



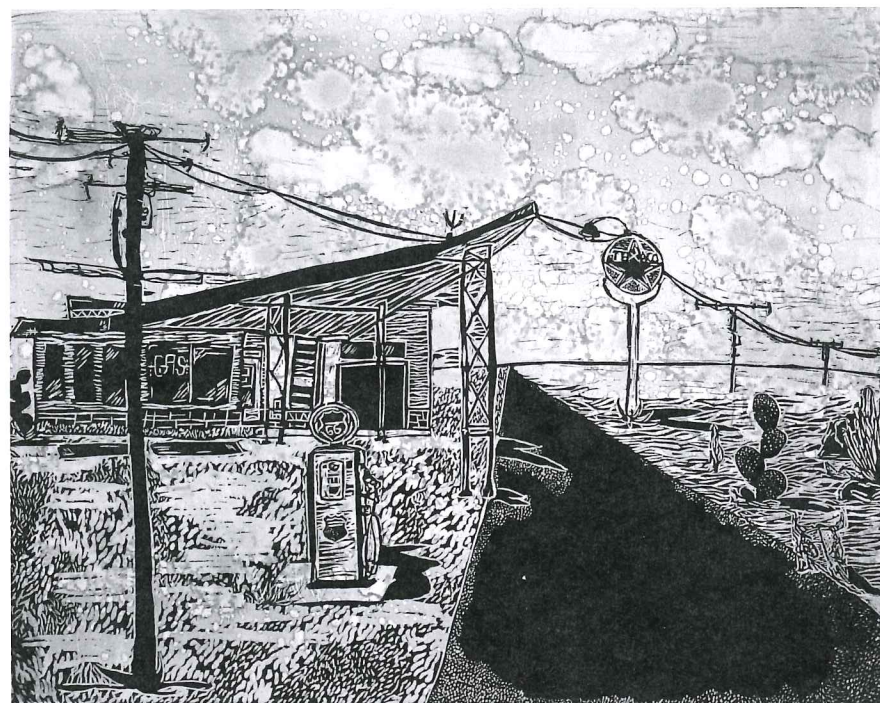
2018

Zephyrus

 WKU

Zephyrus

2018



A publication of the English Department
of Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

Editors:

Devin Beach
Eden Gasperetti
David Hormell
Emily Houston
Kyle Marshall
Nathan Mayes
Jessica McCormick
Adrian Sanders
Kylie Schaefer

Cover art:

Crissy Bryant (untitled)

Title page art:

Marlee Jones (untitled)

Art coordination: Mike Nichols and Marilee Salvatore

Faculty advisor: David LeNoir

Printing: Print Media

Editor's note: Our selection process is based on complete anonymity. If an editor recognizes an author's work, he or she abstains from the decision-making process for that work.

Award Winners

Jim Wayne Miller Poetry Award

Nathan Mayes
"My Future's in the Fire"

Browning Literary Club Poetry Award

David Hormell
"Intercourse, PA"

**Ann Travelstead Fiction Award
of the Ladies Literary Club**

Natalie Rose Turner
"Sarah at the Bottom"

Wanda Gatlin Essay Award

Emily Embry
"When Flesh Becomes an Oyster Cracker
and Blood a Sip of Grape Juice"

Zephyrus Art Award

Paige Miller
untitled

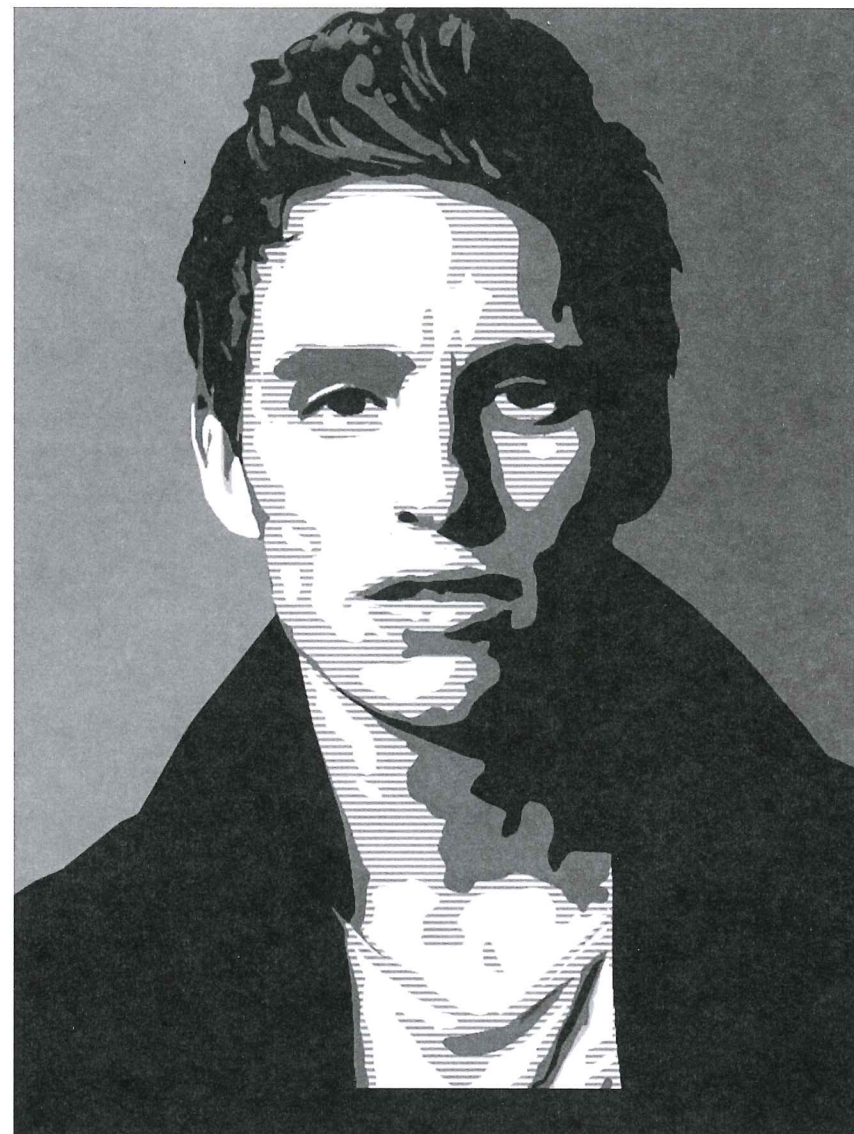
Writing award recipients are chosen by the Creative Writing faculty of WKU; the art award is chosen by *Zephyrus* staff.

Table of Contents

Katie Allison	“Redmayne”	7
Julia Adams	“Gosh”	8
	“People I Couldn’t Save”	9
	“Southern Ancestry”	12
	“Steps”	14
Devin Beach	“Leaning”	16
Claire Contri	untitled	17
Kristen Darby	“Do you drive a cab?”	18
	“Leave Room for Jesus”	20
Elza Hasani	“Dance of the Planets”	22
Emily Diehl	“Sips”	23
Sam Johnson	untitled	25
Joshua Dilley	“Old Vinyl”	26
	“The Passing”	27
Emily Embry	“When Flesh Becomes an Oyster Cracker and Blood a Sip of Grape Juice”	31

Delaney L. Holt	“An Autumn Wash”	33
	“Before a Fish Fry”	34
David Hormell	“Intercourse, PA”	35
	“Quiet Litany”	36
Hunter Little	“Sleep Dread”	37
Paige Miller	untitled	39
Nathan Mayes	“I Wish I Were a Hippo”	40
	“I Wore a Splinter from the Rough Air”	41
	“My Future’s in the Fire”	42
Autumn Minor	untitled	43
Michaela Miller	“Her”	44
	“Hunter”	46
	“Portrait of a bowl of beans”	48
Daniel Nausa	untitled	49
Alicyn Newman	“Silent Riot”	50

Nikki Ogorek	“Churn”.....	51
Samantha Newman	“Typewriter God”.....	52
Darby Poole	“Latent Pattern”.....	53
Natalie Rose Turner	“daughter”.....	54
	“Sarah at the Bottom”.....	55
Marcee Wardell	“Places I’ve Never Been”.....	61
Zach Preston	untitled.....	63
Marisa Williams	“The Skin of Fall”.....	64
McKenna Vierstra	untitled.....	66
Iman Zaghariet	“Hijabi”.....	67
	“Self-Portrait as a Quran”.....	69
	“In Which the Definition of Love is Abuse”.....	70
Rachel Wallace	“Sfumato Cube”.....	72



Katie Allison

Redmayne

Gosh

Julia Adams

I've scrubbed my body with sandpaper and turpentine,
trying to grow a different skin,
retching at the thought of my own pleasure,
punched my thighs until they were a jelly sweet enough to eat,
until I remembered these fists are weak.
I've banged my head against my head against my head.
I want to bleach my skin until I disappear.
When was I beautiful?
Certainly not with burning flesh.
Not with candlelight or kissing or don't fucking say my name.

I cried the moment I woke up and fell into your T-shirts.
I can't even look them in the eye,
when they still look like you and you still look like you,
and I smell like the feeling in my gut.

People I Couldn't Save

Julia Adams

My mind has stacks of us,
piling up around the walls,
covered in ash and dust.

Not-so-distant memories
floating in my headspace.
A diaphanous microcosm
of the universes we created.

I

I've picked pieces of you
from the ground of the skate park.
Your bloodied knees
bobbing up and down.
And I've held bicycle parts
in
fragments.

Your eyes were clear
when you rode all over town
to find me.

I've looked for you in tubes of lipstick,
for your painted mouth,
for our first and only kiss.
And I laugh about it now,
but I've smeared enough blank pages
with different shades of red,
to know that there's a difference
between being lost and being dead.

I remember all these things
and yet I forgot to tell you,
not all of my friends are good people.

II

How you always managed to fall apart
in every moment I sought you out,
almost seeming like you were trying
to leave me a wind-up toy,
never stopping to put me back on the shelf
or even dust me off.

I've wondered if I'd see you
hidden in that tree
with the man-sized hole
where you'd tuck your knees into your chest.
Sitting before the brown-green river
where I pretended the air didn't smell
of fish—dead or alive I didn't care.
But you'd never be this close
or close enough for me.

I was given countless nights
of fire and lights and dew
to actually see you.
Sat outside our middle school,
frozen adolescent worries
flickering in and out of sight.
Every time I saw your headlights,
I wished I was a deer,
smart enough to run
to the forgiving, sparse woods.
But there I would find you,

starting fires, telling stories
and I'd tilt my head to the sky.

I've seen you folding over with laughter
in the dark of my bedroom
and creating worlds I wanted to exist
and always chasing, chasing, chasing.

I saw sadness and brilliance
tying your hands behind your back
with ribbon and barbed-wire.
When I tried to cut through,
you'd pull them both tighter.

Southern Ancestry

Julia Adams

I fell asleep and I woke up in Kentucky,
suckling ambrosia from honeysuckle.
Everything that was once ugly,
was still ugly.

Uncle George told me about my Great something,
how she tar and feathered that man,
that man who had scorned her.
She made that man into a chicken.

I started fishing recently.
I cried when I took the life
from that worm.
I could taste greenery
and I caught nothing significant
and I smiled at my dirt-stained pants.

My grandma almost killed a teenage boy
when my aunt ran away.
She sat on his chest
And she pounded and pounded.
He said *you're killing me.*
She said *motherfucker, I'm trying to kill you.*

We skipped rocks this summer.
Water spilling over with effervescence.
How sweet it was to be baked out of my shell.

On road trips, we passed dilapidated barns.
Zipping by tobacco plants,
I picture tenant workers-1934,
The Great Depression hits the south.
My grandmother is born.

I wake up, fall asleep, wake up, fall asleep
in Kentucky.

Steps

Julia Adams

1.

My mother's pride and joy partner of my youth
was brilliant and beaming with onyx skin.

The brightest teeth I'd ever seen,
besides hers,
rested in
his mouth.

I have a picture of the three of us
filed away between stacks of books.
The way that he bled into the night
similar to how he evaporated
from our lives.

2.

He started a church in our living room.
A congregation of banished blood,
of sinners needing second chances.
At his pretend podium, he looked
even more like a cheater.

If I could see him today, I'd ask him
Did you ever feel God in her?

3.

When she told me he didn't have a job,
I didn't care.

But when he slept on our couch
for a month,
I didn't care that he strung lights all around the trailer
and put up that pathetic Christmas tree
in an attempt to make me smile

We've never liked the holidays anyway

4.

Now I want you to leave.

Leaning

Devin Beach

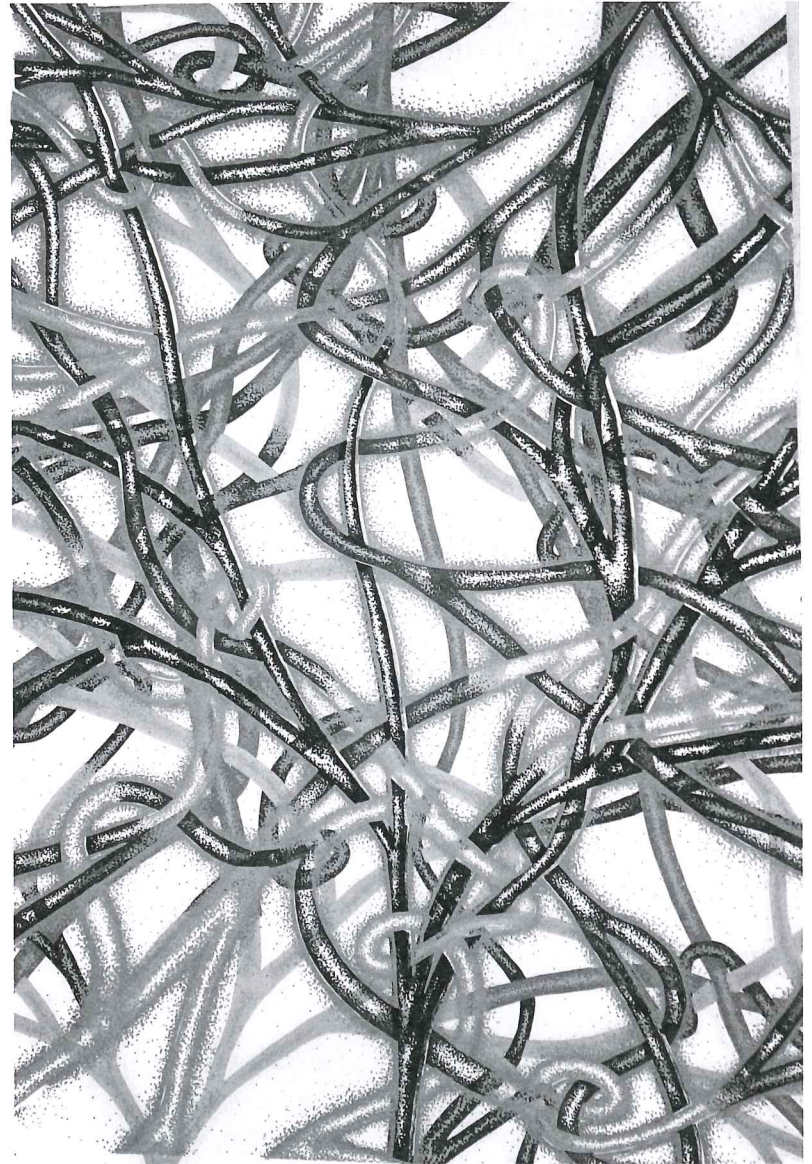
I watched my window
turn from black to
a muted blue.

I've been leaning out
of my window with
a lit cigarette nestled
between index and middle.
I blow the smoke through
the ragged screen and
watch it dissipate.

I wrote three lines about you
in comparison to the
amphetamine making me
sway between gritted teeth,
watered eyes, and a crease
under my mustache—the corner
of my mouth.

I've considered revisions,
rewrites,
retellings.

But,
I prefer to sit here
leaning out towards
the muted blue light
with the cigarette nestled
between index and middle.



Claire Contri

untitled

Do you drive a cab?

Kristen Darby

I ask the man with the tobacco-stained moustache.
For a living, I mean?

Yes. It is beginning to rain outside.

Do you like your job? Sometimes, he replies.
Like when?

He hangs for a moment like Christ on the crucifix around his neck.

Like the night I drove a pregnant woman to the hospital. I went in
with her and held her hand. She called later to say that they had
named him after me.

What's your name? My name is Julian
and my daughter's name is Jewel.

A polaroid on his dash immortalizes her bony shoulders and river
of hair like ink.

Her eyes truly are emeralds.
When do you not like your job?

When drunk men stumble home from my cab and I hear
their wives inside crying. They usually become abusive.

How does that make you feel?
Julian's eyes are on the road, tan hands gentle on the wheel.

I am thankful they didn't try to drive home,
but I wish they could have just passed out at the bar.

The rain is changing to sleet, turning the road into a mirror

reflecting Julian's cab, his tires, his underbelly.

What do you do for a living? Are you a therapist?
He asks, and we meet eyes in the rearview mirror.

I am a writer, I tell him. I don't make a living
but I'd love to make a life.

Leave Room for Jesus

Kristen Darby

The word trivia is derived
From the Latin "tri" and "via",
meaning "the place where three roads meet."
I was taught the only three roads
ere God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.
But I don't suppose they
were around in ancient Rome.

I will never know which
of these roads I met you on.
Point-seven percent of the world
is drunk at any given time.
You must have been drunk on
love, sex, or anger.
Something trivial.

I was also taught to never talk
to strangers, but I
"Never know a stranger,"
when I see one.
There are one-point-three
million legally blind
people in the United States.

You offered me a cigarette.
I'd never smoked before.
A Parliament, also a word
for a group of owls.
You were an angel in uniform,
but your feathers were brown.

"What is a girl like you
doing in a place like this?"

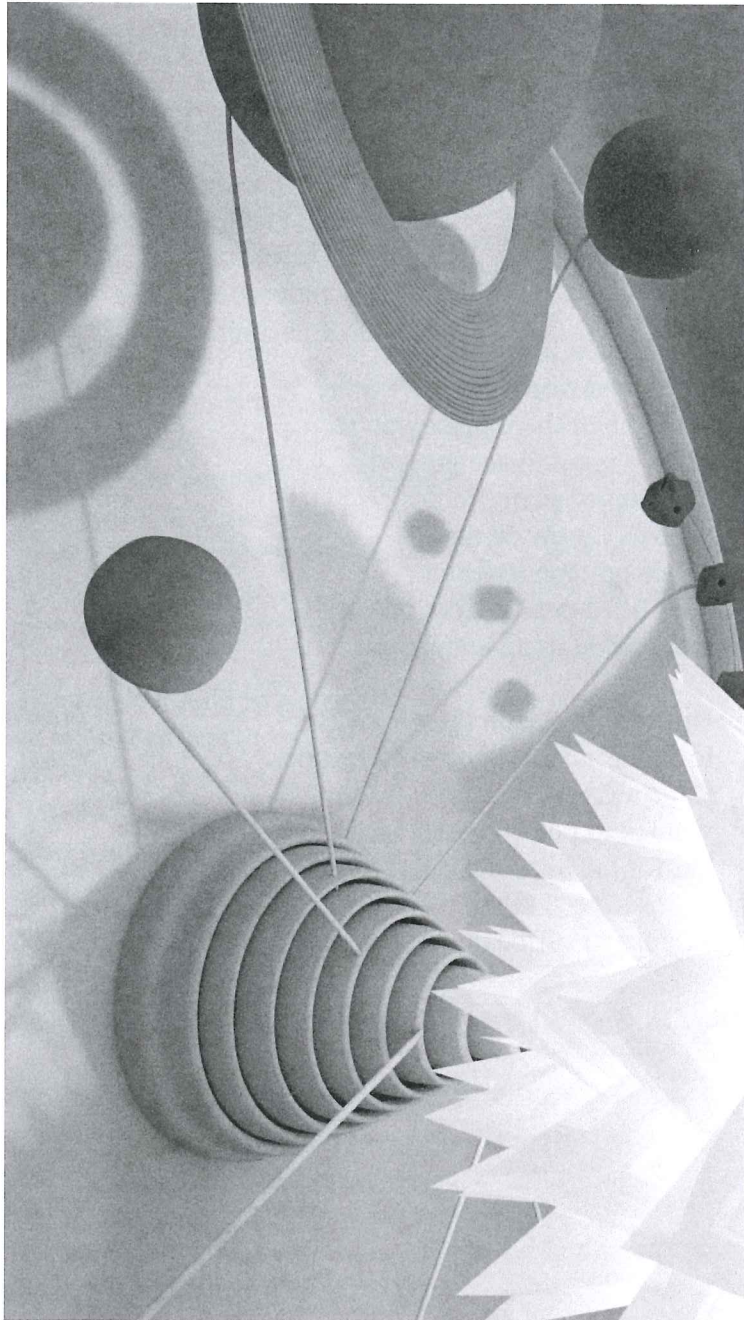
And so this went on for
longer than it should have,
though less than a year.

I heard through the grapevine
that you found God after.

The French language has
seventeen words for surrender,
yet none of them made you stop.
I was a hotel to accommodate you.
You stayed in my rooms,
even as I grew colder,
an ice hotel in Sweden.
You filled your head with me
and I filled mine with trivia.

Billy goats pee on their hooves
to smell more attractive to females.
Rape awareness classes teach
women to pee on ourselves,
but for the opposite effect.

I refuse to suffocate in your ashes.



Sips

Emily Diehl

I careened Diddy Kong into a tumbling barrel and the game jumped back to the map. My pulse quickened. Dad looked at me.

“Okay, Emily. Just one sip.”

Chest tight, I hovered a cup of broth below my lips, the steam dampening my nose, the smell strong. I forced down a mouthful, let it settle into my caved-in stomach, then nodded to show I needed the next distraction.

I would graduate college in four months, and the unknown had barreled me deep into spiraling anxiety. Everything was hard. Sitting up straight. Showering. Brushing my teeth. Most of all, eating.

Dad tipped back his own cup and swallowed before restarting the level. He’d had a rough week and needed this too. He said helping me helped him.

Dad and I have played Donkey Kong Country annually since I was seven or eight. At some point every Christmas break he’ll say, “Ready to play, Donkey Kong Buddy?” and we’ll race to the TV like we’re about to do something mischievous and switch on the Super Nintendo.

The first time we played, we sat cross-legged at the edge of my parent’s bed, close to the TV because the controllers were wired to the system. It was the same bed I’d sleep beside whenever I had bad dreams or saw shapes in shadows. This happened enough that Dad eventually bribed me into sleeping in my bed for a week by promising me a trip to Build-a-Bear if I did. “You have to want it more than you’re afraid of it,” he often said.

“You have to act normal to feel normal,” he said now, encouraging me to sit up straight on the futon—to talk, breathe. “You’re okay.”

I wasn’t. I was collapsing. I’d built a tower of security upon the foundation of college—the not-yet-real-life—and that piece was about to be pulled out like a Jenga block. I pushed back fear until it sling-shotted back at me—*What if?* What if I can’t do it? Forget the past four years. *Remember—you are insane.*

I was going insane. I’d come home unable to talk or function, shaking out tension against a pillow I’d drowned in essential oils, squeezing Dad’s hand like I did as a child—“Don’t leave me, don’t

go”—even as I realized I clung to what I could lose, grasping at brittle ropes.

We lost another level, this time Donkey’s fault. Dad raised his mug, almost in apology, and we took a shot.

As a kid I could never say what kept me up at night. I tried at first—Bad dreams. Getting sick. Skeletons. But really I was just scared. I didn’t know why. After the panic attacks started—after I was diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder at age ten—I had a better answer. I was afraid of anxiety—of the fear itself. But this isn’t as wise as people make it out to be. I couldn’t fight fears with kicks and blows or sound reasoning. I still can’t. And so I pray, and then I stand up, brush my teeth, wash my face—talk, breathe, play.

When you run out of lives in Donkey Kong, the screen shows Donkey covering his eyes and Diddy caressing his cheek below a black eye. I don’t remember when it started, but that became our thing. Whenever we lost, Dad’s hand would go over his eyes and mine against my cheek. Then that became our signal that we wanted to play. We’d be finishing up cleaning dishes with the family when we’d turn to each other and mimic those defeated gestures and scurry to the TV.

We lost again, and the image came up. I tensed as my body told me to run. But then Dad slapped his hand over his eyes. I gasped out a laugh, like I was coming up for air, and pressed mine to my cheek.

Another shot.

Next time, we leapt over barrels and knocked out orangutans until we reached the end and Diddy and Donkey danced to the next level.

Smiling this time, I took a sip and let it warm me. Dad did the same.

I knew we couldn’t stay there forever, in the basement playing games. I would still have to graduate, figure out life, experience loss and pain.

But today we played and took shots.

One for every victory. One for every loss.

A shot for life. A shot for death.

But always, just a shot.



Sam Johnson

untitled

Old Vinyl

Joshua Dilley

I rescued you
from a yellowing gloom
in the powdering pulp
of a paper sleeve

You thanked me
with the dried scent
of damp roots
and old libraries

You spoke to me
in a calming crackle
and the dust of age
loosened in your throat

I heard you
and you told me
how to feed
my taste for time

The Passing

Joshua Dilley

I.

Your leaving left a dent in my brain

like the one they made in the ground
for you—
you became a ghost of your former
strength—
now, a paper man weighted down
with stone.

They woke me up around 3 a.m. so that
I could say goodbye.
19 years have passed, and I still feel the
crick in my neck
and the burn of a pleather seam furrowing
the flesh of my arm—
common symptoms of nightly beatings from a
hospital pull-out bed.

I want to say it was hard—sleeping knees-to-mouth
and ear-to-shoulder
like some malformed fetus on display at a
crepe-soled carnival
for nurses and blood-letters and other seasoned sadists
on parade,
but it was the last decent sleep I have had—
the last honest sleep.

And I can't feel right about thinking anything
has ever been hard for me
after seeing how hard you struggled for those
last three breaths you stole.

Death shoved you off
like you were nothing.

You weren't nothing and you were nothing
like what you had become.

II.

For eight years we all stood helpless as we watched you
slip away from the familiar.
Like the stale smoke of your Pall Malls seeping through
the pores of the kitchen wall,
you drifted
into a time where
you had first lived the memories that were now being
taken from you.

It seems you had a dent in your brain as well—
a system of plaques and tangles tunneling through
your cranial catacombs
where you misplaced your own remains.

No, Papa. I'm not Jim Tom. I'm Joshua.

No, Papa. It isn't 1967. It's 1999. New Year's Day, Papa.

Soon you won't have to cry every time someone speaks
about your dead brother
like you're hearing the news for the very first time.

You won't get lost in the backyard anymore.

You'll never tell me again how frightened you were as
a boy seeing an airplane for the first time

when you were ignorant of the world beyond your
family's farm,
or about the men you got to know just before you saw
their heads explode at the will of
a bullet fired from a Japanese rifle or their bodies
perforated by indiscriminate shrapnel.

It must have seemed like the world was coming
to an end when you were dug
deep into the dank earth of your foxhole, cowering from
the shells of hellfire.

But you lived long enough to tell your stories and pray to
God you never had a son—
a boy who would one day be a man and a target
for recruiters and hopeless dreams of heroic glory.

III.

I can't think of 3 a.m. without thinking of
the 3 a.m. when I awoke to the
smell of stale piss and fear, and the industrial cleaner
couldn't sanitize the yellow in the air.

I hurried to relieve my own bladder before
settling in to watch you die,
and those last few hours flew away, gray
and heavy with the burden of
what was left of my youth, and death brought in
the truth of itself and urged me to
get rid of those Romantic ideals of living in memories
and leaving the suffering and some
naïve notion that dying can be beautiful,
because it isn't.

There was no beauty in watching the stories you

loved to share evaporate
from your mind like water boiling down in some
neglected kettle left simmering.
There was no beauty in seeing the mouth that
so often spoke of love
become blistered with dryness from two weeks
in a coma—

I lost my innocence sponging your cracked and bleeding lips
and gums from a cheap plastic cup
with the hospital logo printed across the front
in a bold and gaudy blue.
I lost my innocence when I felt the terror in your grip
as you squeezed my hand—
when I heard the crack of your spine from the way
you threw your chest into the air
to heave and to heave and one more gasp . . .

When Flesh Becomes an Oyster Cracker and Blood a Sip of Grape Juice

Emily Embry

I was almost a teenager, but still lifetimes away from the maturity I needed to sit in a church of believers. I was still wearing my witch's luck charm around my neck and I wondered if it'd burn right through my grandmother's blessing and into my throat.

I remember the way the purple juice rippled as the woman's hands shook trying to keep it balanced on the tray. I thought the blood of Christ looked delicious and I was dehydrated. I knew it was only grape juice, but I wanted to try it, to say that I had tasted the blood of the holiest man and liked it.

It was communion, when believers gather to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, like the way they cannibalize the Bible. I was sitting in the pew, my feet swung through the air. I remember my friend's mom's voice, *I don't think your mother would want you to have that*. And I thought about my mother and how little this woman would ever know about her. My mother has always told me that I should find my beliefs in whatever ways I can.

I found one in childhood, when my Barbie dollhouse became a playground for fairies that visited my room in the night. They were fond of peanut butter sandwiches with no crust. My mom would let me make one, once a week. I'd write a note—I still have all of them—and ask about their world, their lives, their days. I'd cut the no-crust sandwich into tiny, bite-sized-to-us-normal-sized-folk portions. In the morning, I'd wake and the sandwiches were gone and the letters answered. I still clap for Tinkerbell and I probably always will because *I do believe in fairies, I do, I do*.

I didn't take the cup. And I remember her face when I told her, *it's just juice*. It wrinkled up like a piece of scrap paper bound for the trash. I found another here, in that very instance when judgment came and blessings left. It reminded me of a man covered in dirt with a cardboard sign. He blessed a man for the change he dropped in front of him the way you'd throw slop to a pig. *Bless you, bless you*. I remember wondering if the man sitting in filth felt blessed. I was only six and even I knew blessings weren't saving anyone on that street, or in the pew I sat in many years later.

When the juice was gone, the bowl carrying his flesh was

passed through the pews. My hands never even got the chance to even touch the holy bowl. How could I believe in Him if I couldn't consume his flesh like everyone else? I wanted to taste the salt of His skin and crunch it between my teeth and wash it all down with His blood. I wanted to be a cannibal, too. *It's just a fuckin' cracker.*

At eight, I was enthralled by Buddha's teachings about re-birth and anti-materialism. Having an infinite amount of chances to live a small life sounded like magic. Magic I knew, then and now, I could never do—life is not like my spell books and tarot cards. But I still touch Buddha's stomach every time I see him and wish for prosperity and a little luck for everyone who needs it and hope it works.

When I went home that night, I told my mother about church. She laughed, hugging me into her small frame. She leaned heavily on me—she still does. *I think we have some saltines in the cupboard.* I found another belief in the absences of others.

An Autumn Wash Delaney L. Holt

I eased into a crisp bath. Dry leaves scraped my arms—clawed like hamsters on runaway wheels. They seeped into my overalls, ratted my hair, dissolved under my youthful warmth.

Dad raked and piled and pressed those leaves against me—wrapped me in a pool of stems. A wide-eyed corpse, I gaped at passing clouds. Under the October sky, I shed any alarm, left it soaking in a leafy basin.

Before a Fish Fry

Delaney L. Holt

Catfish flopped on pressed
flats, ripped skin against
fresh wood. They swallowed
hollowed groans, moaned
for moss, the water, a dock.
A butcher knife caught the
sun; each glimmer bragged
of past fillets, past slaughter.
Dad traced a maze of cuts,
cradled fins with the blade.
With a fluid *CHOP*, a slimy
head plopped on the grass.
That cat's mouth kept
begging, lips miming a
silent "help." For an hour,
the mouth opened, closed
until it froze: eyes and mouth
agape, aimed at the stagnant lake.

Intercourse, PA

David Hormell

The townsfolk in the Amish village are aware
of the name and how it tends to connote sad
images of conservatives in coitus, so they
embraced the name like a lettered patch
intricately stitched in passersby's minds.

Ugly t-shirts complete with scratchy cotton
announced: "I love Intercourse" to the delight
of giggling children, faces rendered red
by the fire of impure thought.

I crave intercourse, the Latin brand *intercursus*—
an exchange—of time and body heat pooled
together to form a collective sweat and

in school I learned fire in Latin is *ignis*—
to ignite or spark—and the spark
of sudden thought comes to me
when I consider the stars
are hanging graves
suspended
in space

Quiet Litany

David Hormell

I want to forge tiny intersections of light
in the corners of time and space
so strangers might see and say:
that boy sure is something.

I want to inhale drugs without consequence,
to clear the cobwebs from the winding
corridors in my mind and try anything
to prompt light to clatter through.

I want to make like Mary Shelley,
to intricately stitch glimmers of good
together to make something tangible.

I want to justify rice and beans
and water five nights a week.

Perhaps I may make
you proud and in my head,
you'll crease the corners
of your mouth when you read of me.

Sleep Dread

Hunter Little

My first memory is one in which I could not sleep. We lived in the white house on the corner with the hardwood floors and attic door we were warned not to open. I dreamt I was falling. Dreams of falling are commonly associated with insecurities, anxieties, or feeling out of control. I was only three, but the dream haunted me for years. I climbed out of the white bed with the mattress that sounded like plastic that high-maintenance aunts secure around couches on holidays, and ran into my sisters' room. One of them let me crawl into the bottom bunk with her and I was able to sleep peacefully knowing that someone I trusted was there to protect me.

As a child, I would curl up on the couch at three in the morning, watching reruns of *Three's Company*, *Full House*, or *George Lopez*. It was in the moments I wasn't sleeping, when everyone else was tucked away in bed, that I felt most safe, least vulnerable. On more than one occasion, my mother found me under a mountain of blankets with the wide, lit screen burning my eyes. I don't know if she said anything to me, she must have, but that wasn't important. She walked to the kitchen, warmed a big ceramic mug of milk, made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich (sliced diagonally), and sat with me on the living room floor, her fingers moving against my back like cirrus clouds lightly painting the sky. I fell asleep quickly after that and I still find comfort in the simple affection of someone's hand rubbing my spine.

I didn't realize the amount of time I spent not sleeping was a problem until it followed me like a raging bull into adolescence and adulthood. Many of my memories during this time are blurry or non-existent because of sleep-deprivation or repression or both. I spent my high school years journaling until four a.m. and my undergraduate years snorting Adderall on my two a.m. lunch breaks to help me wrestle with graveyard shifts and eighteen credit hour schedules. I had become afraid to sleep. Nightmares and flashbacks stalked me, paranoia stationed itself deep in my bones, I developed a constant feeling of uneasiness and nausea, and many pieces of the memories I have from undergrad are miss-

ing, lost in the void I created out of fear of the unknown, or the too familiar.

At twenty-three I still suffer from that uneasiness. I still force my eyes to stay open and when they don't I am slapped out of sleep and remember the paranoia that resides in the cracks of my joints. I can lie for hours, painting scenarios in my head of what *could* happen, and strangling myself with memories of what *did* happen. I am a prisoner to the dread felt when my eyelids become heavy and my body fatigues.

I've tried sleeping pills, antidepressants, anxiety medication, cups of tea, melatonin, watching Bob Ross, and listening to classical music. I don't know if I am more afraid of sleeping or not sleeping. To sleep means to face my inner thoughts, to fight flashbacks and fears, to wake up in cold sweats, panting because I've relived traumas, but to not sleep means to accept a perpetual state of exhaustion, to fight against my body and mind, to lie down in bed at night and pretend I want to sleep, waiting for the breath leaving the body next to me to slow so I can escape into the three a.m. silence.



untitled

Paige Miller

I Wish I Were a Hippo

Nathan Mayes

I hope to forget you, but I remember
like the human nose, which can recall
fifty thousand scents. Every small detail
sticks to me like the bedsheets clinging
to my wet skin as I dream of you again,

unable to separate sweat from tears.
The detailed memory of that day with you
comes to me before what's easier to remember,
like the lighter being invented before matches.
I long to be a hippo because they sweat red

when they're upset. If I were a hippo, maybe
my family would see something was wrong
when you were around. I'd be able to say
that the reason I swim with a shirt on,
the reason I don't like to be touched,

the cause of my nightmares where I'm six
and the grown man chases me are all
because of you,
how you felt me before throwing me
aside like fruit that wasn't yet ripe enough.

I Wore a Splinter from the Rough Air

Nathan Mayes

The tips of a hawk's wings slice through
the wind like your scissors trimming
my young, thin hair. Cut short
in the summer, left long in winter.
Hair falls to the floor like leaves
shedding to reveal rough branches,
to expose rough-housing thoughts.
I'd run my soft hands over the rough,
split tree bark, which left splinters
in my palms like spittle from the cat
and his sandpaper tongue. I went to you
with splintered hands the way chimps go
to their mothers for grooming, knowing you
would ask why I had a splinter again.
But knowing that when I'd tell you it came
from nowhere, you'd smile and suggest
it came from thin air and press down
my hair's cowlick with your gentle kiss.

My Future's in the Fire

Nathan Mayes

Who is the witness?

Their irises are darkness. When pauses are old
in a war or two, when columnists are through
answering, the disguises are nothing we imagined
as a divide: no chance, no conveyor-belt kiss,
no bell-jarred life at the bottom of the heart.
The coliseum of morning shows God is empty,
a time before truth pours the order. The fortresses
await maelstroms. Moates are thirsty. Every atom
carries sound forward, conveys it into acoustic
nothing. Eyes full of actions, mouths
like statues, minds producing song.
Ashes speak before I can say it.



Autumn Minor

untitled

Her

Michaela Miller

This was her,
a part of me.

Her eyes looked
like dirty
emerald earrings
--tucked away
in a wooden
jewelry box
in the third drawer.

I remember hearing
a scratchy
Conway Twitty—
“Tight-fittin’ jeans,”
and strong tobacco
in a styrofoam cup
on a musky couch.

A pink dress robe,
smooth splotchy legs,
a thin mouth.

Dirt stained in the carpet
by the screen door and
“The Price Is Right” muted
on the television.

Instant coffee and
Diet Pepsi and
Pepto Bismol

A dining room

with a hole in the floor
and a wall filled with
mismatched frames

House shoes with the heels
worn out on a scratched
coffee table

This was her,
but she was not there.

Hunter

Michaela Miller

I love a man who
slices open animals,
eats their insides
and asks if he can
have seconds.

Huntsman
of my
hips—like
the way
you pressed
them against
your Ford
and stretched
me from
the truck-bed
to the moon

Wild gatherer
of maraschino
cherries—
you said
they all
tasted fresh.

Fresh like
the blood
you collected
from the
does—she
squirmed
and wept

when you
pierced her

I wish
you would
still caress me
like the
dead carcasses
on your walls.

Portrait of a bowl of beans

Michaela Miller

My spine cracks and curves like
the one-lane road connecting
every hollow, branch, fork
and lick

the batter that drips
from my chin,
a salty cake that
doesn't need an occasion—
a crest of cornbread,
crumby, floating in
a bowl of soup beans.

My eyes are
budding, not mature
enough to be picked
and peeled
and broken

half a tablespoon
of hot sauce,
mustard greens,
slivers of wild onion
styled on top,
and delicate

wrinkled hands
ladles the leftover
beans in a white bowl,
traps them under
a skin of plastic wrap
and saves them for later.



Daniel Nausa

untitled

Silent Riot
Alicyn Newman

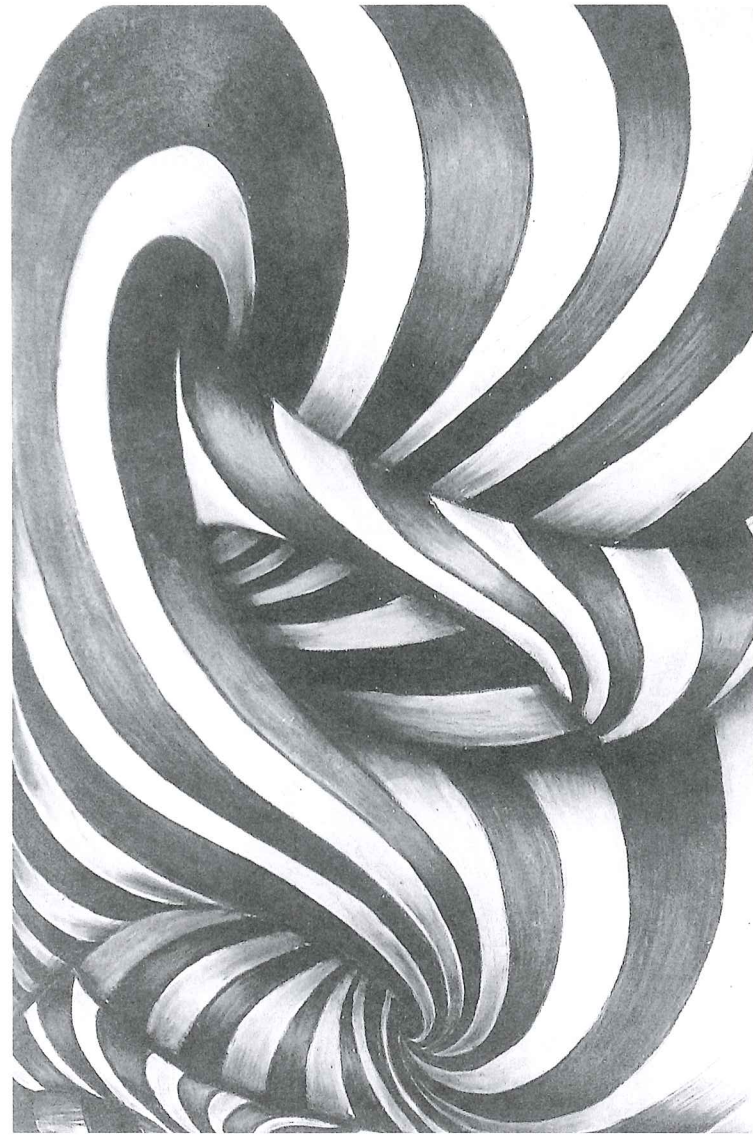
Listen

.
. .
. . .

Do you hear
the silent riot?—
paper soldiers clashing,
pouring forth ink as blood.

Do you heed
the untold stories?—
the narratives born
from pain and typewriter keys,
a tight smile
or a lingering glance
their synopsis.

I want to fold the stories
into paper planes—
send them
spiraling
to land at the feet of those who think
time is better spent
not listening.



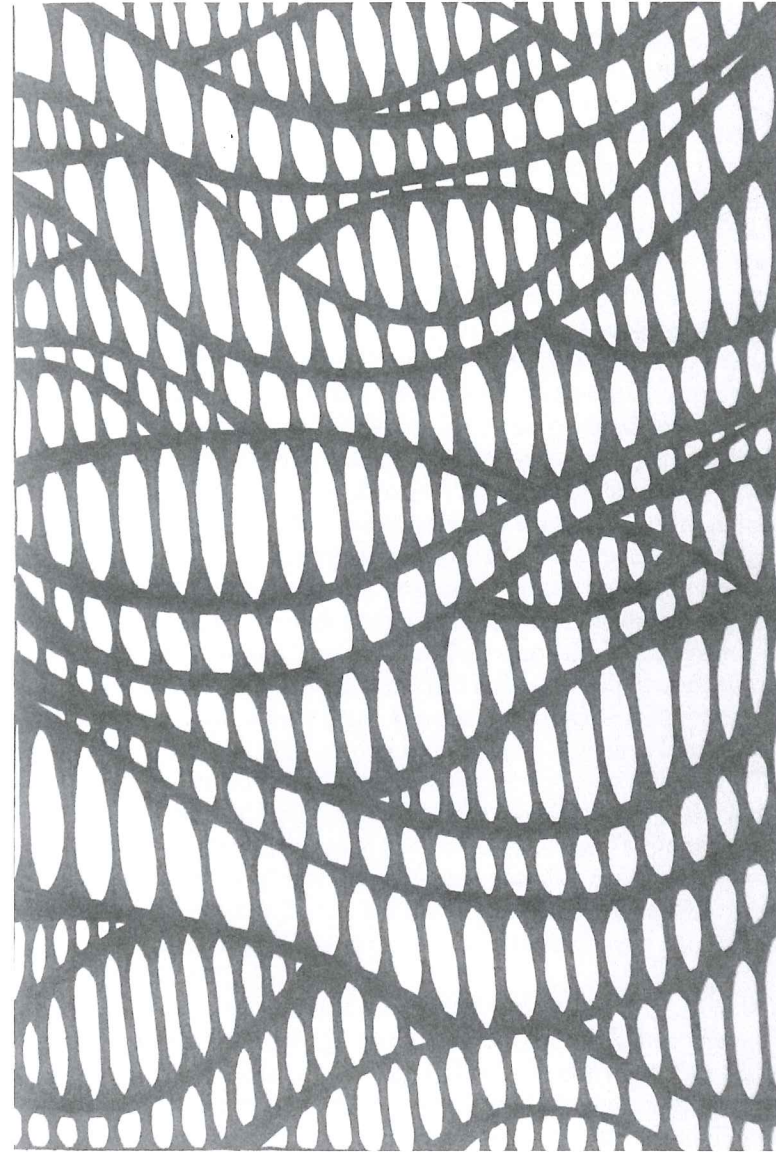
Churn

Nikki Ogorek

Typewriter God

Samantha Newman

Tom Hanks collects typewriters.
They sit on a shelf and they wait for the day that
Tom Hanks picks them up and puts them on
his desk.
His fingers peck out words on metal keys,
Clicking, Clacking.
Every night I find myself awake and staring out my window,
a world of bright lights and speeding cars not so far away,
Tom hanks and his typewriters play in my mind.
Clicking, Clacking
fills the silence and overwhelms the soft purrs of the cat
who takes his role of protector and comforter too seriously sometimes,
the whispered whirs and whooshes of the speeding cars far away,
the peaceful rain dropping against the frosted glass.
Tom Hanks, at his desk, types his words of joy or sadness,
I don't know,
and he types and types and types
Until
all that's around me is
Tom Hanks
and
his words.
I wish I could sleep, but with Tom typing,
I cannot. I can only imagine the wisdom his fingers spit out, the
beautiful words he shares with everyone who can read them, but
Tom Hanks only shares the sounds with me,
keeps me awake for hours and days and months and years.
Sometimes I wish I could be a snail and sleep for three years, but
Tom Hanks doesn't want that, and for now, he is my author.
His typewriter is my God.



Latent Pattern

Darby Poole

daughter

Natalie Rose Turner

“when you were born
you shot out
so fast

I had to catch you
with a baseball glove”
he says

but he never caught me
so, here I am
still

going. So fast

Sarah at the Bottom

Natalie Rose Turner

Above: 200 feet of craggy limestone, grey and lined from years of exposure to the tides. Below: the shallow sea and a few stray boulders peeking above the waves. From their current height, he'd probably die.

Rafael was good to Sarah. When they walked together, he held her hand like a gentleman, neither following nor forcing. And they walked together often, across the scarred landscape of whatever the world had become, scouring burned and abandoned cities for survivors and destroying any guns they found.

Sometimes it wasn't easy, convincing people who'd seen the end of the world to hand over their only means of self-defense. For anyone but the so-called “girl who never dies” it probably would have been impossible. Her elders told her it was for the best. Years ago, just before Sarah was born, the sky turned red and let out bright serpents of energy, they said. Some were large enough to curl themselves around “skyscrapers” and tug until the massive structures fell apart in a whirlwind of fire. Others slipped down the throats of living creatures and contorted them from the inside. Sarah's mother told her one such beam of light slipped down her own throat when she was pregnant. Instead of killing the mother or the unborn child within, it gave Sarah undying flesh and unyieldingly regenerative tissue. “God's chosen,” her mother had once said. “God wants you to live.”

But no one knew if some god had sent his fire and siphoned almost all human life from the planet. What they did know is the fire had not been seen since the end. Why should such volatile creatures as man run around with guns when so few of them remained?

Sarah told Rafael that that is what she wanted to do with her apparently endless life. She wanted to find survivors and eliminate guns. She was the perfect candidate. Even if someone shot her, her body would simply reject the bullet and grow back stronger. Like she had asked him to perform a task as simple as washing her hair or fetching a pair of socks, he just nodded. “Sure. Okay.”

Now, they climbed for a better view of the area, searching for a place to camp for the night. Rafael walked the cliffside a few paces ahead of Sarah, one arm still stretching back in case she wanted to clasp on once more. His skin glowed pink after another day in the sunlight, contrasting with the blackness of his shaggy hair. He looked distressingly human. Everyone Sarah had grown up around was starting to get wrinkled and grey. Everyone except for her. The brown of her hair was no less deep, her skin

no more rough. Rafael, just four years her senior, looked almost like he could be her father.

She looked closer at his skin, coated in a thin layer of sweat. The rolled sleeves of his shirt caught on his forearm muscles, still sturdy after all the years. Perhaps she'd exaggerated her conception of his age, though she could definitely see a few grey hairs on his head in light of the sunset. One side effect of immortality was the inability to ignore signs of aging in the normal people around her. She did not exclude Rafael from judgment.

"Look up there," he said, finger pointing in the air. "All the way at the top. We could build a house there."

She trudged on behind him. "A house at the top of the cliffs?"

"It looks like it flattens out once you get up there."

She put her right hand on her hip. "All I want is a decent view for the night."

"I wouldn't mind thinking about a decent view for my future." He sounded calm, unperturbed.

"The future..." Her voice trailed off into a tiny laugh. The wind drowned out the sound. Survivors told her the wind used to wail far less often, and when it did you knew it was coming. People once had entire networks for weather predictions. Not anymore. "Just keep the umbrella," her mother once told her. But Sarah never shied away from rain.

"Why not settle down somewhere?" Rafael said, admiring the setting sun like he'd been the one to give it color. "We've done a lot of good work. But work is work."

The wind blew in her ears again. "Maybe."

Rafael turned his head towards the daunting mountain path before them and exhaled. "Just let me rest for a second," he said. He sat close to the ledge with his eyes facing outwards. She stood behind him and stared at the back of his head.

When Sarah was still a kid in the years following the end, everyone wanted to see her. Strangers would pick her up or try to yank her from her mother's arms. One group of men wanted to dissect her and see what she was made of. "She won't die," they said. "She'll come back completely fine." They said that, but they didn't really know for certain. At that point in her life, she'd never been shot or stabbed or decapitated, but some people were still willing to experiment with the body of the immortal child.

Of course, many survivors in the settlement didn't have frequent opportunities to interact with children. Most were childless both before

and after the fall, either by choice or necessity. The closest person to Sarah in age had always been Rafael, and he alone wanted nothing to do with her strange abilities. That's why she liked him.

Together, they stole strawberries from the supply cache and hid outside the settlement's walls. They sparred with sticks until Rafael's body could take the pain no more. He never complained. In fact, he almost never asked anything of Sarah.

Some of the survivors started calling them "Adam and Eve" — the first children of the new world, even though Rafael had been born four years before the end of the old one. Sarah asked what it meant one night, and her mother told her God's first humans were given the same names. Sarah didn't understand the story because Adam and Eve weren't children and Sarah would never walk around naked. Another adult told her she might change her mind when she gets older. Sarah's mom told the man to shut his mouth, and Sarah ran off to her hiding spot outside the walls.

Hours later, Rafael found her crying out there, knees spotted with dirt. When he put his arm over her shoulders, she pushed him away. "Don't touch me!" she had said. He stood there with a blank expression, but before he started to walk away she raised her head again. "And don't leave me either."

Years and years later, they lost their virginity to one another. "I never want to do that again," she'd said. He shrugged and said "okay." Two days later she dragged him into her bedroom again, and he seemed just as content.

They kept walking and the trail narrowed. They were close to the top. For a moment, Rafael stopped and looked ahead. "Ground looks safe," he said. "Want to test it with something?"

"Should be fine." She bit her lip. While he tapped his foot on the increasingly narrow pathway ahead, she peered over the edge and back into the water. They'd seen the cliffs from miles away, not knowing whether they'd be able to climb to the top. Well, Sarah knew she'd be able to climb to the top. The question was whether she'd be leaving Rafael at the bottom.

"It's getting pretty thin up here," Rafael said, turning his body sideways to cling to the limestone a little better.

"Should I be worried?"

He smiled back at her, still moving forward. "Not unless you'll miss me."

She could see he still had plenty of room. The shimmy was probably unnecessary, but she turned herself sideways as she proceeded, if

only to preserve his confidence. "Not a chance," she said.

He nodded with one eyebrow raised, one corner of his lips turned upwards.

After continuing their ascent for a few minutes longer, Rafael was breathing heavy. The slope had increased. While Sarah waited, she tried to tune out the wind and focus on the waves beneath. She could almost feel them pulling at her skin, the endless ebb and flow. The rhythm was easy to get lost in. That's why she liked it.

"Fuck!" Rafael said, ahead of her. Her head shot back. His left hand had loosened a chunk of stone enough for it to tumble forward between them. In the moment, his body clung to the stone and he lurched forward, surely to fall. She could see it in his footing, his posture, his aching muscles.

But he didn't.

The man had balanced himself by throwing his right shoulder backwards at what must have been the last second. The thrust gave him enough momentum to fix his feet on the stone and step to safety again. He laughed like only a man who'd almost died could laugh. "You thought I was going to fall, huh?"

Sarah had lowered her stance, like sticking close to the ground could prevent it from losing its integrity. Rafael gave her a strange look after his smile faded and outstretched his hand. "Come, my love," he said. She took his hand and caught him looking over his shoulder while they walked the rest of the path.

He had been giving her that look more often as years went on, his eyes slightly narrowed, lips caught between a smile and a grimace. The expression quickly disappeared when she met his eyes directly.

In those moments, where she thought she might lose him, she felt just about as much as she thought she would. As they continued to the final stretch of the climb, her heart pounded just thinking about it.

"Look," Rafael said at the top of the cliffs. "There used to be a lighthouse here, looks like."

Sarah shuffled from the edge to gaze at the rubble he'd rediscovered. There wasn't much left besides the concrete foundations and bits of glass. Enough stone remained to form what looked like an adequate shelter from the raging winds of the coast. With a renewed energy, Rafael made his way over to the inner walls of the structure and knelt down. Pressing his fingers into the earth, he looked back at Sarah. "Fire here?"

"Guess so." *You'll grow tired before you ever make a spark.*

He grunted in confirmation but remained kneeled for a bit before

standing to collect the proper materials.

Sarah stared at the ocean beneath their great height. Growing up immortal meant she had no reason to fear heights, or falling. What reason had she to fear bodily pain? Something about knowing she'd survive the damage made pain feel more like an inconvenience and less like torture. Over her shoulder she heard Rafael mulling around in the bushes collecting tinder.

Just then, a flock of birds started squawking near the edge of the cliff, startled by the humans who had appeared on their property. Sarah watched them rise from the branches and circle the area until they decided to wander on the other side of the cliffs instead. She sauntered over to the edge and noticed how precarious the hanging stone was on that side of the formation. Where the moss stopped, she could see not just cracks but deep cuts in the rock. With the tip of her boot, she chipped a few rocks off the side of the cliff and watched them float all the way down, tossed about by the wind. How long had the edge stood there without falling? What were the chances that—

"Can I ask you a question?" Rafael was standing behind her, closer to the destroyed lighthouse, a dry old branch in his right hand.

"Yes, my dear."

Avoiding her gaze, he chose to take in the ocean instead. "Do you think you can have children?"

She took a step back. "Children?"

"I mean, your body. Do you think you could ever have children?"

She waited for the punchline, the explanation. When she didn't get one, she scoffed. "Are you asking out of scientific curiosity?"

He took a step forward her. His eyes were serious. "I know this world is new," he said, "but that's exactly why we should fill it with something good. That's why we've been destroying guns, pointing people in the right direction. And listen...if you say no then that's that for me. But I can't go to the grave without having asked. Just because you might be around forever doesn't mean I will."

She turned her back to him and faced the sheer drop. The birds had returned and they chirped around the old lighthouse. Like she'd been embarrassed, she crossed her arms close to her chest, placing her weight on her left leg. "I've never thought of it that way."

"Sarah!"

She knew. She had long known the ground would fall out from under her. In fact, she couldn't have hoped for a simpler solution. On instinct she grabbed at the limestone on her way down before she saw the man tumbling down the cliff after her. Of course he would follow. Of

course he would follow. He had always followed, even when he didn't know it, and now he had followed where he could not go. Perhaps he realized it the instant his feet left the stone, because he closed his eyes like he was already crying.

The pain was some of the worst she'd felt in her life. She must have lost consciousness. Before she blacked out, she found herself wondering what parts of her body were exactly where they were supposed to be, what parts would not have to regenerate. Then, while her head was still submerged in the shallow water, she heard the second crash.

Waking was no more painful than it was any morning. Sarah saw that Rafael had crawled to the shore, which was more than she'd expected of him. Her legs finished regenerating in the sea foam. It was an old sensation, like she was born of water and sand, like the foraging fish worked to reassemble her pieces. When she had crawled her way to him, his eyes were already closed, salt drying on his eyelashes. A trail of diluted blood marked his path from the rocky water. She spotted a great number of fatal wounds and wondered how he'd even made it to shore.

"My love," she said. The waves beat their bodies time and time again. She reached to cradle his head on her lap, but his fingers twitched.

"Don't," he said. "I know."

She had to bring her head close to his lips to even hear him over the sea.

"I know I am a fool," he said. He spaced his words between the rushes of water. His face was no longer pink from the sun. He could spare no blood to keep his face from paling. "I dove after the girl who never dies."

He relaxed his fingers and the waves kept coming. She thought he was gone, but still she sat with him. The sky was nearly black when his lips moved again.

"I've been diving this whole time, Sarah."

And then he was gone. The last person who really knew her as a person

The girl who never dies, she thought, reflecting over his body as the tide rolled in. *How would you know? Have you seen forever?*

Places I've Never Been

Marcee Wardell

1.

Arizona is a place best known for a vast emptiness, a gaping wound where the land has been gouged by centuries of water, of abrasion, erosion, disintegration. There is desert too, and mountains: inhospitable, unwelcoming.

An ex once told me he was moving to Arizona. Instead he moved in with his other girlfriend. *You know, the iced tea isn't even from there*, I said of Arizona, like that would matter to him, like it was proof of the absence of it, the lack.

2.

Lowell, Michigan has a river too, or part of one, the Grand River. The water is clear-cold, sharpish, even in July, and near where Main Street crosses it, the river is full of lily pads and seaweed, a chloro-green shield that makes it hard to paddle. The slowing of the current here lets these plants flourish, and causes us to stagnate.

This isn't really a place I haven't been; I've been there once, drove through the cornfields, kayaked in the river. But when I drive past the exit for Alden-Nash, I think about not what I know of Lowell, but how I could have known it.

3.

North Carolina is a coastal state, home to Cape Hatteras, the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." It is so called because many ships have been lost off the cape; the arctic Labrador Current meets the Florida Current here, making the water inconstant and changeful.

I had a plane ticket, once, to see Marine who was stationed in Jacksonville. Now I have \$166.50 of expiring airline credit. He had a voice that sounded like he was smiling while he spoke, and he usually was; it was something I thought I could love about him.

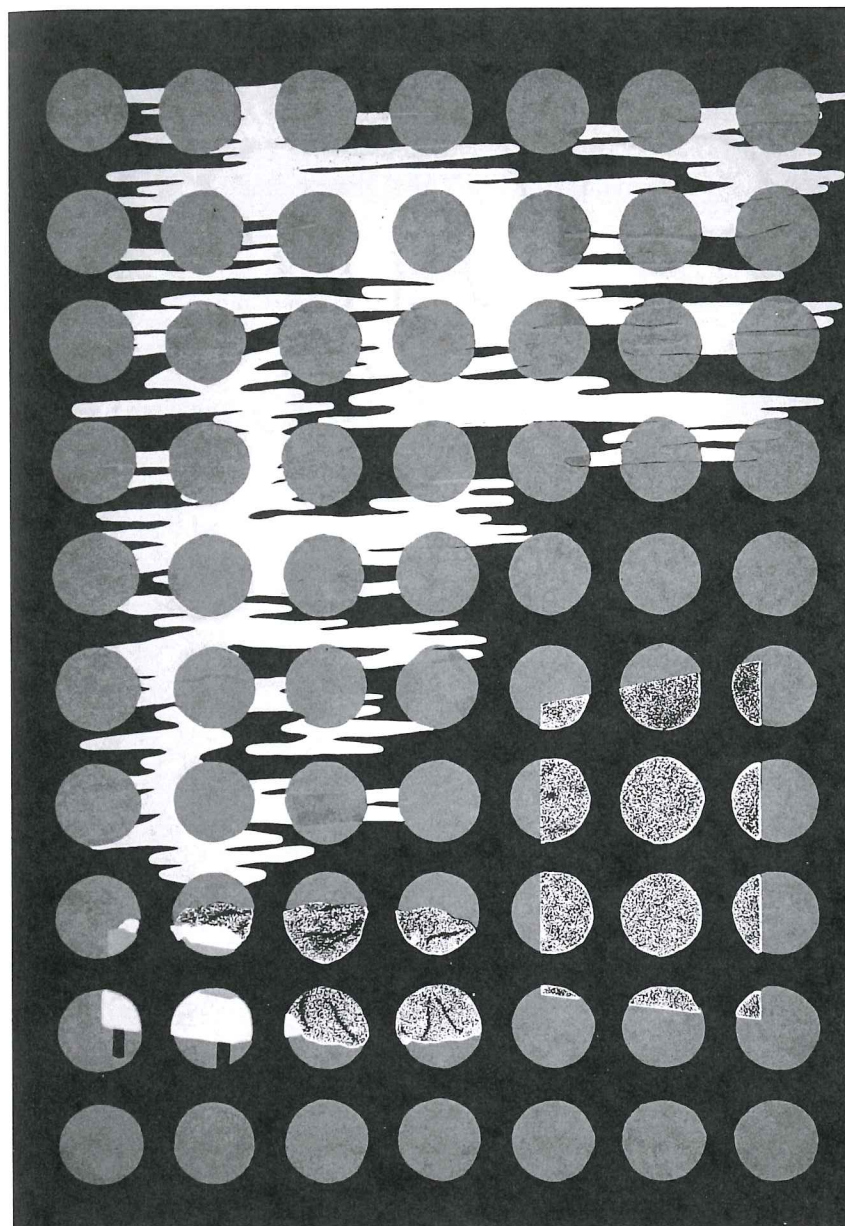
4.

Louisiana is costal, too. It's where the Mississippi meets the Gulf—a culmination. It's known for swamps and bayous, it's known for disaster: hurricanes, floods. We are made of water, but we drown in it, live and die by its cycle; it wears out the land and pulls it from beneath our feet.

Another ex had friends there. *I had the best gumbo I've ever had in my life*, he said. *We'll go sometime.*

Really? I said.

The erosion that happened after was not wholly unexpected.



Zach Preston

untitled

The Skin of Fall

Marisa Williams

Fall was my favorite season,
until I realized everyone was fetishizing
the death of everything around them.

No one walks around
like an arborist, observing
sycamores shedding skin,
becoming coconut white like

the color of the skin of girls
who are secure enough
in themselves to let
their spray tans fade.

It is because of them
and because of the sycamores
who shed themselves so bare
that beauty is relative, highly subjective,
and often biased.

Beautiful things believe they are beautiful
so they are beautiful.

Ugly things believe they are ugly because
beautiful things tell them they are.

You don't need to see true beauty
to think something is beautiful.
You just need something beautiful to tell you so.

This should trouble me.

Those girls told to me all my life that

my thighs were too thick
my hair was too curled
but not in the cute way, the beautiful way.



McKenna Vierstra

untitled

Hijabi

Iman Zaghariet

Hijabis are their own species. There's a certain type of curiosity that surrounds them. One that elicits oftentimes ridiculous but genuine questions. Do you ever take it off? Do you shower in it? Do you have more than one? Are you bald? Were you forced to wear it? Admittedly, most of these answers can be googled. It's the kind of curiosity that breaches and overcomes shyness or trepidation. A confident curiosity. A most curious curiosity.

In the wild, hijabis walk in herds of swooshing black material. And in their natural habitat, they can be seen doing the exact same things everyone else does.

A couple of years after I'd moved back to the States, at fourteen, I decided I could be a hijabi. I didn't consult anyone, not my aunts or cousins or my mom. I was up late one night and planned to wear it the next morning to school, and I did. Immediately, I was showered with compliments and welcomed into the inner hijabi circle. Where we could give each other a look from across the hall and understand what the acknowledgement meant, *I'm really feeling the heat today* or *that's a cool hijab you're wearing there* or *hello, fellow Muslim*. When I wore a hijab, people saw me and knew something about me for sure. Walking around now is different, everyone's passing looks make unsure judgments and assumptions, and occasionally the question comes up: *I know you're not white, so what are you?*

As a hijabi, there are unwritten rules that must be followed. One, color coordinate your hijab with your outfit; two, keep your shirt sleeves and pants long; three, indicate to other hijabis that their hair has slipped out by making prolonged eye contact and tucking your own hair into your hijab; four, now that you can be easily identified, lose all contact with the male species or your cousin's cousin will tell her mom who will tell her friend who is coincidentally your aunt that you have a boyfriend, and not that you let a boy in your Math class borrow a pencil; five, be vigilant.

The first year I wore a hijab I stood taller knew that when people were looking at me it was probably because of the hijab, not because of me, and I liked that. For a year, I had a piece of cloth that I just had to wrap around my head that I could use to explain away stares and whispers and giggles, whether they were directed at me or not.

By my junior year of high school, I was paranoid. I had become a little too vigilant. Now, every sideways glance or hushed conversation was meant for me. Every day, my hijab felt tighter and my breathing more choked, and every day, I loosened my hijab a little more until one day, I took it off.

My family is used to me making important decisions myself. My mom, especially, has always trusted that I know what I want. I'm decisive. I started dressing myself by four; whether it was my pink PowerPuff Girls shirt with blue starry pants, or my magenta starry pants with the sunflower yellow shirt, she trusted my judgment.

When my mom converted in 1992, she almost immediately started wearing the hijab. Today, she's been wearing it for over 20 years and finds pulling it over her head as natural as putting on her glasses. In the summer, she enjoys the extra warmth that turns her face five shades of red and tans a perfect oval in its place. And in the winter, she jokes about already having a scarf to keep her warm, wrapped tightly around her neck and head. Her eyes don't dart back and forth from the moment she steps out of the house. Instead, mine do, making sure hijabis don't become an endangered species.

Self-Portrait as a Quran

Iman Zaghariet

أنا علق

أنا تين

أنا نحلة

أنا امرأة

أنا شاعرة

I'm a time

before translation stood

to tell you I began

as a clot, sprouted

into a fig, lost

a stinger as a bee,

metamorphosed into a woman

who writes as a poet

in an open book

that wants to be believed in

In Which the Definition of Love is Abuse

For Aya

Iman Zaghariet

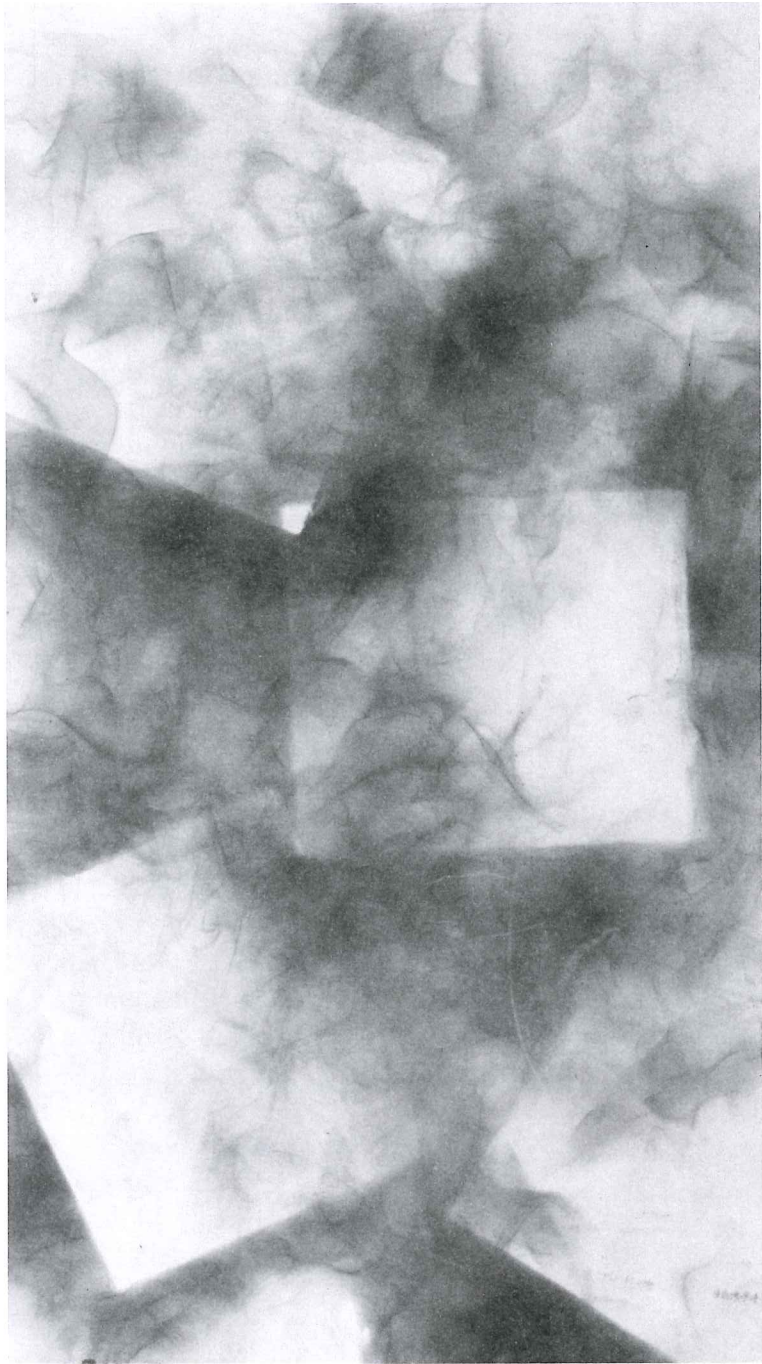
I

I was taught love
in material ways. Criticized for a lack
of appreciation of a feeling I didn't
understand. Sorry if I wanted hugs
instead of phones and praises over
jokes I never thought were funny. Call
me ungrateful, selfish, fat. Hit me
while you continue to pretend
you're a dad. Your friends and family
only see the saintly side,
and at home is where you attack.
They tell me you care, but I
don't get why your care
has to be shown by
telling me to die.
According to you, my heart
is black. A blend
of fuckery and sin. But
you get away every time
by pinning it on getting rid
of a djinn.

II

Before I forget,
remind me what love is.
When I picture knees crouched
down in a promise
of patience, hit me. Call
me fat, threaten

to make me hurt, then realize
you're not strong enough, and sick
your mother on me.
Bonus points if she calls
me a slut. Remember
I am worthless
and should be treated
as such.



Rachel Wallace

Sfumato Cube

