



REFLECTION

59.2

REFLECTION

# REFLECTION

59.2

SPRING 2018

Copyright © 2018 *Reflection* Gonzaga University

All rights reserved. No portion of this magazine may be copied or in any ways reproduced without written consent of the editor and Gonzaga University. Views and opinions in *Reflection* are those of the individuals and do not necessarily represent the views of Gonzaga University.

*Reflection* submissions are evaluated and selected anonymously.

*Reflection* staff would like to thank everyone who participated in the literary and visual arts community on campus by submitting to the journal. Joanne Shiosaki, Kayla Cartelli, and Jeff Dodd deserve our praise for facilitating an instructive and positive experience.

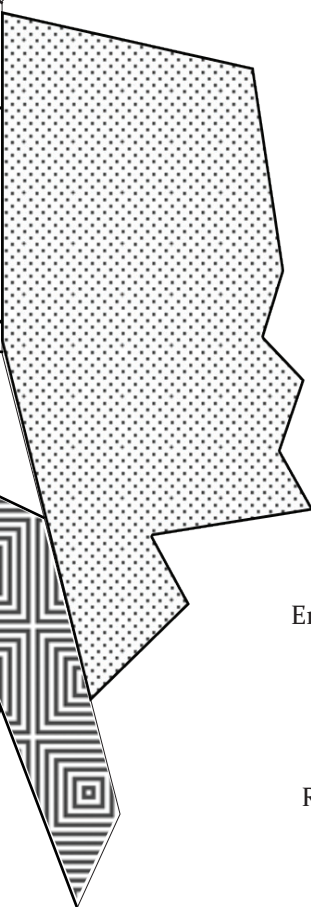
Art is the lie that enables us to realize the truth.

*Pablo Picasso*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 9 | Ally Clapp - *Joy*
- 10 | Elizabeth Harrison - *Christina*
- 11 | Catalina Bala - *Tuesday Morning*
- 12 | Isabella Manoguerra - *For You, In Late Winter*
- 14 | Andrew Mercer - *Whiskey Race*
- 16 | Nicole M. Wallace - *This Is Not a Toy*
- 17 | Eiryn Renouard - *The Un-Persistence of  
Memory*
- 21 | Josh Bulawa - *Animated*
- 22 | Emma Winkelman - *Winter Song*
- 23 | Alina Tsyukalo - *Quiet*
- 24 | Emilia Megid - *.Paak*
- 25 | Kau'i Ho'opi'i - *Beauty Disrupted*
- 26 | Christine Carero - *Home*
- 37 | Natalie Louie - *Undone*
- 38 | Maya Coseo - *Tai Chi*
- 39 | John Morey Maurice - *Mountain Gorilla*
- 40 | Eiryn Renouard - *Picnics on the Living Room Floor*
- 42 | Anna Sherwood - *Open*
- 43 | Andrew Mercer - *Dumplings*
- 44 | Colin Bonini - *Martyr*
- 46 | Josh Bulawa - *Light-Stained Floors*
- 47 | Brahiam Villanueva - *Making Angels*
- 63 | Tom Hoag - *Bloom*
- 64 | Courtney Shih - *He is Not Midas; You Have Always Been Gold*



- Grace Davis-Nicholson - *Violet* | 65  
Christopher Barker - *Galactus* | 67  
Molly Wilson - *Merlot* | 68  
Rachel French - *Milk* | 70  
Tom Hoag - *Detachment* | 71  
David Landoni - *Nice To See You Again* | 72  
Colin Bonini - *Candy* | 82  
Sarah Kersey - *Blockages* | 84  
Christopher Combs - *Shadowed Jazz* | 85  
Isabella Manoguerra - *5,400 Seconds* | 86  
David Landoni - *Red, White,* | 87  
Chelsie Sunde - *Rebuilding Macy's* | 88  
Chelsie Sunde - *Rebuild the Ridpath* | 89  
Brahiam Villanueva - *Learning* | 90  
Maddie Hueske - *Hard to Swallow* | 92  
Rachel French - *Dreams in Pastel* | 97  
Dorothy Deane - *Anne* | 98  
Emma Winkelman - *Home of the Brave* | 106  
Sarah McClennan - *Woodsy Stein* | 107  
Molly Wilson - *Translation* | 108  
Christine Carero - *Girlhood* | 110  
Regina Carrere - *Woman of Color Yellow* | 112  
Rachel Wright - *Building a Castle* | 113  
Emma Morris - *The Fish List* | 114  
Sarah Breitschwerdt - *Cabin in the Woods* | 127  
Rachel Wright - *Submerge* | 128



# A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Picking up a beloved habit off of its dusty shelf usually feels like a confession. “Lord have mercy; it’s been four months since I last wrote anything.” Responsibilities, commitments, and life inevitably get in the way. And life must get in the way—the laundry has to be done. Food needs to be bought. Assignments have to be turned in. Making art is quite an irrational way to spend our time.

When your stories can’t pay any bills or take any tests or make any friends, it’s easier to stop creating than to start. And once you’ve stopped, starting again can feel like pushing a train. Doubt plagues me more than anything; I find the most daunting feat is to just begin.

How many perfect phrases do we wish we had written down? How many curious moments do we wish we had photographed? These strikes of inspiration are as elusive as they are exhilarating. It’s idealistic to think that one perfect beginning will lead to one finished piece. It’s also what stops me before I start. I hold my breath for revelations, for flashes of worthy ideas.

But making thoughtful art takes time. Sketching and writing and editing and revising to make something beautiful usually requires sitting down, patience, some balance between focus and wonder. It requires failing, and sharing, and revising again, and pursuing a piece because at some point you owe it to the story to get told.

*Reflection* celebrates the Gonzaga community that performs the irrational. That pushes their train into one station and then the next. That begins their creation and also pursues it. And finally, that releases their story to be told. I hope this art and writing inspires us all to start again.

Thank you for picking up our journal,

Elise Kuterbach

JOY

ALLY CLAPP

There is much joy to be found in this

current of dread,

lurking in the

wings.

bucking, restless,

wonder

can't be tamed.





**CHRISTINA**

ELIZABETH HARRISON

# TUESDAY MORNING

CATALINA BALA

Along the sidewalk she cruises  
past the stereos that  
bop and slide  
like the colorful musicians  
that dance on the stairs  
of the apartment buildings.  
The slow thumping beat of the  
bass fills her mind  
till she herself is the stereo  
that nods and grooves  
through the throng  
of gray bodies stepping  
to the beat of the  
metronomes on their wrists.

# FOR YOU, IN LATE WINTER

ISABELLA MANOQUERRA

You feel like  
the first day the earth  
remembers it's alive

I don't like winter,  
but I like the way  
the world seems to hold its breath  
before sighing  
in relief

You feel like  
the last day fog  
curls itself through my lungs

I don't like silence,  
but I like the way  
it feels in the seconds before  
it's broken  
by song

I find you in the place where  
all things toss between  
sleeping and waking  
stretching to put life back

into unused limbs  
I find you in the place where  
the raw winter sky  
warms to the thought of  
its passing  
and hugs the mountain tops  
goodbye

# WHISKEY RACE

ANDREW MERCER

Running along, the screeching of the night train  
jumps through the cab of my Chevy  
trying to find where it crosses the road. First gear.  
Racing through the fields of grain,  
pressing the near empty bottle of whiskey  
to my lips, I cut it with the rain.

Bringing life to the country around me, rain  
falls faster than the steel wheels of the train  
carrying the barrels of whiskey  
to towns like this, filled with Chevy's  
and wave after wave of grain  
slamming the clutch, forcing the gas. Second gear.

Engine roars, RPM's soar. Third gear.  
Slamming through the sheets of rain  
ripping through the fields of grain,  
tearing after the train.  
Each turn forcing the question of why from my Chevy.  
I am looking for the answer in the whiskey.

Chasing the mechanical beast with more whiskey.  
Each shift pushes me forward. Fourth gear.  
Tearing through the engine of my Chevy.

Pounding on the rusted roof, the rain  
tries to drown out the sound of the train  
and give me life like it does for the grain.

Each stalk slowly growing, the grain  
Ferments into the brown, pungent whiskey  
That sits inside of the train,  
sloshes in my belly. Fifth gear.  
Only other liquid present is the rain  
that falls within my Chevy.

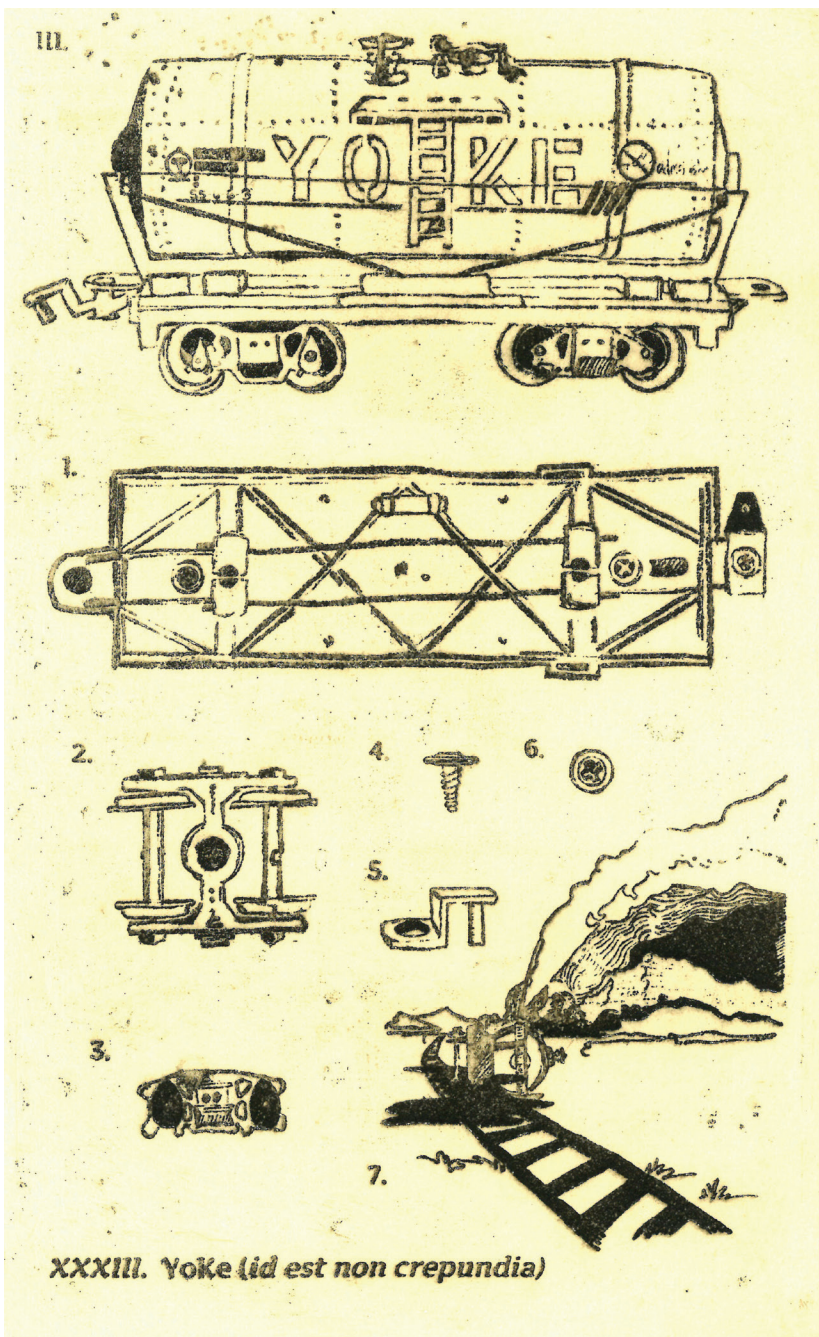
The old green and rust colored Chevy  
that you used to haul the grain  
after the late summer rain.  
Each of us meet downtown for a whiskey  
then race towards the tracks. Sixth gear.  
Just to see if we could beat the train.

You no longer run through the rain to your Chevy,  
no longer race to beat the train filled with mashed grain.  
So I take a final pull of my whiskey, and shift. Seventh gear.



# THIS IS NOT A TOY

NICOLE M. WALLACE



# THE UN-PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY

EIRYN RENOARD

*2018 Michael and Gail Gurian Writing Awards  
Honorable Mention—Nonfiction*

A large rectangle of yellowing paper—the kind of wrinkled dry that comes from having been rain-soaked. Scrawled words born from a barely functional, blue, fat-tip Sharpie. **Sink: \$75**

It's old, once white, now a washed-out blue mottled with yellow. Rust has enveloped the basin like a pack of termites, leaving flaking holes pocked through the thin metal. Barely any of the sink is left untouched by oxidation. A narrow pipe in the shape of an L juts out from the bottom—the resulting unevenness causes the sink to tip onto the only corner untouched by rust. It's entirely possible that if someone jostled the sink, it would simply disintegrate, the rusted flecks unable even to float to freedom in the stagnant summer heat.

They call it an antique fair, but a more apt name is junk circus. A tragedy of overstuffed attic space and backyard litter. There is a musty quality to the air: thick, nearly spilling over with nostalgia and just a hint of desperation—desperation to unload the menagerie of broken window frames, half-melted (and probably haunted) china dolls, and yes, rusted-through sinks.

Yet, fighting all logic, people are buying these items for \$50, \$80, even a whopping \$150 that a woman paid for a grimy mattress frame. She told her daughter as she forked over the cash that it would look great in the back garden. The idea of adding some vintage charm to your do-it yourself projects is not lost on me, but then I go back to the

sink. Rusted, cratered, with a flaccid hose hanging from the edge of the pipe, what could one possibly do with this thing? For \$75? Take bets on how long it takes for the sink to rust away completely?

The process of rusting is a long one. First: the corrosion. The metals start to break down slowly from contact with other elements in their environment. The end result: oxidation. A peeling, useless heap. In the antique fair, surrounded by mounds of broken furniture, outdated children's clothing, and a troll doll whose stomach has melted into a blackened whorl, the corrosion is palpable. Grandparents left their treasured items to their young families. It never occurred to them that these things have no place in their children or grandchildren's lives. Where could the apartment-dwellers put grandma's old wheelbarrow collection? How could the childless couple use their mothers' hand-me-down, patchwork overalls from their own childhoods?

I am sure there is a vision that the givers of these gifts have: of their children dressing their new daughter in the three-generations-old baptism dress; of the family gathering to plant marigolds in the window frame planters; of the son donning his father's leather jacket. The sad truth is that the subsequent generations have no use for these items. Bequeathed to them in a will, or as a meaningful Christmas gift, these items clog garages and attics until spring cleaning when the oxidation of junk is scrubbed from the house and tossed at an antique fair, where hipsters and older women in floral tank tops will pick them up for an exorbitant price, only to have the process start all over again.

My grandmother, Joanne, would have been at home in the maze of trash that is the antique fair. My mother's mother—she grew up

under the influence of Depression-age parents and learned to save and reuse everything. Everything. As an adult, armed with this outdated knowledge, she was known to give shower caps pilfered from hotels and piles of ketchup packets as Christmas gifts. When she volunteered to help my parents plan their wedding, she started right off in classic style: “I have a vision,” she said, “for the seating. Imagine recycled wooden planks on top of plastic buckets.” She ended with a flourish and excitement sparkling in her eyes, as though she had just designed a wedding plan worthy of the royal family.

Perhaps Joanne, raised by parents who were forced by circumstances to scrimp, save, and hoard anything with a value, never updated her habits of keeping things around and taking what she could. Perhaps she assumed that those values of collecting (morphed into sentimentalism) carried across decades and were instilled among generations—that her children and her children’s children would want to keep the same things that she did. And yet, the evidence is before us in the antique fair.

Those values, like the sink, have rusted with time. Sentimentalism met its match in the advent of the new millennium and, with it, the age of shiny, new technology. What once was seen as a legacy is now a burden. The meaning of that old sink, old doll, old mattress frame has oxidized with every passing year. Holes poke through the memories of the owners and flake away into the ether of forgotten things. A doll that was once a childhood friend to a little girl with whom memories were created, a keepsake for her daughter who heard those memories and treasured them, a decoration on a shelf which occasionally sparked a dusty story, in a box in the attic with no

more stories to tell, before being tossed into the pile of junk in hopes of being pawned off at the antique fair, shied away from by passersby fresh from the matinee showing of *Annabelle: Creation*. Corroded memories disintegrate slowly under the pressure of time.

Time turns meaningful to meaningless. What one generation found special, useful, or sentimental becomes rusted in the overoxidization of time. The philosopher Martin Heidegger makes a distinction between objects and things: things are what objects become when they no longer serve their purpose. For the items in an antique fair, their purpose was memory. They served as proof for the owners that they are leaving behind a legacy. But the old photographs fade like the memories, both yellowing and blurring when the oxidation takes hold. And yet, there are people who find a curious beauty in these things—people who are willing to make them objects again. They find it, buy it, and turn it into something new even though the odds are stacked against the persistence of this revamped memory.

As I left the antique fair, I noticed a movement across the dirt field parking lot. A girl in her early twenties was carrying a detached headboard. The metal was twisted into elaborate patterns; its white paint was chipped, and it flaked behind her like a bad case of dandruff. It stretched taller than she, and she struggled to carry it without tripping. She looked rather lost, carrying it all alone. The sun beat down, picked up the dust, and settled it around her. She became hazy as she lugged her find across the dust-clotted lot. She, too, was starting to oxidize.

ANIMATED

JOSH BULAWA







## WINTER SONG

EMMA WINKELMAN

# QUIET

ALINA TSYUKALO

The soft silence of falling snow

The muffling quiet

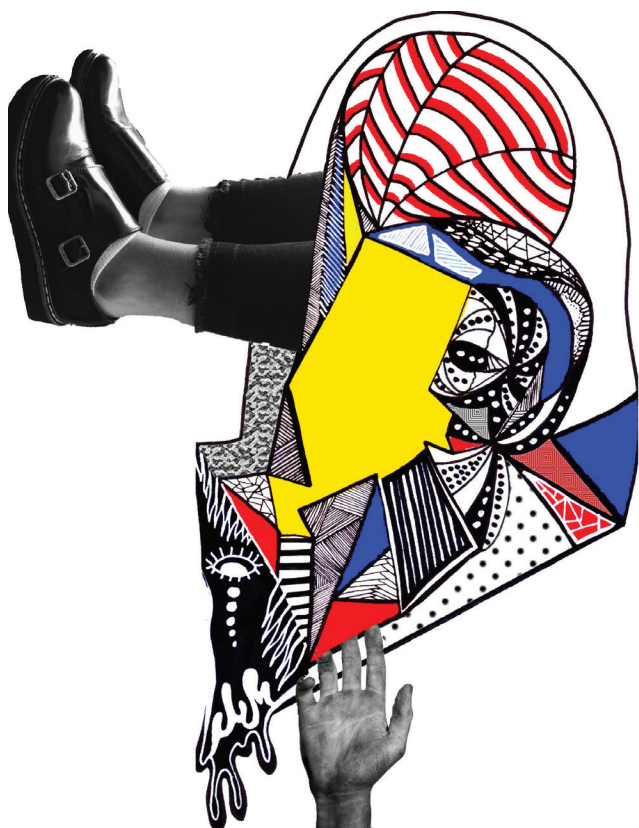
This feathery cascade of white

I take down the ticking clock to better listen to the silence—

And the sudden whirring of the refrigerator ruins my quiet  
morning reflections

**.PARK**

EMILIA MEGID



EM

# BEAUTY DISRUPTED

KAU'I HO'OPI'I

Beauty bursts into a billion particles as reality  
strips away the best parts of a perfectly shaped,  
most graceful teardrop.  
Her iridescent beauty displayed oh so effortlessly  
as she trails her salty water  
down an unblemished surface,  
her translucence showing the minute details of a pure complexion.

All disrupted.

All set aflame like the fires that constantly threaten her mind,  
the ones who torment her brain,  
strain her vocal chords just enough  
that even the thought of speaking those words she so desperately needs to  
evokes pain.

Her brain's functioning in a different dimension,  
and not even the densest of weights can bring her back down to earth,  
unless the serotonin and dopamine increase their numbers,  
frequent her too-often troubled cerebrum.

*2018 Michael and Gail Gurian Writing Awards  
First Place—Nonfiction*

These letters are not for you. They are for me to read, over and over again until the ink stains my eyelids and the paper disintegrates into my skin. These letters are not for you but my head is too full. My head is too heavy to fit these stories anymore, there is no room. These letters are not for you, but I want you to know you have changed me.

**Dear Tristin<sup>1</sup>,**

Sea glass starts as broken bottles, windows, or jars. Fragments and pieces from a night on the beach, a baseball through a house, a cold drink with friends. Floated into the ocean waves, broken up, tumbled and tossed over the sand again and again until the sharp edges are worn down and it is cloudy and frosty. Only then does it resurface upon the sand, beaten and yet more beautiful than when it first dipped into the ocean. I read once that if you hold sea glass up to the sun you can see your future. Our last night together I scooped up a handful of green and white glass from the Malibu beach and held the stone up to the sky. It was too foggy to see any future clearly. Instead all I saw

<sup>1</sup> Tristin (noun) /Tris-TEN/

Definition: 1. My best friend 2. A reckless driver 3. A girl who does not sleep enough and drinks too much coffee

Nicknames: T, Babe, My Guy, Dude

Synonyms: insane, nervous, smart, absent minded, selfish, tough loving, impulsive, scattered

Antonyms: boring, calm, rational

was home through the distorted shapes. The rough sand underneath me, the water splashing out in front of me and then sunset falling in distorted hues of pink, red, yellow, orange, and now green from the glass.

*Home will always be a distorted image.*

In Barcelona I found sea glass along the beach. I picked up as many as my pockets would allow. Licking the sand and salt off of them, tasting like home. I keep them wherever I think I will need them most. Some in my pockets, some inside my suitcase, some in my backpack.

I smoked my first cigarette with you. We sat in the park by my house, my hair resting in the same sand that I had once peed my pants in years before. We were walking distance from a water fountain that I had once used to build my sand castles, the material that made the grains stick together. I opened to inhale the smoke, coughing as the material poured out of my mouth into the night air. Grasping onto the stick like it held answers. Hearing you whisper that you loved me over and over until the words lost meaning. Hearing that you say that moving like sand angels was the same as moving like snow angels.

**Dear Olivia<sup>2</sup>,**

In German culture, a traditional housewarming gift is bread and salt. The bread suppresses hunger and the salt wards off bad spirits, allowing health and prosperity to enter the home. This tradition even

<sup>2</sup> Olivia (noun) /O-LIV-IA/

Definition: 1. Roommate since freshman year 2. Gives everything her all 3. Knows me better than I know myself 4. Easiest person to talk to

Nicknames: Liv, Livy, Olivi, Liver, McChicken

Synonyms: Beautiful, intentional, funny, bratty, patient, comforting, sleepy, trustworthy

Antonyms: Careful, prideful, harmful



crossed over to the Soviet space unit. It was customary to greet the astronauts with cracker and salt to welcome them back onto Earth. Germany was the first place we visited on this adventure abroad. It might as well have been a different planet. I remember crying on the floor of the hotel hallway in Garmish, feeling farther from home than ever before. You comforted me as best as you could until you gave up on words. Instead, you offered me your blanket to sleep with for the night. Your own small sense of comfort, brought from home. Wrapping the blanket around my shoulders you reminded me that this is all temporary. My sadness was suppressed and the tears were warded off. I slept through the night for the first time since we arrived.

*I hope my parents set the table with crackers and salt for my return to Earth.*

**Dear Dad<sup>3</sup>,**

You told me once that every time a bell rings it is to remind me that I am a child of God. The bells at my own parish ring every hour. The grandfather clock at our house rings every fifteen minutes. I am reminded often of who I am when I am in California. You can imagine my excitement, hearing the Duomo bells ring. This sound holds meaning, wrapped in history, warped in personal experience, and finished with tradition. This sound means safety, being near a place that is sacred. Being close enough to feel God. The first time I

<sup>3</sup> Dad (noun) /dad/

Definition: 1. The jolliest man to walk to Earth 2. A gentle giant 3. My number one fan

Nickname: Daddio, Brair Rabbit, Bill

Synonyms: Agape, radiant, open minded, intrigued, witty, friendly

Antonyms: Indifferent, dull, unmotivated

went to mass in Florence I was surprised at how similar it is to the United States. Catholic means universal, all embracing. I can feel God regardless of which corner of the earth I am curled up in.

In the Coliseum you are allowed to sit on the fallen pillars and touch the statues close up. At the Roman Forum you can rest on the old marble and walk along the ancient ground; you can run your fingers over the temple of Caesar. My tour guide told us that there is too much ancient art for the museums to contain. A professor told me that Florence was unable to build an underground subway because the more they dug, the more art they found. At what point do you stop digging? What does it feel like to live above so much history? History ground and buried into the Earth, parts of the culture that are not worth learning about. A home can only hold so much. When I turned 18 you wrote me a letter. You explained that you wished your heart was bigger so you could love me even more. "You're not the apple of my eye Christine, you are my entire orchard." You asked me to stop growing up, saying the more you got to know me, the more things you loved about me. If home is where the heart is, I've outgrown yours.

A turtle can drown underwater if they hold their breath for more than 7 hours unless they are hibernating, in which case they are resting or sleeping. You told me that not leaving the country does not count as living fully, I might as well be hibernating. We had a conversation before I left about how badly I wanted to stay home. I asked you why anyone would ever want to leave paradise. You told me that being comfortable was not paradise, that is ignorance. As much as I adore the ocean, sometimes I need to come out for air.

**Dear Liam<sup>4</sup>,**

You have been around the world; you had called 6 different countries home before you turned 18. I could never keep up with your knowledge, your questions, your thought process. You look at things from every angle and you're never satisfied with a mediocre result. You write the best poetry, create the best art, and have an appreciation for music like I have never seen before. Liam, you can speak three different languages, but you always claim love is universal. Everything here reminds me of you.

In high school when we would make breakfast you would butter your toast and then you would proceed to cover the entire buttered surface with sprinkles, mostly rainbow, sometimes chocolate. I would make a face every time, letting you know my obvious disgust. You claimed it was normal. You said that when you lived in Holland that is what everyone ate. After seeing Amsterdam, I can confirm that this is a tradition but I still think it's gross.

Adam Mickiewicz summarizes his idea of a Polish home as being private. He says that homes conserve inner thoughts, feelings, and memories. He states that a home can be anything from a house to a cemetery. Seeing Auschwitz was walking through a massive graveyard. Feeling the death in my hair, seeping under my nails and through my skin. This experience shocked me in ways I couldn't imagine. Glancing

<sup>4</sup> Liam (noun, adjective) /LEE-um/

Definition: 1. Ex-lover 2. Of the Earth 3. Teaches one how to hate 4. The most beautiful façade

Nicknames: Li, LJ

Synonyms: brilliant, warm, thoughtful, soft, good listener, talented, confusing

Antonyms: Authentic, transparent, honest

up at people's belongings, their hair, their shoes, the space that they stood during their final moments. Their most inner private struggles, the place that they called home for days, months or even years. Peering through the glass into their most intimate, private, moments. Liam, one of our favorite places was the graveyard in the Valley. We would walk for hours reading off names of people we didn't know and would never meet. Sitting on the park bench reflecting on our own final moments, where we would be and if we would be together. You took my hand and pressed it over your heart. Our private thoughts, making our home, bringing life into the death around us.

*"Can you feel how fast it's beating? A mouse's heart can beat 750 times a minute. Human hearts can only beat 80 times a minute, that seems unfair."*

Friday nights were ours. We would sit in your TV room, pop popcorn and watch movies. Whenever you traveled you would bring me back Smarties. Not like the United States ones, the chocolate ones, the ones that look like M&Ms. You would pour them into the popcorn bowl and we would watch the colors melt together into the white. I see these everywhere. The iconic purple packaging. Reminding me of the home we created together, our Friday nights, the solace we found inside one another.

Liam, tell me about the time when we were seventeen. The time where you picked me up from cheer practice. When you explained to my coach that I had to leave "right now" because there was an "emergency." Tell me about the time that we drove and drove up a windy road. And you parked, teetering on the mountain. Remind me of the time when you pushed me against the car to kiss me and my cheer bow

flew into the wind and I got in trouble at the next game. Tell me about how we ran; so fast up the hill, ruining my white shoes. How we crawled into the dirt and settled against the Earth. How my uniform snagged against a rock and the clock struck midnight. And my mom called me to ask where I was and to tell me I never broke curfew and how I had never missed a day of practice in my entire life and why would I ever leave early. Tell me about how we thought we should stay there with our backs in the mud. Making our new home in the dirt, eating only plants. Tell me why we didn't, because I honestly don't remember what made us ever drive home.

There is a city called Babylon in modern day Iraq which is known for the infamous Tower of Babel. The people of the city tried to build a tower tall enough to reach God. God was displeased with their actions and made it so they all babbled, or spoke in different languages. They couldn't understand one another and the tower could not be completed and instead the people were scattered all over the Earth. I remember laying next to you, watching your chest rise and fall. Your lips were parted slightly and you looked so peaceful I almost felt guilty for interrupting. Shaking you awake explaining that I couldn't fall asleep. You pulled your copy of *The Little Prince*, and began to read aloud in French. I sunk into the bed feeling comforted by the sound of your voice, thick with sleep. A few months later we fell out of sync. I guess we weren't speaking the same language anymore.

Tell me the story, the one where you left. The one where I had to crawl out of your ribcage through your mouth and find a new place to sleep, a new home.

### **Dear Grandpa<sup>5</sup>,**

You were born in Holland, very in touch with your Dutch roots. You were so proud to always have Dutch cookies waiting on the table when we came over. I would usually get the jam across my face, sitting up, too short for my feet to touch the floor. It was customary that whenever I saw you I would help you tend to the garden outside. I had a pair of overalls just for that occasion, denim with a piglet embroidered into the pocket. We would water the plants, clip out the weeds, and sometimes even make flower arrangements for grandma. At the end of every gardening session we would eat popsicles outside in the California heat.

Mine always melted too quickly. You passed away before you could make it back to Holland. When I saw Amsterdam it was filled with flowers, tulips blooming in every direction, the same colors as the sunset and my Big Stick popsicle.

### **Dear Mom<sup>6</sup>,**

When we lived in Westchester, you and I would sit on the front yard watching the cars pass. I would stare up at the biggest palm tree

<sup>5</sup> Grandpa (noun) /GRAND-paugh/

Definition: 1. Harry Hart 2. A tall man with watery blue eyes 3. Smells like department store cologne and freshly ironed shirts

Nicknames: Papa, Hart-Attack, Gramps

Synonyms: Jokester, giving, teacher, aware, observant, kindhearted

Antonyms: Temperate, quiet, harsh

<sup>6</sup> Mom (noun, adjective) /Mah-om/

Description: 1. The most incredible woman I know 2. Unapologetically curious 3. Of or being strong enough to move mountains

Nicknames: Mother, Mama, Ana

Synonyms: beautiful, selfless, knowing, brave, strong

Antonyms: shallow, curt, rude

I had ever seen, telling you that when I was older I was going to climb it to the top so I could see the planes fly out. You put me on your shoulders so I could touch the bark and feel the wood underneath my nails. Years later when we drove past our old house with the green shutters and beaten fence, the tree had been cut down to just a stump. I cried the whole way home. Before you turned the music up, you told me there would be bigger trees to climb.

I tell you often that there is no one I will ever love like I love you. And this is true. No one else would ever put up with my bad days like you. You tell me that even on my worst days, a day together is a day well spent. When I was small, you would dab your perfume unto my wrists before school. "If you feel homesick, just know I'm right under your sleeve."

I know that it is not easy for you to send me across the world, hoping that I will come home okay, even better. Mom, I have seen it all. I have swum in the water of Croatia, letting the salt clear out my wounds. I have climbed to the top of the Duomo feeling the cool air breeze past my fingertips, swirling around inside my head. I have walked through the gardens of Paris, feeling the greenery sprout inside my ribs, growing through my chest.

You grasped my arm across the dinner table when you visited me. Running your thumb over my knuckles, you told me I looked good. Better than you had seen me in a while. You told me that in the last two weeks we'd been together I had only had good days. I told you that since I have been here every day has been good. When you hugged me goodbye, you told me that I would always be yours. I told you that I would never love anyone like I love you. My home will always be in with you, Mom. I will always feel safe inhaling your perfume and feeling

your arms wrapped tightly around me. I have traveled to 8 countries and countless cities, but I have never felt as complete as I do with you.

Demeter, the goddess of growing things, weeps for three months when her daughter goes missing. Because of this the trees go barren and there is winter for three months. Winter season is a mother mourning her daughter, so far from home. Mom, every week you put fresh roses on my night stand. When I left for Spokane you told me it was hard to walk past yellow roses because the smell reminded you of me. Mother, let the garden bloom I'm coming home.

**Dear Max<sup>7</sup>,**

I wish I could explain just how hard it was to leave you so far away. There are not many words for how much it hurt to have you ask me why I was gone for exactly 106 days and where I would be. It was never fun to have you tell me that you could fit an entire hand between where you were and where I would be. You put your finger on the map and dragged it from Florence to California. You told me that it didn't take you long to spin the globe and that we would be closer than it seems "probably." Max my little man, I hope one day you find sea glass scattered on the beach. I hope that you hold those beautiful stones in your small fist, feeling the salt and sand against your skin. When you push the glass in front of your eye I hope you see the world. I hope you

<sup>5</sup> Grandpa (noun) /GRAND-paugh/

Definition: 1. Harry Hart 2. A tall man with watery blue eyes 3. Smells like department store cologne and freshly ironed shirts

Nicknames: Papa, Hart-Attack, Gramps

Synonyms: Jokester, giving, teacher, aware, observant, kindhearted

Antonyms: Temperate, quiet, harsh



see the future splayed upon the sky. You won't drown Max, you can hardly sit still as it is, one country will never be able to contain you.

• • •

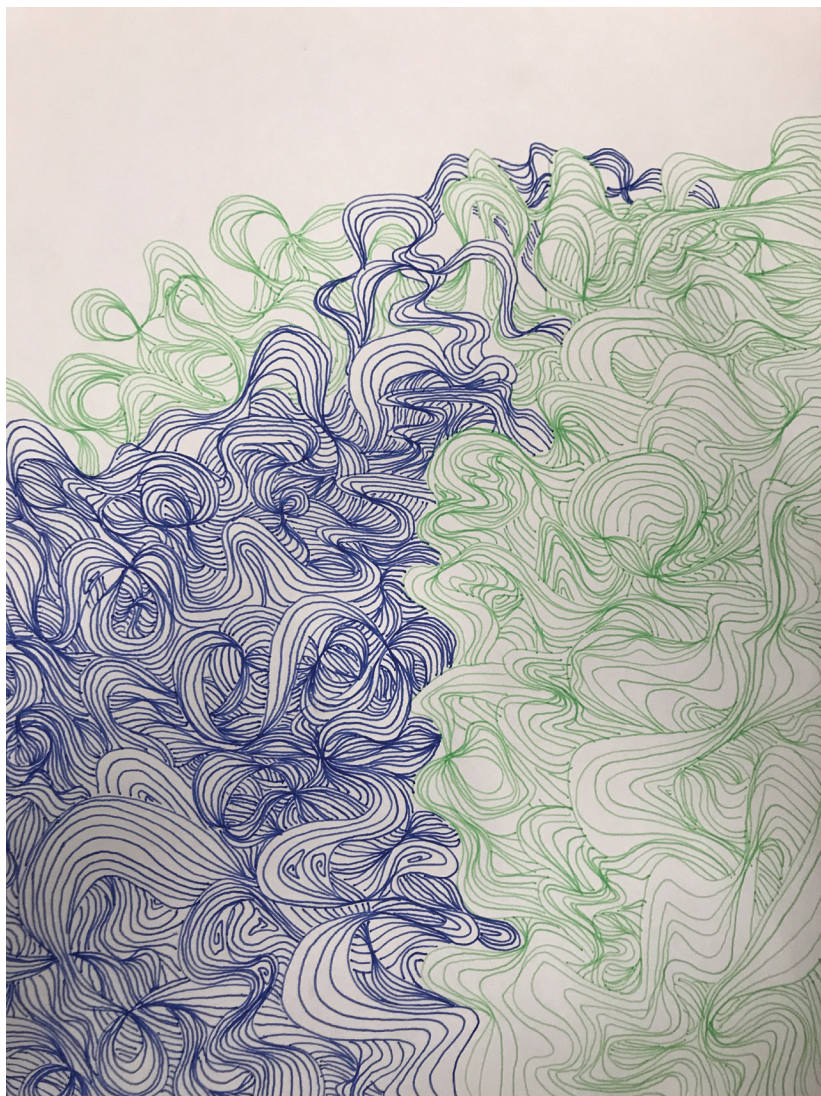
And so the story goes, and the bells toll, and the scene ends, the curtain closes and you wipe the blood seeping from your mouth with your bruised fists. There is no battle, there is no fighting. The plane is taking off rolling faster and faster down the tarmac, hurling you into the sky. You are leaving the planet being spit back to Earth like the pomegranate seed fallen from Persephone's mouth.

Gravity is too strong, old habits are hard to break, the home inside myself is better equipped than anywhere else.

These are all stories now, letters unopened, letters unread.

"I don't want to write that down, but I don't want to keep it in my head either."

—*Andrea Gibson*



**UNDONE**

NATALIE LOUIE

We are all in our own  
little, imaginary boxes,  
feet pointed at the diagonals.  
Back wall, side walls,  
Front wall.  
Heaven and Earth.

Hanging from a golden thread,  
Spine straight, shoulders down,  
Breathe in.

Water is the softest element  
until faced with something hard.  
Then it is a sculptor,  
Patiently ebbing away resistance  
over millions and millions of years.  
Breathe out.

# MOUNTAIN GORILLA

JOHN MOREY MAURICE



# PICNICS ON THE LIVING ROOM FLOOR

EIRYN RENOUE

*2018 Michael and Gail Gurian Writing Awards  
Honorable Mention—Poetry*

I remember:

House small, one story, red brick

Lawn modest, green, tidy

Living room had thick red carpet, wood-paneled walls...or  
maybe the other way around

When we visited, we spread paper towels on the living room floor and  
picnicked on York peppermint patties and biscuits slathered with jam.  
I ate and studied the adults above me.

Treadmill in her bedroom...it might not have been the bedroom

My sister and I walked on it and tried to push each other off. Foreshadowing.

A collection of teddy bears on her dresser

One bear played tennis, racket in paw

One bear in the Navy, uniform snappy and clean

The first bear was given to her by her son—my father. It is old; its fur is  
tufted and matted with substances whose origins are murky with lost  
time. It bears a small, goofy grin on its face, only noticeable in profile.

We drove past the house once or twice after she died.

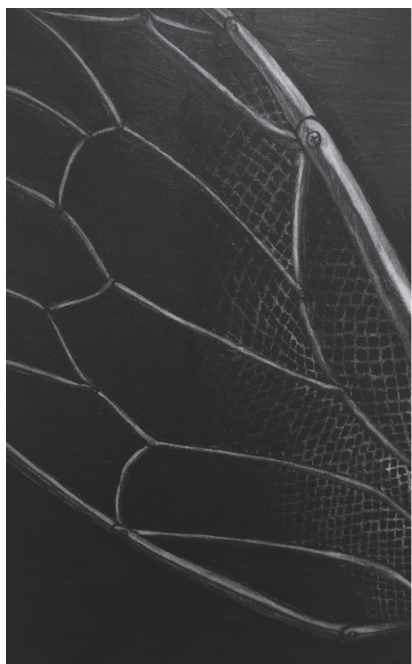
I remember:

Lawn browning

Smiling scarecrow leaned forgotten against front door

Someone left a broom outside.





**OPEN**

ANNA SHERWOOD

# DUMPLINGS

ANDREW MERCER

Have you ever had a dumpling?

A real dumpling.

An jioazi.

One made by someone who truly understands.

Understands how the flavors combine together.

Someone who knows the history of where they come from.

Someone who knows why they were created.

And why sometimes people think they look like ears.

If you can't answer yes, then you haven't had one.

As the flavors combine, you will get lost in your mouth.

Lost in the histories bundled up inside.

When you come to

you'll go find a master to make the dumplings.

They'll give you one of them, and they'll have the wax.

The armor they've prepared for their ribs, ready for service.

Protecting their precious insides.

You eat the dumplings.

Now mixed with an açai bowl and espresso.

You take the recipe.

Then you fly back to your life.

Without wings.

And stolen dumplings.



Your hands are tried and callused as they take mine.  
Your breath stale and dry to match your lips.  
Your dark eyes wet with a sorrow to match the world's,  
I've seen you before.

Like a rosary made of charcoal  
I pray to you now.  
Each prayer bleeds onto my skin.  
The beads crumble like a temple in my palm,  
the rubble turns to ash that stains my fingers  
no matter how soft I touch.

I've felt your kiss.  
Spent your silver with no intent of returning it;  
each coin sounded like a cracked bell  
tolling completion as they fell to the floor.  
I, too, have been chastised for not understanding.  
I understand.  
We've all been used  
like coins to collect and sell and spend.

You show me yellowed teeth.  
You show me

everyone's fingers are stained;  
the church basket is full of coins;  
every father is flawed.  
When you reached for that bread,  
did you know?

Answer me, Judas,  
I need to know.



## LIGHT-STAINED FLOORS

JOSH BULAWA

# MAKING ANGELS

BRAHIAM VILLANUEVA

*2018 Michael and Gail Gurian Writing Awards  
First Place—Fiction*

Kyle's body slithers in the darkness, his torso deflects white beams of light from the wooden stage; purples, pinks, and reds glide through the foggy atmosphere and across his exposed skin. His body is just another set of shiny pecs and abs, coated in oil to seem more appealing. I feel nothing. Money didn't buy emotions. And for a while now, emotions have been all I have wanted: to love somebody, to feel love. I dreamt about love again last night. This time I came home to a husband; we hosted a potluck in our backyard and my best friend's six-yearold asked why our kids had two dads. Everyone laughed, but it was only a dream.

I wonder if Kyle dreams. He drops to just his knees on the stage, his legs are open, he slides his palms down the top of his thighs. He's as typical as any other go-go boy because he thinks he's unique. He makes me want to drink myself out of existence because boys like him can have love, because boys like him choose against love. New clothes still generate his smile, new shoes still earn his most sincere attention, a new watch earns a date.

...

More than two months ago, I had been sitting on the same cushioned barstool when I first saw Kyle. I had been watching the same darkened, wooden stage. The same heated fog had tinted my breath with the smells of murky cologne and vodka. Torsos of gay men, and the occasional woman, dissipated throughout the club as if moving in unison.

Kyle had been snug into his boyfriend's arms at the edge of the dancefloor, overlapping his arms at the tall white boy's nape and moving side to side. His head bobbed up and down and into the shiny chest in front of him. I had almost overlooked him, but then he looked up and towards me; I still remember the whites in his eyes. He had kept eye contact with me. I found him appealing; his high ethnic cheekbones, his shirtless body the color of khaki, the dark nipples on his toned chest, his teeth shining brightest in the white black light around him. My teeth have gaps, and I hate it, his didn't. He had seemed predictable, like the type of boy who thinks his pretty face deserves money and attention.

"My god, Chase," Michael had said to me, wiping a glass dry from behind the bar, "you like the looks of him too?"

I had turned to make eye contact with Michael. I knew we needed someone like Kyle, he looked so different, unlike anyone else dancing around him. "Should I go get him?" I had smiled wide, no teeth.

He had pushed me off the bar stool and nodded, I traversed the six or seven feet between me and Kyle, clenching my fists. He wasn't the first boy I approached like this, but I hadn't imagined he would be the last. He laughed at me when I asked for his name. His boyfriend had turned all the way around to face me, a purple illuminated the side of his face. "My name is Kyle," his salmon lips had said, interrupting his boyfriend's glare. He pushed the tall boy aside, and leaned in, making his way closer to the stanchions between him and me, he had grabbed their thick red robes suggestively.

I inhaled hard. "I'm one of the owners, wanna chat with me by the bar?" I said, loud enough to drown out the music. It was hard to

keep a friendly smile, the name Kyle hadn't made sense, and I wanted to express my confusion. He looked anything but white—Middle Eastern? An Islander? Latino: Venezuelan, Puerto Rican? Mixed? Foreign for sure. Olive skin from somewhere far away, I thought the name had been a joke.

His boyfriend had followed him as he crouched underneath the red ropes. He had been staring at Kyle—all of Kyle—as if he should have given more love. “Wanna dance for me?” Michael had yelled at him from behind the bar as we approached. Michael handed me and Kyle a cold glass half full of pink bubbling juice and large ice cubes.

“When would I start?” Kyle had said, in a straight face, his eyes locked on Michael, as if watching for something. He had taken a sip from the stubby glass, condensation already formed at the base.

Michael had kneaded a white towel with his large hands and smiled, “Tonight, if you’d like.” He looked down on Kyle from the other side of the bar as I analyzed the two of them trapped in a titillating death stare.

“Babe,” Kyle’s boyfriend grabbed for his arm, and Kyle turned. “You’re not even sober, let’s go back to the hotel?”

“I’ll go grab my stuff,” Kyle had said, “and call me by my name. My name is Kyle.”

And just like that, Kyle was ours.

...

He is ours.

Walking across the dim stage on the balls of his feet—in a way I have only seen him do—gliding the very tips of his black socks across the dark oak of the wooden planks with every step. He’s entirely ours.

Looking down on the crowd in just his socks and underwear. He is ours. His hairless, caramel tanned torso painted in a kaleidoscope of light around him, he entertains solo at first. But soon the other boys will join him onstage, because Kyle is more intriguing when surrounded by black and white gods: veiny muscles and white lace thongs. He is a contrast, desirable only because his differences cause fixation. Only special because boys with skin the texture of Jell-O—if Jell-O were dry and warm—are hard to come by. Aside from his mysterious skin, he is typical, aside from his bone structure, he is typical.

“You’re staring a little extra tonight,” Michael says, grabbing my shoulder from behind the bar. I’m so drunk I can hardly feel his grip.

“I have a lot on my mind,” I say. On the shiny floor, I can see the reflection of the madness in front of me. I’m not ready to tell Michael. I have pictures, screenshots, of Kyle soliciting our patrons. I was seeking evidence for the longest time, and now I don’t know if I want to tell Michael. Everyone knows go-go boys shouldn’t sleep with our patrons. Not only is it illegal, it’s also bad for the club’s reputation: go-go boys should be something you can see, maybe touch, but never have full access to because then there’s no mystery to sell. But it happens anyways, with Kyle as with others, it happened anyways.

...

That first night when we met at the bar, he asked me to drive him to the waterfront hotel he had been staying in. We crossed the parking lot adjacent to the large doors of the first floor. He had paced in front of me, as if embarrassed, but looking back now and again. Once inside he used the card key to unlock the heavy door, and then threw it on the single bed of white sheets. He crammed some underwear

and a few shirts into his black North Face backpack dangling from his shoulder, went in and out of the bathroom, and then opened the door to head back out. “Ready,” he had said.

It was a little over two months ago, at Pike Place, when we saw his ex-boyfriend exiting an Uber in the parking lot of the multiple-story Marriot. There was a valet parking attendant in a nice vest in the corner of the porte cochère. Kyle had waved at the man in the vest—he hadn’t even made eye contact with his ex, we had walked right by his large youthful torso.

“You’re an angel,” I had told Kyle after he entered my apartment for the first time, “for doing this.” Michael didn’t have any open rooms in his house, so Kyle would stay with me until he found his own place. For diversity’s sake, we made the extra effort, to ease him into staying.

“I’m dirty and drunk,” he responded and then smiled, a full, white smile. “Not what I’d imagine of an angel,” he threw himself across my Valentino three-piece couch once we were in my apartment.

“We’ll make you an angel,” I had said. I was drunk, and I felt out of place as I turned to see him lying on his stomach. I gazed at the roundness of his jeans. The next day, Michael and I began our project.

I kept my eyes on Kyle as we glided down the escalators of Seattle’s Nordstrom, the ceilings radiated a golden glow, as if made of diamonds, and workers dressed in all black smiled at us from every corner of every shelved clothes stand. It smelled of new, of fresh, of perfumes, and expensive hairspray. I noticed Kyle’s eyes had flickered as he walked behind Michael, as if he knew about the exchange: the things we could afford—the Adidas, compression shorts, protein, and testosterone supplements—in exchange for everything he would



become. For diversity's sake, we spent the extra cash.

That first full day with him, I had wondered how someone could be so willing to join two strangers, as if he never belonged to anyone, as if he had never belonged anywhere.

"Thank you for taking me in," he had said after we were done shopping, after Michael dropped us off in his black studded truck, back in my apartment, "how's the food?" he gestured to the rice and chicken with his fork.

Mexican, just Mexican, I learned, the first and only Latino to dance for Michael and me. His expertise in the cuisine of his culture was, "Phenomenal," I had responded, chewing a forkful of red rice. Because the way he had talked to me, the way he had been looking me up and down all day, the way he had caressed his new shirts, jock-straps, shoes, and jeans made it seem like he was measuring something. It made me self-conscious, as if 'good' wasn't good enough.

I remember having dreamt again that night in the solitude of my dark room. This time, I was married to someone like Kyle. And he cooked for me, food which tingled the back of my jaw, food cooked without using cans, no oven, no microwave. But it had only been a dream. I woke to darkness, knowing Kyle slept in the other room, a thin line of light under my door breaking the shadow in my room. I remember the impulse to check on him, to make sure boys like him need sleep. But it had been late, and being with someone like him had only been a dream.

...

A black god, and then a white god, join Kyle on the stage, and I wonder: had I been so nervous the day we bought him a new wardrobe

because I am no longer one of them? Young. Clean. A white yang to Kyle's dark Yin.

"They make a good team," Michael says, still grabbing my shoulder, massaging me a little.

"Yeah," I choke, cough, and then clear my throat. The music, voices, heat, everything seems too loud.

"You okay?" I hear Michael, but my eyes are on the stage. In this club, there are only three types of guys, and I am witnessing two of the best types: a white god, a black god, and a brown angel, and I must consume the sight before it is gone. "Chase?" Michael says again pulling me around, I almost fall from the bar stool, but catch myself on the wet countertop of the bar. Soon the scenery will fade back into the usual, the monsters: the asymmetrical, the fat, the scrawny, the worn down, the inexperienced, the infected, the poor, the unmodified.

"Can I have another?" I ask Michael. His face looks shattered, angry almost, I grip the hard edges of the bar. I lick my cold lips, inhaling traces of the 'T'—or was it 'G', whatever was in my drink, it doesn't matter, cute nicknames make no difference; it all tastes like sugar, and alcohol, and the blueberry aftertaste. I am on my feet, in what I imagine looks like a primal position, like a chimpanzee aching to attack Michael. My whole body feels warm, except my fingers. My head is a balloon of hot helium. I forget when I last inhaled, so I breathe.

"You should take a break," Michael says, stretching his hand out. He sounds like he is caring for a child, again; I grab his large, soft hand. He supports me as I sit back on the stool. I belong. With him, in this world, I belong. And I shouldn't complain, even though I am monster, even though HIV sprints through my veins, infecting even the alcohol

inside me—I imagine—I shouldn't complain. Because some gay men never get to belong. Anywhere. Not even as the decorative 'pos' types who uphold the statuses of the gods and the angels. Cute nicknames make no difference.

So, I take a break, looking into Michael's hazel eyes, and feeling beads of sweat leak from my hair, as if we have all our lives to live, as if we can take a break.

I remember a younger Michael, a whole lifetime ago. I remember him sitting across from me in a vacant blue room at a local Planned Parenthood, my palms a cold sweaty and my thighs weak, our eyes escaping each other, asking in unison, who is he? I remember him catching up to me as I exited, me riding in his car, him leaning in to kiss me, me breaking the news. I remember my family not being able to do it. They just couldn't do it, gay was fine, but HIV made it different. I remember Michael telling me it would be okay, I remember moving in with him. I remember telling him I wanted to know love. Him saying it was a fairytale, telling me I should take a break from boys, because love doesn't exist in our world.

We could never afford love, for we are too unhappy in our world, according to Michael. Love is a luxury only the happy can afford.

Really, we can't take a break because we were just born into the wrong era, and we have to keep living, living, living, and make the best of it.

...

Kyle started living differently just five weeks after we met, and I knew he had to be selling himself already. Every other week, black boxes had littered his room, full of clothes still in plastic wrappings. Once I saw two watches in the same box; they were both shiny. But then it was a new

iPhone, and a new MacBook. And I knew that nobody who would be willing to dance could afford so much in such little time.

Someone had to be funding him. I knew it had to be some of our clients, and I had to know exactly who.

“Where were you?” I had asked, aggressively, to my surprise, over the smell of waffles and syrup, as he walked into my apartment after a series of nights when he didn’t sleep in his room.

“Damn, I was visiting a friend. Chill,” he said, taking his shoes off on the doormat. But I knew he had been lying for weeks at that point. After a boy like him sells himself for the first time, he isolates himself, because everyone around him becomes a modifiable object. Just another replaceable and ugly object when compared to him.

“Just wondering. Another package came in for you today,” I had said.

“What is it?” he sounded annoyed.

“Don’t know. Didn’t open it.” But I had really wanted to. And I don’t know why, money and material things don’t excite me anymore. I was just curious.

He had exhaled, and walked into his room. I had been mad, but I understood him. His burden. Older gay men attempting to relive an evasive youth by buying his time, smiles, and affection. As if by knowing more—or all, just everything—about him, they can be young again, just for a few minutes. And not just young, but ethnic too. Exotic and desirable. The best of two worlds.

He had been fidgeting with the utensils in the bathroom—focused on the mirror in front of him again, probably—before I stuffed my mouth with waffles and milk. I thought about the time he spent fixing face, the time he spent in the gym, and eating and cooking right.

I knew Michael and I had made a good investment. After a boy like him sells himself for the third and fourth time, his body becomes his most prized, most fragile, possession. That morning I got the idea to get the password to his phone.

...

“So lonely tonight,” says a shirtless guy standing next to me on my barstool, cocking his head close enough for me to pull away. He stands in between me and the sight of Kyle and the gods. His whole body is illuminated by the amber light about the bar behind me.

I smile. “A man like you shouldn’t have too many of those nights,” he comes closer, a drink in his hand.

I want to push him away, but my arm responds lethargically. “I’ll pass,” I say in what sounds like a clear voice, emboldened by his not-entirely-flat stomach and the purple stretch marks reaching out from underneath his exposed beltline. Kyle doesn’t have stretch marks. I suspect boys with skin tones like his are immune.

He leans to the side, showing just how offended he is. In general, he stands awkwardly, arching his back, although I am not convinced he does this on purpose. I could never fall in love with someone like him. His skin turns pink at places, and he has too many freckles sprinkled throughout his pale torso.

He turns and leaves, not knowing he has the advantage. He is young enough to reject me if I open up, if I were to tell him about the HIV. Young enough to not come so close to me, out of fear that my sweat might infect him. Boys his age are stupid, immature, and shallow, probably drawn in by my shoes or my watch, and not much else.

When I am in love, I wonder if stretch marks will matter. I

wonder if teeth will matter. I wonder if I will overlook the discoloring and instead focus on the infinities hidden behind the skin. Will it be harder to breathe around him? Will he make me more afraid of death? Will he overlook the HIV? Will he think it was my fault?

...

I had watched Kyle take his PrEP medication just last week. He was in my bathroom, plucking his eyebrows. I had only noticed because he ran into the kitchen, saying, "Shit! I almost forgot," to become virtually immune.

I remember feeling my stomach grow spikes. I remember feeling those spikes tear my insides apart. Something hurt so bad, and I wanted to cry. I wondered if I would have done PrEP had it been available. "Can you do cocaine while you're on that?" my fists were clenched. I remember hoping my face was stable.

"You should know, how old are you?" Kyle had said over the open fridge.

"Doesn't matter, not a fan of sex. Never had to worry 'bout it," I had relaxed.

He had laughed, then pulling out a juice box from the fridge, he said, "Sure, sure," as if I had HIV tattooed on my forehead.

So, we did cocaine with Michael after work that day. I thought cocaine was bad for the immune system, and I had hoped, from some unknown corner of my gut, that his PrEP would somehow stop working. I wanted a slip-up, anything, during his meetings with our patrons. I had hoped he would become infected, rejected. I had hoped he would come to know what it's like to want love, real love, and to know its absence is all your own fault.

Over the bitter drip from the inside of my nose to the back of my throat, I hadn't moved my eyes from Kyle. The cartilage of his nose seemed so fragile on his first time. I had imagined with time, it would become more malleable, perhaps, for his future nose job.

Like his bones and kidneys. Fragile. Side effects of PrEP. And I had laughed, no one else was making any noise, and Michael's car show wasn't funny, but I laughed while sitting crisscross on the soft furs of the white rug in my living room. What a concept: trading healthy bones and kidneys of the future for the heat of the moment. So, symbolic. So, Kyle. "Your family doesn't miss you?" Michael interrupted the voices on the TV which followed my unwelcomed laugh.

My eyes were still browsing his body, "I don't have a family," he had said.

"Everyone has a family, Kyle, who raised you? Who named you?" Michael had responded with his eyes barely open. His bald head was shining, his facial hair in disorder.

"I knew, 'Kyle' wasn't your real name!" I dragged out his name, "what's your real name!"

"It doesn't matter," he said, heading to the bathroom.

He had vomited. He clenched onto his stomach as if the spikes inside of mine were now inside him, but his spikes were more real. They made him suck in and out through his teeth. He begged to be sober and punched the white tiles of the bathroom; his face was bright pink, and his eyes opaque. He fell asleep breathing into a crevice near the toilet's base, holding onto his stomach. I had knelt over him, after Michael left, wiping away sweat from his tender forehead.

"Mami, te quiero," he had said. My fingers had stood still for

longer than I cared to count. His eyelids were barely open, and I analyzed the precise crease outlining them, even the lunulae on his fingernails were all delicate arches. I had wondered how someone like him could be so unafraid to die.

I tucked his crippled body into his bed, wondering the whole time why he didn't say, 'te amo,' what I had always understood to mean love. It was as if in his language, love could be more profound, as if it came in assorted flavors.

I used his thumb to unlock his phone. I took screenshots, texted myself and deleted everything when I was done. He would never know.

I ran into a picture which burns me with remorse. Kyle was in his high school graduation robe, holding his diploma. An older woman and two similar-looking guys huddled around him, they were taller and chubbier, I imagined they were his younger brothers. Perhaps the woman was his mom, she looked worn and her smile was the widest. Kyle seemed more exposed, even though most of his body was covered.

That night, I had dreamt again.

I can still feel this dream in my bones. My mom visited me in my sleep, to help decorate for the fall. It smelled of pumpkin spice and orange leaves rimmed the edges of my white wooden cabinets. Acorns in glitter rested in a small woven basket on the kitchen island, and Mom put an apple pie in the oven with a plaid mitten.

"I can't do it, Chase," she had said, straightening up. "I'm sorry, I don't think I can."

"You can't do what?" I had felt panicked.

"The drive home," she said, her mannerisms making me smile.

"Oh!" I sighed, "just the drive home?"



“Yeah, Chase,” she had said in the dreamy echoes of my head, “I don’t think I can. I’m just really tired of everything.”

I had tucked her into bed. I let her sleep in my bed. With me. It felt an odd type of warm. In the morning, my kitchen wasn’t decorated, and she was gone.

• • •

The gods have pecs the size of Kyle’s face, and their veiny arms are almost as thick as his waist when they turn him sideways. Kyle wraps his toned leg around the black god, and then tilts his head to the side. He is balancing on one foot—one set of toes, but not quite his toes—holding onto the arm of a god. His hip and abs protrude in a naturally feminine, naturally masculine way. And it almost happens in slow motion. The whispering, the rising, the falling, the low-pitched rumbling, his stone face, and the white god approaching him from behind.

Kyle Madrigales named himself, because no one—not even his mom, who he loves even when not fully conscious—could ever claim too much of him. Even his soul, I suspect, belongs entirely to him. Because Angels like him have no God. They don’t need one. And even the best of gods aren’t good enough for angels like Kyle.

I see it even in his pills: not even society—whoever society is—demands him to earn his dignity. For me, even buying condoms made me feel like I was melting, like everyone around me had laser vision, and they were all drilling into my skull.

“Michael,” I yell.

He runs, leaving one of our patrons unattended, and watching over the granite surface of the bar. “What’s up Chase?”

“I only want the best for you, Michael,” I’m pulling my phone

out, scrolling through pictures, texting them to Michael.

“Chase,” he’s looking over my hands, onto my screen, “Why hadn’t you told me?” He’s grinning.

“I can’t stay,” I say, not really knowing how to articulate what I feel, “I can’t do this to him.” I look towards the stage, towards an angel who should find thirst, by himself, for the finer things in life.

“Chase, you’re drunk. You’ll change your mind tomorrow, this is great,” he’s scrolling through his phone, reading texts, seeing nudes, his eyeballs full of satisfaction. Michael can only see how Kyle is ready to be another boy, the first of his kind, another piece of club’s growing repertoire. I can see more in him now.

“He doesn’t deserve this,” I say.

“You’re funny. I think you drank too much,” he says, eyes glued to his phone, his spatula thumb scrolling down and down and down. I move away from the bar stool and head for the door. The outside slaps me like a cold mist, and I realize it was so hot—so hard to breathe in there. The streets are busy with fast cars heading uphill on one side, and drunk people hurrying across sidewalks in a crouch on the other. Mostly gay men, mostly laughing. It is serene, and I imagine it will be even more so when I leave these blocks. Driving doesn’t seem smart, so I walk downhill and across downtrodden streets. I push crosswalk buttons, it smells of hot asphalt, and the sun is setting. The bellies of orange clouds shine bright.

I walk by the leaves of Seattle University’s flowers. They are thick and waxy, and they shake in the breeze, just shy of waving. I can try to order a ride. It’ll get dark soon. But something within me wants to walk the long ways back home. It can’t take more than two hours, and

two hours can sometimes feel like two minutes, and something within believes I can find my way.

My phone buzzes repeatedly, it's Michael, I turn it off. I imagine if I walk home, I can throw all of Kyle's stuff out, and leave it in the hallway, I can delete Michael's number, tell him to keep the business. I'll change my number, move somewhere far away from Seattle, and start all over.

In the distance, a large skyscraper changes its whole body into the colors of the rainbow, slowly, like a Chameleon, barely glowing in the waning vigor of the sun. I'm walking on the edge of an overpass, running my fingers across cold rails over a highway, cars zip into the far away below me. There is so much world out there.

I'm not worried for Kyle. The gods will protect him. They think he needs protecting; they think he needs them. But he can fly now. He doesn't belong to anyone, or anywhere for too long, not even his family. He is ephemeral; his youth, his bones, his kidneys, the cartilage in his nose, his slightly modified body, his virgin heart, his desire to be in that bar, even. Ephemeral.







**HE IS NOT MIDRS; YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN GOLD**

COURTNEY SHIH

Stark white lines,  
imagined images.  
Giving shape to emotion  
in the deep color.  
Hope to reveal something,  
but nothing.

Short beige walls mazed  
the illusion of borders.  
Every five feet: colors, faces, scenes.  
Each corner ends.

You wander, staring.  
Trying to see meaning in illustrations  
of people's souls.  
Studying brushstrokes, feeling silly,  
searching for symbols.

The same one catches your heart,  
Purple.  
Strong white lines falsify emotion,  
created life. This to you,  
Violet to me.

Our eyes connect.

Rushing, movement bubbling up inside,

I reach for my gold.

Scrambling to make verses on a paper

that accepts no ink. Please,

anything, everything, written words

are empty.

Purple releases you and again

wandering the souls.

My hands out, mouth open, God must

control my breath because

the words on my lips are Gospel!

But nothing.

The maze closes, high enough

to hide you. I sag, turn away. There will be no conversations

on days ending in Y.

# GALACTUS

CHRISTOPHER BARKER

It's sad to remember that even in the cosmically  
breathtaking sight of an exploding star, it too is unaware  
of the planets it seismically pillages, of the  
life that it devours like a supernatural  
Colonizer, ripping through the fabric of  
time and space in the same system that it cohabited.



I spilled red wine on the carpet—  
a pool of honeyed maroon. My hand went limp.

I woke in the middle of the night in a cold sweat.  
I fall asleep on the couch dreaming of—drowning in—your eyes,  
  
swimming in those little flecks of jade and forest green.  
I spill red wine on the carpet.

I hang my harried heart on the clothesline in my backyard.  
It dries up. Unbeating, it floats away in the wind.

I wake in the middle of the night in a cold sweat.  
I wander, lost in the daytime; unfocused, blurred, colorless;

tripping over my own feet; staining my lips and  
spilling red wine on the carpet.

I drag my feet in the dirt road behind your apartment: the sun  
sinks into the clouds, turning the sky jade and forest green.

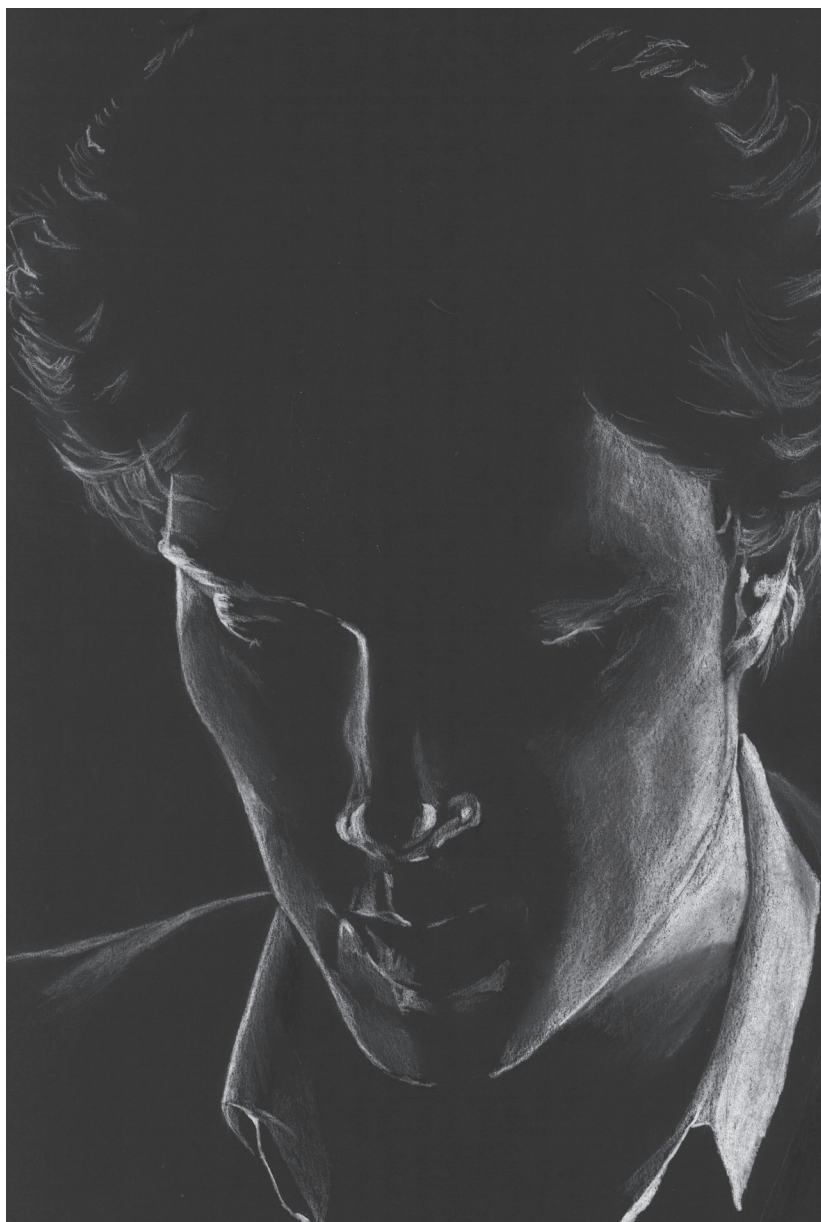
I wake in the middle of the night in a cold sweat,  
your fingertips haunting the outskirts of my face, leaving

crimson clouds across my cheekbones and ghosts on my lips.  
Again, I spill red wine on the carpet.



# DETACHMENT

TOM HOAG



*2018 Michael and Gail Gurian Writing Awards  
Honorable Mention—Fiction*

My brother took up the task of organizing the family banquet after our mother's funeral tomorrow, and I offered to help him with grocery shopping. He knows it's been a long time since I was last in Marquette, so he gave me a list of each item he needed and exactly where it is located in the store. Helene is still back in St. Paul. She gave a lot of reasons for not coming with me: a son is very different than a daughter-in-law, and it wasn't a good time for her to miss work—even if it was, she made sure to point out, she didn't know the rest of my family that well. I didn't press her to come. I'm not sure I'm going to be able to cry at the funeral, and no doubt she would find it horrifying if I didn't.

Even with my brother's list I'm still overwhelmed trying to find everything. As I turn the corner into a refrigerated aisle I see a figure in front of me that makes me stop. She's in her late thirties, with wavy hair less brown than it once was, deep creases underneath her cheeks, and a grocery basket under her arm. She's parsing through two dozen varieties of refrigerated deli meat, trying to find a match in a stack of coupons over half an inch thick. Even after almost two decades, it only takes me a moment to recognize Josie. The recognition must be mutual: when our eyes make contact she unwittingly says "Alain?" out loud. She turns towards me, approaches, stops a few feet in front of me, opens her mouth, then closes it again. A tense second passes; two voices interrupt one another, and at once two laughs ring loud down the

cold aisle, the kind of laughs that are too loud and startling to be forced.

"You haven't changed that much," she says. I've grown a gut since the last time she saw me, and I wish I had worn a more flattering shirt. She stuffs her coupons into her coat pocket and looks up at me again.

"Since when do you live in Marquette?"

"I grew up here," I say.

"No shit. You been hiding all this time?"

"I live in St. Paul now. My mother passed last week. I'm in town for the funeral."

"My condolences." She appears restless. "Are you busy? Let's go get something to eat."

Do you still go by Al?"

Josie, who she tells me still goes by Josie, had been a mutual friend of Miles' before I met her. Miles had managed to collect a posse of dope-smoking student revolutionaries to read anarchist theory and vandalize cop cars together. I met him during my second year of college in Detroit, and he immediately took to me because I was from France, even though I had moved to Michigan as a child and barely knew French. The next term I enrolled in a French class so I could interpret then-untranslated articles of Émile Pouget for him and his group, and after that I stuck around. As for Josie, she was a self-declared Leninist, which occasionally caused friction among the more committed anarchists, but she liked spray-painting and glass-breaking just as much as everyone else. Even though she was one of the experts in theory, she always stood out as among the least ideological of the group. She called things like she saw them and didn't mince words. In a group of free-thinkers, that was saying something.

We go out for fast food, at her request. I had suggested a real place to eat, but she insisted. “I’ve been really strict on myself recently. Low fat, low sugar, low carbs, low fun. I haven’t tasted a greasy hamburger in ages.” It’s us and a group of sexagenarians playing cards in the fluorescent restaurant parlor. The venue is quiet and awkward. About halfway through my hamburger I venture an inquiry.

“You never said how you ended up here in Marquette.”

She wipes her mouth with a brown napkin before she speaks. “My ex-husband has family around here, plus we both liked the area. I was just eager to get out of Detroit after we graduated. I wasn’t really meant to be city folk, I don’t think.” She blurts out before she gives me a chance to speak, “Now I guess I’m here for my kids. He’s got ‘em this week. At least they’re old enough they don’t have to be supervised all day long.” She seems to be trying to take polite-sized bites between her sentences, and occasionally she forgets to clean ketchup off the corners of her lips. “You got any kids?”

“No, no kids.” Helene had always wanted children, and I had always thought I would be ready for them when I felt ready, and only then. I told her as much, and it was true. I didn’t mention that the idea of kids sounded like pressing the stop button on an autonomous life, one that I secretly hoped was just on pause. After a while she had stopped asking about it.

“Émile Armand would have approved, I’m sure,” Josie says. I smile and pretend to understand what she means.

• • •

Josie says something, but neither of us hear her over the sound of traffic emanating from the street below. “I said it’s too fucking

hot out,” she repeats. She’s perched on the open windowsill, tapping out a spliff onto the sidewalk two stories down. Miles is staring up at the ceiling from his bed and I’m in one of the corners of the small bedroom, reading.

“Get out of the window if you want someone to hear you. Fuck, it’s too hot to stay in here any longer, that’s for sure,” Miles says. His voice is coarse, and just the right pitch to be heard above anyone else’s, no matter how loud he’s talking. Cars outside are slowing to a crawl as they file in to downtown Detroit. Miles’ place isn’t nice but it’s close to campus, and against all odds he somehow manages to pay rent. “Al. Al. How’s Kropotkin reading so far, quiet boy?”

I look up, start to speak, then clear my throat and try again. “Honestly, I’m a little suspicious of his economic system. It’s even more stripped down than Bakunin’s: no money, no prices, no wages. Everything based on bartering, I suppose.”

Josie chimes in, “That doesn’t sound too bad to me. I hate carrying around money anyway,” She’s out of the window frame and now behind a copy of *The State and Revolution*. She makes a funny face at me when she notices I’m looking at her.

Suddenly Miles is upright. “How do you all feel about fucking up the police station?” “Like, the main one? You’re crazy. There’s always cops around,” Josie says.

Miles can only pace a couple steps before he has to turn around again. “I bet we can find a vantage point where we could throw something hard enough to smash the windows. We could try making another Molotov. We should at least go check it out, summer’s almost over. It’s either that or play Spades again.”



We have been sitting in the parlor a while, taking turns reminiscing, but the conversation has tapered off. The truly elderly crowd left a while ago, and is now being replaced by a trickle of high-schoolers that will continue until the place closes at midnight.

“Al... fuck, who am I kidding. There’s no reason not to be real with you.” A tired, grave face peeks through her smile wrinkles. “College me was scared shitless that my life was going to turn out like it is now: quite suburban. It’s not that I have any regrets about it, and I love my kids more than anything. Maybe for everyone we hung out with, all the anti-war protests and smashing-the-state talk was just more exciting than glee club, but I really believed in what we were doing. I kept reading after we all split up, even after I got married. I helped organize unions in Detroit before I moved up here. Not much to show for it though.” She places her napkins in her paper wrapper and crushes it into as tight of a ball as she can.

“It’s like you’re left with two choices...” Josie takes a breath and continues. “You’re left with two choices, either acquiescing and accepting that everything you believed in with your heart of hearts was for nothing, or admitting that you’ve let down your younger self.” She lets the thought hang in the air. It has an uncomfortable ring to it, but she looks slightly less distressed than she did a minute ago. “Shit, Al. Was the revolution supposed to happen before or after I got behind on utilities?”

Josie’s last line draws a chuckle out of both of us. She unravels her paper ball so she can crush it again. “There, I think that’s everything I wanted to complain about. For most people this is a non-issue, so getting to complain is a rare treat indeed.” Two dark brown

eyes stop wandering for a moment and look directly at me. "There's not many people who get it, you know?"

Trying to find something encouraging to say, I point out that Emma Goldman lived a long time and was an activist until the end. She points out Emma Goldman didn't have to put two kids through college.

"Maybe there's time for you though," she says. "You sound a little more free than me."

"I've got family too, you know."

"Do you? Now that your mom is dead, rest her soul and all that, who do you have to hold you down?" After a pause she adds, "I met your mom once, I remember. She was a real nice lady," which is her way of apologizing for tactlessness.

I think about Helene. After we got married, there was a big debate over whether we should move or stay in St. Paul. I was for moving: I had barely been out of Michigan except for an occasional vacation. Helene said we didn't have a good reason to move, and she was right. My attention wanders elsewhere. "Did you ever hear from Miles after he graduated?"

"No. He moved down to New Orleans right after. Said he had something lined up for him, but I always suspected he was lying and just wanted a new place to cause trouble." Josie gives her wrapper a moment of respite and moves on to mine. "Honestly? I've assumed he's been dead for a while. I think being around us kept him out of worse than all the stuff we got into, if that's possible. He might have just self-destructed after he left. Awful to say I know, but you just get a feeling about things sometimes. I still think about him."

I have to cool a flare of heat in my chest at her last sentence

before I can speak. "More and more, it seems."

"He actually gave me a mailing address before he left Detroit. I meant to write to him, but I never did." She's run out of things to fidget with and is getting restless again. "That I do regret. OK, Now I'm all aired out. You got any confessions you want to make, quiet boy?"

Before I can answer, we both perk up at the blips of a police siren approaching in the distance. Through the window we see the patrol car stop across the street a few blocks down. Two officers with flashlights get out and make their way to a trailhead that leads to a nearby park; they're likely on their way to bust kids with weed. Some things, at least, haven't changed since I left.

Josie's train of thought is the same as mine. "Bastards probably didn't even get a complaint. Poor kids." Two brown eyes are alight and burn straight into me. Her smile creases are deeper than ever.

We each order two extra-large sodas cups and fill them with water, no ice. Our younger selves would have worried about where to park the car in case we needed an emergency getaway, but we look less suspicious now in our middling age, and perhaps we simply don't care anymore. Josie is prepared with a metal file, but the police car is so old that the lid to the gas tank opens up without resistance. I keep watch as she carefully pours four extra-large cups of water into the tank. On the fourth cup, the two officers reemerge from the trail head, but it's too late to make an exit now. They've already seen us.

"Evening sirs," Josie says as the officers approach. "You guys have got a nice-looking car. Is it early or late '80s? We've been trying figure it out, but it's in such good condition it's hard to tell." She punctuates her last sentence by taking a sip from one of the empty cups.

"It's a Ford LTD II, 1983 as a matter of fact," the fatter officer replies. "It's the station's, but I do a lot of work on it myself. They just don't make them like they used to."

"They certainly don't," Josie agrees. "Looks like you were right, Al. It's a real thing of beauty. Have a good night, sirs."

"Goodnight ma'am, sir."

We don't walk back to my car until we're out of sight in case they try to find us later. The car doors are barely shut before twenty years of laughter escapes our bodies all at once, loud enough you could have heard it outside. The back of my shirt is completely soaked through.

"The poor bastards," Josie says once she can speak again. She tells me to crack open a window so we can hear the engine. She's practically vibrating in her seat.

The two officers sit in their car a long time before they do anything. Josie and I don't say a word. Finally we hear the engine start. It revs up perfectly, and the police car makes a U-turn and drives away. Neither of us look away from the spot where the cruiser was a moment ago.

"Damn," she eventually manages to say. "I guess they really don't make them like they used to."

Our botched job sours the mood, and the car ride is quiet. Josie tells me where she lives, but it isn't until I get there that I realize there are only a couple different ways this can go. She doesn't say anything at first when I park the car. She threads her keys through her hands.

Finally, "You can come in if you'd like. I'm uh, I'm not doing anything."

Every one of my senses shuts down except for my vision, the same way they did when Helene told me three years ago that she

wanted to move in with her sister for a couple weeks. I remember her looking at me, waiting for me to say something, I don't remember if I had said anything. A faraway streetlight on the other side of the road flickers, then keeps going. Water droplets are forming on the inside of the car windows. I try to imagine Josie's apartment looking like her college dorm room, disheveled and surprisingly feminine, but the memory is so far away the details are melting before I can grasp them. My ribcage is ripped open from two opposite directions and my insides dangle between them, impossibly stretched and not enough to let me be torn apart.

"I can't. I'm really sorry." I fear what she will say next, but she just nods in acknowledgement.

"Al, it's been nice to see you again. Now that I know we've got a town in common maybe I'll see you again... you know, again."

"Likewise," I reply, but it isn't the right word and it comes out sounding much less sincere than I meant it to. I wish I could take it back. Her last look before she goes bores into me, but I can't tell how deep. The air is stale and acrid with the taste of likewise.

• • •

Miles is asleep in the passenger seat, so a guy with the blondest hair I've ever seen has to take the map and help direct the driver from the back seat. I've never met these two before—Miles says they're friends of his, and importantly they have a car. It shouldn't be that hard to get to Canada, "Once you get past Wisconsin just drive straight up!" as Miles said, but apparently they are not gifted navigators. Josie is in the middle seat, also asleep, her head resting on my shoulder. I let her stay there. Bags of clothes, biographies of Rosa Luxemburg, and sack

lunches for the afternoon are in the trunk. School starts again in two weeks; I'm graduating after this term, Miles and Josie in one more year.

The car is all quiet save the hum of the road. The countryside is stretched taut from horizon to horizon, and frost from an abnormally cool morning gives the grass a pale color. I have no idea how long we've been in the car—you can't tell if you don't pay attention. All I know for sure is that the rest of the trip is getting shorter all the time.

ripe and tart and dreamlike,  
swirling in toothache-sprinkled novocaine  
among her pink starred bedding  
with moonlit craters in the sheets.

The sheets slip to pillowcases,  
filling gleeful door-to-door treats  
with fairy dust and princess wings  
adored with a headrush  
creeping like shadows in the moonbeams.

Shadows catch her,  
vomiting caramel-covered nightmares  
through rickety stranger's open doorways  
like masks in the moon  
with craters for eyes.

Eyes fill the empty sockets  
eerie with hyena-cackles of children  
rabidly begging in the moonlight  
behind werewolf snarls and snouts  
on streets paved with empty wrappers.  
The wrappers lie in the sheets,  
trembling with their silver insides-out

on pink stained bedding  
after werewolves leave them hollow  
like her, desperate  
for a fix, to be adored,  
turning to the moonlight,  
ripe and tart and dreamlike.



# BLOCKAGES

SARAH KERSEY

You went to the doctor  
twice a week  
for a month  
because you felt  
like your throat  
was on fire

You were convinced  
it was your tonsils  
but it turned out  
to be a collection  
of unspoken words  
lodged in your windpipe



## **SHADOWED JAZZ**

CHRISTOPHER COMBS

# 5,400 SECONDS

ISABELLA MANOQUERRA

*did you know*, he said,  
that sperm whales can go  
for ninety minutes without air?

i ache to feel that  
slow resurfacing  
from a long stint  
beneath the pressure of water.

*how must it feel*, he said,  
to inhale after cold  
wraps its fingers  
tight around your bones?  
how must it feel  
to be set free.

*2018 Michael and Gail Gurian Writing Awards  
Honorable Mention—Poetry*

As far the road runs,  
I'm going everywhere the highway takes.  
Never seen America before.  
Still going,

Going everywhere the highway takes:  
Palm Springs and their fucking polo courts,  
Still going,  
Shacks in the heart of the Everglades:

Palm Springs and the polo courts,  
Strangers that will never meet,  
The shacks, the heartland, the Everglades,  
Roadside brush,

Strangers that will never meet.  
Never seen America before.  
Roadside brush,  
As far the road runs.



## REBUILDING MACY'S

CHELSIE SUNDE



## REBUILD THE RIDPATH

CHELSIE SUNDE

*2018 Michael and Gail Gurian Writing Awards  
First Place—Poetry*

Faded plastic wrapper,  
yellowed by the sun.  
Rocks turned black  
by the current.  
Sharp edges,  
Earth's granular faces,  
pointing to the dusk sky.

A rusty red bridge  
links the two mountains  
towering high above  
two beavers.  
The fatter one  
jumps into the thick water.  
The smaller one stays behind.

It sniffs the blades of grass  
near the edge.  
It scuttles around  
the shallow side of the river.  
It pauses, tightening its back.

Unknown shadows swim  
beneath the gray surface.

I'm standing atop a suspended bridge, overlooking the vast space  
between us. Colorful apartments line the horizon.

I too would hesitate to swim. The water is cold, I imagine. Hesitation is a luxury.  
The smaller beaver crawls into the darkness.



# HARD TO SWALLOW

MADDIE HUESKE

My mother was the one to suggest the Pill. I was fifteen. The synthetic estrogen helped bring some normalcy to my period, and at a time when my whole life felt a bit out of control, this was more than I could have asked for, so I've continued using it out of my adolescence and into young adulthood. Many of my friends had similar experiences, where the Pill was touted as a way to exert some control over the mystery of the female body, a way to transition into womanhood without the fear of bleed-outs or unwanted pregnancies. I was lucky to grow up in a progressive environment, one that assumed birth control was a choice and did not vilify me for using it. Through all the changes in my life, the Pill was a constant, a little reminder that regardless of where I was or what I was doing, my body and my sexuality were mine to control.

Around a hundred million women around the world currently rely on the Pill to regulate their periods, yes, but also to regain control of their sex lives and reproductive rights since its legalization in 1972. In the free-love climate of the seventies, the Pill provided women with the ability to engage in sexual activity the same way men could, sans fear of pregnancy. It also allowed for family planning, as couples could decide when to have children, so as to prevent interference in careers, schooling, or life experiences. Women could finally invest in a career and move up with it, a luxury once reserved for men who needn't worry about pesky things like unwanted pregnancy. They no longer had to put their families before their careers; they could do both, often at the same time, truly leveling the playing field with their male counterparts.

I've seen this phenomenon in action. My mother, as an

ambitious young law student, had no interest in having children ever when she was in school (I try not to hold this fact against her). I asked her about her relationship with the Pill when she was younger. “I started taking it in high school, and at the time, there was this feeling that girls that used birth control were loose,” she told me. “But it didn’t bother me, because I wanted to be able to make my own decisions about my body and I knew I wasn’t ready for a kid. I took birth control through law school and after I’d made partner [at a law firm] because I didn’t want kids yet, and thankfully all the people around me were the same. We just weren’t ready.” She worked in Portland for several years before taking a job and relocated to Bend. Her career had taken off, but being a woman in a male-dominated field certainly had its challenges. “Having kids really does put you at a disadvantage in the workplace, because leave isn’t optional,” she said. “Husbands usually don’t want to take time off because of the stigma. They’ll call you a pussy, and I hate that word, but what people say is ‘You didn’t have the baby, what are you doing taking time off work?’” She explained that professional women are constantly fighting to stay afloat in demanding and competitive jobs: “If you step out, you’re already behind.”

Having had children while working a corporate job gives my mother a unique perspective on birth control in the workplace. “It’s really just circumstantial,” she told me. “If women are using birth control to delay having children so they can reach a point where they feel safe in their career, then it’s great. They have options. But if they’re doing it because of the workplace, then they’re put at a disadvantage. It’s not what they want. And that’s a separate issue that needs to be addressed.” However, it is no question that the gradual emergence of

women in the workplace can be contributed, to some degree, to birth control. Until now, it was hard for me to see the Pill as anything besides a champion of female empowerment and equality.

And then I started hearing about the salmon. It started a few years ago, when my family went to one of our favorite restaurants along the Oregon coast. My stomach was pinching at the thought of their signature salmon dish, served with a jalepeño-marionberry glaze. However, when I tried to order, I was informed that a “draconian” salmon shortage along the Pacific coast prevented them from keeping it on the menu. Since then, I haven’t forgotten the forlorn look of our server, or the disturbing pale pink flesh—salmon is usually a bright pinky-orange—of the Coho we saw at the market the next day. There was something in the water, as the saying goes, and it was destroying part of what made the Pacific Northwest so special to me.

The dwindling salmon populations have troubled many folks, and their disappearance can be attributed to several problems. For me, the most unsettling is the birth control. I do not mean birth control for the fish themselves; they receive plenty when dams and other obstructions prevent them from returning to their natural spawning grounds. What I mean is human birth control, namely the handy little one-a-days that many twenty-first century women take before bed. The Puget Sound area of Washington has seen an incredible uptick in chemical contamination of the water. Everything, from antidepressants to cocaine to Pine-Sol has been found in small traces. One of the most sinister is ethynil-estradiol (EE<sub>2</sub>), a synthetic estrogen compound found in most birth control pills. The EE<sub>2</sub> enters the bodies of the fish through the water and causes many reproductive issues for the already

struggling populations. Jim West, a scientist with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife noted that the hormones caused fish to be hatched with both male and female reproductive organs. In fact, some of the male fish with especially high levels of estrogen have started producing vitellogenin, a protein used to make egg yolks. About a third of the fish studied exhibited these characteristics. In addition, the fertility of the males is greatly reduced, and females often do not gain enough weight to survive the journey upstream.

I find this knowledge incredibly distressing. As an environmentally-conscious woman interested in protecting my reproductive rights, I must ask myself: what is my role? It would be easy to sit here and assume that my right to birth control carries more weight than a salmon's right to its breeding grounds. In our androcentric world, this sentiment would not be out of the ordinary. And truthfully, I am not going to stop taking birth control. I want a career and the ability to explore my world without fear of pregnancy. Perhaps I am selfish.

While I am not willing to stop using birth control, I am willing to change how I take it. Increasing options of contraceptives, such as an IUD or implant, can reduce the amount of estrogen released into water systems. After researching the far-reaching effects of birth control on salmon, it has become difficult to take my pill every night. Is the tiny tablet in my hand worth the destruction of a keystone species simply trying to do what it's done for centuries? And what about the millions of other women around the country doing exactly the same thing as me? I do not think I can call myself environmentally conscious if I continue without action.

It is time for all women, but especially women like myself, to ask the hard-hitting question: is my right to reproduce any more valuable than a salmon's? If yes, then please, continue as you are, mindful of the problem but choosing to ignore it. If not, however, it is time to embrace new methods of birth control. The fish do not have the luxury of choosing the water they swim in, but we get to control what we put into it. As I stand in the bathroom with the little blue pill in my hand, the image of a roaring river, full of salmon throwing themselves against the current, comes to mind. Is it worth it? I grimace, pop the pill in my mouth and swallow. The bitter taste has nothing to do with the medication.



## DREAMS IN PASTEL

RACHEL FRENCH

2018 Michael and Gail Gurian Writing Awards  
Honorable Mention—Nonfiction

*\*All names have been changed\**

When Anne wasn't looking, I reached out my hand. My finger traced the imaginary line of the horizon, where water ended and sunset began, with my left eye closed tightly.

"What are you doing?" Anne snickered. She had turned around; she was taking pictures of the nearby palm trees against the orange sky and her phone stood poised in her hand.

"Looking for sharks," I said absentmindedly, letting my hand fall. I couldn't believe my eyes—I didn't grow up with beaches, nor the incredible sunsets that came with them. A naïve landlubber like myself would not think of beaches or sunsets when thinking of Africa. Yet here I was, Atlantic sand in my toes and tiny seashells held tightly in my fist. My free hand pointed a finger up above the fiery sunset to the sleepy cerulean sky, where a single star twinkled. "Look, a little star," I marveled. I looked over at Anne as she held up her phone to the sky for a moment, and then shook her head and brought it back down.

"Nah, my camera wouldn't catch that," she laughed, slipping it into her pocket. "I wish it did. Man, where's Oscar when you need him? He needs to be getting all this," she said, gesturing to the terrific view.

She was right; Oscar Morgan was the only cadet that brought an actual camera to our overseas training. Out of all of us eighteen cadets, Oscar was the oldest, funniest, and the smartest—he thought

of everything. And we were grateful to have him; on our bus rides to the Liberian Armed Forces barracks, we kept our cheap smartphone cameras tucked away in our uniform pockets, instead pointing out the windows, chirping:

“Oscar, over to this side! Take a picture of the Guinness ad!”

“Oscar, get this—that man’s shirt says the Panthers won Super Bowl Fifty!”

“Oscar, dude, take a picture of that Ebola clinic sign...”

He captured all the slums and shantytowns of Monrovia in ways we could not; he nabbed the facial expressions, hairstyles, and even the most intricate of patterns on women’s headscarves while in a moving, bumpy van that would never appear as more than a sandy blur on our screens. He took photos of the Liberian soldiers as they scratched sentence diagrams into old chalkboards while we, as their tutors, looked on, and he took many shots of us, of course—on the bus, at dinner in our hotel compound’s dining room, or on the beach at the edge of the compound during sweltering afternoons when tutoring was over. He took photos not to seek answers, but to ask questions, and Lord, did Oscar ask millions of questions. He had a notebook filled with scrawls, but for every scrawl there was a hundred new questions.

Anne, my roommate, was entirely different. Anne Carmichael drove me crazy. She was the youngest of us, and exuded immaturity in nearly everything she did or said. As her battle buddy, I was also always responsible for her, and that kept me busy. Time and time again, Major Carney, our Team Commander, had to pull me aside, with “Martin, why is she late again?” or “Martin, you need to talk to her about proper conduct—she cannot wear a two-piece to the hotel pool!”



The list went on and on. Anne had no shame. She put on music every morning as we got ready; “I gave a guy a lap dance to this song,” she giggled one morning as she shimmied her uniform trousers on to the beat of the track playing. She always stated the obvious; she complained about the swampy heat, gawked at the poverty rolling past our bus windows, laughed way too loud at jokes certain male cadets would tell, and even whined one morning at the table to MAJ Carney that there were no Snapchat GeoTags in the area.

In Liberia, West Africa.

This was Anne. This was my roommate.

On this particular evening, as I began earlier, we were enjoying the last embers of dusk on the beach at the edge of our hotel compound. As our heads craned upward and we searched for more stars, our gazing was interrupted by several “Excuse meh, arre you Ameerhdicans?” Two middle-aged Belgian flight stewards were waving at us from beach chairs nearby, their accents potent but familiar.

We recognized them from seeing them eat with the rest of the Brussels Airlines employees in the dining room certain mornings, dressed smartly for that day’s flight out of Monrovia. These two men were tall and skinny up to their bellies and chests, which protruded proudly. (“Mine would too,” I snickered to Anne later, “if I lived in a place with Belgian beer and chocolate!”)

But there was no snickering now. I was with Anne, of all people, the one cadet who I would never pick to interact with any internationals while representing the U.S. Army. Several expletives came to mind.

Anne smiled widely at them. “Yes, we are,” she stated proudly.

“Come on, Rose,” she whispered excitedly back at me. “Let’s go talk to them!” I followed very reluctantly, pouring my seashells nervously from one palm to another as I trudged through the sand after her.

We learned that the younger, blonder of the men was a pilot, and the older, balding one was a steward. Anne complimented them on their “adorable” accents (while I blushed furiously), and after hearty laughter (like any good Belgians, they had been drinking), they explained that there are two major ethnicities in Belgium; the French and the Flemish. “We are Flemish,” the older one said proudly.

“Yes, but the French are much more wealthy,” added the younger one.

“And more of trouble,” the older one smirked.

These gentlemen were very endearing, and their unfamiliar accents were terribly amusing! But I was nervously awaiting the question I knew they would ask, and the younger one finally inquired: “So, what brings you ladies here? Are you with UNICEF?” They had every right to ask; Liberia was by no means a tourist country. We were all among the very few light-skinned foreigners there. During our in-processing at Fort Knox, we cadets were repeatedly drilled, over and over again, to not tell any non-US citizens we encountered that weren’t part of our training mission who we were and why we were there. With all the terrorist threats, we were expected to keep a low profile when not conducting military training. I wasn’t too worried, though; everyone on the compound had seen us in our uniforms and I figured these flight attendants weren’t stupid—where else would we be going every day and why else would we be here?

Still, Anne glared at me nervously (affirming my belief of there not being one discreet bone in her body) and then quickly replied,

“Yes! We’re all here...for a school trip.” She gestured to both me and the hotel buildings where, outside the dining room, more cadets tossed around a volleyball.

“Where in America are you from? Are you all from the same place?”

She was doing well. I was mentally rooting her on. “We’re from all over,” she replied more confidently. “I’m from Virginia, and Rose, she’s from Colorado.”

“Ohh, Colorado!” they both murmured appreciatively. I relaxed a little as I filled with pride. “Good skiing, yes?” the older one asked.

“Very good skiing,” I grinned. “Have you ever been?”

“No, no,” he chuckled, and the other one shook his head. “We have marvelous places to ski around Belgium!”

“Brings in lots of tourism!”

“Many tourists, many tourists!”

“Except not lately.”

“No, not lately. We’re sorry, we’ve been drinking.”

“Can I get you ladies anything to drink?”

If there was one rule above No Talking About Army Things to Normal People While in the Country, it was General Order Number One: No. Alcohol. This rule scared me to death; they’d threatened us with so many things at Fort Knox and I’d heard so many awful stories from other cadets who had gone on these overseas trainings. Even the faint smell of liquor from these men elevated my heart rate.

“We’re fine, thank you though,” I replied sweetly, before Anne could open that mouth.

“Nothing? You sure? We Belgians love to drink! It is social, it is social,” assured the younger Belgian.

"Yes, no buying drinks for ladies like at clubs," agreed the older one.

"This is no club."

"No club."

"Clubs are not for gentlemen."

"We are gentlemen. We are sorry, we've been drinking."

"Have a drink with us! We mean no harm!"

"We can have a drink with them," Anne declared as I suffered a silent heart attack. "Just no alcohol, sir. School rules." She winked at me as I let go a silent breath I'd been holding. I nodded slowly in agreement, and also felt better seeing that we were in clear sight of the other cadets near the hotel building. The two Belgians cheered, and then guffawed at the stupid American beer rules as the older one made his way to the mini bar on the far side of the beach.

"What were you saying about having bad tourism?" Anne turned back to the younger one.

"Bad tourism," he sighed. "Since the bombing."

Anne and I looked uncertainly at each other. "Oh," I realized after a moment. "In Brussels."

"Yes, yes," the younger Belgian nodded vigorously, his brow furrowing with worry.

"When was that again?"

"Uhh," he thought for a moment, then turned to the older steward coming towards us with sodas in hand. "Hey, when was the bomb? The bomb?"

"The bomb?"

"The bomb."

"In Brussels!"

“Yes, in Brussels!”

Anne and I graciously thanked the older one as he handed us each Fantas and his friend a Heineken bottle, his face scrunched in thought. “March, I think. March,” he decided, popping his bottlecap. We looked later; it was March 22nd of that year—only a few months earlier. We shared our Brussels Airport layover experience with them—a dull one, no doubt, as we were stuck there for several hours between heavily secured checkpoints. We couldn’t wander anywhere; it was terribly boring.

“Yes, for the time being Brussels Airlines has everything locked down,” the younger one frowned. “That airport has lost its magic.” He took a thoughtful sip of beer. “This is why we like Liberia.”

“Yes, we like Liberia,” agreed the younger one. “We like West Africa.”

“Too much disease here,” explained the older Belgian. “Terrorist groups like Boko Haram never come here. Their bodies are like ours; used to different drinking water and immune to different illnesses. No threats. Safe for airlines like ours.”

“When we land in North Africa, everybody grows tense.”

“It is stressful. Everyone is armed. We treat everyone as dangerous.”

“Even in southern Africa, more and more threats are emerging.”

“What a dangerous business!” Anne finally laughed nervously.

She gripped her can tightly in her hands.

“Oh, not nearly as bad as our counterparts back there,” chuckled the younger one, waving a hand behind him. “There are American military people here.”

“Yes, I’ve seen them!” the older one exclaimed. “They are all so young.”

“So young! Our protectors.”

“Our protectors. We pray for them at breakfast when we are here. They will be the ones who will go after ISIS.”

“That’s so sweet,” I admitted. I meant the prayers. “I’m sure they appreciate it.”

“They are brave. We Belgians love Americans,” the older one smiled, motioning a hand towards the ocean. “They will make life safe again.”

Not long after, the two Belgian gentlemen bade us goodnight. “We have a flight tomorrow,” they explained, sheepishly downing the last of their beers. Anne and I turned back towards the ocean, the horizon glowing dark blue as the last of the day sunk into the sea.

“Well, fuck,” Anne finally said, reaching down to grab a rock and forcefully toss it into the waves.

“Yeah.”

We stared out into the ever-darkening horizon. Any danger felt so far away. The whispering tide quieted our thoughts as we kicked the waves that lapped at our feet. “You think we’ll ever fight ISIS?” she wondered aloud. Her next thought surprised me. “You think we’ll ever be those soldiers they think we are?” she chuckled.

“Maybe we are more than just shitty cadets,” I shrugged.

“Maybe we are,” she agreed. She picked up another rock, and hurled it into the ocean. “Fuck you, ISIS.”

I tossed her another rock. “Throw one for me, too,” I laughed.

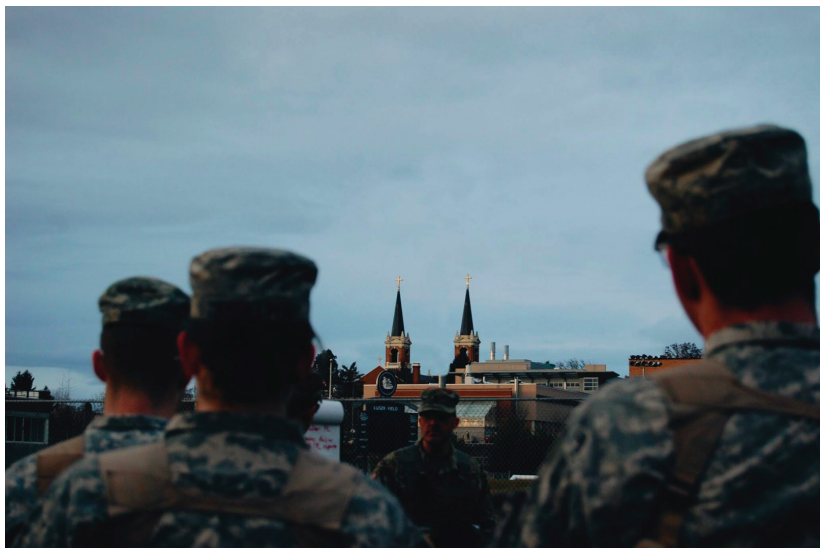
She tossed it back to me. “Nah, girl, you gotta fight your own fight.”

I flung mine in. “For Brussels,” I added.

“For Brussels,” she agreed.

# HOME OF THE BRAVE

EMMA WINKELMAN





## WOODY STEIN

SARAH MCCLENNAN



i.

We're lost in a mist of intuition.

Sour berries disguised by smells sweet,

deep purple rambling along

the periphery of my styrofoam cup.

The sky is falling in:

I brush the horror from my face

with pressed powder and sugar.

Hollow skeletons pirouette among fleshy hearts,

their empty bones rattle in the wind.

Our whispers hang in the fog:

haunting my eardrums, marooning my gaze,

enveloping vivid memory.

The salts of later eyes lick at my wounds,

watering the bouquet of tiger lilies found

deep within old, chicken-scratched journals.

ii.

The white lines on my palms  
stain red in this wind, this cold.

I fall deep into the nights

soaked in envy and freezing rain.

Our two-bedroom bursts with melodies  
that tear open the rickety roof,

splitting the sky into phrases of light  
that crystalize in the morning sun.

I plant hydrangeas in the scars.

Those whispers peeled the melancholy layers  
of two-toned grey from my retinas—  
woke me up from the nights.

I'm swimming in shallow water,  
I'm forgetting the evenings that escaped,  
I've found rich purple among mist.

# GIRLHOOD

CHRISTINE CARERO

Girlhood is rotten lollipops stuck to hard cement  
It is matching pajama sets and flannel pillows  
Secrets through thick whispers and ink stained diaries  
Honey-sweet smiles and caramel skin

Girlhood is putting on red lipstick in a stained gas station mirror  
Dragging skinny fingers through tangled hair  
Girlhood is hairspray, cotton candy  
Diet coke through lipstick stained straws

Girlhood is flavored vodka and sultry smiles  
Holding your high heels up above your head  
Feeling the asphalt under your toes  
Laughing as the cars whirl by

Girlhood is the constant whistle at your back  
The one that makes you smile and yet walk faster  
Girlhood is the shared feeling of fear  
The universal friendship; understanding.

Girlhood is held hands and heavy hearts  
Nicked knuckles, and sunken eyes  
Girlhood is collective smiles,  
United in unkempt curls, smeared eyeliner – panic

It is having a belly full of glass  
Swallowing ideas and interruptions  
It is watering flowers where there are scars  
Romanticized pain and wine-colored bruises

Girlhood is a blood-soaked dress  
It is holding her hair with one hand  
watching the night swirl down the drain  
Girlhood is praying she won't remember

Girlhood is biting back with only baby teeth  
It is never having the upper hand  
It is entering the ring with no armor  
Only the buzz of the crowd

Girlhood is not a delectable rosé  
It is peach flavored vodka, clear and beautiful

# WOMAN OF COLOR YELLOW

REGINA CARRERE





## BUILDING A CASTLE

RACHEL WRIGHT

# THE FISH LIST

EMMA MORRIS

*2018 Michael and Gail Gurian Writing Awards*

*Honorable Mention—Fiction*

There's the beginning of a bite in the air as their footsteps crunch through the first of the fallen leaves. It's that in-between time, where the brown leaves mix with vibrant wisps of grass, and full bloom melts into colorful decay. Fingers of sunlight slip through likewise golden leaves, dappling the man's black jacket and illuminating the blue coat of his young daughter. "Slow down, Jennie!" the man exclaims as the girl's blonde ponytail bounces in rhythm to her impatient steps over the jagged riverbed. "If you fall in, we go home, and the day is over. The number one rule of outdoor survival is stay dry." He brushes back the tag of his own coat with "Jack" etched on the label with thick sharpie by his wife as Jennie runs back toward him and grabs his hand.

If they listen closely, the busy hum of the freeway can be heard in the distance, but Jennie always pretends the noise is a distant waterfall hidden in the grooves of the Cascade Mountain foothills. They were surviving after all, just her and Dad. Jack holds two poles and a shared tackle box, allowing Jennie's curious fingers to collect stones, sticks, or catch slithering garter snakes out for a final sunbath if she was particularly lucky. "This looks like a good spot, Dad!" bubbles Jennie as she gestures toward a bend in the Snoqualmie River. It didn't look any different than three other spots she passed, but Jennie wanted to be able to find the magic fishing spot, just like her dad, and she was content to keep digging until she struck gold. "Let's try a little farther

up,” her father replies with a smile, “where the water moves a little slower. There’s a pool with some rock outcroppings that I know the trout like to hide in.” Jennie nods like they made the decision together and the pair wanders on, hand in hand.

As they approach the magic spot, they must climb over a pair of boulders that loom wide like a shelf and rise up to her dad’s waste. He picks Jennie up and sets her on top of the boulder, handing her the gear, which she cradles with the care of a newborn baby, and hauls himself over last, repeating the process in reverse on the other side. The tackle box settles on the river bed with a gentle clank of a sigh as its contents rattle into position. Jennie leans over her father’s shoulder as he opens the box like a Christmas present. As always, the jigs, lures, and bobbers look like candy but smell like fish. A rancidly sweet odor of stagnant water and fleshy muscle. Every time it wafts over her it lights a spark of excitement in her stomach as they prepare for the day’s adventure. That is the thing about fishing, you cast out your line, armed with your best knowledge, and rely on chance to deliver. No two days are the same, nor should they be. The days where they struck out led the pair to hunger even more for the days where their reels were spinning faster than their eager minds. As her dad threads the eye of the hook with surgical precision and artist’s finesse, Jennie shirks her gloves to the side and picks up three stones from a nearby pool. Her tender inner wrists shudder at the unexpected cold as they plunge in just deep enough to pick up the stones. She tries to skip them on the river, like she has seen Dad do many times, but watches each sink with a dissatisfying plunk. “Alright, Jennie time to put the worm on.” She snaps to attention at the sound of her dad’s voice and eagerly threads



the wiggling body twice through like he shows her. Dad is starting with a silver spoon that looks more like a narrow door hinge than silverware, but Jennie always starts with a worm. In keeping with their ritual, Jennie gets to cast first to make sure she ends up in the “right spot” as her dad always put it. She aims for the edge of the pool, pulls the tip of her rod back over her shoulder, and lets the weight of her lure carry the line into the river. She waits expectantly for the “plink” of her worm landing on target, gracefully carving its path through the surface of the water. When it doesn’t land, she whirls around to the sound of her dad laughing at her startled expression, her eyes bewildered as a baby deer. Between gasps he points his calloused finger up to the tree, the hazard with low hanging boughs that snagged her line and ruined her cast. “Sorry, Dad,” she murmurs sheepishly as he sets his own pole down to untangle her line. “Honey, you’ve got a rat’s nest going on up here.” Somehow, all the intricacies of her dad’s rigging had been undone in a single ill-fated attempt, yet they are both laughing at the mess as they wait another five minutes before starting to fish again as he cuts the line and re-rigs her pole.

For two hours they laugh and joke, cast and recast. Jennie tells her dad about the happenings of kindergarten with radiant enthusiasm. Her cold cheeks glow even pinker as she describes the compliment Mrs. Arthur gave her on the hand turkey she drew and how all of the boys want her on their kickball team because she is the best player in the class. Every now and then Jennie’s pole dips absentmindedly as she gets lost in her story and her dad softly reminds her to “watch the tip” and guides her pole back up with one sweep of his strong hand. Whenever Jennie’s pole shifts, however slightly, she

breaks off midsentence and turns to her dad, “Is-thata- bite-Dad-my-pole-moved-a-little-but-I-can’t-tell” spills of her tongue with rabid intensity. Jack patiently and gently takes her pole from her, giving her his to hold, and determines if it is a fish or the weeds tugging on her line. “You’ll know when you have a bite,” he always claims.

Finally, Jack’s eyes light up with that tell-tale excited glow he always gets when he has a fish on. He sets the hook with a single fluid movement and gently places Jennie’s small hand on the reel, his larger hand helping to hold the base of the pole steady. “Reel, Angel, reel! Go go go keep the tip up and at an angle. Nice, Honey that’s it!” He pours a constant stream of encouragement onto her shaking frame and adjusts the pole with the slightest of flicks until a bumbling trout hangs exhausted before their eyes. Wow! It is amazing how the glint of evening sun shining off the scales and the rhythmic movement of the gills zaps the cold from the air and reignites the coals of excitement from the beginning of the day. “This is a rainbow trout,” her dad explains. “See how the top is spotted and greenish and the side has a stripe of many colors?” Jennie nods solemnly in response. It is a work of art. Together they release the creature back into the river where it swims away in all its majesty. On the walk back to the car, the memory of their catch makes the cold hands and rough terrain completely and undeniably worth it. As Jack blows his hot breath onto Jennie’s cupped hands to warm them up, she wonders aloud, “What do you think the fish is doing right now?”

After a final puff Jack responds, “Talking about its great escape from two fine fishermen.”

“Dad!” Jennie calls out through the open basement door, “Can I

borrow the car tomorrow?" His busy reply unintelligible, she bounds down the stairs two at a time. Illuminated by the light of a crooked desk lamp sits her father, his hands still as dexterous as they were during his early days on the river as he works the yellow thread around the pipe cleaner body of what will become a convincing fly. The silver in his hair sparkles and his reading glasses slip forward on his nose as he shifts his gaze toward his teenage daughter.

"Sure, Honey" he replies, but Jennie has already begun to make her way toward her father's perch, her query forgotten. Next to his worn white sock lies a dog-eared green notebook with pages shoved haphazardly between its folds. Gingerly, Jennie lifts the book onto her lap and opens up to one of the middle pages, where a colored pencil image of a rainbow trout dominates the paper. Beneath the trout is a description of places where it lives, where Jack has successfully caught a specimen, and the lure and tactics he used. An old entry in black scrawl dated autumn of her kindergarten year has a heart next to it and a drawing of a little girl with her pole tangled up in a tree.

"You like that?" he chuckles, that familiar sparkle in his eye. "I've got a big list going of all the fish I want to catch in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. See that rainbow has a star by its name? It means I can cross it off my list."

Jennie reminisces about the hours she has spent fishing with her dad throughout her childhood, and she knows he fished with his dad growing up. "You've got to be almost done catching all those species by now, Dad!" She exclaims.

He raises his eyebrows in humble amusement. "Not even close. But I think if we go at it together we can make some serious progress.

Say, ten species this year will get us a decent jump considering it's only February." She answers with an excited smile to match his own and they got to work on planning local fishing trips for the spring.

It is one of those nights when sleep is slippery and escapes before it can be pinned down. Thoughts of prom and graduation bounce around in Jennie's head, knocking relaxation to the wayside. On nights like this, it is difficult for her to tell whether she even falls asleep or just spaces out for several hours. It must have been sleep. Otherwise her mom wouldn't have needed to shake her shoulder to get her attention. "I'm taking Dad to the ER," she whispers, "I think he has appendicitis." She might as well have screamed in Jennie's face for the pit it leaves in her stomach. How is she supposed to return to sleep knowing her dad will likely be going into surgery in a matter of hours? After an hour or so of fitful turning she opens her phone and searches "Appendicitis". She exhales sharply. It is common, it is treatable, and almost all of its victims make a full recovery. Still, the fact that her dad is hurting makes her uncomfortable, because is helpless to do anything but sit back and listen to the rhythmic snore of her sister in the next room.

The chinks of sunlight that slip through Jennie's blinds are a tease. For a moment, she forgets the turmoil of last night and is confused why her pajamas are drenched in an icy nervous sweat. Her face lights up suddenly. It is Friday and the weather is turning, so the fish might be more active. If she could convince her dad to skip out on work and she played hooky they could potentially knock a fish or two off the list. Her skipping heart sinks like a rock. Dad. Dad is in the hospital. Like clockwork, her mother appears in the doorway, lit up by the morning sun like an angel.

"Hey Sweetie, let's talk before your sister wakes up."

"Wait, so it isn't appendicitis?" Jennie's mind is spinning like a wheel off its axis. "You were sure it was appendicitis." Her mom ignores the accusation in her voice.

"My love, I thought it was! The doctors did too. But when tumors in the abdomen get that large they start causing pain that seems like appendicitis." Tumors. Tumors mean cancer.

"Wait, so how did he not know he had stomach cancer? That makes no sense," Jennie complains to the open air.

"It's not actually stomach cancer, per say" her mother corrects. "Cancer yes, but the origin is unknown. We found it because it spread to his stomach." Jennie opens her mouth to speak but her mother continues matter-of-factly, "Stay home from school today, and we will swing by the hospital this evening. They should have more answers by then. Meanwhile, don't mention this to your sister before I ask the hospital's advice on how to break the news to a kid her age." Jennie nods solemnly but can't help thinking it gets no easier when you're my age.

Two weeks later, and there is little more information regarding her father's diagnosis. A storm has been brewing within his body, his seemingly invincible armor penetrated, for quite some time now. "Quite some time." Jennie laughs mirthlessly at that phrase, a catch-all for having no idea when the hell this happened. The real punch in the gut, however, is the fruitless optimism of the doctors.

"With treatment, your two-year survival prognosis is fair." Two years? He was supposed to have twenty, forty even! It was like winning the lottery, and the officials telling you your million dollars is now fifty cents, but that's great because fifty cents is better than nothing. She

couldn't ignore the fact that a million dollars is a hell of a lot better than fifty cents.

"So, here's the deal," her dad's voice fills the living room with every shred of the confidence it has always had, "I either get maybe two years and spend it frail, tired, and vomiting, or I live with a little pain for six months doing what I love with the people that I love. It's a no-brainer. I'm going to go out as me, not some drugged-up shell of me." Her mom wipes a tear from her eye but smiles knowingly and begins nodding her head too many times. Her sister's mouth is opening and closing like she is repeating his words back to herself, interpreting a foreign language. Jennie stands up sharply, a fire burning in her stomach, acid leaping up into her throat.

"So that's it, huh, you're quitting? Miracles happen with medicine, Dad!" Her voice gradually rises in a crescendo from a whisper of disbelief to an animalistic howl. "Can't you even try? Do you want to die?" Her eyes blur, and the final word comes out garbled with emotion as she flees to her bedroom.

"Hey, Angel" a soft voice whispers. A hand rubs her back in rhythm with her sobs. "Want to get to work on that list?"

Jennie's texts could have been set to an automated reply: "Sorry I'm fishing with my dad." They go at least three times a week. They trek to the Cascades in search of the endangered catch-and-release only bull trout. They seek small mouth bass in Lake Washington. Jennie traipses around the rocky lakeshore, her left arm weighted down by their combined tackle while her dad leans against a boulder to rest before they continue their walk.

“Look up there, Dad” Jennie gestures to an inlet with weeds protruding from the surface like sticky fingers. “Bet this spot has some magic in it.” She grabs his hand and guides him over to a waist-high boulder he could perch on. “Alright, Dad, you hold the pole and I’ll rig us up. I’m going to use this jig and I’ll set you up with a plug to see what they’re going after today.” Her fingers twist and knot the line methodically, measured in a flash by her well-trained eyes. One pole done. Her dad’s hands shake too much to thread the line through the eye of the hook these days. Jennie’s fingers brush his shrunken hands as she gave him his rigged pole. “You’re freezing, Dad!” She exclaims, taking his hands in hers and blowing hot air on his blue fingers to warm them up.

By the end of the summer there are only seven fish left on their combined fish list. They could have probably finished, but they had too much fun recatching some of their favorite species. Every time they catch a bluegill they dehook and release it in quiet admiration. It’s shimmering blue sides seem too tropical for the temperate tones of Washington. It is unconventionally beautiful, out of place but utterly special. The last week before Jennie must leave for college, they catch a bluegill every day.

Jennie has never seen her dad cry. She knows it’s happened, everyone cries, but he has never let tears fall in front of her. He spent more time joking then moping in the months following his diagnosis.

“Angel, I’m just so proud of you” he whispers, waterfalls streaming down his cheeks and his throat clouded with emotional pride. Crying is contagious, and before she knows it her eyes are brimming with tears of her own. It is hard to leave. It is hard to indulge

in her own future when his future was now so limited. His arms around her are a shadow of the unshakeable boughs they used to be.

She wipes her eyes and forces a smile, “Keep my pole safe for some winter steelheading, Dad.” Her family waves once more before hopping in the car and she blows a kiss at the license plate she knew they couldn’t see.

Folding laundry one day, her hands freeze on a gray shirt as her phone rings, illuminating November 1st over a photo of her first silver salmon.

“Hey Mom! You’d be proud I’m doing laundry—” She is cut off by a voice fighting against a wave of sobs.

“Honey you have to come say goodbye to Daddy.” She hops on the next available flight home.

“Dad, you’re freezing!” She exclaims with a plastered smile as she embraces his withered form. She blows into his blue hands, even though the living room is uncomfortably hot already. His amber eyes creak open and his face relaxes. The crabapple cheek bones, his characterizing feature, look worn and weathered. His body has become like an old pair of boots. It has done its share of walking, it has seen its share of life, and it has memories tattooed on its scarred leather. Each breath he takes is shakier than the last. His entire skeleton rattles with every inhale.

“I love you,” she whispers, then escapes for a long walk. The rest she doesn’t need to see. No one likes to picture their favorite pair of boots muddy and torn when they are so much more than that.

Against her dorm room wall, two poles rest side by side. Her



father's pole has its reel positioned on the opposite side as hers, and she smiles at a shard of memory. For at least a year, she used to pretend to fish left handed like her dad, so they could match. He figured out pretty quickly that she fished much better right handed, so he switched both their reels to suit her until she grew out of her everything-we-do-has-to-be-the-same phase. The sweetness of the memory rips at her freshly stitched wound. He should still be here. They should be planning a Dad's Weekend fishing trip around her university. She lets down her fake smile in a huff and kicks his tackle box with the unmistakable force of a grieving daughter. Jigs fly, bobbers role, a piece of worn notebook paper flutters to the ground. The fish list. Her tears blot the paper as she silently mouths the seven species left to catch. She folds it gently and sees writing on the back. It's familiar. The m's and n's are cursive and the other letters are printed. It reads: *My girl, We are still in this together. Love, Dad.* For the first time since his death, she picks up his pole and begins to rig it up to catch a wall-eye in the nearby Moses Lake, home of the state record fish.

Jennie slips on the rocks making her way over to an outcropping that juts out into the center of the lake. It takes two laborious trips to get herself and her gear—their gear—to her chosen fishing spot. Her hands are chilled from the wet moss she uses as a grip and she breathes hot air on them to warm them up. Casting out, she waits. Eventually, a bite yanks her line and she reels in a bluegill, not a wall-eye. Disappointed, the bluegill was crossed off the list ages ago, she tosses it back. Four times she has a fish on and reels in dashed hopes as a bluegill wriggles from her hook instead of her desired catch. After the final bluegill, she sits on a nearby rock and cries. Hot tears sting

her wind-burnt cheeks as she watches the fish swim away. As her eyes clear, she becomes transfixed in spite of herself. Its shimmering blue scales are too delicately beautiful for this rugged place. It stands out too gregariously among the neutral colors. Somehow, this undesirable catch still brings a smile to her weary lips.

In the ripples of the lake she sees herself reflected back as a grade school girl. Dad would take her to Riff Lake in pursuit of kokanee, but often they would return with no catches to brag about. Instead, their spirits were ignited with a barrage of stories about a deer they spotted, a bullhead they had on the line and didn't notice, or the ceremonial Gobstoppers from the General Store that spilled from their pockets and likely "scared the fish away." She breaks her own gaze and casts out a final time, laughing to herself when she reels in another bluegill.

Jennie doesn't have as much time to fish anymore, but she makes an effort to go occasionally. Sure, the list of species to catch is always cradled in her dad's tackle box, but she still enjoys recatching perch, bass, trout, and bluegill. By the time she attains her degree, she has caught the wall-eye and two more fish on their list, leaving four more to go.

"Slow down, Jackie!" Jennie calls to her toddling son. She jogs to catch up to him and lifts him over the rocks to get to the magic spot. "Oh, sweetie your hands are freezing!" She fusses as she puffs hot breath on his cold fingers and rubs them between her own. What Jackie calls "Grandpa's List" is tucked snugly next to a list of their own, which has only perch and bluegill crossed out. There are still four species left on the list Jennie has with her dad, but for now she focuses on teaching Jackie the ropes of fishing. Her mind wanders around the bend of the

Snoqualmie River. Would she ever have time to go out on her own and finish what her and her father started?

Her musings are interrupted by her son's surprised cry, "Mom, I need help!" and her attention shifts to untangling Jackie's line from an overhanging tree.

# CABIN IN THE WOODS

SARAH BREITSCHWERDT





## SUBMERGE

RACHEL WRIGHT

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Catalina Bala** Freshman. Writer. Disney enthusiast. Loves to quote *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*.

**Christopher Barker** believes that a bio cannot encapsulate his complex obsession with everything.

**Colin Bonini** is a senior at Gonzaga studying English with a writing concentration and minoring in Criminal Justice. He tells people he likes to write fiction, but writes a suspicious amount of poetry.

**Sarah Breitschwerdt** is a freshman at Gonzaga.

**Josh Bulawa** is a sophomore nursing student. He started out doing photography in middle school when he didn't get put in the Spanish class he wanted and got stuck in a digital media class instead. Since then, photography has taken him on wild rides from falling into waterfalls in Europe to getting kicked off high school football fields to eating it on ski routes and diving underwater for swimming shots. Josh was inspired by the beauty seen through the elements and principle of design in our everyday life.

**Christine Carero** is a junior at Gonzaga.

**Regina Carrere** is a senior with a English Major (writing concentration) and Criminal Justice and Theater Arts minors. Don't ask her what she plans to do with those. She doesn't know either.

**Ally Clapp** has probably waved at you while you were trying to wave at the person behind her.

**Christopher Combs.** “Shadowed Jazz” was part of a photography concentration Chris did exploring light and altered figures behind shadowed mediums.

**Maya Coseo** is a sophomore English major with creative writing concentration, and Spanish minor. She loves coffee, reading, and writing. She is from Portland, OR and hopes to move back there after graduation. She wants to write and hopes to someday publish a novel. She has been published twice before—her poem, “Row” was published in the Writers in the Schools (WITS) 2015 anthology *Off Center*, and her opinion piece, “Face[book] You[tube]r INSTA[gram] Fame: A young person’s experience with Social Media” was published in *VoiceCatcher Magazine’s* winter 2015 edition.

**Grace Davis-Nicholson** is a freshman at Gonzaga.

**Dorothy Deane** is a senior at Gonzaga.

**Rachel French** is a junior from Portland, OR with a passion for fashion and beauty photography. She has become fascinated by the way in which the lens can capture such intricacies of the human condition. She believes clothing and makeup are an art in of themselves.

**Elizabeth Harrison** is a visual artist and aerialist athlete at Gonzaga University. She will graduate with both a BA in Philosophy and a BA in Art with a concentration in Art History in spring of 2018.

**Kau’i Ho’opi’i** is a sophomore from Honolulu, Hawai’i. She is a special

education major with a big passion for working with kids, creating and promoting justice for all, and inspiring future generations. She's a coffee connoisseur, almond butter lover, and is obsessed with. She writes because once the ink hits the paper it runs until her mind stops thinking. It's the one place she can express every part of what she's feeling. It's a place where creativity thrives and big ideas become real in such a simple way.

**Tom Hoag** is a Biochemistry major at GU. He enjoys drawing with colored pencil in his free time and finds that it is a great way to escape from the hecticness of life.

**Maddie Hueske** spent most of her childhood roaming the mountains and high desert around her hometown of Bend, Oregon. All this time with dirt on her knees gave her an environmental bent at a young age, which influenced her decision to attend Gonzaga University and major in environmental studies. Her love of exploring and facing the unknown head-on has also influenced her decision to study Spanish. Welcome to her world of heartbreaking interactions with the natural world, which may seem fatalist at face value, but can inspire action, reverence, or at the very least, a stroll through the woods.

**Josh Jacobs** is a senior who loves bagels and making excuses to have existential crises with close friends.

**Sarah Kersey** is a sophomore English writing major with a double minor in history and WGST. She enjoys eating ridiculous amounts of ice cream even though she might be lactose intolerant.

**David Landoni** is an anagram for "Dino Anvil Dad"



**Natalie Louie** is learning to be creative.

**Isabella Manoguerra** enjoys many things in life, but ordering pizza over the phone is not one of them.

**Sarah McClennan** would like to dedicate her piece to Natalie and thank her for the constant encouragement to submit her work.

**Emilia Megid** is a junior who spends her free time drawing, making mildly amusing jokes, listening to Kendrick Lamar, and watching the *Great British Baking Championship* in bed. Sometimes simultaneously.

**Andrew Mercer** is a recent graduate who still haunts the basement of Hemmingson while pretending to be an adult in the CCE office. He loves home gardening, stories, *The Office*, long walks with his wife and dog, and short walks to Thomas Hammer.

**John Morey Maurice** is a Professor Emeritus at Gonzaga University's School of Law.

**Emma Morris** is a junior at Gonzaga.

**Eiryn Renouard** is a junior at Gonzaga.

**Anna Sherwood** is a transfer student who was born in Maine, but she has lived on the west coast for around 7 years. This is her first year at Gonzaga University, where she is pursuing a degree in art.

**Courtney Shih** is a junior at Gonzaga.

**Chelsie Sunde.** I am who I am because of who He is. Joy is Free & Worship is Free.

**Alina Tsyukalo** is a student in Gonzaga's Teacher Education program. She loves the outdoors.

**Brahiam Villanueva** is a senior studying History and English.

**Nicole M. Wallace** is from Spokane, WA. She is a transfer student from EWU finishing a Bachelor of Arts at GU.

**Molly Wilson** is a hysterical female.

**Emma Winkelman** was born and raised in Reno, Nevada and is in her third year at Gonzaga University. She is an aspiring photographer, capturing everything from senior portraits, performing musical artists, and the beauty around her hoping to someday have her work recognized and appreciated.

**Rachel Wright** is a senior at Gonzaga.



# REFLECTION

59.2

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Elise Kuterbach

## COVER ARTIST AND GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Emilia Megid

## EDITORS

Natalie Louie  
*Art*

Molly Wilson  
*Poety*

Brahiam Villanueva  
*Prose*

## EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Sophia Maggio  
*Art*

Christopher Barker  
*Poety*

Colin Bonini & Elizabeth Brudevold  
*Prose*

Poetry. Prose. Visual Art.

Want to be published in the next edition of *Reflection*?  
Like our page at [www.facebook.com/GonzagaStudentMedia](http://www.facebook.com/GonzagaStudentMedia)  
or email us at [reflection@gonzaga.edu](mailto:reflection@gonzaga.edu)

