

UNT ARTS & LITERARY JOURNAL
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

NTR's mission is to showcase UNT's highest quality student work and to enrich the literary and artistic campus communities. Every year there are many more great works than space in our journal, and we are privileged to be able to select from such a talented pool of submissions.

The book you are holding represents the work of thirty-seven NTR staff members, and the best submissions from one hundred and five student writers, poets, and artists. We are proud to elevate the incredible work of our peers.

NTR thanks all those who made this year's journal possible. Thank you to Rob Honegger and Diane Culpin for their vital staff support and aid with budgeting, and to Lisa Vining for managing public relations. Thank you to Corey Marks, Director of Creative Writing at UNT, and Jacqueline Vanhoutte, Chair of the English Department, for offering NTR valuable resources and support. Thank you to UNT Printing and Distribution Solutions, The Student Service Fee Committee, and the UNT Department of English for facilitating the creation of this journal. I'd like to thank Professor Raina Joines personally; I cannot speak enough of her patience, guidance, and unwavering support for the journal.

Thanks to everyone on staff. I want to thank Shelby McNally for going far beyond their required duties and taking on every responsibility available. Special thanks to Jannett Garcia for proving once again her talent and expertise in book design. Without these two, the journal would have suffered much. Thank you to McKenna Applewhite, who added a new flair to NTR's aesthetic spirit. I am grateful to my genre editors, both senior and assistant, for their dedication, their expertise in managing readers, and, of course, for their excellent taste. I especially want to thank Mallory Miller, Sterling Zuelch, and Aeon Wood for their friendship and support, both within and without the journal. Another set of thanks for the publicity team's hand in inventing NTR's brand this year. I thank every one of our writers for the astonishing work they have created for the online journal. Not least, I thank our readers, without whom a journal would not have been possible.


I also want to extend my gratitude to every person that indirectly helped bring this journal to life. Thank you to the family and significant others who supported authors and staff, the friends who encouraged them to submit. Thank you to the professors, peers, role models, who challenged us to make something. This book is for all of you, too.

It has been an honor serving as Editor-in-Chief of NTR. It is my hope that this journal accelerates the careers of those published in it, and inspires the passions of those who read it.

Please, enjoy our journal.

Matias Masson

he/him/his



< 3 DFW by Jacob Steed

WE TAKE LIFE IN STEPS

JORDAN MILLER

WE TAKE LIFE IN STEPS



She knew, deep down, that it would be far too difficult to handle the bird. It fluttered nervously away from her at every movement, no matter how small

or gentle. The one time she actually succeeded in catching it between her fingertips, the sound of its hideous shriek pierced her heart like a harpoon and ripped it from her chest. After that incident, she couldn't go near the little creature for a whole day without hearing that horrible shriek tear through her living room. Stubbornly it scorned her, ignoring her encouraging coos, refusing to eat or drink if she were watching, even beating at the walls with its brown wings whenever she sat down to work. There was no taming it, and there was no shooing it away.

During the day, he stalked about the rafters reminding her of a person, pacing back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. For the most part, she was the observer, but sometimes the bird's eyes drilled holes into her back. She felt his presence constantly in the pit of her stomach, and like a ball and chain around her mind, he always dragged her thoughts back to how she could get rid of him.

Oh, how she wanted to be rid of him.

At night, he chirped at nothing, with no discernable rhythm. Sometimes his song swelled to a crescendo, sometimes it fell into a heavy whisper. Irritation swelled in her chest every night as she tossed and turned in bed, unable to drown out the chirping. *Attention-whore*, she thought. *Nobody cares*. It wasn't until the third night, as she stared at him in the darkness, that she realized half of his right leg was missing.

Her mother encouraged her to befriend the animal. "Just be gentle around it, my love. It will learn to like you." She didn't see much promise of that happening.

Her siblings seemed unbothered by her intruder.

Her brother: It's harmless.

Her sister: Poor thing!

She kept her plight secret from her friends. The stupid thing embarrassed her. A pest invading her perfect life, taking over her time, and controlling her thoughts. She felt weak, letting a helpless bird weigh her down with such heavy shackles. She even avoided hosting company at her house. Can we reschedule board game night?—Not feeling too well, a nasty cold. Can't go back to her house after happy hour—her kitchen was being redone. Need to take a rain check on dinner—so many papers to grade, so little time. Even when invited to events around town, she found herself opting to stay home to babysit the bird. She once accidentally startled it and in response it fluttered across the kitchen island, knocking over her favorite vase and cutting itself on broken glass. It left a trail of blood on the white countertops while she chased it around her kitchen with a wet rag. "Just stop!" She screamed. "I can help you! Let me help you!"

But he refused to be helped.

She stopped trying to ignore it and took to identifying the little stowaway instead. She narrowed it down to some kind of common garden bird, a thrush or a brown sparrow, and one of those would have fit,

if it weren't for the blue eyes.

His eyes were strikingly blue, similar to her own. What kind of regular bird has blue eyes? Maybe he was born with some odd gene mutation that created a creepy combination of dark, brown feathers and bright, cerulean irises. Great. What were the odds that not only would the most irritating and disruptive bird in the world get stuck in *her* house but also that it was some kind of freak of nature? He hardly ever looked at her but when they made eye contact, when those blue eyes ripped open parts of her that she didn't even

understand, her chest tightened, her breaths came in shorter spurts, and her palms dripped with sweat.

Something was wrong.

His gaze made her lungs collapse within her chest. He made her nervous. When he slammed his wings into the wall, she wanted to slam her head against a table. He forced her to notice, forced her to care. When she looked at him, pathetically ambling around the house, it made her want to sob uncontrollably. He was trapped and he wouldn't accept anyone's help. He scared her and angered her and made her love him. She pleaded with him, tried to convince him to stay, tried to convince him to leave. Her words, *everything* she said, drowned in his blue eyes. When he looked at her, she felt like a stranger in her own home. She felt useless. She felt like she was nothing. A waste. Worthless. Unwanted. Guilty. Shameful. Furious. Heartbroken.

She felt sick to her stomach.

So, instead of setting out his usual sesame seeds and water, she set a trap. A pillowcase, taken from her bedroom, was all she needed. A pillowcase and a teaspoon of courage. She turned off all the lights in the house to trick him into thinking she was asleep. Waiting for her eyes to adjust, she watched this small, sad bird pick through the seeds. He ate, hopped into the dish of water, and washed. He hopped out, looked around, and went back to the seeds. With two brisk steps and a well-timed lunge she threw the pillowcase over his body and cinched the opening closed. She had hoped that his screeching would be muffled by the fabric.

It wasn't.

She carried her burden out to the work shed behind her house. She couldn't do it inside the house, didn't want to stain her home in that way.

The shed was old, a blemish behind her clean little house in the woods. She hardly ever visited. The door hinges were ancient. She had to brace her shoulder against the door to force it open. A rusted chain hung from a single lightbulb in the center of the ceiling and when she pulled it, it creaked and fought against her. It

seemed that every inch of the shed was begging her to turn back, resisting her, refusing to be a part of her task.

She set the pillowcase down on a work table and set a hammer on top of it to keep it weighed down. He was in there after all, flapping his wings and shrieking her name.

She stepped away from the table and watched as he stopped fluttering around. The shrieking turned to yelling turned to talking until he was just whispering to her.

I'm sorry.

She took a deep breath in.

I love you.

She exhaled.

Please.

She began to cry.

Make it stop.

HE FORCED HER TO NOTICE, FORCED HER TO CARE.

She began to scream.

She reached into the pillow case, grabbed the bird, and snapped its neck.

Relief flooded over her. Immeasurable sadness flooded over her. She held him in her hands and stroked his limp, brown body, and listened to him whisper.

It's okay.

She took him to the backyard.

It will always be okay.

She took pride in her garden, lots of vibrant flowers.

It's not your fault.

He wasn't too big, so she could just dig a whole with her hands.

You will always be wanted.

His body fit perfectly. She picked a pretty, round pebble for a gravestone.

You will always be loved.

Crickets played a requiem for him. Cicadas sang laments.

By me. By your family. By your friends. By others.

She placed a kiss on her fingertips and gently pressed them to his head.

It's okay.

She buried the bird and left.



TITAN TRAIL by Will Baldwin

BLUE BIRD

SARAH HERNANDEZ

She starts and the needle digs,
dragging repeatedly across my flesh.
The vibrations are ugly and sharp,
like breathing.

My arm is pulled taught
and I imagine her pushing deeper
until the tip hits the leather beneath me.

At a point, she asks the question.
Perhaps as she scrawls his name
into the banner across the heart.

I'm trying not to think about him
as we bounce between topics.

The needle hums and drones.
Busy buzz of a worker bee,
pleasantly distracting and kind.
The color is getting painful,
blossoming into something else.

My hand clenches as she shades
the wings over and over.
Sixty minutes of my life
and I almost regret it
not being larger or more
intricate work.

But in the mirror it's perfect
and I forget for a moment that he's dead,
entombed forever in my skin.



BLUE BIRD by Makenna Baldwin

HORIZON-LINE

RACHEL SPRATT

1. You are ten years old, sitting on your bed and bouncing your heels against the mattress. Your mother sits on the other edge of the bed to your left, about to begin yet another conversation she deems important for your development. “There are people who have a mental illness that makes them sexually attracted to people of the same gender,” she says. Your heels stop bouncing. “Yeah, mom,” you said, feeling like you don’t want to have this conversation. Because, at the time, you think it is boring. Because you’d rather be off reading. “We must still treat them with love,” she says. “You’re about to enter middle school, you’re bound to encounter them.” Her voice is sincere and patronizing. You bounce your heels again.

2. You are fourteen years old and it is your freshman year at your new Catholic high school. Your mother made you go there since there was a prostitute ring busted at the local public school. Your friend starts long-distance dating someone of the same gender. In a panic, you say something about God loving her regardless. Because of what you said she stops being your friend and several people you know decide you aren’t worth spending time around at all. You want to explain that your mother had come out of your mouth that day. That you don’t even believe in the same God that they thought you meant. You want to explain the feeling of your heels bouncing against a mattress years ago.

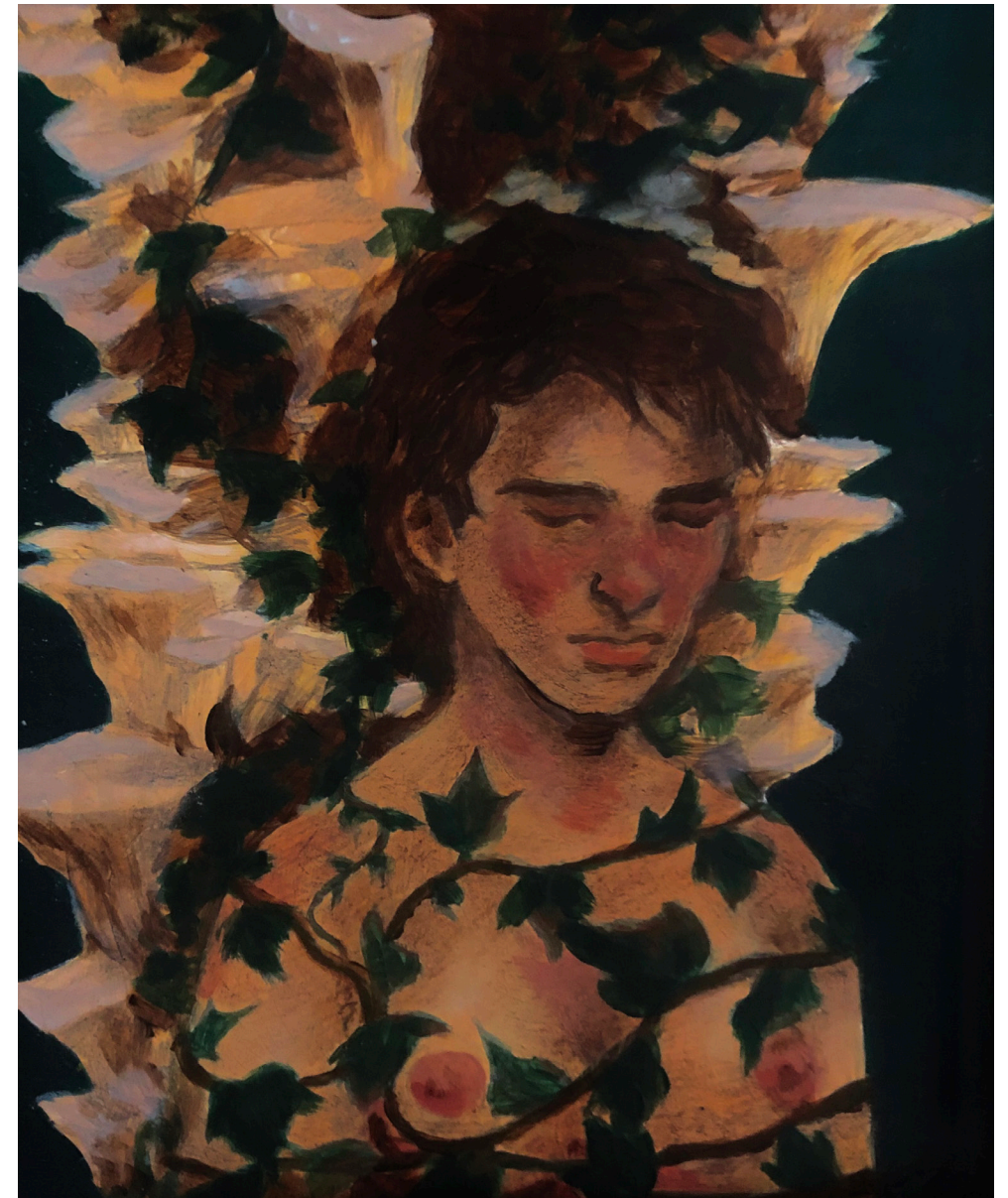
3. You are fifteen years old and you finally swallow what has been burning in the back of your throat for five years. A close friend comes out to you and you shiver, swallowing deeply and free yourself of the internalized homophobia that was pressed like a seal on your vocal cords. A present from mom. “Me too,” you say, and this is finally the conversation that you wanted to have. Now you can come out to your friends but you still don’t tell either of your parents. Your mom is the Catholic one in the family, but your dad and you are good at pretending.

4. You are eighteen years old and after your dad has dinner with you and a handful of friends, your partner included, you call him the next week to tell him the reality of who you were pretending not to be dating. He tells you not to elope, but that he still loves you. You laugh and kick your heels against the side of the chair you are sitting on. When you realize what you’re doing, you stop. After the phone call, your partner kisses you deeply, and tells you how proud they are of your courage, your strength. They smell of Taylor Swift perfume, detergent, and home.

HORIZON LINE

5. You are twenty years old and you finally, *finally* tell your mother. She tells you she disagrees with your view of yourself, and you respond with a theological defense of yourself built with the knowledge you gained in your Religious Studies degree. She still disagrees and sends you letters on how you had crushes on boys in elementary, middle, and high school. She doesn't understand that you said those things intentionally because you were in the closet. You go to the pride alliance and sit numbly coloring a picture of a unicorn. You bounce your heels against the seat as a reminder of when you were ten.

6. You are twenty-one years old and your dad and his girlfriend help you and your partner move into the first apartment you've lived in as just the two of you. You decorate the place together. A vase of white fake flowers. An Ikea coffee table. A bed with two drawers underneath. You slip your arms around their waist and they rest their head on your shoulder. Your mom told you to love gay people. You guess you technically are still doing what she asked, although not exactly in the way she had in mind. A decade of struggling with yourself later and you have a ring on your finger with the promise of a wedding.



BYNATURE by JayCrisp

PIN-UP

M. A. HENDRIX

Body like an hourglass
effortless and envied.
Clothes don't fit
like they should because women
with these ratios "don't exist."
Large busts on tiny frames
that taper down to ring sized waists
and back to swaying hips—
these proportions that just "don't exist."
Because pin up girls aren't real,
clearly they've had alterations
to a body once construed as real.
Because cups above an E
must be fake
unless they are accompanied by weight.

Objectified and sexualized,
laughter becomes our vice
as groping becomes commonplace.
Take the comments as they come,
don't let your temper rise.
Bat away the hands that prod,
assuming they can touch
because "it's okay, I have them too!"

PIN - UP

"It's okay, I'm gay!"

It doesn't matter how many times
you tell them *it's genetic*
they still won't believe you.
They still comment at how much
they wish they had your body,
how much they want to touch you.
Because you're not human.
You're a pin up doll,
a commodity for others to marvel at.
You're put on display
by simply existing.
Because bodies like ours
don't exist outside of fantasies.



DULCE by Makenna Baldwin

MUCH LOVE, UNCLE RICK

SARAH ULERY

MUCH LOVE, UNCLE RICK



My Uncle Rick is the only person I knew growing up who had gone to Europe. He's also the only person I've met whose house passes for an art museum, uses fine

china on a regular basis, and named a cat Obama, but who also still took my sister and I to the waterpark and laughed with us about cheese. That one is a good memory—even if I had a hard time getting over the strange amazement I'd felt at the chlorinated water droplets shining in the deep, dark hair that covered his chest almost as thickly as on his head. We'd pulled at the globs of oozing cheese dripping from our overpriced slices of pizza. My Uncle Rick would dangle a string in front of my sister and me as we squealed, and he'd ask, "Do you girls need some more *cheese*?"

When I was younger, my Uncle Rick was like my window to a bigger world. He brought my sister and I presents from Amsterdam. I still keep rings in a tiny jewelry box, leaving them to be protected by a small golden clasp and the sly smile of a powdered woman painted on the lid. When we visited him in Ohio, he'd let us play in his workshop, a giant warehouse full of lifelike props he'd created from styrofoam for the event hosting company, Ambiance, he and his partner founded. For that matter, he was also the only person I knew growing up who "lived with a friend" who we called Uncle David. It sounded fun enough to naive little me; who wouldn't want to live with their best friend, collect art, and take riverboat cruises down the Rhine? Their life seemed exotic, passionate, and desirable.

...

I expected to hear from my Uncle Rick at some point after I announced my plans to study abroad in Italy this summer. As my departure date grew nearer, my mom told me he was sending me something.

A few days before I received it, as she cooked dinner, she'd said, "Uncle Rick called. He said he'd send you a card in the mail. I'm a little worried about him, grandpa says he hardly sees him anymore since Rick's so busy. Rick said he was digging through a desk drawer upstairs, and he found a postcard from Orvieto—are you going there?"

I'd shrugged and grimaced. The itinerary for my study abroad trip had changed so many times it was hard to keep up. "Maybe? It might be around Rome."

My mom probably threw a piece of lettuce to her shih tzu, who is allergic to almost everything except leaves, carrots, and hypoallergenic dog food. "Well, I wonder if he's going to send you that postcard. He said it was one of David's."

My chest tightened up a bit, and I nodded, quiet; Uncle David was about twenty years older than Uncle Rick. We attended his memorial service last summer. Even as time passes, I tend to remain quiet when someone mentions someone who passed. I never know what to say about the dead—especially not when I am told I may receive a postcard from beyond the grave.

...

In the midst of my final preparations for my trip to Italy, the letter moseying to me through the U.S. Postal Service drifted from my mind until it arrived. I found the white envelope on the kitchen counter one afternoon, and it hit me. For reasons I could not explain, I really, really hoped Uncle Rick had sent me that postcard.

For one, my mom made it sound like it upset him. And two, I missed my uncle's gifts. He was never rich, but he collected unique things. Everything of his that I've received—from the miniature carousel that plays songs from the Nutcracker Suite to the sweet-smelling handkerchief embroidered with lavender from France—seems to carry an energy of

MUCH LOVE, UNCLE RICK

a different frequency from the world of Candy Crush games and big Texas trucks barreling down eight-lane highways. His gifts are mystical in the way other parts of the world are mystical. They're never just keychains of the Italian flag with *SARAH* on one side and *ROMA* on the other. I can imagine that the gifts my Uncle Rick gives are items that someone could find one day and use to unlock an old, magical spell.

I sat with the letter on my bed. When I opened it and pulled out the folded piece of printer paper, I ran my fingers along the outline of something thicker hidden between the creases. *Yes*, I thought. *He sent me the postcard.*

I slid it out of the letter. The edges were a bit worn, but the images framed on the front against a purple background were still vibrant. A cathedral, classic and pointed towards the clear blue heavens, dominated the left half of the card. Within the points adorning the front of the church, biblical scenes shone in colors of yellow and orange. In the top right was what I assumed was the inside of the cathedral, the basilica made of arches and guiding me, even in just an image, to the altar. The town of Orvieto sprawled across the bottom right corner. Nestled in a shallow green valley, the town was a picturesque image of the Italian countryside. Old buildings folded at organic angles, practically on top of one another, and when I squinted at it, I could see the cathedral and what may have been an amphitheater in the background.

The card seemed to vibrate in my hands, but maybe it was just my shaking fingers. Yes. My uncle's magic was within it.

I set it aside and reached for his letter. His words, in his usual all-caps lettering, are as follows:

SARAH,

I STILL VIVIDLY RECALL MY FIRST TRIP TO EUROPE. JULY OF 1984. IT CHANGED MY LIFE.

IT WILL YOURS AS WELL. YOU WILL VIEW

YOUR WORLD WITH A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE. I'M SO HAPPY YOU ARE DOING THIS.

-- BE SAFE

-- LISTEN AND EDUCATE YOURSELF

-- JUST RELAX AND TAKE IT ALL IN

MUCH LOVE,
UNCLE RICK

It was short, but like the postcard, powerful and from my only close source of a world outside of the United States' bubble. My eyes scanned his handwriting once more. A completely different perspective. Vividly.

It may not have been until that moment that I realized quite exactly what I was going to do. I was not going on a normal vacation. I was going to a different world—a place with a different culture, where no one commonly speaks my language—and a world that was for so long a center of the globe. America feels new. We have preserved no great, ancient monuments.

Italy, Europe, and most of the rest of the world, I think, will have a similar mysticism to my Uncle Rick and to his gifts. They are creative. They are thirsty for knowledge and simple, authentic pleasures. They are humbled by history, and they are stronger and wiser for their past.

I am nervous, not because I am afraid to be somewhat on my own, but because I want to drink up as much of the deep world as possible. I am afraid of changing myself, but if the change Italy will enact on me might grace me with some of the aura that's made a home within my uncle, I'll open to it my arms.

As I sat the letter back on my bed, I picked up the postcard once more. I ran my fingertip along the frayed edges, and something slipped—a bit of cash that had been stuck to the back of the



NYHAVN STREET — A DREAMLAND OF COLOR by Kersten Stroud

**I NEVER KNOW WHAT
TO SAY ABOUT THE
DEAD—ESPECIALLY
NOT WHEN I AM
TOLD I MAY RECEIVE
A POSTCARD FROM
BEYOND THE GRAVE.**

card. The cash fluttered into my lap, and I flipped the card over. In a different colored pen but with the same handwriting as the letter, it read:

IF YOU GO HERE, THERE IS A WONDERFUL GELATO SHOP TO THE RIGHT OF THE CATHEDRAL. HAVE SOME ON ME!

UNCLE RICK

As I finished my packing, my hand grazed the letter from my uncle where it sat on my desk. I didn't really

know why, but I slipped it inside my journal before I put it in my carry on bag. The morning I left Dallas, I didn't think much about it. I barely had the nerve to force down my last American breakfast for the next six weeks and say goodbye to my mom and sister at the airport. But when I sat down on the first of two planes on my journey, I pulled the postcard back out.

As I write this, I'm on my first plane, the postcard nestled in my lap. I've been thinking about why my uncle sent it to me. Why I felt the need to take it with me. Yes, because I'm going to Italy. And perhaps also because it makes him sad—but not because he simply wants to be rid of it.

My Uncle Rick has returned to Europe since my Uncle David passed a few years ago, and I can't imagine it's been the same. My Uncle David was the one who first took my Uncle Rick to Europe. July of 1984.

Rick was just over twenty years old then, and I turned twenty exactly one month ago—one month before I will arrive in Rome. My Uncle David seems to have taken care of my Uncle Rick when he was my age, when he took him for the first time away from backwoods Springfield, Ohio, and across the Atlantic. Maybe my Uncle Rick didn't know it when he sent me the letter with the postcard. Maybe I didn't know it when I put it in my bag. But maybe my Uncle David, in some way, is meant, also, to return to Europe. Perhaps, as he did for my Uncle Rick so long ago, my Uncle David is meant to guide me.

I am writing this, beginning to end, on the first of two planes that will take me to Rome. This one only gets me as far as Charlotte, North Carolina. It will be my last stop before my perspective changes. Vividly.



HOMESICK by Chien Meah Lin

DAYDREAM

MIA CHOE

Red velvet cakes and silver spoons,

Flamingos waltzing on the moon.

Honey mountains, cherry on top,

Strawberry-dew-kissed vanilla crops.

Rosy pastries with lavender milk,

Cream and memories, pastel silks.

Untold wishes, stained with tea,

Raining glass over satin seas.

Sunlined starlight and treats to keep,

Melodious reasons, periwinkle sweets.

THREE, TWO, ONE

TRISTAN PHELPS

Someone once told me that all it takes is three seconds of insane courage, that in moments of extreme anxiety all you need is to countdown from three to one and just *do it*; later, I would find out they stole this from *We Bought a Zoo*, but right now that doesn't matter, the neon orange glow of Dix's Coney Island is brightening your face, your smile, *three, two, one*, fuck, my lips stay glued and my feet crush loose asphalt like ice in the awkward silence, *three*, leaning over the trunk of your night-black Sentra, I can see the hint of a smile creep onto your face, your maddeningly emerald eyes are dancing around me, circumnavigating my person, waiting for me to take that plunge, to muster up that insane courage, *two*, I peel open my mouth and it's like peeling an orange: dry, rough, papery—and I know if I can get one word out I can get the whole thing out: one drop of rain will open the floodgates—so I moisten my lips, fidget with your trunk, stare at the moon lighting the night and return to you, *one*, “Hey, can I tell you something?”, your head tilts on its axis like a confused puppy, “What's up?”, you ask, and I stumble the words out like a drunk just barely feeling his way out of a bar: “I think...I like you...”, I let it linger and you laugh, fasten yourself to me like a safety-award winning seatbelt and smile, “I know”.



FISH AND LILIES by Chien Meah Lin

THE CROWS

ADRIAN VILLARREAL

THE CROWS



The panning spotlight signaled the occurrence the panting group was dreading. Their illuminated faces wildly broke onto the path, and the signal of their

invasion spread throughout the echoing Chihuahuan desert. The sirens rang inside their ears and reverberated off the concrete and rusted wired fences

As they ran upon the worn sandy loam, black crows—startled by the disturbance—flew onward just above the running heads. Their black wings barely scraped over multiple barbed fences

The group dispersed into smaller duos and trios as the SUVs, equipped with terrain tires and light-bars, diagonally closed the distance

The sounds of three-quarter empty water jugs acted as a faint marching tune

Their foot and shoe prints added to the day-old graffiti beneath them

The wire grass and sacahuista looked onward as the hot, west Texas air cut through the desert and entered the running group's erratic lungs

Helicopters rang behind the mountains. White SUVs and pickup trucks with freedom-colored lights slid on the gravel before the dusty running group. The group tried to scale the fragile fence but they were pulled down by green, uniformed men tugging at their brittle garments. The metal of the fence vibrated in the air. The uniforms smacked the group's worn legs with black metal sticks, the thrashing combining with the sirens. The uniforms hunted the others who fled like wounded prey

They rounded men, women, and children into a pickup truck with black zip-ties restricting their wrists

behind their backs. The guards hit the side of the trucks like a gavel to hurry up their herd

One sand-covered young girl peered towards the eluding chain link fence from the old metal bed. The truck began spinning and the dust from the tires distorted her vision briefly

THE MEXICAN CROWS

FROM THE OTHER

SIDE, ON EVERY

LEAFLESS BRANCH,

BEGGED HER ONWARD.

The searchlights from the helicopters showered over her and the others, those around her looked up into the swaying lights above them

She squinted towards the bare trees on the other side of the fence, occupied only by the crows. Her head snapped back from the truck's acceleration. The noise of the blades above her became clear

But beginning to become faint, the Mexican crows from the other side, on every leafless branch, begged her onward.

SINKHOLE

ISABELLA LUXENBERG

Out of everything I have ever tasted, this might be the sweetest. Though likely synonymy to every sensation preceding, it dares to feel brand new. Like the serendipity of Texas humidity rising from the ashes of a snowless December. In light of all my clichés, I can't deny the heat radiating, the sweat chasing each careful stain off my skin. I almost feel clean, I think. Hawaii moves 7.5cm closer to Alaska each year and it's cosmic such opposites could touch one day. Long-lost lovers, or here I go again, placing bets on horses I'm not quite sure could win. Because so soon it seems, I'm evaporating under this newfound sun and left barren like the southwest wasteland, lost somewhere between Sedona and Albuquerque. Only the mirage of life and death pulsating on the brink of infinity could allow me to feel so violently! Only hyperbole could capture the monstrosity of my young heart yearning! I am certain if I try to crawl home from here on my hands and knees, I will sink to the Earth's core and be met with epiphany in a place without delicacies, like blossoms or bees, when, really, I'm just asleep on desert dirt, dreaming I'm awake in sonnets and poorly written verse. At night, the sand cools by 40 degrees or so, but the burning never ceases to subside. Although I am volatile at my worst, at my best I am fragile like the frail wings of the butterflies that flutter through my gut. It's gross, really, when I blush bright red at the thought of tenderness and fidget my fingers haphazardly like the shifting floor beneath. The pace of these tectonic plates is comparable to fingernails, I read, and I'm chewing mine down as we speak. Similarly to the act of digging my thumbs into my hands till I've birthed the Montezuma Well in my palms. It's a habit I can't shake nonetheless, and I can't shake the sense that something is creeping up on me. It's getting hot again and it's barely June! I feel embarrassed for falling in love so soon.



SOFT BLOSSOMS by Mia Choe

CHILDHOOD SHEETS IN ADULTHOOD

CLARENCE BROOKS

funny, i never really thought about the age of my sheets : they were simply a constant
that lasted through ages and ages of my existence

{ now i see them in a new light, from a new perspective }

as she quietly traces the folds | creases | stains of my sheets with her green-blue-brown
eyes, so mesmerizing ~

~ terrifying when she rests them upon me ~

who am i to let her enter here, display the inner workings of my life my body my mind
laid bare in

/a few coffee spills /

/and stray oil paint brushstrokes /

/and faded pen marks /

/rusted blood leaks /

CHILDHOOD SHEETS IN ADULTHOOD

{ calmly, she approaches me, like a deer, so as not to frighten me away }

she needn't fear : i want her here,

i want to see her, learn her, know her

don't i ? don't i want her like she wants me?

someone to hold, someone to laugh with, a friend,

a comfort in the night, warmth when one is so cold

can i be that for her? i feel so

useless when it comes to emotion

they say you can't decide to fall in love but that's always how it seems to go for me

{ except tina, but we don't remember that }

such old pain rests in these sheets, foolish human thinking : it's the eternal fault : that hope of love comfort relief

what would i have thought as a child? back when everything seemed so much more simple

i knew nothing back then, living in my own fantasy world full

of dragons and monsters and book collectors, geniuses and

magic and impossible journeys to defeat the insurmountable odds

such a long time ago, before i knew who i would become



FRAGILE INNOCENCE FIRST SHIELD by Maria Haag

AUTOIMMUNE DISORDER

MELANIE PETERSON

AUTOIMMUNE DISORDER

My sweater has a loose thread.

Thread pulled, and many will follow.

As I walk, it tangles my body,

and I can't move.

My body is a sweater

with a loose thread. The doctors

Pick at my treads and try to

sew me up by my seams.

My body gave me a thread

that I want to pick at. Sometimes

I want to pull upon a string

and let myself unravel.

My sweater is pale and cold.

It thins with the wind. The air

worms its way into the knit

and I just want to go inside.

My body has a loose thread

and the sleeves of my sweater

are tattered, but a sweater

I still have.



INDISTINCT by Makenna Baldwin

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

BEN LIEBERMAN

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

MINISTERIUM FÜR STAATSSICHERHEIT

5 September 1973 15:00

Telephone surveillance from PRENZLAUER ALEE 42. Occupant LAURA SAKS

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

SAKS: Hello.

OSCAR ALTERMANN: I've missed you.

SAKS: I told you to stop calling me.

ALTERMANN: Wait. I need to see you.

SAKS: No.

END TRANSCRIPT

5 September 1973 15:03

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

SAKS: <Exhalation> Hello.

ALTERMANN: Why did you hang up?

SAKS: Because I don't want to talk.

ALTERMANN: I haven't stopped thinking about you, since last week. You're special, you know.

SAKS: Don't be trite.

ALTERMANN: Alright. If you don't want to see me, at least tell me what I did wrong.

SAKS: You don't know me.

ALTERMANN: Laura, all I want is to know you. You won't let me.

SAKS: <Exhalation>

ALTERMANN: Please, Laura?

END TRANSCRIPT

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

5 September 1973 15:07

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

SAKS: Stop calling me, Oscar! It was one night! You are a vile man. I despised your incessant, boring prods into my personality. Most of the time you couldn't stop talking about yourself... and you smell like shoe polish. You are swine! I am disgusted by you. All you wanted was to get me back to your apartment. I only slept with you because I had too much to drink.

VERONIKA STAMM: I didn't think he smelled that bad.

SAKS: Oh Veronika! Sorry, Oscar won't stop calling.

STAMM: I hope you wrote that speech down. It was a crucifixion.

SAKS: He brings out the worst in me.

STAMM: Did you really sleep with him?

SAKS: I don't want to talk about it... What do you need?

STAMM: Nothing serious. Did you hear about Rolf?

SAKS: Not over the phone.

STAMM: They already know about him. He was shot.

SAKS: Shit! How?

STAMM: He tried to cross the border. Someone must have told.

SAKS: We should talk in person.

STAMM: I'll be there in a half hour.

END TRANSCRIPT

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

3 August 1973 10:46

Intercepted Letter, from EZRA SAKS to LAURA SAKS

Dear Laura,

We miss you so dearly. Your father and I have been talking and want you to come home. We hardly hear from you anymore. Are you still at the University? I know we didn't leave on the best of terms, but you're being quite unreasonable. State Security has been asking us about you. We had to cooperate. I hope you haven't been getting into trouble. I thought of you the other day. I saw a raven while walking through Karl-Marx. It was massive! I thought about that fairy tale I used to read to you. The one about the girl whose brothers turn into birds? Please come home, or at least write. I might try and call you this week. We love you.

Mom



STREETS OF KAMPALA by Will Baldwin

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

5 September 1973 15:45

Wiretap Surveillance from PRENZLAUER ALEE 42. Occupant LAURA SAKS

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

<Doorbell>

STAMM: Hey.

SAKS: You're late. I thought the worst.

STAMM: Don't worry, they don't just pick people up for no reason anymore.

STAMM: Mind if I put the kettle on?

SAKS: That's fine.

SAKS: What do you know?

STAMM: He had a border guard friend in Hungary. Shot him in the back in no man's land.

SAKS: Some friend. Why didn't he tell anyone from the meeting?

STAMM: He didn't trust us I guess.

SAKS: Nobody at the meeting would talk.

STAMM: Rolf didn't think so.

SAKS: This is getting too dangerous.

STAMM: We'd better not go to any more meetings. At least until this blows over.

SAKS: I think I'm being followed.

STAMM: You're paranoid. Just don't do anything incriminating for a while.
Nobody else from the meetings has been arrested yet.

SAKS: You're right.

STAMM: What tea do you like?

SAKS: Whichever.

END TRANSCRIPT

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

5 September 1973 17:00

Observational surveillance by agent codename HANSEN

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

17:14- SAKS leaves her apartment. She walks slowly. She turns the corner on to Danziger Str., apparently aimless. She enters Diesterweg Park, sitting on the bench located at the southern corner. Perhaps waiting for a meeting, or making a drop off?

17:53- SAKS gets up from the bench, walks back to the street and around the block. Just before the door of her building, she stops. The key is resting in the lock. She appears frozen. Her face is pale. Surveillance may have been compromised. She enters her apartment. No further activity.

END TRANSCRIPT

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

7 September 1973 9:45

Interrogation transcript of OSCAR ALTERMANN by HANSEN

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

HANSEN: Hello Herr Altermann. May I call you Oscar?

ALTERMANN: Call me what you like.

HANSEN: Well, you can call me Hansen. Would you like anything to drink?

ALTERMANN: No thanks.

HANSEN: So, what brings you here?

ALTERMANN: I have a tip. A woman named Laura Saks is most certainly involved with a secret group. I think she has anti-party motivations.

HANSEN: How do you know Laura Saks?

ALTERMANN: She is a coworker of mine. I only know her in passing.

HANSEN: On your papers it says you work in production?

ALTERMANN: Yes. Auto distribution.

HANSAN: What have you heard of her...in passing?

ALTERMANN: She is friends with a woman named Veronika Stamm. Veronika used to work at the office, transferred somewhere else. They talk about watching Western Television.

HANSEN: And this group?

ALTERMANN: I overheard Laura talking to Veronika about a meeting they both attend weekly.

HANSEN: Do you know when or where they meet?

ALTERMANN: Wednesday evenings at a bar in Kreuzberg. The bar closes and they go in.

HANSEN: Have you ever attended one of these meetings?

ALTERMANN: Are you joking?

HANSEN: Answer the question please.

ALTERMANN: No.

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

HANSEN: Are you a communist?

ALTERMANN: Yes.

HANSEN: Tell me about the night you spent with Laura Saks, the 3rd?

ALTERMANN: What?

HANSEN: You were seen at a restaurant with her.

ALTERMANN: Oh, yes I remember. We went on a date.

HANSEN: And she accompanied you home?

ALTERMANN: Yes.

HANSEN: Did you sleep with her?

ALTERMANN: What do you need to know for?

HANSEN: You are choosing to cooperate unconditionally, Oscar.

ALTERMANN: Yes. I did.

HANSEN: And you proceeded to call her... multiple times afterwards?

ALTERMANN: If you know all of this, why ask?

HANSEN: What is your motivation for reporting on her? Revenge?

ALTERMANN: I didn't ask for this! I'm just trying to help!

HANSEN: Have you gone to meetings with Laura and Veronika?

ALTERMANN: No. She wouldn't have taken me. She never trusted me. She hardly trusts anyone. At work, she's silent. Hard hearted, hard headed, a hard woman all around. Cold, too. It's a wonder she ever went to dinner with me. She seemed in a trance the entire meal.

HANSEN: How do you know about the meetings?

ALTERMANN: I've been following Laura a bit here and there.

HANSEN: Has she ever seen you following her?

ALTERMANN: No! I'm quite good. Maybe you should hire me?

HANSEN: Thank you for your loyalty and integrity, Mr. Altermann.

END TRANSCRIPT



I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYES 1 by Jae-Eun Suh

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

27 August 1973 10:00

Employee report on Laura Saks by Party Representation, VEB Sachsenring distribution office in Berlin.

Laura Saks is by all means exemplary. She is a hard worker, always on time and willing to stay late. She is quick witted, but keeps her nose to her work. She has always been good humored, loyal and respectful to authority. That being said, recently she has been exhibiting troubling behavior. She seems distant, quieter than usual. The other day she left her desk for hours. She was seen in the restroom staring into the mirror. I had her in my office last afternoon. She claimed all is well. She seemed quite tired. I recommended that she see a doctor and take a few days off. She refused.

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

9 September 1973 9:30

Interrogation transcript of EZRA SAKS by HANSEN

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

HANSEN: Thank you for your cooperation Frau Saks.

EZRA: How can I help? Is this about Laura?

HANSEN: Unfortunately, yes. We have reason to believe that Laura is involved with anti-party agitators.

EZRA: That doesn't sound like Laura.

HANSEN: What can you tell me about her?

EZRA: She was always a sweet, gentle girl. She loved animals especially. I never noticed anything peculiar about her. Quite normal!

HANSEN: What was her social circle like?

EZRA: She never was much of a socialite. She would have one friend for a while, then another, but for the most part she preferred privacy. I'm proud to say she stayed out of trouble.

HANSEN: When did she leave home for Berlin?

EZRA: After primary school. She applied for Humboldt. I preferred Karl-Marx, that way she could stay here, close to home. We fought about it.

HANSEN: Have you spoken with her since?

EZRA: She called once.

HANSEN: When was this?

EZRA: A few months ago. She said she was starting a job in production. I was disappointed, but happy she was taking care of herself.

HANSEN: Why were you disappointed?

EZRA: Well, she was always such a brilliant child. A fantastic writer. She would have made it far within the party had she chosen to finish school.

HANSEN: Did she mention anything else on the phone? Anyone else?

EZRA: Nothing. She did seem strange. Distant.

HANSEN: Thank you once again Frau Saks.

END TRANSCRIPT

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

11 September 1973 10:30

Interrogation of VERONIKA STAMM by HANSEN

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

HANSEN: What can you tell me about the bar on Kottbusser?

STAMM: I don't know, I don't drink.

HANSEN: You were there last Wednesday.

STAMM: I don't know what you are talking about.

HANSEN: If you don't cooperate, I can make things quite difficult for your mother in Potsdam.

STAMM: You're a monster.

HANSEN: I am carrying out orders.

STAMM: Do you even hear yourself? Let me guess... your ears belong to the state.

HANSEN: Would you like to cooperate, or should I make a call?

STAMM: Christ. Yes, I was at Kottbusser.

HANSEN: And who did you meet there?

STAMM: Friends.

HANSEN: Which friends?

STAMM: Jacob Metzler, Sara Feldman, Stefan.... Not sure what his last name is, and Laura Saks.

HANSEN: What do you talk about at these meetings?

STAMM: Western things. Western T.V., western products. We all want to escape, so we just dream about it together.

HANSEN: Any escape plans?

STAMM: None presently, not since Rolf died.

HANSEN: Rolf Schädler attended these meetings?

STAMM: Yes. Why not ask me something you don't already know?

HANSEN: Tell me about Laura Saks.

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

STAMM: She is quiet.

HANSEN: Do you know her better than others?

STAMM: Yes. We are friends.

HANSEN: Please, describe her to me as intimately as you possibly can.

STAMM: Alright. Laura is a dreamer. Quite intelligent. Thoughtful. I met her when we both worked in Auto distribution a few months back. She had just dropped out from university. What else do you want me to say?

HANSEN: I am just trying to know Laura a little better.

STAMM: Well, she doesn't say much about herself. She'll say she wants to leave for the west, but I don't think she'll ever do it. She's much too scared. Quite soft, Laura. I sometimes think she goes to the meetings out of boredom. She never talks very long there. Although, when she does, she says the perfect thing. She's the kind of person who reads the room, sums up the entire conversation in so many words. After Laura says something, everyone stops and wonders for a moment, about themselves, the conversation as a whole, how it all fits together. I'll be honest, I'm not sure what else there is to say.

HANSEN: Thank you. You are free to leave.

END TRANSCRIPT

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

5 September 1973 19:00

Entry taken from the diary of LAURA SAKS, retrieved during search of PRENZLAUER ALEE 42.

5 Sept.

Dead leaves on a dead tree. I've watch the last of them fall. Bare branches in the park now, and it's not yet winter. Leipzig was deadly. I couldn't stay with Mom. Father never really existed. Mother was lovely until she wasn't. I used to think that she loved me, but really, truly, she loved the idea of me. I was her reason to breathe. A little porcelain doll to dress and tea with. Father was ambivalent. I danced and danced for her, my legs started to crack. At that time I remembered visiting Berlin with my parents. They let me roam the streets. I bought sweets with money they gave me. I sat in the park for hours, watching the finch trot along the dirt, leaving little imprints. I thought if I got back to Berlin, to the park, maybe that would feel like freedom. I don't see any birds anymore. Mother was replaced by the party. Crack down, do the job. Dance, Laura. I kept dancing until my doll legs shattered. I'm done performing. Have you gathered enough? Rolf's dead now. I don't feel any particular way about it. One day here, the next day ground up. Meat in the machine.



A FATHER'S TOUCH by Dejian O. Duncan

RED-BLACK TREES

PEYTON ASTON

Red-
black trees.
The roots are dark
and charred beneath soil. Every leaf lost is

a
body burned
in our failed dominion
over nature, self-castrating. Venus in the dark

horizon
approaches, soon
to rise from the
blood-froth of sea. O fleeting lungs, breathe

deep
through green
alveoli jutting from earth,
now red and black. We've come to this,

fate
compressed in
a cigarette butt. Balance
will be restored, us invisible again. Macaws like

RED-BLACK TREES

flash
paper in
air, glass frogs evaporating,
sloths closing their eyes, accepting. And us, closing

our
eyes, accepting.
Stumbling out of the
forest to turn and burn. Nature is self-

balancing,
and fared
fine without us, and
will again. We are not separate, no matter

how
hard we
scavenge for the dividing
line between us and nature. Red-black trees,

we
head back,
marching to dissolve into
soil, cascade into a yellow haze. We have

RED - BLACK TREES

failed
this world
and will see no
other. We don't belong. Red-black trees, we

will
not be
long. Coded to innovate,
to push. But a tipping point nears, or

has
passed, unknown
except for a few.
Perhaps something new will rise from the rubble

of
our blindness.
Learn from us and
try again. Closed eyes won't sway. Red trees

to
black. Venus
with nothing left to
love, her billowing hair swallows the earth whole.



© Ryan McDowell

RED ENAMEL NECKLACE by Ryan McDowell

OUT OF MY HANDS

PEYTON ASTON

Encased in a dome
of ominous sky,
like the earth hidden
in the palms of a
curious god, I
became so immediately
helpless. Is this how
so many geckos
of my childhood
felt in my hands
before I loved them to death?

These dark, cupped hands
resemble ones of great technique,
yet branch from deceitful
mind. To know all and
create all is to
allow nothing. So
here in the clouded
palms I stare into
the folding dark,
straining to see
what will not be shown.

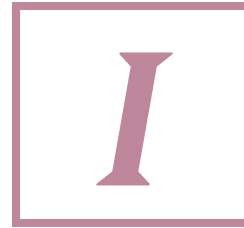


THE RED SCARF by Jessica Wu

GOING TO HELL

JOSIE THOMAS

GOING TO HELL



I think I am going to hell.

I think I am going to hell because I hate puppies. I hate puppies because puppies are uncontrollable, uncommunicative, and put me at great unease. You see, my least favorite human experience is a loss of control—also the reason why I hate roller coasters, drive-through car washes, the government, and the weather. Most puppies are kinda ugly. This may not actually be true, of course. See, I hold my standards higher than heaven, longing for things that will never come to me. Maybe it's why I was always reaching for the stars as a kid, attention buried in books about beautiful boys and women warriors and kids who saved the world. Kids that absolutely did not go to hell.

I think I am going to hell because I have definitely screamed at my mother a hundred times too many, voice reverberating off the walls like an organ in a sanctuary, my noise destroying rather than delighting. I have yelled about nothing important; nothing is important enough to yell at my mother about, but I did anyway. Screamed at a woman who is bound for the pearly gates, to be wrapped up in God's arms while he whispers apologies into her new wings, saying the sorries that I never got around to.

I think I am going to hell because I lied. I lied when I told him I loved him, lied when I told her I was fine, lied when my teacher asked if I was almost finished with my essay. Fibs roll off my tongue like fire, burning away trust as though it were turpentine, igniting roller coasters and sanctuaries as quickly as a canister of gasoline. I'm sure I will find some semblance of comfort in the flames of the fiendish angel, grown so used to the heat that spills from my head.

I think I am going to hell,

so I will happily stay here, because a second with you is better than any length of time in heaven, a second means a kiss, or a smile, or a glimpse of the peace on your face when your eyes lock on mine. Here I can read every word you ever wrote to me, we can be beautiful warriors saving our own worlds, side by side when the militia march out. Here I can be quiet, finally. Here I can tell the truth, for I know you would have me no other way. Here I can reach for stars, plucking wishes from the sky, though each one is the same.

I know it is selfish to say, but I wish you would come to hell with me.

TO WAKE IN MOMIEMENTUM

IMMANUEL A. GARCIA

Every year is a restless smorgasbord of bicycle kicks
and or Denver boots.

We, like most plump heart fluffers
are tossed out on the finest of silk cloths
anticipating the DIY magician's arrival
praying that a wrist flick coated sleight of hand
may very well trick us into a lifelong belief.

But you enjoy these Ironman marathons.
You enjoy the vigor that comes with catching your breath
with comically sized pasta servers
and knowing whatever dish you end up with
will still be palatable
aside from the mouthfuls of mud and pulled hamstrings.

TO WAKE IN MOMENTUM

This high-octane discharge calms the sick running gag
of an inevitable submission to a checkered pattern rest.

There is no room for such finite
and properly dressed
conclusions, suckering us with temptations made of cheap
commercialized goods and guideline fabrics.

Give us the aftermath of illegal fireworks
placed unknowingly in our hearts.

Watch our riot
amongst the flowers
leave us the gift of waking up
to a cultivation of earthly confetti.

Let us wake to these badges of progress
hanging from a one trick pony swaddled in congratulatory sashes.

But more memorably
let us wake.



ECHO LAKE by Will Baldwin

ACROSTIC

JOSIE THOMAS

J just another wannabe poet, hiding the fact
that i don't know what i'm doing behind calcu-
lated lines of clever comments, alliteration that
stretches synonyms a little too ... skinny ...

O verly concerned that you won't like this.
that i'll have written a testimony to your smile
only for you to frown when you hear it.

S ee, i'm trying. i only wanted to impress you.
got up on this stage to spill my soul in to a micro-
phone, megaphone, tell me to shout from the
rooftops and i will already be on the empire state.

I i should talk about you. so, tell me what you
would like to hear. shall i wax on about your starlight
eyes, twinkling in the soft glow of the streetlamp on
the balcony? or would time be better spent singing
about how you sway on the kitchen tile, twirling
into the tabletop and touching my arm to steady
yourself, though that then sends me in to a tizzy.

E very night i lie awake, counting the woman moons
that must orbit your charisma gravity. how can i get
you to notice me when your atmosphere is clogged with
satellites that look like they do? with comets that shine
so bright?

T ell me every bad thing you ever did, then let me
love you anyway, though i am certain such perfect
hands could harbor no heinous hardware, such
lovely lips could lock away no lawless locution.

H ere i go again with the alliteration. i can't help it,
i swear. my mind just gets so wrapped up with thoughts
of you that it's hard to write a poem that doesn't sound
like seuss or silverstein. but i promise this feeling in my
chest, in my gut, in my head and in my toes is much
more intense than can be captured in a children's
book. not that an acrostic is much more mature...

O nly you could make me feel this way. only you
could have me standing up here, performing a decla-
ration i'm sure nobody wants to hear. look, what i

M ean to say is i think i'm falling

A nd i just want you to

S ee, i'm trying.



PERCHANCE TO DREAM by Maria Haag

AFTER-
NOON ALONE
IN PARIS

CARIS ALLEN

AFTERNOON ALONE IN PARIS

The Jesus statue in the Louvre looks exactly like You
as long as I don't focus on the broken-off nose.
No, just the unshaven chin, the eyes softly shut. I pretend
He is sleeping, not comatose or dead or made of stone.
I pretend a lot of things. I pretend I have not been
4,927 miles away from You for 63 impossible days.
I pretend Jesus's father is watching over me.
I pretend the thought of being watched doesn't fill me
with centuries-old shame. I leave Him
like I've left You, go circle other halls, pass Mona Lisa
and her prying eyes, the Sphinx about to pounce,
the Code of Hammurabi with its ancient rules,
all of which I am well-prepared to ignore.
I linger among the many Aphrodites. I yearn for a female
God, a Venus who will plant angry volcanoes
on the backs of bad men.
You are not a bad man.
I would break every chandelier in Napoleon's apartments
to be able to touch You: angel, savior, prophet.
I go back to Jesus, sit next to him and consider myself
in the context of everything that has ever been.
Yes, I remember why I came here:
to find the halls that house the paintings of the Revolution.
To find Delacroix, a freedom flag, a bare breast.



THROUGH THE GOLDEN GLASS by Emily Grace Ely

THE
MUSTANG
AUCTION

HANNAH CULBERSON

THE MUSTANG AUCTION

The dust settles around the four planted legs,
sorrel tail pressed against the wooden fence,
ruby flared nostrils quiver. Mud caked mane.
Droning voices swarm like a cloud of flies.

We lean on the creaking slats; splinters needle
the fabric of our jeans. Wide-brimmed hats shade
our starving eyes. Rusty air of hand-rolled cigarettes
burns the backs of our throats. The humming
of the loudspeakers vibrates through our chests.

Swaying grasslands out beyond once full—
the drumming of a hundred prancing hooves.
Heads tossed high in trumpeted whinnies
Bay, dapple, buckskin, shining gold and white.
We dream of how we will bring them underhand,

they will prance for us, toss their heads and snort,
ears pinned flat and we will pop them with the whip,
then yank at the bit until they stand as still as stone—
dull and muddied, head held low.

RIVER SWIM, DRESSES RAKING TWIGS FROM MUCK by Emily Grace Ely





MOSS by Jay Crisp

CONTRIBUTORS

CARIS ALLEN Afternoon Alone in Paris

Caris is a Senior completing a BA in English with a minor in Theatre. Her poetry has been featured in the *North Texas Review* and NCTC's *April Perennial*, and her microchapbook "Something Like A Prayer" was published online in Ghost City Press's 2019 Summer Series for emerging artists. Her poetry short film "Russian Roulette" was featured at Austin, San Antonio, and Tyler Film Festivals, and she was a finalist in Austin Film Festival's fiction podcast competition in 2018. One day, she hopes to work as a professor of English and have a house with lots of plants and dogs.

PEYTON ASTON Red-Black Trees / Out of My Hands

Peyton Aston is a musician, artist, poet, and educator residing in Denton, Texas. He recently graduated summa cum laude from the University of North Texas with a BA in English, Language Arts and a minor in Music.

MAKENNA BALDWIN Blue Bird / Dulce / Indistinct

Makenna is a Sophomore majoring in Communication Design with a minor in Marketing. As of right now, she is focusing on playing with color and different styles of illustration to develop her own stylistic process. Over the last few years, she has been developing her portfolio, and the images she submitted are a few of the pieces that she created on the path to figuring out her own artistic style. From photography, to charcoal, then to colored pencil, many mediums were used to create these pieces.

WILL BALDWIN Titan Trail / Streets of Kampala / Echo Lake

Will is a Senior Photojournalism major and the visuals editor for the *North Texas Daily*. Will's passion for visual storytelling is matched only by his love of street tacos and horror movies.

CLARENCE BROOKS childhood sheets in adulthood

Clarence is an aspiring elementary school teacher, currently finishing an undergraduate in English, Rhetoric and History. His academic focus centers mostly around identities in space and the materiality of memory. Outside of academia, he writes and draws in the medium of zines and occasionally ventures into more structured narrative forms. His creative work examines the nuances of self-construction, inhabitation of body, and interpersonal relationships.

MIA CHOE Daydream / Soft Blossoms

Mia is a Senior at TAMS who is passionate about STEM and environmentalism. She is planning on studying chemical engineering with an emphasis on sustainability, and she hopes to teach and inspire others as a university professor in the future. When Mia isn't in her classes, you can find her enjoying video games, studying for Quiz Bowl, playing the piano, exploring the outdoors, hanging out with friends, and, of course, writing poetry.

JAY CRISP ByNature / Moss

Jay Crisp is a Freshman Studio Art major who has been drawing since childhood. He is a self-taught artist primarily working with graphite, ink, colored pencil, and paint. Crisp focuses on contemporary portraiture, observational sketching, and conceptual design, but isn't scared to do something new. His identity as a gay, transgender male is hinted in his pieces as well, riddled with both shame and pride in reflection. Crisp is pushing for a successful studio career, and is excited to explore the art world. To see more of his work, follow him on Instagram at @j.crsp.

HANNAH CULBERSON The Mustang Auction

Hannah Culberson is an undergraduate student at the University of North Texas pursuing a double major in Creative Writing and European History.

DEJION O. DUNCAN / BASEFORYOURFACE A Father's Touch

Dejion is a Junior majoring in Technical Communication with a minor in Computer Education. He's a mixed media artist but the majority of his work is digital with some video editing. Hailing from Dallas, Texas, Dejion based most of his work on his family life, religion, and identity. Using textures to express human emotion in his imagery, he believes that it's best to showcase how un-monochromatic we are as people. Our colors and shades are what make us beautiful.

EMILY GRACE ELY Through The Golden Glass / River Swim, Dresses Raking Twigs From Muck

Emily Ely is a Senior majoring in Painting and Drawing. Her work is primarily in acrylic, watercolor, and mokuhanga printmaking.

IMMANUEL A. GARCIA To Wake in Momentum

Immanuel is a young buck barrel shot from McAllen, TX. He is a Senior double majoring in Theatre Education and English with a concentration in Literature. His first self-published collection of poems, "Pèace De Résistance," echoes his continued effort in exploring the vast, creased edges of linguistic expression. Along with his enormous fondness for all things poetic, he is also an avid supporter for the art of storytelling as a means of sharing a more genuine human connection. If he isn't actively analyzing the dramatic structure of independent foreign films, he's likely reading up on some niche factoid about Ireland, which is his greatest and most honest obsession.

MARIA HAAG Perchance To Dream / Fragile Innocence First Shield

Maria Haag is a second-year graduate student studying Drawing and Painting. In her work, she examines the fragility and resilience of becoming in the inevitable journey of existence.

M. A. HENDRIX Pin-Up

M. A. Hendrix is a Senior in Integrated Studies with focuses on Creative Writing, Anthropology, and International Studies. Her work primarily focuses on both folklore and societal views of women.

SARAH HERNANDEZ Blue Bird

Sarah is a Creative Writing Major, graduated in December of 2019. Her focus is poetry but she also appreciates writing fiction short stories.

BEN LIEBERMAN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

Ben Lieberman is a Senior majoring in German, minoring in English. He enjoys writing poetry and fiction, and he wishes to translate his skills into teaching high school. Next semester, Ben will be starting his Masters in Education at the University of North Texas.

CHIEN MEAH LIN Fish and Lilies / Homesick

Meah Lin is a Senior majoring in Communication Design.

ISABELLA LUXENBERG Sinkhole

Isabella is a Junior majoring in English and minoring in Art History. When not in class, she is either making music, watching anime, or sniffing candles.

RYAN MCDOWELL Red Enamel Necklace

Ryan McDowell is a Christian craftsman and artist currently studying Ceramics and Jewelry at UNT. His work is process-oriented and portrays the materials of raw nature. In his work, he strives for the spirit of craftsmanship, traditionalism, and spontaneity. You can get the latest updates on his Instagram @mcdowell_craftsmen.

JORDAN MILLER We Take Life in Steps

Jordan is a first-year student at UNT, excited to be pursuing a degree in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. She was born and raised in Plano, TX, but adores traveling. Airplanes are her happy place. Some of her favorite destinations have been Kauai, Hawaii and Eugene, Oregon, but when she isn't traveling, you'll find her spending time with her best friends or writing short stories. She is an aspiring publisher/editor and believes that root beer is one of mankind's greatest creations.

MELANIE PETERSON Autoimmune Disorder

Melanie is a Senior majoring in English with a concentration in Creative Writing.

TRISTAN PHELPS Three, Two, One

Tristan is a Senior majoring in English with minors in History and Spanish. He enjoys doing absolutely nothing. Maybe too much.

RACHEL SPRATT Horizon-Line

Rachel is a Senior double majoring in Creative Writing and Religious Studies. Her writing focus touches on the variety of experiences and struggles associated with her identity as a queer, pagan woman. While generating her unique writing voice, her writing attempts to subvert the familiar in order to convey meaning. Her desire for her writing is to give voice to her experiences while offering others both the representation of identity and a moment to practice empathy. She hopes to eventually pursue a career as a professor and to continue publishing works that can develop a platform for underrepresented voices.

JACOB STEED <3 DFW

Jacob is a Junior majoring in Media Arts and a freelance filmmaker. This photo was taken during a series of photoshoots for up-and-coming artists in the DFW metroplex. Jonathan (pictured) was gifted the photoshoot by his sister, who has been helping her brother get back on his feet after being homeless for fifteen years. Jonathan's openness and artistic vulnerability provided for some beautiful moments with the camera. Jacob took these photos in November 2016 while working as an intern for the Fort Worth-based photography and design studio Square 8 Studio, but they had never surfaced to the public eye.

KERSTEN STROUD Nyhavn Street—A Dreamland of Color

Kersten Stroud is just a person with a camera capturing the beauty that is in nature.

JAE-EUN JANIS SUH I Spy With My Little Eyes 1

Jae-Eun Suh is pursuing her BFA in Visual Art Studies, with minors in French and Art History, at the University of North Texas. She hails from Austin, Texas and has lived in Korea and France. She does not limit herself to one medium, style, or concept. She enjoys working with organic and abstract shapes in a theme of blooming, exploding, or emerging. Some of her artwork is based on memories, her personal background, experience, and emotions.

JOSIE THOMAS Going to Hell / Acrostic

Josie is a Sophomore majoring in English. She hopes to edit novels some day, but for now, she'll settle for making sure her friends don't misuse commas in essays.

SARAH ULERY Much Love, Uncle Rick

Sarah is a Senior at the University of North Texas where she is studying Creative Writing and History. She's always working on her novel about sad bois and magic. Her work can be found on Scribbler, Ink as well as in *Bridge*, the Bluffton University Literary Journal.

ADRIAN VILLARREAL The Crows

Adrian is a Senior majoring in Creative Writing and Advertising.

JESSICA WU The Red Scarf

Jessica is a Sophomore at University of North Texas as part of the TAMS program. Art has been a big part of her life for over 10 years, in which she focuses on photorealism with colored pencil, graphite, and charcoal. She is currently the Competitions Director for pROfILE (the art and theater club), where she coordinates entries for the VASE and Scholastic art competitions. In the future, she hopes to pursue a career in medicine while continuing her involvement in the arts.

INFORMATION PAGE

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