

The Lighter

Volume 63
Issue 2 *The Lighter Spring 2017*

Article 1

April 2017

The Lighter Spring 2017

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Recommended Citation

(2017) "The Lighter Spring 2017," *The Lighter*: Vol. 63 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.
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The background is a watercolor wash of various shades of green and blue. The colors are layered and blended, creating a soft, textured effect. The shades range from light, pale greens and blues to deeper, more saturated tones. The overall composition is organic and artistic.

*The
Lighter*



issue 63
volume 2

Editor's Note

What do watercolors remind you of? For me, they send me back to my childhood when painting outside of the lines was a freedom I never thought would leave. But then you grow up and soon enough, art classes teach you to color within the bold black lines of pages. Similarly, as we grow up, life begins to fall into patterns. We are forced to choose paths, directions, ideas, beliefs. The Lighter represents a space where the opportunity for individual freedom still exists. We represent a diverse background of Valpo students, giving everyone a chance to air their passions and express themselves openly. We engage with the unknown, analyze possibilities, and push the boundaries. Our cover and the following pages have a theme of watercolor backgrounds which represent the flexibility and fluidity of our publication. We seek to give creative outlets for all individuals. We search for the next wave of personal freedom in the pieces we publish for our campus to see. We stand for the childhood feeling of comfortability in one's own skin. The Lighter hopes to spread these emotions to those who pick up this little piece of human identity. Thank you for picking up this book and for giving a voice to those who use the creative process to show the world who they really are.

The Editors of the Lighter would like to thank all of the students who submitted pieces for review; you are all so amazingly talented and we are honored to have had the privilege of seeing your work. Thank you to Professor Schuette, our wonderful faculty advisor and mentor. Thank you to the Committee on Media for helping us to grow even deeper in our campus presence and for the continued support. Thank you to the Art Department for always letting us infringe on your space for our Coffeehouses. Thank you to those who have performed at our Coffeehouses -- we appreciate your fearless ability to stand up in front of a crowd. Thank you to Nicole Jones and Angela Hatfield for the beautiful design of this book and two sets of spot on humor. Finally, thank you to Emily Neuharth who has grown into her position as Assistant Editor and who is also one of the most passionate and dedicated humans to ever grace our presence.

Sincerely,

Michelé Strachota and Kate Braun
The Editors

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All submissions remain anonymous throughout the selection process. The Lighter welcomes submissions from all undergraduate, graduate, and law students of Valparaiso University, regardless of race, gender, religious creed, or sexual orientation. The Editor assumes responsibility for the contents of this publication. The views expressed in these works do not represent any official stance of Valparaiso University.

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Table of Contents

Upon a Rock	8	Brendan Miller
Dust to Dust	9	Patty Jarosz
Approx.	10	Andréa Kütemeier
How Many Calories in a Can of Soda?	11 - 12	Michelé Strachota
Portrait of Felipe	13	Nathan Biancardi
Eye	14	Madeline Flynn
(Un)Seen	15	Grace Erickson
Winter Milky Way	16	Alex Rayonec
A Requiem in Ursa Minor	17	Victoria Bruick
Harmony Within	18 - 19	Sarah Zakowski
Skeletons in the Closet	20 - 21	Jessica Clanton
Twisted Self Portrait	22	Nathan Biancardi
Excerpt from a Book I'll Never Write	23	Megan McDaniel
Fragments of Pool	24	Cora Veltman
Nap of the Parakeet	25	Sarah Zakowski
Abuelita of Jocote	26	Navy Browning
smiling is the language anyone can understand	27	Navy Browning
The Low End of a High Rise	28 - 29	Victoria Bruick
S. in Love	30	Nathan Biancardi
Old Friend	31	Alec Chase
Marie Howe Interview	32 - 34	Michelé Strachota
Por ser nina	35	Navy Browning
Stained	36	Marissa Rinas
Boy among the flowers	37	Navy Browning
Bug Weed	38	Andréa Kütemeier
Green Thumb	39	Caitlyn Alario
Billowing	40	Burns Halverson
Fred	41	Brendan Miller
Flute Family	42	Sarah Zakowski
Self Starter Musician	43	Michelé Strachota
Sunshine and Stone	44	Angelica Jackson
Hickies	45	Emily Neuharth
Curling	46	Michelé Strachota

Table of Contents

Unfamiliar Bed	47	Emma Ryan
Become One	48	Andréa Kütemeier
Horse	49	Madeline Flynn
The Farming's Teeth	50	Andréa Kütemeier
Idling	51	Caitlyn Alario
Narnian Winter	52	Brendan Miller
laundry day	53	Emily Neuharth
Climbing Out	54	Cora Veltman
Seasonal Clothing	55	Emily Neuharth
A Door at Indiana Dunes	56	Madeline Flynn
The Day is Over	57 - 58	Michelé Strachota
Zentangle	59	Adii Johnson
ON YOUR WAY HOME	60 - 61	Eleanor Chae
Windy City	62	Angela Hatfield
Letter to the One That Got Away	63	Isabel Coffey
4 Faces	64	Nathan Biancardi
Nights at Home	65	Brian Eckert
Kaethe Schwehn Interview	66 - 69	Emily Neuharth and Michelé Strachota
Hold Your Breath	70	Samantha Holland
Don't Breathe	71	Alec Chase
The Black Parade	72	Jessica Clanton
The Cleansing	73	Nathan Biancardi

We would like to give credit to Kristen Tucker for her two poems, *Gray* and *Gone*, which were mislabeled in our previous edition.

Upon a Rock

BRENDAN MILLER

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Dust to Dust

PATTY JAROSZ

CREATIVE CODING





How Many Calories in a Can of Soda?

MICHELÉ STRACHOTA

FICTION

The soda passes the girl's lips and burns as it travels down her throat. And she feels sick. She feels guilty. 160 empty calories. 45 sugars sitting there in her stomach. 160 calories. 45 sugars. Just sitting in her stomach. She can feel it there like a swarm of ants that want desperately to climb back up her throat and out her mouth. 160 calories. 45 sugars. An empty can has never looked so hideous. The girl stares at it like the power of her gaze might magically make the liquid appear back inside, tab reclosing and shutting the bubbles safely away from her.

But she has been nursing that soda for three hours and it is too late. 160 calories. 45 sugars. Too many. Too many. She has never felt so hideous.

A boy she doesn't know stumbles past her, clumsily kicking the can beneath the couch. She is thankful to have it gone.

"Oh, shit," he says.

"It was empty," the girl replies. "It's fine."

Pausing, he takes a second look at her. She does not like that. Her skin crawls, each epidermis cell clawing at the others and screaming in desperation to hide. Surely he can see the rolls of her stomach and the cellulite crevices of her thighs. He doesn't have to stare.

"Do you want some pizza?" He asks, motioning to the boxes already half devoured by other party guests. To him, she must look like the kind of girl who eats pizza all the time. She has avoided the food area since the delivery man arrived.

"No, thank you." She crosses her arms across her body.

"Something else then?" He is still looking at her.

"No, thank you."

The girl's friend Macy sits down next to her on the carpet. "Here, I brought you a cheese one." Macy plops the paper plate in front of her. The girl does not look at it, smelling it is nauseating enough. The ants bite the lining of her stomach angrily, looking for any way out.

The boy is still standing there, looking at the girl. He must be laughing on the inside, she is his entertainment, her gargantuan body a story to tell his friends.

"Hey, Ben." Macy smiles. "Having fun?"

The boy glances at Macy, smiling. "Definitely." On the inside he is laughing at how repugnant the girl is. She knows he is. *(cont.)*



He gives a small nod to each of them and walks off. Finally.

“Cute, isn’t he?” Macy says, taking a big bite of her pizza.

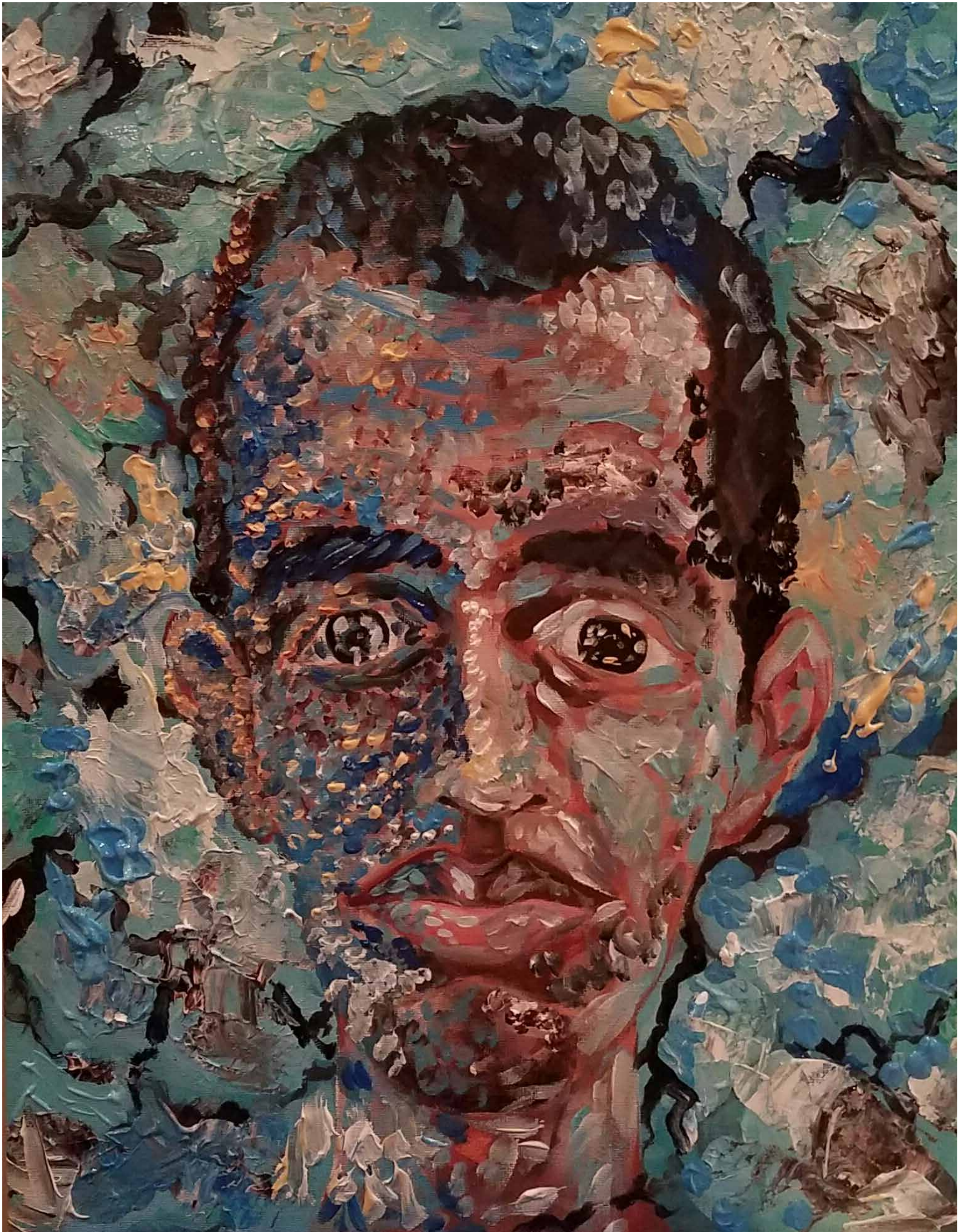
The girl smiles tightly. “I’ll be right back, I’m going to grab another soda.” She makes her way up the stairs to the kitchen, paper plate in hand, then in garbage. She does not stop on her way to the bathroom. She locks the door and moves past the menacing mirror without a glance. The closer she gets to the toilet the more excited the ants gets. They make no noise, but the collective mind of the colony thinks, freedom.

Leaning over and pulling her hair back, the girl releases the swarm into the bowl, hundreds of little black bodies covering the white surface. She leans back in exhaustion once the ants are gone, but there is no sense of relief and the air smells like vomit.

Portrait of Felipe

NATHAN BIANCARDI

ACRYLIC



Eye

MADELINE FLYNN

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



(Un)Seen

GRACE ERICKSON

MIXED MEDIA:
ACRYLIC & OIL PAINT, NAIL POLISH



Winter Milky Way

ALEX RAYONEC

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



A Requiem in Ursa Minor

VICTORIA BRUICK

POETRY

Doubtless the world will just keep
spinning. I learned your name just today,
and your spirit drifts off to God Knows
Where. Maybe foreign stars parade you as
Prodigal Son. Maybe wind propels you
home on currents of cosmic dust. Regardless,

they say you're "somewhere beautiful."
My world just revolves around me.

Your obituary takes time to write, emotions
take time to sort, and impulsively I wrap my jaw
in cotton swaths to ease the toothache
of mortality. Mourning etiquette prescribes
crape for an hour - or was it a week?
I cringe at my irreverent closet.

My selfishness will only plague
this planet for sixty more years, give or take,

and my being will fling to God Knows Where.
I'll see you in the company of nebulas, but
you won't recognize me with my skin
off. My body melds into overpriced coffin lining
- the final homage of their regrets. Miseries,

memories whisper "wait," and yet
the world will just keep spinning.

Harmony Within

SARAH ZAKOWSKI



PENCIL, INK, AND SHARPIE ON PAPER



Skeletons in the Closet

JESSICA CLANTON

POETRY

Never will I ever
Negate the naked truth
Of the obvious obscenities
You yelled uselessly
To torture me through text.

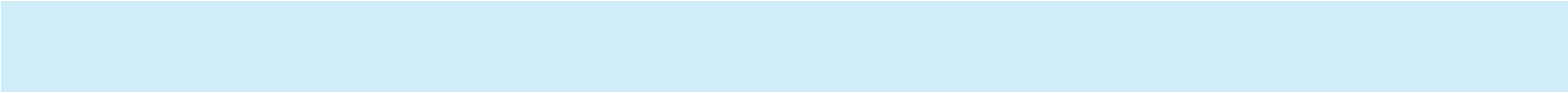
Never will I ever
Forget the fracas, the fray, the fight
Where words wrangled with my rights
As not only a woman, but as a human
Calling into question my honesty, sincerity.

Never will I ever
Believe the tale that you've transitioned
From a wrong to a right
Despite the demands of development
Melting from your mouth.

Never will I ever
Abstain from asserting my anger
Towards the terrible terms
You use to construct a character
For me that doesn't even exist.

Never will I ever
Understand the reasons for you leaving
Because even I, the object
Of your hatred, your indignation, your vexation,
Don't have a single clue what you could have been thinking.

(cont.)



Never will I ever
Leave the wrongs to not be righted
I will do what needs be done
Starting with the one
I know will never see the wrong.

Never will I ever
Ruminate on the rumors that you rasp
With every single breath
About my honesty, my honor, my homage
Because they do not tell the tale of me.

Twisted Self Portrait

NATHAN BIANCARDI

MIXED MEDIA



Excerpt From a Book I'll Never Write

MEGAN MCDANIEL

PROSE

“I’m sorry I hurt you. I just got to thinking—this isn’t love and it never was, there has to be more to it. Don’t you feel the same?”

He glances down at his feet as silence fills up the spaces between us. “No. I don’t,” he says. “I grew fucking flowers for you. I carried you on my back for two miles home when your feet hurt from walking all day. I’ve blown off family and friends and school just so I could have you by my side. I gave you my whole damn life, and if I could, I would pull the fucking sun out of the sky and give it to you for Christmas.” Tears start streaming down his cheeks as he sets his heavy head in his hands and pulls his fingers through his hair. I’ve known him for five years, and I’m just now realizing that I’ve never seen him cry. “What do you mean this isn’t love? There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you. When I fall asleep at night, I dream of your smile and when I wake up, the first thing I look at is that picture I took of you that one time we went ice skating in Millennium Park. Your cheeks look just like roses.” He grows a subtle, soft smile that is only noticeable for a half second before the corners of his lips curve downward once again. “How could you say that this isn’t love, when every ounce of my being lives for you?”

As my mind is jumbling up all of the words I practiced saying to him, I feel my own eyes begin to water. This wasn’t the plan. He has built his whole life around me when I was merely living my own life and moving him around it. That’s the problem with relationships. Nobody wants to sacrifice a part of their being to make room for someone else. Yet that’s exactly what he did for me. I swear I can feel my heartstrings breaking apart at this very moment. The pain inside of my chest is absolutely crushing, but I can’t help the way I feel (or don’t feel) about him.

With tears beading down my face and softly dripping onto the thumbs I’m subconsciously fiddling with, I finally find the courage to open up my mouth.

“I guess I just don’t feel the same,” I mutter.

Fragments of Pool

CORA VELTMAN

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Nap of the Parakeet

SARAH ZAKOWSKI

COLORED PENCIL ON BLACK PAPER



Abuelita of Jocote

NAVY BROWNING

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



smiling is the language anyone can understand

NAVY BROWNING

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



The Low End of a High Rise

VICTORIA BRUICK

POETRY

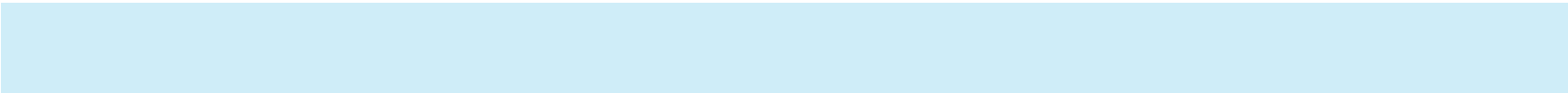
I'm sorry, but it is not on my agenda to be brave today. Groggy sunshine makes the morning kind of pathetic: my eyes don't open until cinnamon cereal pours on my feet launching a milky waltz to the bathroom. I find their cat's hair in the sink again. Spend an hour contemplating my address.

After the daisies died I adopted a cactus to address when reality TV bores. Yellow prickly fellow, brave enough to give rooming with me a stab, won't sink under my waves of forgetful rage. He's my kind of guy, really: quiet in the mornings, doesn't waltz in when I'm soaking. If only he made me cinnamon

toast as I read yesterday's news. The only sin of Man I recognize is a disregard for quality toast. Address your counter-argument to the cat. She'll casually waltz away tail high, and I raise my eyebrow at any brave remark against her. She's unwelcome but, to be kind, I tolerate sad meows and grant her refuge in my sink.

Listen, they say a lot of things but loose lips sink ships so I won't repeat these lines laced in cinnamon that waft through the vents. I pretend I'm a kind of undercover spy noting the barking man address the dodgy blonde every Saturday morning. No brave bone of mine (or the cat's) would propel me to waltz

(cont.)



to the police. The legal song and dance is one waltz
I avoid, thank you. I find socks stuck between the sink
and bathtub. Damn small apartment like the Brave
Little Toaster. Not enough electricity. Cinnamon
colored curtains (were they ivory?) don't address
the lacking light problem. Now December, a dull kind

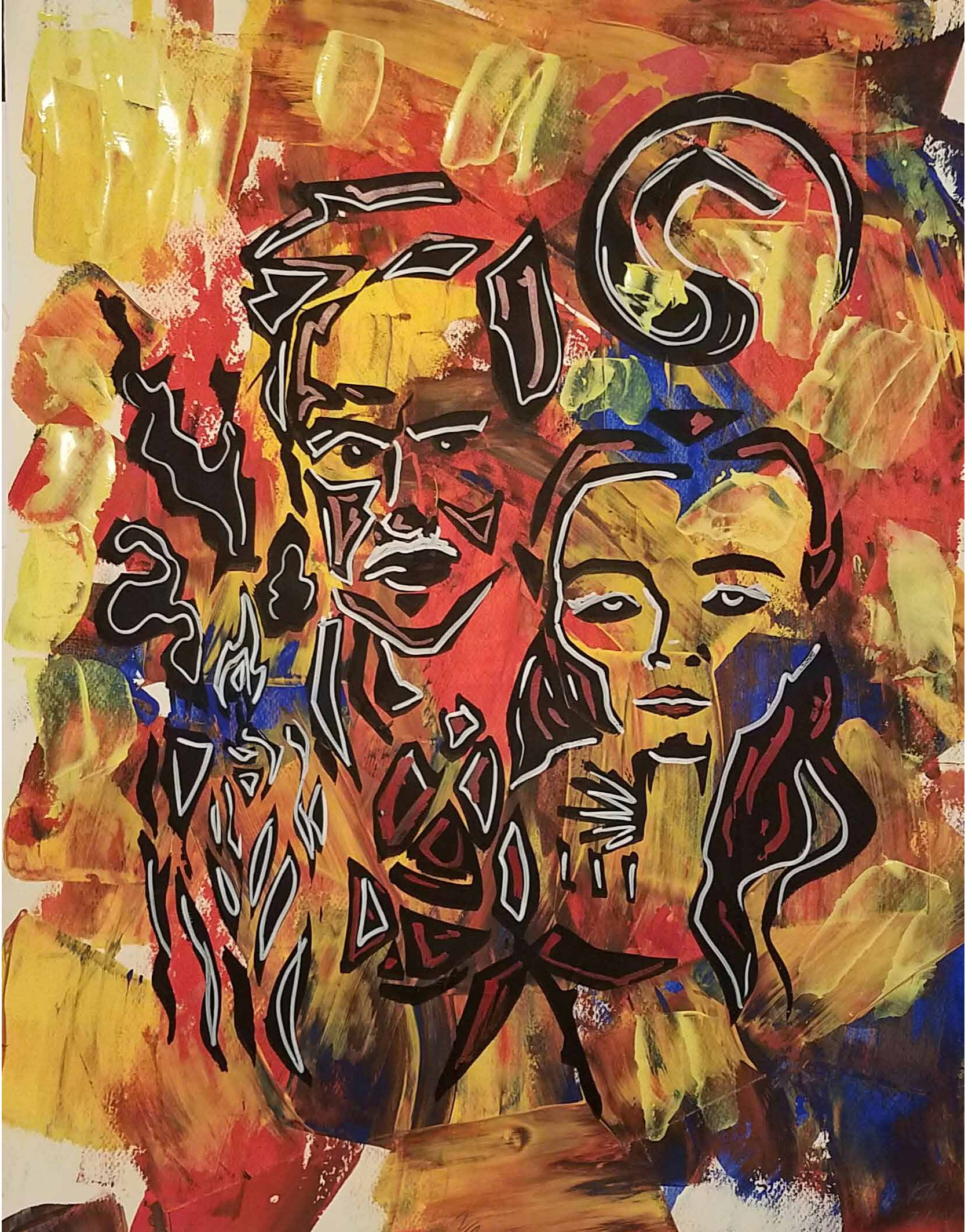
of shadow lingers from sun up to sun down, kind
of makes you want to con the sunshine with a waltz
to a deceptive cadence too bad the star's address
is a few postal codes away. Mom's heart would sink
at the sight of these towering tipsy boxes of cinnamon
squares, but this is freedom baby, home of the brave

and all that jazz. Tonight I think I'll waltz, cinnamon
on my breath, to bed and listen to my spirits sink kind
of like last week's slush outside this not-so-brave address.

S. in Love

NATHAN BIANCARDI

SILK SCREEN PRINT



Old Friend

ALEC CHASE

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



An Interview with Marie Howe

MICHELÉ STRACHOTA

“Every poem holds the unsayable inside it. The thing you can’t really say because it’s too complex. Every poem has that silence deep in the center of it.”

-Marie Howe

Anyone who has ever met Marie Howe will vehemently tell you how extraordinary she is. She is the rare kind of person who can change you with her presence, and she can change you with the words in her poems. Professor Chelsea Wagenaar said it wonderfully when she introduced Marie Howe, “Hers are the kinds of poems you live in.”

I could tell you Marie is a poet and professor of Creative Writing at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. I could tell you about the three books of poetry she has previously published and about her fourth, *Magdalene*, which just came out in March, but it will mean so much more if I simply tell you the words she spoke while on VU’s campus this past October.

Marie said, when asked about her writing process: “Every poem had to be a discovery. It couldn’t be something I already knew. It had to be new. The poem knows what it’s doing, I don’t. I write many poems and throw them out. Those are the ones where I know what I’m doing,” In some ways, it’s frustrating to be a writer listening to Marie, because her process is so organic and there’s no formula to take from it aside from this: write. But there’s also something inspiring about her lack of knowledge of the process that makes young writers like myself think, maybe, we can do it to.

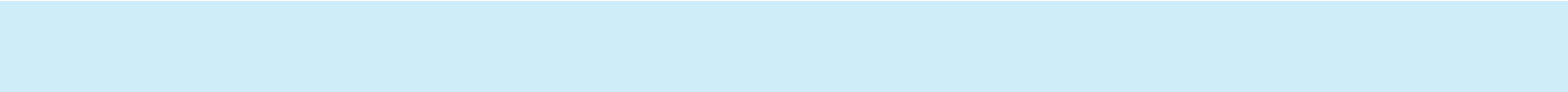
“I write my poems 40, 50, 60 times over. I wrote these *Magdalene* poems for 30 years.” So, for those of you feeling like you haven’t accomplished anything yet, keep working. When asked, “How do you know when you found a perfect end?” Marie answered, “I don’t believe in the word perfect.” So, for those of you thinking you aren’t good enough, maybe you need to reevaluate what “good enough” means. If you feel you haven’t gotten it right yet, there’s still time. Of course, Marie isn’t telling you it’s required to write (*cont.*)

your poems and stories 60 times over. However, she did say that all writers should, “Read your stuff to a tape recorder and listen back. Just write a whole bunch of stuff and let that stuff tell you what it wants to be. Read. Read. Read. Fall in love with other writers. Just for ten minutes a day listen to someone. What do they do that you love?”

Marie’s passion for writing is clear in everything she said, “A lot of contemporary young poets don’t read. When I was in school, you were expected to have read everything. I loved living with that expectation. School gives you the permission and the time. Otherwise I wouldn’t have had the discipline.” Those years in school, writing and writing, reading and reading, gave Marie a larger view of what it means to be a writer, “The world is writing one continuous poem throughout all of history, and reading our brothers’ and sisters’ poems puts us in dialogue with them. A woman wrote about a girl’s sandal 100 years ago, and we understand her. We understand what she meant. It’s extraordinary.”

As amazing as this is, Marie recognized that it can be daunting to contribute to such a huge legacy. Every writer has their own struggles and insecurities about writing and about themselves. Marie stuttered until she was 30 years old, “And I couldn’t spell for my life,” she said, laughing. Just as you have your worries, she has hers. But she didn’t let it change or invalidate her writing. Instead, Marie reminds us that she doesn’t believe in perfect, “It’s how you say what you say. That’s what poetry is. The how is the what.”

A huge influence in both Marie’s writing and in her life was her professor turned mentor, Stanley. She went to graduate school at Columbia when she was 30 and met Stanley in her second year. He was 75. Marie sat in the front row and watched him rub a piece of paper between his fingers. She thought, “this man is present.” She went to his office hours every week and they became friends. Even after she graduated, she continued to send all of her work to him. He helped her garner her first publication and he ultimately knew she was writing a poetry book before she did. Marie said, “I had 25 years with him. He was crucial to my life.” *(cont.)*



When asked about success Marie spoke not about how many poems she has published, how many interviews she's given, or how much money she's made, but about personal success, "Internal success, that is the victory of writing a poem you are glad to have written." Marie referred to publishing as a "secondary success" because, "you can always give a poem away. We want people to steal our poems. We want to give them away, want them memorized and recited. We want people to rip the pages out of magazines. That's what's so cool about poetry: it can't be bought. There's no market for it, and that's what's so freeing. It's priceless."

So if you take away nothing else from Marie, keep reading, keep writing.

Por ser niña

NAVY BROWNING

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Stained

MARISSA RINAS

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



boy among the flowers

NAVY BROWNING

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Bug Weed

ANDRÉA KÜTEMEIER

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Green Thumb

CAITLYN ALARIO

POETRY

The lies in my garden bloomed beautifully
that year. Thick and heavy, their petals dripped
with viscous toxicity. I muddled
their leaves with rosemary, drowned them in dye

so they'd stop screaming, "Don't eat me!"
when held to the mouth.

I would eat them myself, pretend the rot
came from somewhere else, but no amount

of perfume or nose holding could get rid
of the smell. One time I found this pill
that made the lies go down like chocolate. I
think I got it from a friend, or maybe

it was the movies, showing me how to
live, whispering I was always this close.

Billowing

BURNS HALVERSON

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Fred

BRENDAN MILLER

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Flute Family

SARAH ZAKOWSKI

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Self-Starter Musician

MICHELÉ STRACHOTA

FICTION

It's like this. You're young, like really young, like the kind of young where you think you're old but you're not actually old enough to realize you're young. Like that. And you learn how to play the guitar. And you're pretty good at it, actually. You win your school talent show. Fifty bucks that's worth, a good fifty bucks too because you're too young for your parents to consider allowing you to get a job. So fifty bucks is a lot of bucks and you take those bucks and put them in a jelly jar that you store beneath your bed. You washed it out, but it still smells like strawberries every time you pop the lid off.

It's like this. Eventually you'll save up enough money to buy a good microphone so you can record better sound for your YouTube channel. But until then you'll record two videos a week with bad sound quality and even worse video quality. Still, you're young and optimistic, not to mention cute. You're cute too. All of which earns you 500 subscribers in a short time. You're on top of the world, your dream is coming true.

So you start to play local gigs, and after a few shows you realize it can't hurt to put your strawberry jar out on a table with "TIPS" scrawled across the front. It definitely doesn't hurt. This time, when you empty it, you buy an amp. The amp earns you a couple hundred subscribers, a couple hundred bucks, and the ambition to write your first original song. Your mother loves it. You finish singing it for her and she says, "Sing it again."

And you do.

You're on top of the world, your dream is coming true. You enter a competition. All of your friends and family vote for you to win the five song recording deal. The competition closed today. You finished in second place. Second place doesn't get anything.

It's disheartening, disheartening because you lost, but also because the guy who won didn't win because he was more talented than you. He won because he got more votes than you. Turns out it wasn't about talent, it was about popularity. And you realize you are young and you were optimistic.

You dig the jar out from beneath your bed and place a five dollar bill in it. The stench of money reaches your nose.

Sunshine and Stone

ANGELICA JACKSON

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Hickies

EMILY NEUHARTH

POETRY

Drops of Sauvignon
staining soft satin.

Lingering reminders:
his mouth full

of my skin.
A receipt

for a moment's
release from reality.

Visibly, loudly
surround me.

A necklace
I can't take off.

Curling

MICHELÉ STRACHOTA

P O E T R Y

His hair curls around the edges of his hat
like I want it to curl around my fingers.
Curling as severely as I want him.
But we've never even uttered a hello
because my thick thighs blend me into the crowd,
my protruding stomach melts me into the walls.
Maybe his body would curl toward mine
if my love handles didn't pull me into the floor.

Unfamiliar Bed

EMMA ROSE RYAN

POETRY

My heart is twitching in my ear
A dull pain splits my head
Sensations quite familiar
In an unfamiliar bed

Down below cars rush across
Shining rain-paved streets
I hear showers through cinderblock
Scored by EDM beats

These pillows are too comfortable
They're stuffed with fluff and dread
I think on the unthinkable
In this unfamiliar bed

Become One

ANDRÉA KÜTEMEIER

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Horse

MADELINE FLYNN

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



The Farmer's Teeth

ANDRÉA KÜTEMEIER

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



His shadow appears in her doorway
six minutes past eight, the sunflowers
in his hand smiling to the tips of their petals,
beaming in the glare of the porchlight.
She takes them and murmurs, “You’re
late,” leaving the flowers in the kitchen.

They wander past the fountain and around
the garden, leaving the roses for another day.
“I wonder if this is how Byron felt,” he mutters,
brushing the backs of his fingers past the crook
of her arm. She slides her eyes up his face,
pausing at his lip before
crossing the bridge of his nose.

“This is how Eve felt,” she tosses
her words over his head,
not caring where they land. She shivers,
weaves her arms over and around themselves,
leaving nothing for him to reach for.

Narnian Winter

BRENDAN MILLER

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



laundry day

EMILY NEUHARTH

POETRY

gold glitter and skin-colored stains;
turn the pillow over
and just like that,

clean.

eyes sealed shut,
last night's mascara
the black against all white.
lay back down,
pop the prescribed pills,
the cherry,
control

lost.

blankets:
shells of indifference,
cocooned like snails.
yesterday's regrets echo,
a self-inflicted cage
on repeat:

life is filthy.
turn it over
and just like that

clean.

Climbing Out

CORA VELTMAN

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Seasonal Clothing

EMILY NEUHARTH

POETRY

You lay me
over the back of the chair.
The coat you've shrugged off.

Effortless,
don't even stand to take me
off.

My insides, my seams
form an arc
over the chair's edge,

exposed.

I am kissing the dirt,
brushing the ground.
You don't notice.

And down here, I can't see

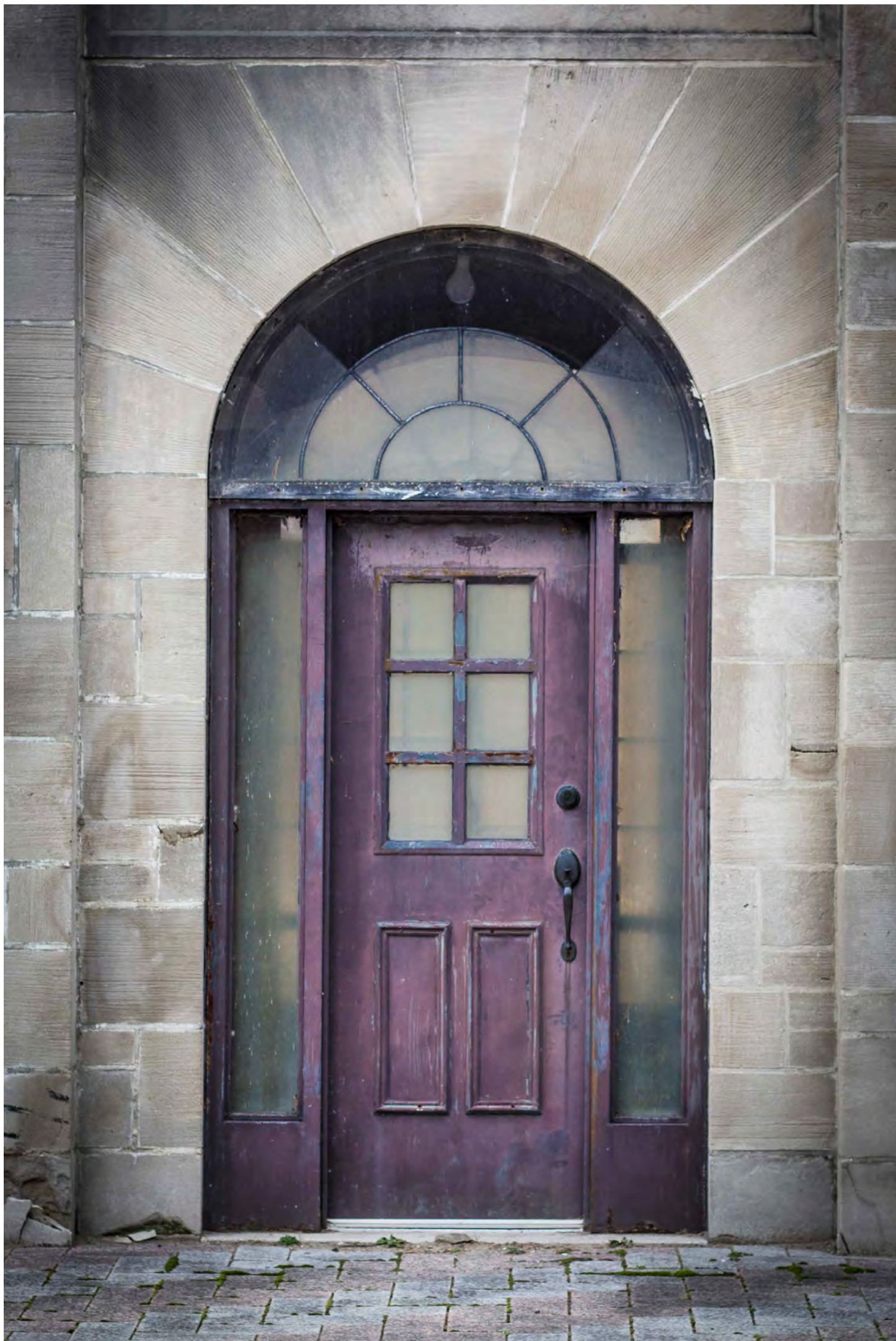
the skies, but they must
be too hot
for me to keep
keeping you

warm. I dangle
off
balance, once held
steady by you-
r cold shoulders:

A Door at Indiana Dunes

MADELINE FLYNN

PHOTOGRAPHY



The Day is Over

MICHELÉ STRACHOTA

PROSE

“This place gives a new meaning to graveyard shift,” Tanya said as she pushed through the double doors of the Garden Hill Senior Living Center.

“That’s just bad,” I replied from behind the desk, watching as she stomped the snow from her boots and removed her coat.

“No, wait. I’ve got a better one. They should change the name to Garden Hill Seniors But Only For a Couple More Minutes Center.” She laughed, straightening her scrubs.

“That was worse.”

“Yeah, you’re right. That one was pretty lame. Gimme a few hours to come up with something. Ask again at 3:00am.”

“I didn’t ask the first time,” I reminded her, hoping she might catch onto the slightly green tint in my cheeks.

I knew it was how she coped; you couldn’t work in the hospice wing and take everything seriously all the time. But we’d lost three in a week, everyone was feeling it, and the jokes were making it worse.

I knew some of the girls had learned to laugh it off, pretend it was funny, but I’ve never had that skill. I was also the newest CNA, and they seemed to think I’d get used to it. I doubted that very much.

Tanya pulled her chair next to mine and began to work. We might not have shared a sense of humor, but she was good on the job. For a time it was quiet. That was the thing about third shift, every once in awhile we’d make rounds or escort a wandering resident back to their room, but for the most part it was quiet.

“I’m not sure Mr. Hobb will make it through the night,” one of the second shift nurses had said as she pulled her hat over her ears on her way out. She thought she was just making conversation, but it stirred my anxiety.

I was still thinking about what she’d said as Tanya and I sat. I was assigned to the assisted living unit, not hospice, but my fingers were itching; I needed to check on him. I stood, the chair squeaking loudly against the floor. Tanya glanced up at me, and furrowed her brow as I sat back down. I was torn. The thought of seeing him dead stirred more than just anxiety in me, but the thought of him in his room possibly miserable, helpless, in need, made me feel worse. I stood. *(cont.)*

“Is this how you get your exercise? ‘Cause if it is that’s cool, I just wanna know.”

“I’m going to check on Mr. Hobb.”

The single flight of stairs and half a hallway wasn’t quite as much time as I needed to prepare, but I told myself not to hesitate with my hand on the door. I was a CNA, studying to be a nurse, I needed to do my job. If I was going to be the last face he saw then I better be making a good one. When I thought about it that way it was easier to swing the door open.

The relief was short lived; as soon as my eyes focused to the low light I could tell he was already dead. The floor felt like tar as I approached his bed. His skin was already beginning to yellow, his mouth and eyes stuck open. He had been getting into bed, I could tell that much, but he hadn’t made it and was awkwardly half displayed in his underwear. The blankets reached to cover him but were no real help.

I took a few shaky breaths in and out, praying his soul was somewhere besides here. Then, carefully leaning over him, I closed his eyelids and his mouth. I brushed his hair with my fingers and lifted his dangling leg onto the bed, straightening the blankets around him. I was not the last face he saw, but I was the first to see him like this. *The only one to see you like this*, I corrected myself.

Zentangle

ADII JOHNSON

GRAPHITE AND INK



ON YOUR WAY HOME

ELEANOR CHAE

POETRY

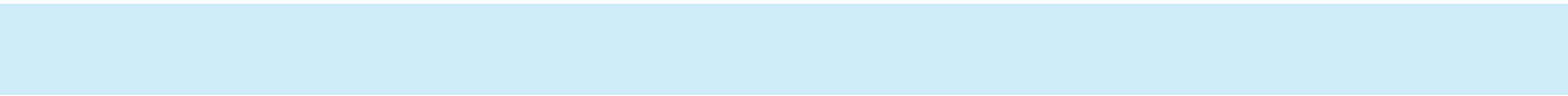
Be sure to drop by and visit the bones he left
under the hydrangea. Keep your words soft
and your hands softer. Smooth your fingers over
her exposed eye sockets, brush them across
her yellowing brow. Promise her yes, of course
you'll come see her again, aren't you two friends?
She was a sweet girl once, and lonely still.

The cat with tiger stripes likes to perch along
the crumbling, pock-faced walls on sunnier days.
If you happen to have food, offer half. He favors
fried rice cakes sprinkled with soy bean flour,
the store with the blue door makes a fresh batch
every other hour. There's a second mouth
under the cat's chin; mind you feed that one first.

Bow your head when you greet the masked lady
with the paper umbrella. Compliment her new dress,
doesn't the color make her sunken skin glow?
She'll ask how your family is doing. Be courteous
in your answer, but give no details. Try not to wonder
what kind of face she wears, if she has one.
She might hear you. Don't give her a reason to show you.

The peddler tucked behind the newspaper stacks
looks thin enough to wisp away in another breeze,
but he looked old when your grandmother was young,
and she made sure you knew it. His joints don't hang
quite like a human's joints. His waxy, cavefish eyes
roll in your direction, unblinking. And when he gapes
his mouth in a smile, his teeth shine a touch too sharp.

(cont.)



The blood under the cherry tree is old. It's sunk into the heavy black soil, soaking into spidering roots, staining pale tissue-paper petals the softest shade of blushing pink. The ground still gleams wet if the moonlight hits it just so. Best to avoid that road entirely. If uneven shadows flicker in your peripheral, ignore them. You learned that lesson long ago.

There's a hotel on the hill where the old temple used to stand. They tore the bell and its tower down before you were born, but when you pass the gated driveway you can hear it ringing its low, mournful tone. They scattered holy ashes here, once. This place stayed sacred. Stayed safe. This will save your life one day.

Remember: a dog's bark will banish ghosts. Any jar can hold a spirit, but red clay will last the longest. Never trust a fox. Never give your name in full. Never, ever look back.

Windy City

ANGELA HATFIELD

PHOTOGRAPHY



Letter to the One That Got Away

ISABEL COFFEY

PROSE

Letter to the One That Got Away

To the beautiful man walking along Van Buren St.,
You looked, at first, like you didn't belong on a lonely, disheveled city street—
your shiny black aviators, your combed dark hair, your leather briefcase, and
your set jawline convinced me of your fluid, nonchalant professionalism. Yet as
I slowed down in rush hour traffic to wait for my right turn, I examined your
easy pace, set undoubtedly by whatever was playing in your slick headphones.

As you approached, I saw that your slightly worn blazer did not quite match
your cuffed slacks. You adjusted your sunglasses and I noticed your fingers slide
across a chip in the painted frames. Perhaps you're a teacher? I wondered, as
you caught my eye and grinned through my open window. And then went on
your way.

Maybe you are perfect for that street after all—a tiny bit worn, but fully fasci-
nating and nonetheless inviting. I'll tell you one thing: for three consecutive
moments I watched you, and then all the way home, I was smitten. Now, hours
later, I can see your grin, brief though it was. And I'm sure I'll remember you as
one of those pleasant moments that sweeten the mundane, even though I know
you're so much more than my conjecture.

Goodbye,

Girl Driving On Van Buren

4 Faces

NATHAN BIANCARDI

ETCHING



Nights at Home

BRIAN ECKERT

POETRY

The loneliest nights are those at home.
The ones spent all alone in the dark.
sneaking out to take hours off my life,
taking drags and holding them deep.
Reading a book every day, just to do it.
Writing all night to feel something,
extracting the deepest memories,
just to put some words on paper.
Thinking thoughts,
and feeling emotions.
Raise a glass for all the abuse,
and all the booze I've stolen,
because home is where the heart is
and where friends are always busy.
All alone, where I've always been.
Life was spent in this very spot,
but so very little of it remains here.
Pieces spread across the nation,
sprinkled like dust, clumping up,
congregating in special places.
Places close to the heart
and others furthest away.
There's a place called home somewhere
but it's not here anymore.

An Interview with Kaethe Schwehn

EMILY NEUHARTH AND MICHELÉ STRACHOTA

E: In *Tailings* [Kaethe's memoir] you mention that you write every morning--like journaling--and that that's your best time to write. I was wondering how you stayed motivated to do something like that so consistently?

K: I'm not as consistent about the writing now when I'm teaching. Partly because lately I've been working on novels which just requires a little bit--it's harder for me to do in brief spans of time. With poetry it's kinda like if I had a half hour I could sit down and work on something, and with a novel it's hard to get back into it. It takes a little more time. But back then it was more just trying to get into the habit of doing it and showing up. So I think it's the same as any practice that people have and feel loyal to. Whether that's practicing an instrument, whether that's showing up for church, whether it's making sure your kids get out the door in the morning. Ultimately you show up because you love the thing and you show up whether you feel like it or not. And that's the hardest part to learn.

M: Are you working on fiction right now? Can you tell us about that?

K: I have a book that's going to come out in about a year called *The Rending and The Nest*. It's a post apocalyptic speculative fiction book. Speculative generally--that's the term that they--well, that the publisher tagged on it when it was purchased. Usually it means something deeply outside the realm of what we would consider "possible."

E: You mentioned when choosing to be done with a piece, it gets to the point where you think if you kept this it would be selfish to not let others benefit. How does that play into your fiction? Is it the same as nonfiction?

K: I would say that's something that I wrestle with, or that I am wrestling with right now in the sense that, well, I certainly believe that fiction and literature help us learn how to live in the world and help us learn how to be more empathetic creatures. What's difficult is that, you know, 99.9% of us are not Margaret Atwood or George Orwell. So sometimes it is really hard to know whether your writing is ultimately going to be "worth it" to the world. (*cont.*)

And that's hard. Cause you have to write it, not knowing it will be useful. With lots of other vocations, if you're being a teacher, a nurse, this sense that you have been useful is palpable in the moment of the act itself. But with writing you are constantly doing it by yourself in this world away from other people. And if you are going to have an effect that might not be for five more years down the line.

E: How would you define creative nonfiction?

K: Hmm. Prose that attempts to recount or engage actual experiences through the use of craft elements one usually finds in fiction and poetry. Does that sound about right?

M: You said you started writing *Tailings* because two of your students came to you wanting to do nonfiction independent studies so you were like, "Well I should probably give it a try." So I know a lot of memoirs and things are driven by the author's need to talk about that thing. Which is clearly not the same origin story for you. Did you ever feel like there was a time you questioned why am I writing this? Or does this deserve to be written?

K: Oh yeah, daily. I mean I think that is always a tension in writing. I think that the pendulum swings between feeling that you're doing the world a great gift by writing a page that you just wrote in your journal, versus feeling like you have actually worsened the page by putting ink on it is the natural rhythm for most writers. And that most good writing gets done when you ignore both of those instincts and let it be about the work itself rather than what your emotional relationship is to the work at that moment.

E: In connection to what motivated you to publish *Tailings*, what would you say you were hoping the readers would get out of it?

K: I had someone say to me, "You know, the twenties were my hardest decade." And it was such a great relief to me to hear her say that. Because I felt like the 20s were always built as this great exciting time where you're going to figure things out and have all these adventures and be free and get to do so many things and be liberated in all these different ways. I don't know what I thought, and then suddenly I was in my twenties and that was not my experience at all. And it felt worse because I felt like it was supposed to be good. So what do I hope people get out of it? I think for part of me that was such a period of transition, and hard transition, and trying to make sense of what you want to do with your life and which relationships you're going to keep in your life, whether they're romantic or otherwise. How you're going to come to terms (cont.)

with the things that have hurt you in your past. Are you going to let those go or are they going to continue to sort of haunt you? What communities are you going to be a part of? And an awareness that I hope is in *Tailings* of coming to terms with the world outside your own personal bubble which is maybe falling apart or the temperature is hotter than it should be. So there's just a lot of choices to be made about how you're going to live your life, and a lot of those choices are going to be painful because for the first time they really involve letting things go.

M: For the journey that *Tailings* took: we as writers think, oh, you need an agent, you need an editor, you know? How did you get from writing it to now?

K: Oh, yes. That's a great question. So. I finished it. And I worked on writing a query letter and I submitted it to probably about 30 or 40 agents. And, so you submit the query and some of them ask for the full and some of them ignore you. That's the way it goes. But I had one good agent say to me, "You know, this is good writing, but it's just not gonna sell." That was the main response I got. That it wasn't marketable enough to be published by a really big house. In order for an agent to take you on, they have to be able to sell it because that's how they make their money. I ultimately submitted it to smaller--so in order to submit it to a big house you have to have an agent--so I submitted it to a number of smaller houses and Cascade took it on. Then with the novel, I got done with a draft of that and had met an agent through a class I took. She had read some scenes and she said, "When you're done with it, send it to me." And so I sent it to her and she immediately took it on. So for the novel I had an agent and she sold it. I could have kept sending *Tailings* to agents and tried to get a bigger book deal out of it, but at some point I was just like, "I'm done with this and I want to get it out into the world and move on to the next thing."

E: What are the differences or benefits of doing it through a small publication versus an agent?

K: Well, some small publishing houses, because they publish so few books, they really, really care about each book they publish. They care at this deep emotional level about getting your name out there and getting the book out there (*cont.*)

because their whole house rests on that. Once you get into bigger houses, it's very easy for your books to just fall through the cracks because they're publishing so many books, right? And most of the time they're making their money on the cook books or the adult coloring books and not the literary fiction books. So you get money when you publish with the big house but you might not get care. Which isn't to say that some small presses couldn't be really jerky or fold in the middle of when your book is supposed to come out. I mean, there are a lot of horror stories throughout the publishing world on all fronts.

M: What would you say is the biggest mistake a nonfiction writer can make?

K: Not writing.

M: Can I have another?

K: Only if you promise to put that one first, because it's true.

E: We can put it in capital letters.

K: Yeah. NOT WRITING. I think using nonfiction as a way to present a heroic portrait of oneself, also. But I don't see writers doing that that often.

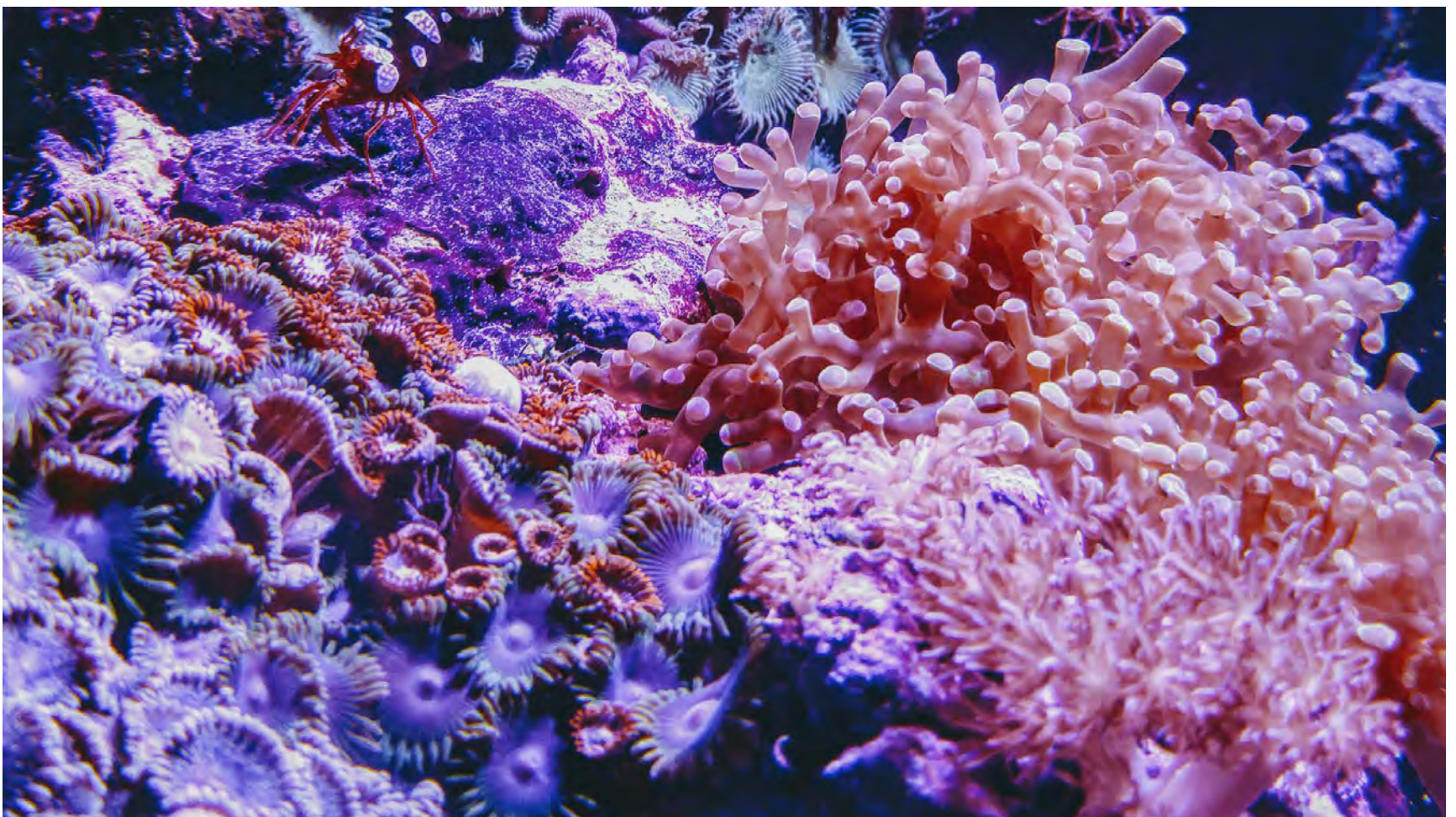
E: Does that apply to more than just nonfiction?

K: I think writers of fiction and poetry often want to present themselves as smart, or clever, or witty. And I certainly have been--that has been a flaw of mine. And I think that that can be a real risk. Trying to be clever can sometimes be the enemy of writing something that matters.

Hold Your Breath

SAMANTHA HOLLAND

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Don't Breathe

ALEC CHASE

FILM PHOTOGRAPHY



Black Parade

JESSICA CLANTON

POETRY

The smell of bouquets
Masking the scent of death.
Wood paneled walls willing wanderers
to forget the real reason they're there.
Make it pretty, make it memorable,
but DON'T make it enjoyable.
Make it just enough to be worth
The thousands spent to dress a body up
to decay in a plot sold to the highest bidder.
Fill the room with pictures, memories, In Memoriam.
Trinkets, tulips, and tapestries meant to make
a foreign room feel familiar for an hour,
make it comfortable, make it conservative,
but DON'T make it a celebration.
It's a farewell, a final glimpse of the person always there
before they will never be seen again.
Say your goodbyes, wish them goodnight, and
Let the dead rest.

The Cleansing

NATHAN BIANCARDI

MIXED MEDIA



Contributor's Notes

Caitlyn Alario is honored to be a part of this publication. She'd like to thank her parents for supporting her, her sisters for making her cool, and her roommates/soulmates for always saying yes when asked to "read a thing I wrote."

Nathan Biancardi: I was born to sketch. Faces and the human condition is what interests me and my artist subjects. Trying to explore personality is what helps create meaningful art. I have been active in the arts since childhood. One of my pieces will be hanging in the Christopher Art Center as part of the Purchase Collection. I am inspired to become a full time artist and an art professor, being inspired by VU's amazing Art Department.

Kate Braun does not have a piece published in *The Lighter*, but since she took on the challenge of writing M & EM's bios, she deserves a claim to her genius. #kateout #theOGhomie

Navy Browning: I don't feel like I need a bio.

Victoria Bruick: Thanks for taking the few minutes to pick up this book. By doing so you're acknowledging that art and expression are important. The biggest of thank yous to the last four *Lighter* staffs who have given me the opportunity to share my voice.

Eleanor Chae: Bark. Bark bark bark. Bark bark. Woof.

Alec Chase is a Junior theatre major with a minor in psychology and an individualized minor in photography. This was his first submission to the *Lighter* and is excited to see that some of his work as made it. "When taking photos I like to focus on portraiture and using available light. Most of my photography is done within the theatre department, as you can imagine there are a lot of interesting things around and something is constantly happening in the world of theatre giving me plenty of opportunities to take pictures. Thank you to my models! You both are beautiful amazing people and I could not have done this without you!"

Contributor's Notes

Jessica Clanton is an English and secondary education major with a creative writing minor. Professional procrastinator. Avid air guitarist. Aubergine enthusiast. I hate the beach but I love taking long walks off short piers. Time and tide waited for no man, so write while you can.

Isabel Coffey: I have loved reading and stories since I was first able to listen, and since then, I have focused on writing. I study creative writing and classics and I love exploring the human tradition of story-telling. Sharing our stories helps us connect as people, and that is what I love most about writing and reading others' writing. Nothing is more beautiful or moving to me than when our stories unite us.

Brian Eckert: I am an English Major with a Creative Writing Minor. I want to get into Journalism and write for a magazine or newspaper and write poetry, fiction, and prose on the side. I enjoy travelling and love the western United States. I also update a blog from time to time at brianeckert0.com.

Grace Erickson: I think life revolves around discovering personal feelings and ideas. Creating art sustains my soul because it allows me to ignore the blurriness between what is real and what is in my head. To connect with others and the world through expression is what brings me the deepest meaning while I am here, so I want to share my work if there is the possibility that I could speak to anyone who seems forgotten and remind them through a small sign that they are not. Above all else, I want to live by the knowledge that there is beauty in every person if you only seek it...

Madeline Flynn is also one of the contributors to this edition of *The Lighter*.

(cont.)

Contributor's Notes

Burns Halverson: I never thought I was very creative. In fact, this bio took me 3 hours to write. But I took a good photo once. Please like it.

Angela Hatfield: I highly doubt I can top the genius of the contributors note above me, but here we go! I like to think of myself as a creative design geek who dabbles in photography. Throughout my travels, I find myself snapping photos of anything that catches my eye. While in Chicago, I stumbled upon a spot that combined nature and urban. So I went for it! I hope you enjoy it as well as all the other amazing pieces in *The Lighter*.

Sam Holland is a junior studying to work with non profits and philanthropic development in the future. She loves to spend her free time taking photos and hopes that others can find enjoyment in her work like she does.

Angelica Jackson is still on track taking the longest time in history to obtain a bachelor degree and will most likely retire as soon as she earns it. In the meantime, she enjoys shooting photos on her iPhone and sharing them with everyone. Many thanks go out to her family for their continued support.

Patty Jarosz: I am a graduate student in Digital Media at Valparaiso University with an undergraduate degree in Studio Arts from Valparaiso University. I am also an Academic Advisor at Valparaiso University for Psychology, Kinesiology and Social Work. This was my first piece created with computer coding. It has opened my eyes to new possibilities to express myself in art.

Adi Johnson is a freshman on the women's soccer team here at Valpo! She has been drawing since she could remember and has maintained it as a hobby ever since. This piece was inspired by a doodle she did in class! (This bio is brought to you by her roomie!)

Andréa Kütemeier is a freshman digital media major with a focus on photography as well as a double minor in entrepreneurship and fundamentals of business. She draws much of her inspiration from her childhood where she dabbled in many different forms of art and found her most sought after tool to be her mother's camera. She says photography inspires her soul and brings to light (*cont.*)

Contributor's Notes

an adventurous excitement that is indescribable. She wants to thank everyone who has supported her throughout her life and loved her through all of her endeavors with a special thanks to her family and her boyfriend and his family. She also thanks God and all of the blessings she has been fortunate enough to receive.

Megan McDaniel: I am a health science major with admission in the Physician Assistant program. In addition to my passion for medical sciences, I also have a creative side which draws me to writing. I'm doing my best to pursue both diverse passions by staying active in the writing world. The Lighter enables me to achieve this, and for that I am thankful.

Brendan Miller is a photographer who thoroughly enjoys shooting sports, but also takes the time to admire the beautiful light around him. He is honored that The Lighter has chosen to publish his work as he is only a freshman. Brendan hails from the Mitten state and enjoys spending his summer pond fishing with a camera nearby. Engineering major subject to change.

Emily Neuharth is a freshman Creative Writing major who has a passion for cats and is from the town with a whole bunch of churches. Never let her drive unless you want your eggs flying. She is also easily scared so make sure not to sneak up on her when she's not paying attention. Lastly, she'd like to thank the creator of nose rings for all of his support. #lilhomie2

My name is **Alex Rayonec** and I am a freshman nursing major. Despite my science-based major, I have a deep passion for art, and creating it. I love earth. I love caring for the earth and I love painting its beauty. My immense love for nature is reflected in all of my artwork, especially in my painting featured here, depicting the night sky in its purest form. This is my first time being featured in the lighter and I am incredibly grateful for my family and friends that have been means of inspiration and support for my artwork.

Marissa Rinas is a senior Digital Media Art major. She has a passion for all things creative and hopes to continue to create her artwork after graduation this May.

Contributor's Notes

Emma Ryan is a freshman studying Creative Writing. Her family and green tea notwithstanding, she loves stories more than anything in the world. Her primary obsessions are middle-grade fiction and fairy tales. In her free time, Emma works with Chapter One Young Writers Conference and St. Genesius Productions. Emma's other interests include *The West Wing*, arguing, and petting cats.

Michelé Strachota is a junior creative writing major who spends too much time staring at dudes at the gym. She probably denied the piece that you have published in here because she expects too much, but don't worry, the rest of the staff convinced her otherwise. Also, fun fact, Michelé's Instagram is hoppin' with cool tunes that you can add to your work out. And she's probably been on a mission trip to a town near you! #fitfruitfrenzy #fitgram #fitlife #MondayMotivation #lilhomiel

Cora Veltman is a Senior Sports Management/ Individualized Multimedia Journalism major. Art is the best articulation that some people have to show how they think.

Sarah Zakowski: I am a Music Education major with a minor in Studio Art. When my artwork is viewed and absorbed, I hope you will react to the various pieces with enthusiasm and emotions of happiness, smiles, and joy. A unique feature to my drawings is that the fine detail I have used to create each piece appears visually different from close up angles compared to viewing my artwork from further away positions. In close up ranges, art lovers are able to view the intricate designs, dots and strokes that I have meticulously placed in each creation. From a distance, art connoisseurs are able to see clear images of my intended subjects. I have drawn pieces consisting of universal themes—music, animals, and family—that people can relate to. I hope when you view my favorite things in these drawings that they will inspire you to consider your passions and interests as well!

