the moonlight, happy to be together.



Chayil Aponte, *We Are What We Are*



Elias Godman, *Tiger-cats Breed Wildflowers*

AARON KING

*Divina Commedia*

*[Enter DEATH.]*

Death, much like love, is the great paralyzer and equalizer  
Of hearts.

I do fear him.

And yet

He brings peace, in a way.

The notion that one day I will not exist

Stirs my body into motion,

Just as love would stir a heart.

*[Exit]*

*[Enter THE LOVERS]*

Love is measured

By decision.

To do or not to do.

An action,

Or even a sip of *Atropa Belladonna*, ingested

By mouth or by ear

In this way, love, too,

Can be a great equalizer, a great paralyzer.

*[Exeunt all]*

LAKOTA GRAHAM

## *Things I Remember*

I'm five years old, sitting on the window seat in that ancient house, watching the field way out there under the mountain. All I can see is a dark smear that I know are the sheep moving in a herd. I can't see her, but I know Nana is down there somewhere too, the golden dog whose name I don't remember trotting by her legs. I know she is calling each sheep by name and tending to whatever needs they have. Later, everyone will come in and we'll eat sandwiches for lunch and then go home, but for now, I'm happier to sit here in the living room by myself. Let myself seep into these warm floorboards and learn the motions of this house without a watchful pair of eyes on me.

Though I'd never tell her, Nana frightens me more than any person on Earth. She's sharp as a razor—there is no getting up from the table before my plate is clean. There is no being scared of geese or dogs or chickens. There is no running in and out, getting in the way while she hauls food from the garden and feeds the animals. There's no sense in being scared, she says. That's just Nana.

Shoulders poised, chest puffed outward, with a stoically polite face, like she knows exactly what she's doing here. Her running the whole kitchen, seeming to simultaneously chop celery, season the stew, and brush fresh olive oil on garlic bread all at once. And there she is again with one foot on the treadle of the spinning wheel and both hands over top of my small ones, carefully guiding those soft white fibers into a strong, unbreakable thread.

I watch the blue pot on the porch.

Mama and the girls and Ernest are somewhere outside dealing with corn and other vegetables I don't entirely understand. Ernest probably doesn't understand either, but he's just a baby and can't be away from Mama for too long.

The blue pot is filled to the brim with dark soil, though I don't know what herb is tucked underneath. I don't really know what the figures on the pot are either. Humans? Skyscrapers? I never figure it out.

I'm twenty-one and Mom is shoving crisp, folded t-shirts in my arms in that way she does things when I'm not to question the action, even if it seems completely absurd. I question her anyway.

"I can't take these," I protest. "These are Nana's. What if she needs them?"

"Baby, she won't even notice they're gone. Trust me. Take them home and go through them with everybody. Y'all decide who gets what."

She leaves me to finish folding all of Nana's shirts while she returns to the living room.

I realize I'm still wearing my shoes on the carpeted floor and a sharp voice from childhood jabs: "Don't track dirt on the carpet!"

I sit so my soles aren't touching the fluff and fold. My arms are mechanical—lift. Tuck. Fold down. Repeat. I imagine my face is a confused mask frozen ajar.

*She won't even notice they're gone.*

That's when it hits me that something isn't right. Not the hospital bed set up in the living room. Not the hushed, double meanings in the texts. Not the fact that Nana can't knit or spin or cook or even speak anymore.

*She won't even notice they're gone.*

I square my shoulders and fold because I know Nana likes her clothes handled a certain way. I remember David—my little brother, though sixteen now and bigger than me, still a child in so many ways, waiting for me in Nana's living room. I still have to drive us home. And I'll have to make sure everyone knows to wash these shirts on cold and hang dry them—that's how you preserve their color.

As I clench my teeth and do as I'm told, I recognize every graphic. The witchy shirt Nana wore every Halloween. The shirt with the Celtic symbols on them, contorted shapes that vaguely resemble a woman. The wildflower t-shirt that matches Mom's. They're all in perfect condition, though some are older even than me. I snag a couple for my own pile—I want the witch one and I don't yet have one of the wildflower ones. But even then, as I separate each article, I know I'll never wear them. What I don't know is that they'll sit

in plastic bags in my bedroom floor for months. I don't know that I'll eventually stuff them in the bottom of my closet, hoping that by tucking them away safely, the gentle scent of soap and Frankincense never fades from them.



Rebekah Culpepper, *Smoke Like Velvet*



HANNAH ELLIOTT

*Burn Out*

The cigarette smoke draws me in,  
I inhale deeply as if it's the same as taking a drag,  
my throat burning and holding in a cough.  
My mouth twitches with the smell,  
but I know my hand will itch for another before this one  
burns out.  
One is never enough.

“One more  
minute,” I say, turning my alarm off for the third time.  
One more  
episode, the work piled up was due last week anyways.  
One more  
goodnight kiss, even though your girlfriend is waiting up  
for you at home.

The ash flickers to the ground,  
like the weight of my body on the bathroom floor.  
My breaths are staggered, getting shorter like the cigarette  
in your mouth.  
You canceled the plans we had for weeks,  
I was waiting by the door when you texted.  
I told you it wasn't a big deal and that I would get over it.  
I never did.  
Nothing ever goes the way I planned.

I knew  
I wouldn't pass my history test, I was too worried about you  
to study.  
I knew  
my mom wouldn't let me go out, she thought I was with you  
too much.

I knew  
you would leave, I cared more than you ever did.

Now I am just the cigarette you threw out of your car window.  
You pull another one out of the carton just as swiftly  
as you dropped me.

She wasn't as good as your first one, the first is always the best.  
You call me on your way home, regretting your decisions  
I come back every time.

I love the way cigarettes smell.



Esaul Mauricio-Castro, *Esaul Castro's Self Portrait*

HANNAH ELLIOTT

*Tornado Warning*

The wind chimes on the front porch dance as the sky turns gray,  
their singing rings in my ears as I raise my voice  
louder and louder to compete with the noise.

“A storm is coming,” you say, as you look past me  
and out into the distance,

but I wasn’t sure if you were talking about the weather or us.

You swirl the dark liquid in your glass,

the scowl on your face scaring me more than the thunder booming in  
the distance.

I can never tell what’s going on behind your eyes,

the color gets darker with the clouds and your gaze strikes me  
like lightning.

That’s what got us yelling in the first place.

The wind is picking up and I’ve stopped trying to hold  
a conversation.

I’m tired of scratchy throats and raw voices,

only for the chimes to drown me out.

I turn my back to you, trying to catch my tears before they fall,

but once the clouds open, you must empty them out.

You either didn’t know or didn’t care that I knew

you were sneaking around,

and I didn’t know what hurt worse.

Before I could change my mind, I took off running  
into the rain.

The drops kissed away the doubts from my skin,

reminding me that I should have left you all those years ago.

There was some attempt of muffled desperation calling after me,  
but the only thing I heard were the wind chimes.



Kyla Rivers, *Julia's Portrait*



Benjamin Bragg, *Woodland Watcher*

ZACK DAILY

*To Become a Poem*

I killed a man in Fayetteville,  
and devoured him limb by limb.  
His poetry bored me, and his words

fell flat against the ground, splashed  
in pooling, shimmering red, the liquid  
rust of his body indistinguishable

from the crimson of the wall. But  
his life tasted exquisite – like wild  
cherries, or sorbet. Sweetness oozed

from his bones, and heroin leaked  
from the marrow. I endured his every  
scream, every sob, as if he were the only

one being ripped apart. This feast,  
this sabotageable culinary agony  
must be savored, remembered. When

one consumes another, do they become  
the same? Can I commit this murder  
and forget the man? Or is he born again

already, reincarnated in the bloodstained mirror?

BRIANNA KLEIN

## *Rains of Wrath*

It was the middle of the night when it first happened.

The sound of something large and heavy hitting the roof echoed throughout the small house. Brooke jumped at the sound, a much fainter thud sounding out as the remote she had been holding fell to the ground. She slowly stood, shakily placing her mug onto the coffee table, a few extra drops of tea splattering onto the sketches scattered around. A quick glance outside revealed almost nothing: lights flickering on in other houses as the neighborhood woke up, silhouettes much larger than raindrops falling to the ground, all to the sound of rain and unknown objects hitting roofs. Brooke walked over to the door and grabbed the large flashlight she kept next to the coat hanger. After a deep breath, she opened the door.

The usual scent of rain was mixed with the scent of fish, metal, and what Brooke could only assume was something dead. Brooke almost gagged at the wide range of scents and turned the flashlight on, wishing to find what hit her house as quickly as possible so she could return to the plain scent of indoors. Hundreds of fish were lying on the grass and street, many still flopping around while others remained still. Confused, Brooke pointed her flashlight up to the roof of the house across the street, a nice angle to illuminate several new fish as they fell to the ground. A couple of her neighbors had left their houses, more handheld and phone flashlights illuminating the yards on their side of the street. Several empty and flattened water bottles were lying in the grass, almost invisible without the additional light. Brooke pointed her flashlight up once more, getting a quick glance of a jellyfish before it hit the sidewalk. Brooke didn't want to see what had become of it.

The rain had mostly returned to normal when two of Brooke's neighbors, a young married couple, walked over to her and gestured to her backyard. Wordlessly, as if speaking would anger the rain itself, the three decided to find whatever had hit Brooke's house. They began to walk around her house slowly, stepping over more fish, both

dead and alive, more water bottles, straws, old plastic containers, and other various bits of trash. A large shape appeared as the three slowly turned the corner and entered the backyard. Hesitating at the thought that whatever it was could be dangerous, they stopped and waited, closely watching for any movement. After what felt like several minutes of no movement, another silent agreement was made and the three walked over to the mysterious object.

It was much larger up close, dark gray rubber glistening in the mix of rain and flashlights. The treads became more visible as they walked up to it, and Brooke felt the tension that had been building wash away as she realized it was just a large tire. She examined it more closely as her neighbors stood back, examining the surrounding area. It was massive, easily almost as tall as her, and the inside was filled with seaweed, sand, and a few smaller fish, but otherwise it was a normal semi tire. Brooke turned her flashlight towards her roof, where the tire had made a sizeable dent. She sighed, annoyed at the thought of getting her roof repaired, yet relieved that no more serious damage had occurred. Watching the sky as only regular rain fell, the three began to slowly make their return to the front yard.

A scream from the house across the street caused Brooke to jump, almost slipping on the dead fish she had been stepping over. Her neighbors were already running across the street before she could fully process what was happening. She looked down, staring at the dead fish as if it held the answers for what was going on. It didn't, yet she could not shake the feeling that the it could respond. Brooke shook her head, internally judging herself for thinking a dead fish would talk to her. She jogged over towards the house across the street, being careful not to step on any more fish. There was a crowd gathering around one specific part of the yard across the street. A couple of people staggered back while she approached, some with hands over their mouths while others looked on with a blend of horror, shock, and curiosity. The majority stood back, looking towards the crowd in fear. Brooke managed to push her way through the crowd until she could see what everyone was staring at: a human skull, a piece of seaweed dangling out of one of the eye sockets.

Brooke couldn't help but stare into the skull's eyes, almost entranced by it. For a moment, like with the fish, she couldn't help but wonder if the skull had any idea what was going on. The feeling



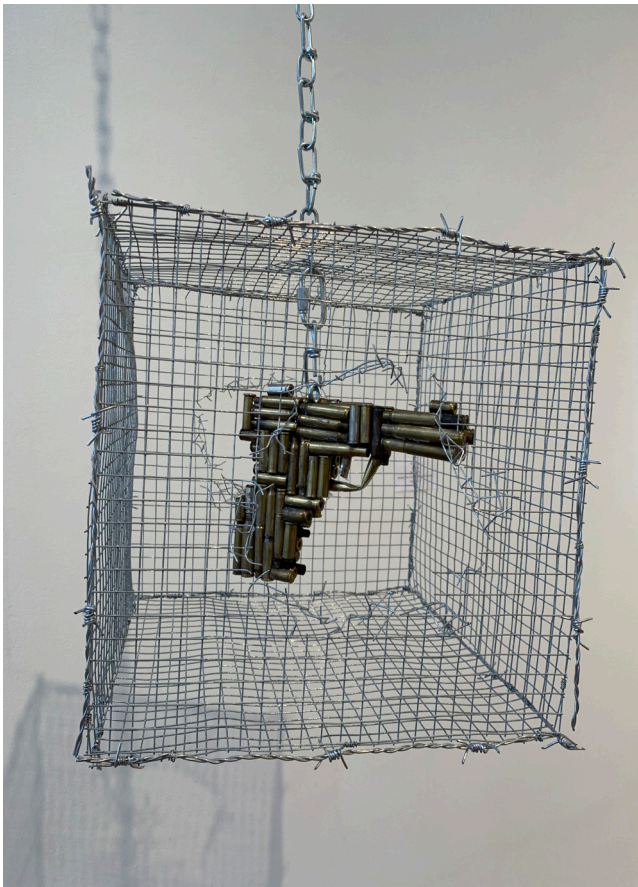
was stronger this time, only being broken as the woman who had screamed earlier carefully laid a towel over the skull. She felt one of her neighbors grab her shoulder and she looked up, watching as the neighborhood solemnly returned to their homes. Most of them had turned their flashlights off, too frightened by the skull to risk seeing anything similar. Brooke was the last to leave, blankly staring at the covered skull as a wave of anger made her feel warm in the cold rain. She wasn't sure why she was angry, and the more she tried to figure it out, the more upset she got. Breaking her gaze away from the towel, she walked back towards her house, carefully stepping over any fish while not bothering to avoid any of the plastic scattered around. It wasn't until she felt her hand throb as she placed the flashlight down on her dresser that she realized she had been clenching the flashlight.

Brooke watched the news obsessively for the next several days. The skull was the only disturbing thing found in the neighborhood, and an investigation into who it belonged to and what happened to them began swiftly. This rain incident wasn't limited to just their neighborhood or other surrounding cities; the entire coastline began reporting nearly identical events: fish and object-filled rain for several minutes, then regular rain. A shark landed in a family's backyard, the frightened creature lashing out at whatever pool toy it could grab. Someone was stuck at work for the night as a sunken car had landed on their truck. Several bodies, in various states of decay and wholeness, had both fallen out of the sky and began washing up. People were panicked, conspiracy theories spread, unsolved mystery forums and videos were posted in the thousands.

Months after the original incident, Brooke remained fully engrossed in the rains, sinking hours upon hours of research into each one, unable to get image of the fish and skull out of her thoughts. The rains occurred internationally now, happening every other week with no shortage of odd or disturbing thing falling into someone's yard. Brooke was sitting on her couch, sketching the dead fish, when the news of another homicide investigation, the third this week, was announced. She stopped drawing and flipped a few pages back in her sketchbook to a sketch of the skull from the First Rain. Brooke didn't know why the fish and the skull had drawn her in so much, but she had quit caring several weeks ago. She felt like it was the rains them-

selves calling to her, like the fish and skull were only used as conduits. It was the ocean calling out to her. Others felt it too; they were there to ensure the ocean's will continued uninterrupted.

Brooke knew that the ocean had finally grown tired. People kept throwing things into it, so it was going to throw everything back at them, with several additions of those it had claimed. She smiled as she heard the familiar sounds of fish and plastics hitting her roof. The ocean would continue its revenge.



Karah Shea, *Untitled*, Mixed Media (Barbed Wire, Chicken Wire, Bullet Casings)

JANERRA COPELAND

*Shot-Down Rainbow Coalitioner*

*I believe I'm going to die doing the things I was born to do. I believe I'm going to die high off the people. I believe I'm going to die a revolutionary in the international revolutionary proletarian struggle.*

– Fred Hampton

All I ever desired was equality.  
Is that too great to ask for?  
A young, intelligent Black Man.  
The Black community fighting a  
belligerent war versus hateful hearts.  
The FBI classifies me as a radical threat,  
just because I expressed the racial  
injustice that lies around in the  
“Land of the Free.”  
I'm speaking the truth.  
My truth of Fred Hamptons' life.  
My life and many others are in danger  
because of white people's fragile minds.  
My last words to my mother.  
My first love.  
Rounds of stray bullets floods  
our room. The mother of my child's  
body veiled by the hands of God.  
Bullets miss her body but rupture all of me.  
No way to dive for cover.  
No way to salvage the ones I love.  
America, you claim to  
protect, love, and help me.  
None of that is present.  
How can it be that hard to assist your citizens?  
On second thought you assured that  
I was “good and dead.”

Cops stand around my lifeless body and joke  
as I fight for my last breath.  
My dear son, Fred Hampton Jr.  
Protect your mother. Protect yourself.  
The world is changed.  
You are “safe” today, son.

JANERRA COPELAND

*Burned Out*

You tell us not to forget, but that we must get over it. 400 years of oppression and nothing has changed. “A Change is Gonna Come,” says Sam Cooke. Well, where is it? Because it’s all lies. The change has not happened. I’m tired of new hashtags that wither away within the depths of social media.

#JusticeForBreonnaTaylor #JusticeForAhmaudAubrey

Their names flood the trending page. Which quickly turns into *page not found*. New tears shed on the faces of mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters. Praying to keep us safe, even the ones we don’t know. Praying that we never have to hear “You’re gonna kill me” from your brother whose neck is under an officer’s arm. Or “It’s gonna be a closed casket” as an officer stands over your husband’s bloody body.

We are tired! Our souls are tired. Our eyes have no tears left to cry.  
Body after body. Yet, we are still complaining about equality.  
The Land of Free is occupied.  
Nowhere to go, nowhere to live.



Laurel Sanford, *Portrait of Rihanna*

INDY AYERS

*Shades*

It was the color of dark flames, flickering out into lighter hues of orange and yellow, as I sat with friends around a tarped campsite, attempting to start a fire with a can of sunscreen and a lighter. There were no signs of it in the dark dawn, where we sat in dim moonlight and talked for eons, the fire fizzling out along with the night's tide.

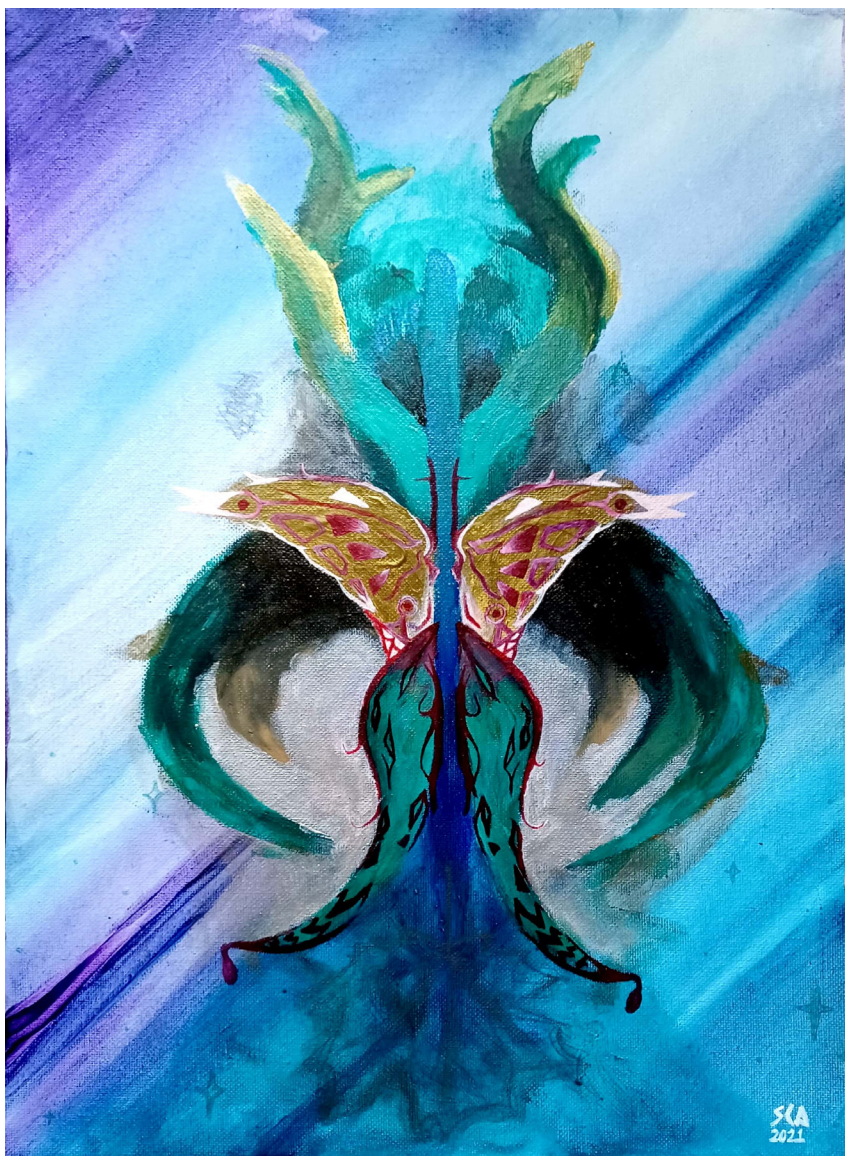
It was blinding, during the first time our eyes met. In our laughter, our heavily flushed faces, when we held hands for the first time; it pulsed in my body and my mind. It slithered into the cracks of my past and patched them.

It was there when we fought for the first time. Screamed, raged, cried, as we tore at each other's minds in desperation to somehow *stop* the suffocating anger. He took it away with an embrace, an apology, and a heated kiss. In return, I eased it from him, with the return of a brush of his jaw, an apology, a promise, and the press of my lips to his, searing our hearts together.

The color lightened, turning into something much more suitable to us.

The butt of a gun smacked me in the jaw, and I saw it flash behind my eyes. They hadn't warned me how harsh the recoil would be. The small range in my friend's backyard smelled of smoke and sulfur. My grandfather probably remembers the scent of fired guns and misted blood on a trail in Vietnam, a memory older than I am. I hope I never have to see it on any of them.

It dropped me to my knees when I saw the bloody halo around my sister's dog, laying in the interstate, where a moment before, she had been standing, 50 feet away, and alive. Blood was a lighter shade than I thought it would be.



Chayil Aponte, *Remains*





Corissa Pritchett, *Unspoken*

ZACK DAILY

*Ashy Potato*

I watch Jake, a schizophrenic man,  
place a raw potato into the embers  
of our morning fire, skin and all. He  
turns it occasionally, but does not

take  
his eyes  
off

of it for ten minutes. I watch him  
the whole duration. I see his brow  
quiver, focused and clear, and his  
foot taps with patient excitement,

and  
I envy  
this

silent whimsy of his. I can hear the  
starches boiling, steaming amidst  
the fragile quiet of snowfall and wind  
as I watch two beads of sweat gather

and  
race down  
his

forehead, then collide just above  
the bridge of his nose before hanging  
on the tip, waiting, trembling, falling,  
sizzling on the coals where the potato

just sat. The juices as he bites through  
the skin run down his jaw and drip  
onto the melting snow, the two now  
virtually indistinguishable.

ADDISYN CLAPP

## *Sweet Tea in the Summer*

### Characters

*ETHEL: An older woman about 71 years old. She is on the shorter side and a little rounder. She doesn't like to skip out on sweets. Her hair is graying. She doesn't bother to keep up with the hair dye anymore.*

*PEARL: An elderly woman of also about 71. She is much taller than Ethel and is often compared to a string bean. Pearl is still stuck in her glory days of the seventies. She hasn't altered her wardrobe or hairstyle since she was 25.*

*IDA: Also an elderly woman. She is slightly older than Ethel and Pearl, about 73. She isn't very tall, but she also isn't very short. Even in the summer, she wears the cat sweaters or vests that her roommate of 30 years has made. She keeps up with dyeing her hair blond. She is not a fan of the gray.*

### SCENE 1

SETTING: [The three elderly women are sitting on Ethel's porch all have white rocking chairs surrounding a small table. On top of the table are three glasses of ice-cold sweet tea and two bowls. One bowl has pistachio shells, and the other is half full of pistachios. It is midday and soft yacht rock is playing from the small radio on top of the table. A crumpled napkin sits beside Ida. She believes that it is polite to cough into napkins. Ethel is crocheting, Ida is finishing the last crossword of her worn crossword book, and Pearl is embroidering. When a loud car or neighborhood kid yells, Ethel's chihuahua barks from inside the house.]

*IDA: [Tapping her pencil against her crossword book. Her face is pulled into a slight frown; usually she doesn't have trouble with her crossword.]*

*ETHEL: [Without looking up from her crochet loops] Since when does tapping your pencil against your crossword book help you solve*

your puzzles?

IDA: *[Also without looking up from her crossword book]* About as much as your grandchildren like to receive scarves in the middle of our southern summers.

ETHEL: *[Places her crochet work on her lap]* My grandchildren love receiving my handmade scarves. Last year Faith even sent me a picture of her wearing it to her first day of classes at her big fancy college. Besides wouldn't you like to receive a scarf in our *[mockingly]* southern summers, seeing as you wear Flo's kitten vests and sweaters every day.

IDA: *[Folds her crossword closed and places it on the table]* Flo works very hard on these sweaters. It would be rude of me to not wear them year-round.

*[Before ETHEL can reply, PEARL puts her embroidery hoop with an unfinished dove on it in her purse by her rocking chair and throws pistachio shells at the pair.]*

PEARL: If I have to hear you two bickering anymore, then I will be moving into the coffin beside my dear Stanley sooner than I had planned.

ETHEL: *[Flicks the pistachio shell off her]* Wouldn't want you to join Stanley just yet, I mean, who is supposed to help me plan for my third wedding. You've been my maid of honor at the past two, you have to just hold on a little more to be my maid of honor at my third wedding. Lord knows Frank won't be any help.

IDA: *[Takes a sip from her sweet tea]* I can't believe I'll be attending your third wedding.

ETHEL: *[Begins to crochet again]* You know, if you really wanted, you and Flo could officially tie the knot. It's legal now.

IDA: We tied the knot long ago. Legal or not.

## SCENE 2

SETTING: *[The setting has not changed from the previous scene. Except instead of pistachios on the table it's a bowl of gummy life savers. Ethel's dog still barks at loud noises.]*

PEARL: Did y'all hear that Betty's daughter is pregnant again?

ETHEL: Catherine or Trinity?

PEARL: Catherine.

IDA: Good lord, doesn't that girl already have a dozen children.

ETHEL: *[Instead of crocheting a scarf like in the previous scene, she is finishing a hat]* Two kids and the four stepchildren have been enough for me.

IDA: *[Coughing and then takes a sip of her sweet tea. She composes herself before she speaks again]* Even that is too much for me.

PEARL: *[Looks up from her embroidery. This time she is embroidering a bouquet of flowers]* That cough still bothering you?

IDA: *[Shrugs and waves her off]* It's gotten a slightly worse this month, but a little cough isn't anything I can't handle.

PEARL: *[Concerned]* Stanley is also saying that his cough is getting worse. Hopefully, you and Stanley don't have the same thing. I'm getting worried about his health. The stubborn ass still won't listen to me and go to the doctors.

ETHEL: *[Places her crochet work in her lap and takes a sip of her sweet tea]* I'm sure Stanley is right and that the cough is nothing to worry about. When Mary was a little girl, she would get so paranoid that her springtime allergies were always something worse. The flowers and trees are all in bloom, it's probably nothing to be too worried about.

PEARL: Maybe. *[Doesn't seem to be convinced at first, but then shakes her head and smiles at ETHEL.]* There has been more pollen on everything lately. Did I tell y'all that when Stanley and I went to church last Sunday it was like we were on the yellow brick road.

IDA: *[Opens up her crossword puzzle book that was sitting on the table]* Besides, this cough can't stop me from finishing my puzzles, and I still need to be kicking to see if Frank finally puts a ring on Ethel's finger.

*[All three ladies chuckle.]*

### SCENE 3

SETTING: [It is now lightly raining outside. The rocking chair that Ida sat in is now empty. There is still a cold glass of sweet tea sitting for her. There are no snacks on the table. The only thing on the table are the glasses of sweet tea and Ida's crossword puzzle. The dog isn't barking today, and the radio is silent. The pair are watching the rain, their embroidery and crocheting lay in their purses.]

ETHEL: The service this morning was lovely. Ida would've loved what you said about our college days. I had forgotten about all of us sneaking a stray—basically feral—cat back into the dorm room sophomore year. *[Laughs]* We were drunk and giggly idiots.

PEARL: *[Also laughing now]* I can't believe that she convinced us to take the damn cat. I was so annoyed that it tore up the curtains in our dorm. *[pauses]* After that night it's probably best that none of us had margaritas together again.

*[ETHEL and PEARL fall into a comfortable silence. Both look like they are reminiscing about their good times with IDA.]*

PEARL: I think we're missing something.

ETHEL: Besides Ida?

PEARL: *[Scowls at ETHEL and shakes her head]* If you ignore the rain, I'm pretty sure you can hear Ida's cackling, but, *[hesitates]* honestly, Ethel don't you feel like something is missing?

ETHEL: *[Looks around and her eyes land on the silent radio.]* We should play her song one more time. I had to leave during the service when it came on.

PEARL: *[Turns on the radio and the songs begins to play. She picks up IDA's crossword puzzle book]* She never finished her book. She had one more row.

ETHEL: *[Stares at the crossword puzzle book and then at PEARL. A small smile on her face]* Then I guess we'll just have to finish it for her.

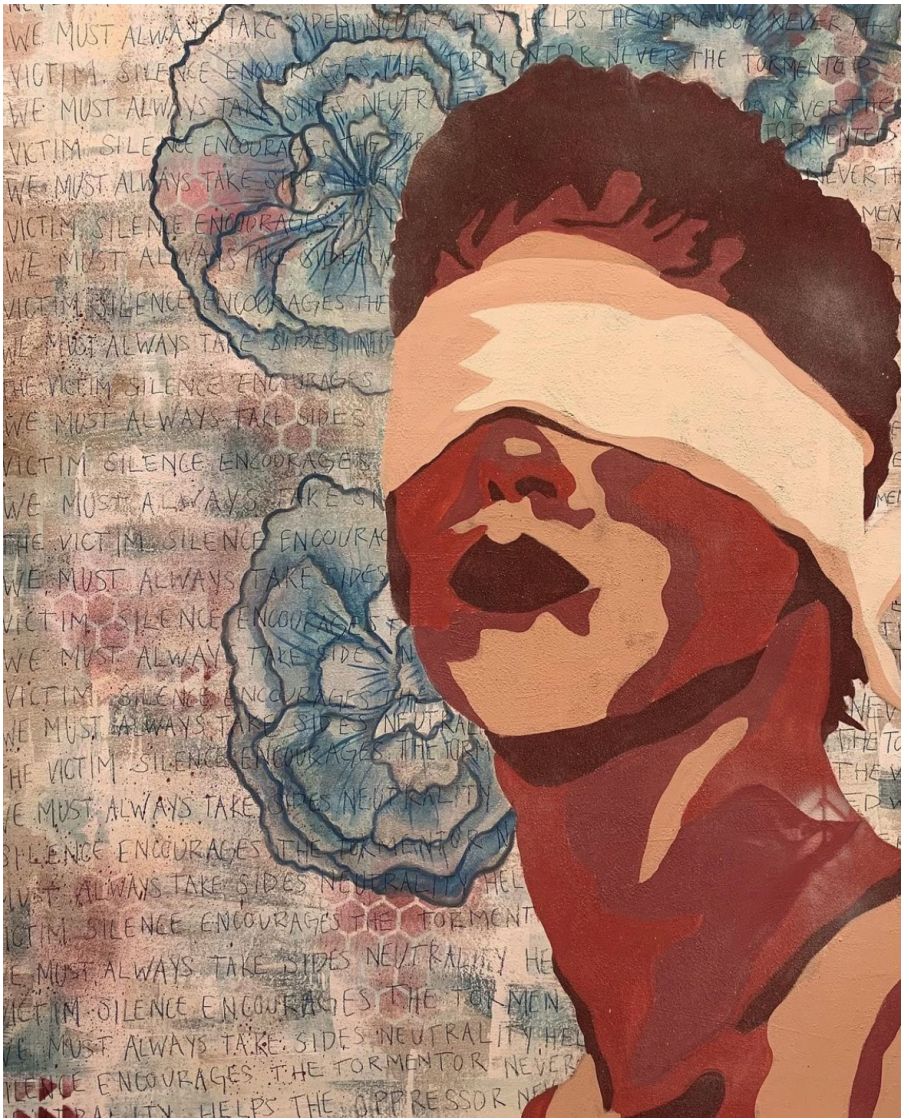
*[As the lights go down on stage, the rain sounds fade out and "Vienna" by Billy Joel is left playing.]*

THE END

BRY MEISTER

*My Nighttime Perusal of Holy  
Ground*

I lay in the grass of the graveyard path,  
looking at the sky and wondering if  
God reads the epitaphs of those buried,  
and judges the verses they chose to love.  
Flickering flags and weathered stone angels  
greet those who wander the crooked aisles:  
roses, sunflowers, peonies, daises  
laid by visitors atop the cool stones.  
Plastic, marble, iron, and gold crosses,  
differing heights stuck in the red-clay ground.  
*The righteous shall go into life eternal –*  
John 3:15, the most common scripture.  
It is dark outside beneath the stars,  
but I wonder if it is cold under the ground.



Mary Grace Nelson, *The Opposite of Love*





Rebekah Culpepper, *Stuffed with Lies*

MADELINE STUDEBAKER

*Liminality*

so I reside in that liminal state,  
in that betweenness.  
the almost new, the not quite. balanced  
on the chair onto which we toss laundry  
that's no longer fresh but isn't dirty either.  
digging through boxes of popsicle sticks and fabric strips  
intended but not assembled for a project.  
repulsed by the dishcloth that sours on the counter  
because it's meant to clean  
but merely sits.  
bathed in the arcade glow  
that bridges the Christmas lights and New Year's fireworks.  
reigning on the precipice

ASHLEY HOPE SMITH

*Mu•sic*

**Mu• sic /-/ n.** 1. A combination of sounds, like that of Copland or Handel, that evoke emotion and produce beauty and harmony. 2. A sound perceived as seemingly harmonious: Starting small / melodies and chords drawing you in like a wormhole / Starting to swell / Tempos pushing and pulling like gooey caramel / Dynamics gradually getting louder till halted by a bell / Starting at tempo again / Flowing freely like cursive written in ink pen / Mood starting to change with the plucking of a violin / Starting to grow / Images of sugar plum fairies dancing on their toes / wind chimes twinkle as snowflakes “blow” / Floating through the theatre / Girls gleefully dancing the "Waltz of the Flowers" / An adagio shared between the Prince and Clara / Creating an arch / The timbre starts to darken as the toy soldiers march / Picking up speed / Starting to tremble / Minor and augmented chords fill the air / A crescendo in the strings / Fear prevails at the arrival of the Rat King / A battle ensues / A crash in the percussion / A clashing of swords / Wood against metal / Mimicked in the orchestra / Later a magical swirl throughout the percussion and winds / The nutcracker transforms into a prince after having won the battle / Snowflakes / Sugar Plums / Flowers / Rats and toy soldiers / And a nutcracker prince / All perhaps a dream / Mapped out through a musical bliss.

JESSIE McCULLOUGH

*Bailey's and Joe*

Whiskey or Coffee?  
Bourbon or Tea?  
Rain pouring down  
Winding roads of a mountain  
Folk music surrounding  
Head full of everything  
Head full of nothing  
Whiskey or Coffee?  
Rustic vibe of orange lights  
Trees hold up high  
A wedding dress of lace  
A tux of deep blue  
Twirling around to time  
Bourbon or Tea?  
White hair screaming  
Desktop filling up  
Colored suits worn old  
Deadlines approaching fast  
Death slowly creeping  
Whiskey or bourbon?  
Coffee and tea?  
Sensible or chaotic?  
Whiskey too strong  
Coffee too weak  
Bailey's and Joe

BAILEE KRAEMER

## *My Depression*

Peace: the feeling of weightlessness. The sensation of floating without a care in the world. The only objective on my mind is the tenderness of the very beams of my affection skating across my face, down my neck, the junction of my shoulder, all the way down to the divots between each of my fingers. I cannot see anything but I feel everything, from the smile beaming across my face, to the wiggle of my toes as they dance just as light and carefree as the bubbles escaping through my presented teeth.

Yes, peace, the only word that comes to mind in this instance. The same peace I felt lying on my bed, protected by the weight of my beloved's arms. The spin of my vinyl emitting the music that reminded me of how truly cherished I was in this moment.

"Why are you crying, love?" I turn my attention to the voice.

"Nothing has ever felt this right in my life before."

Yes, peace. The one emotion I can confidently say I would be content living in forever...forever.

As quick as the flash of the heat dancing on my complexion, the illusion is broken. My eyes shoot open as I realize the reason I am floating, the reason bubbles are emitting through my mouth. The warmth I feel wrapped around me is not the warmth of the sun, but the warmth you feel as your body transcends to the next life. I am drowning.

At once the heat is gone. The bubbles flow rapidly as I gasp for the thing unavailable to me. My arms shoot up as I try desperately to grasp onto something, anything. I just need to pull myself up enough to fill my lungs, even if just for a split second. The once comforting embrace of the flowing blue around me turns against me in an angry attempt to drag me farther under. Finding nothing to grab onto, I turn my hands to my throat as if I am able to force the nonexistent air back into my very being. My hands claw down my neck, trying in vain to rid my body from the bug I feel racing under my flesh. Spasms wrack through me as my body gives up. I accept the inevita-

ble. I will die here.

God looks down on me laughing as if this is his idea of some sick, twisted, joke. Maybe it is. A shade darker than any black I've ever witnessed engulfs the edges of my limited vision, gradually moving inward, swallowing me whole.

"The moment before you die is the moment your life flashes through your mind."

I wish it wasn't so but as I lay on my pillow of death, I see flashes of moments, dancing in and out of the inexorable darkness. I desperately want to explain what I saw that day, but all I can say is it was as if a movie was playing before me. Gears on the device working as fast as it can to produce the vision, only the gears are rusty and get stuck. Pauses between each slide give me the moment of despair as I crave for the moment to come back. I am no longer in my life, yet watching it from the outside. I am the bystander in my own story.

I see before myself the body of an unknown figure. She is older, wrinkles on her skin proving it. She has short, almost buzzed off, grey hair. She is reaching towards me. I lean back from the creased hand stretched before me.

"I'm sorry...who are you?" I see myself call out. "No, please!" I try to push the words out of my throat, but I am no longer in my body. I know what is going to happen and yet I cannot prevent my younger self from the pain she is about to experience at this moment.

"I am your grandmother." The pain at this woman's words erupts inside my body. The very woman before me for I have no recollection of is my own flesh and blood. The moment I found out I was adopted. The gears squeak as it transforms into the next moment. The moments after this occurrence flashes by in a nanosecond. The tears and heartache of confrontation to the family I have always known. The realization that it was true. I was not my father's biological daughter. It then converts to the face of my best friend. The giggles that flowed through the air every time we were together. The trouble we got into in class as the teachers couldn't stop us from the joy being in the same room brought us. Every second of life being spent with her or videoed for her. The pang in my heart feels as fresh as ever when I realize the moments are blurred. There were no secrets between us. How could there be? We were no longer individual people, but one. The blurred moments of true happiness shifts to the moment it all went away. The

very secrets we shared in confined rooms being whispered to my peers right in front of my face. I don't have to see the face of the gossiper to know who it is. The same person that I trusted with my life went and destroyed that same trust I had placed in her small hands. The words I feared are now being thrown in my face as accusations.

“Fat.”

“Druggie.”

“Too sensitive.”

“Can't take a joke.”

The turning of my friends against me, the taunting words thrown at me left and right, the tears streaming down her face saying I was overreacting every time I tried to confront her. Yet there I stayed in hopes of getting my best friend back and my tormentor to disappear.

The faces of those I had known all those years not even sparing a glance my way as I ran through them trying to grasp their attention. The feeling of control slipping through my fragile fingers.

Control. The one word that sparked it all. From that point forward every moment of my life was a repeated mantra of how life was. Correction, how it needed to be. Fitting my way through thresholds or up and down stairs, I had to repeat what I wanted to stay true in a particular order, less I needed to do it again.

The flickering images went from the moment I sat my mother down and told her I no longer wanted to live, to doctors office after doctor's office, pills popped every morning and night, to inpatient hospitals for which I stayed for months in hopes of getting better.

The images of meeting the love of my life. The moment of our first kiss.

Block after block is placed as I triumphantly destroy her at jenga. She smiles and leans in, trying to distract me with a kiss. I lean away muttering about covid. She takes the hint and backs off, shaking her head fondly. Later that night as we rested in bed, feet tangled, hair sprawled out behind us, I glanced at her lips. Pink, plump, soft. I want to taste them. I catch her following my gaze. Before I can back out I mutter my final words before leaning in and capturing hers.

“Promise you don't have covid?”

“Promise.” Our lips seal together.

Later that evening as we reach my truck I turn around smiling as

I wring my hands together behind my back. She grins telling me she had a good time and we should do it again before turning to leave. A noise escapes my throat before I can contain it. She turns back around in questioning.

“Where’s my goodbye kiss?” I ask as she laughs nervously. I roll my eyes fondly and grab her by the collar, pulling her lips to mine, leaning against my truck. Let’s just say it was hard to pull out of her steep driveway after, my mind completely somewhere else.

These moments take a shade darker as I see the images of her getting in her ex’s car. I see myself alone in an abandoned parking lot crying as I lean against a nearby car. Tears and sorrow. Life is crazy like that I guess. They say it is better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all. I’m not sure I agree.

Before another moment can appear upon the screen, I smash my fists onto the gears. Screaming and yelling in vain to stop them. Jolting, I am suddenly somewhere else, above water. A moment passes before I realize I can actually breathe. The breath I take comes suddenly and knocks me down as I fill my lungs with as much air as I can, before I go back under. It is an endless cycle. Pounding after pounding, the weight of gallons of water spinning me in a whirlpool to the bottom of the sea. My legs kick under me rapidly but it is no use. I am not strong enough to battle my way out of the waves. Perhaps I never will be. My sight goes blank.



BRY MEISTER

*In Honor of Bradstreet*

I.

The crisp pages and smooth lines of print  
belong to you, who has labored and  
worried. You have pushed and pulled,  
forging lines of silver and gold, mining amethyst  
and quartz, to create a kaleidoscope of language.  
Your mind strums a note which is followed by  
another,  
another,  
another,  
until an orchestra finds the rhythm, pulsing  
with the heartbeat of your firstborn.

II.

They claim to have done so in your honor,  
exposing the naked form of your child  
to the frost and hellfire of the world's view,  
and you think of the repercussions. What  
would your husband say? What would the pastor  
think? The men watch you hang the laundry,  
your back to them, knowing  
your innermost thoughts have been placed  
at their feet. Do they understand  
what it is to nurse the baby?

III.

Read it yourself –  
examine each word, run your finger along  
the print, and feel the phrases  
bubble in your bloodstream.

It is your duty to give life and to care for it,  
to cultivate a culture around it –  
to educate.

Speak to the babe, those lines you know so well,  
*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,*  
*before you were born I set you apart –*  
*for you yourself are clothed with strength and dignity.*

IV.

My darling, what if I were to tell you  
that you are well-known,  
and your work is a symbol of feminine strength?  
Would you thank your Lord and Savior,  
would you hide behind your shutters?

Dearest Anne,  
your words light fireplaces,  
fluff pillows,  
sprinkle flour over yeast,  
scrub petticoats,  
and cradle babies' blossom heads to pink-tinted breasts.  
You have written generations of women beyond you.

V.

As an author to another,  
hold your book tight,  
but do not suffocate it so  
that it does not meet the world –  
breathe life upon its pages  
and whisper encouragement  
along its spine. It is quaking,  
shivering in the snow and sunlight,  
dressed in rags and barefoot. Wrap a scarf  
around its shoulders, place a kiss upon the cover,  
and let the world finish dressing it.

KATIE D'AMBROSIO

*1814*

*after Meissonier's 1814, the French Campaign*

Winter has arrived, and with it comes the war.  
From the mourning sky, snowflakes  
fall slowly like hesitant tears  
and powder the hoof ridden mud  
well-worn from endless rounds of  
marching men meeting their demise.

Upon his white steed, bred for battles won,  
The emperor's expression is solemn as the looming clouds above.  
He cannot turn and face  
the army of dread that drags behind him.  
He cannot gaze forward with confidence,  
for the road ahead readily reminds him  
of retreat, defeat.

In search of solace, he glances downward  
But, alas, this downcast search is in vain  
And only yields more pain and shame  
For among the riddled slush remains  
A misplaced helmet of  
A mother's son, a battalion's brother slain  
A bare head once adorned with valor  
now likely crowned with ice or blood or both  
Yet another loss, the enemy's gain.

His failure inescapable, he looks on stony-faced.

His tightlipped expression poses the question,  
of what downfall will follow.

Was it all for naught?

But despite his pondering, he leads his army onward

The neat rows of shivering men

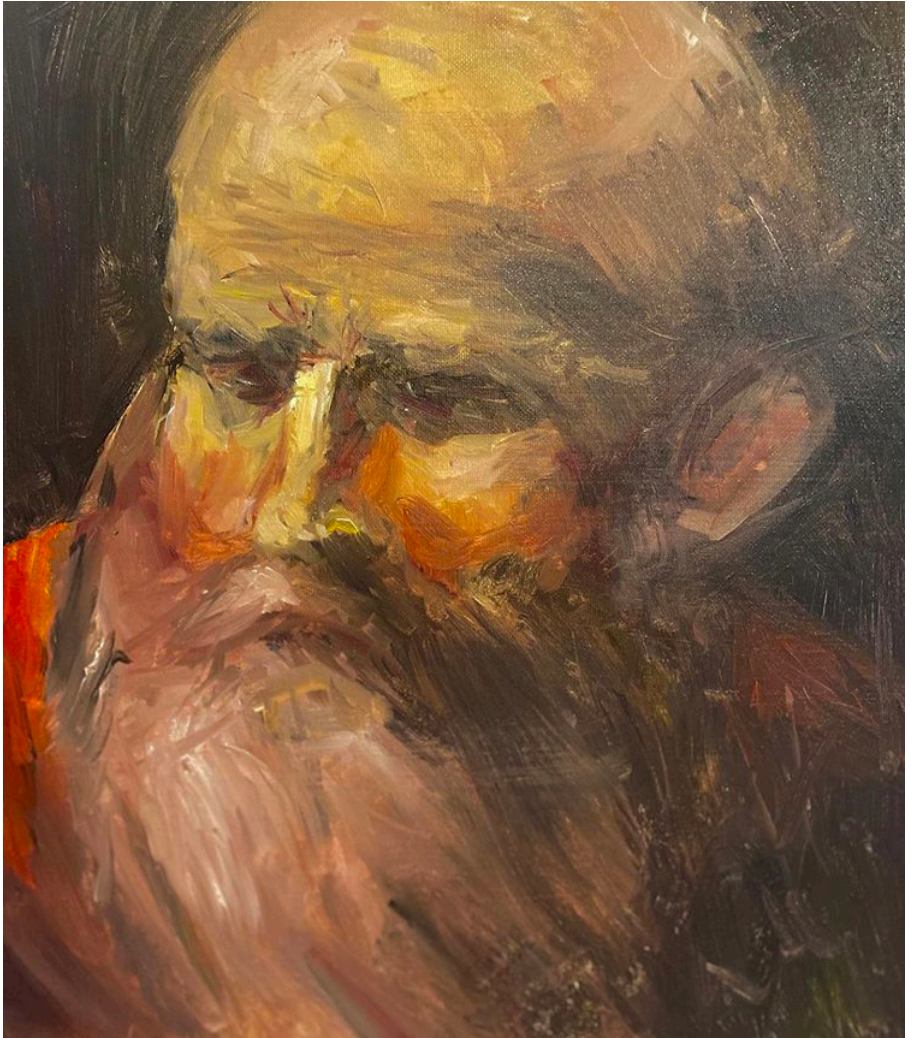
who begrudgingly trudge, their bodies aching  
from hauling their ammo and heavy hearts

As they march towards the edge of the canvas

towards deadly uncertainty.



Laurel Sanford, *An Escape from Reality*



Benjamin Bragg, *The Old Man*

EDIE WALLS

*Home Looks Like a Road Trip*

Oh, those nights spent  
gliding over black glitter asphalt

passing green glow lights  
winking low from the darkness.

The world outside, us inside –  
suitcases like soft bricks

lined up window to window  
pale pink-purple blobs in my unfocused eyes.

The air of dust and chatter  
and the *click click click* of the old carousel

were hours away.  
Instead, crisp marigold grew

from the air freshener clipped crookedly  
on the dashboard piled with papers:

pink for parking and white for memories.  
A red colored pencil

(fished out from the seats)  
drew pictures and doodles

marked and scribbled and remarked bigger.  
Orion, Ursa Minor, and Gemini

were dimmer still  
than the radiating reach

of your cosmic countenance  
when my headphones were yours

and you sang “I think  
you’re just like heaven.”

And if only I were sure  
of twinkle lights in an endless sea,

of smooth ice glass  
on my peach soft cheek,

and of you and me,  
pillows and hearts stacked in the back

while whispered laughs  
flutter in the dazed twilight and

time feels longer, a twisted  
mobius strip eternity,

I would grab my keys (and you)  
and drive into the endless sunset.





Chayil Aponte, *Acathexis* — *LODGED*



Ali Hill, *As One*



Ali Hill, *Time Will Tell*



Young  
Harris  
COLLEGE

EST. 1886