

the aerie

Volume 18 · Spring 2017

the aerie

Concordia University's Literary and Arts Publication
Volume 18 · Spring 2017
Concordia University, Irvine, California



aer • ie also **aer • y** (â'è,îr'è) **n. pl. -ies**

1. The nest of an eagle or other predatory bird built on a crag or other high place
 2. A house or stronghold built on a height
 3. The literary and arts magazine of Concordia University Irvine
- [Med. Lat. aeria < OFr. aire.]

Acknowledgments

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The Aerie is an annual journal which showcases work being done in creative writing and art by Concordia University Irvine students, alumni, faculty, and staff. In addition, it provides students from both the English and art departments a hands-on experience working collaboratively to produce a quality literary and arts journal. Students are involved in every aspect of the production from the call for submissions, to the selection of creative work and the design of the journal. The publication of *The Aerie* is made possible with funding from the Office of the Provost.

The text for this magazine is set in Adobe Caslon Pro and Latina.



Free Choice
Acrylic
Erika Boychenko '17

Dedication

The writer of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 reminds us that for everything there is a season, and many of the pieces in this edition of *The Aerie* echo that idea: clocks tick, time “shifts,” landscapes change, and relationships grow.

With that in mind, we dedicate this edition of *The Aerie* to Thea Gavin. During the past twenty years, Thea has been a valued colleague, wise mentor, creative writer, professor, founder and cultivator of the Heritage Garden, barefoot poet, and much more. We will miss you, dear friend.

We wish you every blessing as you begin your next season.

To Professor Thea Gavin—

Because of you . . .
we never leave a story untitled
we use two hyphens to make a dash
we know all genres are created equal
we always have a backup plan
we silence our inner critic
we never wear shoes when we hike
we plant our own gardens
we give each other positive feedback
we find confidence in our work

—Your Creative Writing Students

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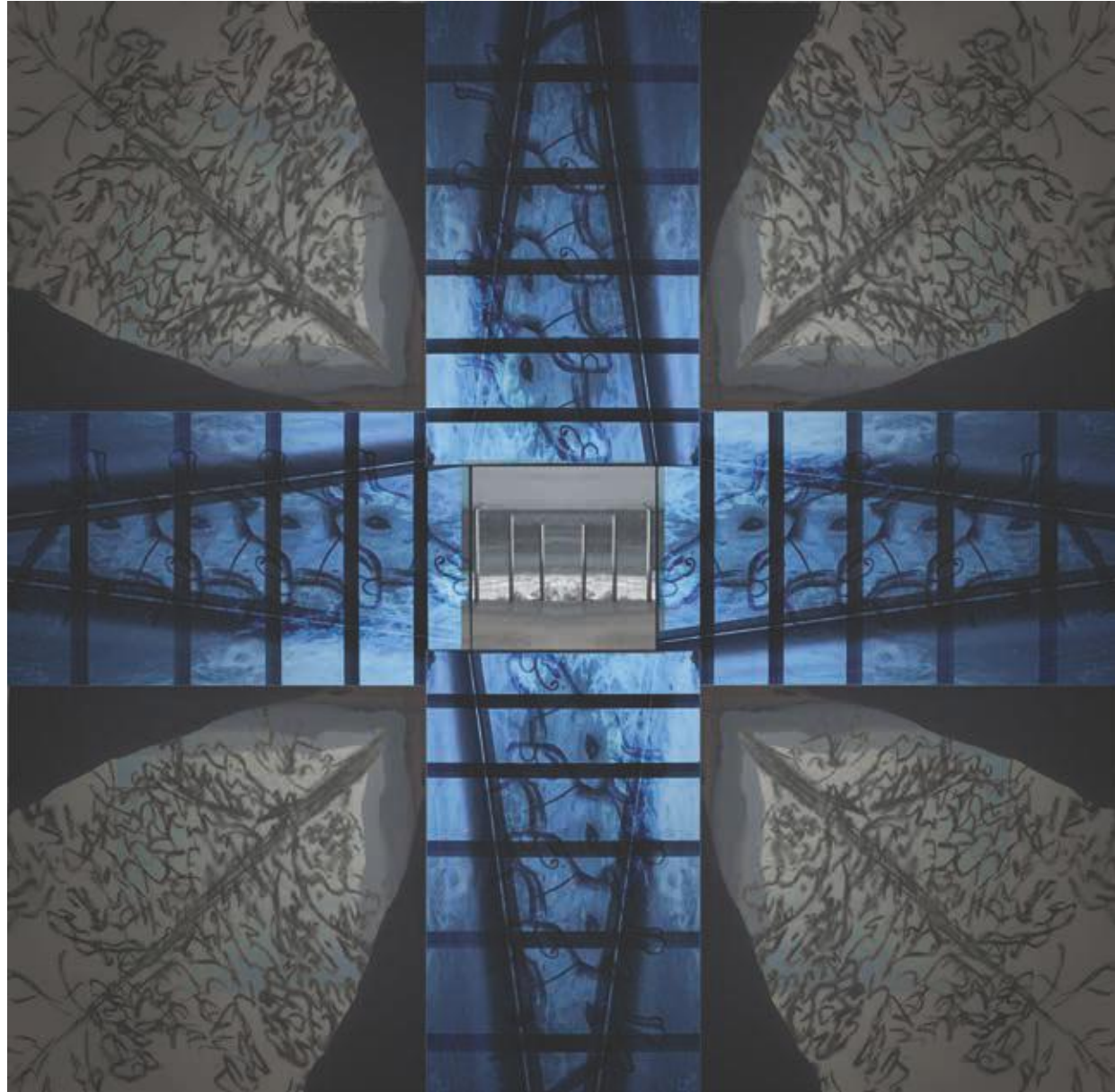
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Where They Roam

Digital
Andrea Acosta '18



Coexistence
Digital
Andrea Acosta '18

Where I'm From

I wait at the window, cold fingertips against colder glass. The stars keep vigil for an absent moon. Flickering in the distance is the outline of the city where I was born, the city that I will leave. It's a frail night, the kind I could stir into ripples with only the force of my breath. Somewhere a clock ticks, quietly, as if it is ashamed of itself. Every beat is a second that I have spent waiting for a summer parade, the light bulbs of the floats echoing into the June evening. Sound becomes streets—Mississippi Avenue and West Burnside, the names of the pathways into which I've folded the creases of my footsteps. I can see myself shaking the rain off my coat, ordering the only pronounceable thing on the bizarre menu with a cup of tea, no sugar. Its rhythm sounds like getting lost, like pages of a book that I have to shelter under my jacket so the words don't run together. The ticking is the whirl of bicyclists that jolt in front of cars, the ticking of the man on the sidewalk that uses metal cans for a drum, chanting as if every verse will keep him fed for another day. A city that I never cared about until it shriveled beneath me on a plane, a city whose poetry I could never recite until I could point to it on a map and say, "This is it. This is where I'm from."

Prose Poetry
Lauren Taylor '16



Fueled

Ball point pen with acrylic on recycled wood
Brandon Sutliff '18

Crocuses

First the roots go down.
Toes first, grip into velvet soil,
then life clammers upward.
A sprout, green as a tart celery stalk,
makes its way, stretching, creaking, like old floorboards
(if you could slow down time, you'd hear it yawn).
Plips of rain try to fuss it back into bed,
But the sapling crocus reaches,
blinking off the pesky raindrops as they
fret and fuss, like an embarrassed wife frazzled by early visitors.

Not yet! The earth is not ready just yet for Spring!

A verdant stem, a stroke of violet:
the unthinking mark of the impressionist
painting women in the shade.
Blue caps (Madonna, Magdalene, and Martha's sister) sprout,
Stretch—stabat mater—suspended between
Palm Sunday and Easter Morning.
They keep their vigil, lips sealed like fans
hiding marvelous Japanese prints,
Sealed and smiling like wise virgins keeping watch,
Burning with purple chastity.

Poetry
Natalie Bartels '17



Corrupted
Digital
Katharine Leese '19

How to Catch a Firefly

Grandpa told stories about the fireflies. Often the stories were of daring adventures in which the fireflies concealed treasure from dastardly pirates. Sometimes the stories were of fantastic love: a prince and princess lost to each other forever if not for the fireflies illuminating a secret path through an enchanted forest. And, every now and then, the stories were more than stories—such as when Grandpa spoke of his grandfather taking him to the meadow so that they could catch the fireflies in glowing glass jars and watch their little bodies flicker on and off. Light and dark.

His stories were the reason I tried so hard to catch fireflies when he took me to the meadow. The fireflies would flit through the clumps of waist-high grass and light up the meadow like a hundred more stars all around me. They did not belong in a cage, but I longed to find treasure and romance and a story of my own.

“Anna,” Grandpa would whisper as he watched me jump and twirl with an empty jar. “Be still.”

“If I’m still, I’ll never catch one!” I called, pretending to be a plane or a kite or a pterodactyl.

He shook his head, wisps of white hair fluttering like sails on a ship. And then he straightened his spine, growing firmer and taller than I could ever hope to be. I watched him like I watched the trees at the far end of the meadow where I was never allowed to venture. When a firefly settled into his jar, I wondered where it had been before and how it had gotten *here*.

Eventually, I stopped visiting the fireflies, but I never stopped listening to Grandpa’s stories. One night, when his liver was failing, and he drank more to dull the pain, he asked me to tell him a story of my own.

“I don’t know any stories,” I said.

“It’s not about what you know. It’s about what you feel.” His words crackled with electricity. I thought, *If fireflies could talk . . .*

“Grandpa. Sleep now.”

That night, I dreamed of stars and trees.

His skeletal body was the first thing I saw in the morning. His ashen face, beer seeping into his flannel and caked in his wrinkles. His waxy skin. His stillness. His emptiness. I padded across the carpet like he was asleep. Like I might wake him. I tossed the can from the floor into the garbage. I wet a washcloth and sponged sticky residue from his face, gagging against the stale-urine scent of alcohol mixed with drool. Then I slipped upstairs, locked myself in his bedroom, and screamed until my throat was raw.

I thought about returning to the meadow that day. I thought about it at his funeral. I thought about it every time I visited his grave and laid poppies against the bleached stone.

It was years until I finally returned. Now that I was taller, everything looked different. It felt different, too. The grass brushed against my calves. The jar felt small in my hand. When night came, and the fireflies began to glow, they looked like bugs, not stars.

I unscrewed my jar, an unnatural creak amongst the ruffle of grass and buzz of wings. I swung in a lazy arc, but the fireflies were just out of reach. They were always just out of reach.

Anna. Be still.

I was still, as still as I could be, as still as the trees. Fireflies darted closer than ever, and yet they carefully avoided my jar as if they knew what I intended. As if they couldn't trust me enough to let them go.

You can stay, but we aren't fooled. You aren't one of us.

I watched the fireflies like I had watched Grandpa. Like I watched the trees, the stars. Untouchable. Full of light.

There once was a girl in a meadow and she was never meant to catch a firefly.

Grandpa could have made that story beautiful, I thought. Some people are beautiful story-tellers. Not me, but I didn't mind.

I watched the fireflies pirouette through the air, and I listened.

Nonfiction
Sydney Luchansky '18



Movement

Digital
Tamlyn Kurata '19

Wristwatch

Two hands glisten and glide
each hour with
allure and accuracy. But a third
trembles and runs,
putting distance between
him and his two brothers,
only to run into them again.
The second brother,
shorter than the
first, will visit,
but is away even longer.

It is when the face
runs out of life
the brothers have a chance
to reunite for
dire moments.

Poetry
Mary McQuistan '17



Shifting Time

Watercolor
Yeon Jin Kim '18



Reflections

Photography
Stephanie Rodriguez '17

Mist on the Bay

You cannot understand the mist in Washington, the fog, the rain.

The way it distills itself from the salty water of the bay
and wafts heavenward, a purer incense.

It hugs the trees and settles in the valleys
as the Spirit of God surges through mountains
like a cyphering fog horn.

It returns to the crags and the sable beaches
as the soul to the glorified body on the Lord's Day.
It billows and grows as the smoke from tongues of fire
on Pentecost: holy, untranslatable, sibyl.

Poetry
Natalie Bartels '17

Five Tips for a New Day Camp Counselor
A Basic Introduction to Day Camp

PLEASE READ BEFORE TRAINING ON JUNE 11th

Welcome, new recruits! First, I'd like to congratulate you on being chosen for this highly coveted position. As your Assistant Camp Director, it is my job to initiate you into the day camp environment. You'll notice that I'm a bit more relaxed than the Camp Director. I prefer to get to know you all personally and treat you like friends so feel free to text me at any point this summer if you need anything.

Before you start reading the Basics of Health and Safety info on the next page, I thought I'd share with you this cool article I found online. It's both hilarious and ridiculously accurate.

~~~~~

Five Tips for a New Day Camp Counselor

1. Embrace the Ugly Neon Shirts

It is a truth universally acknowledged that any day camp that considers itself a serious institution must require its staff to wear ugly neon shirts. You've seen them before, probably at the amusement park or at the beach amidst a mass of floppy hats and ponytails. Like a lonely neon tree in the middle of an island of sticky-fingered, sunburned children, you've seen those brave young adults in pinks and blues defending the children of our nation from untied shoelaces and bee stings in the busiest places imaginable.

The power is in the shirts, really. While it's probably a good idea to go ahead and get CPR and first aid certified (for you know, like, legal reasons), nothing will prepare you for your job more than the day you pick up your first neon shirt.

There are a few stages that camp counselors go through after they pick up their first ugly neon shirt:

1. I hope it's not the same ugly shirt that the people at the YMCA wear.
2. It's worse than the ugly shirts that the people at the YMCA wear.
3. I don't get paid enough to suffer through this fashion disaster.
4. Well, I guess neon green is better than highlighter yellow.
5. Maybe if I act like I'm wearing Gucci people will believe it.
6. Yes ma'am, thank you for staring, this is from the Gucci summer line.

Luckily, there is an obnoxiously fluorescent bright side to your situation! We can all admit that being a camp counselor isn't the most glamorous job. There's a lot of dancing, there's even more singing, and it's absolutely certain that you will produce at least one bucket of sweat each and every day. Be grateful then! At least everyone is staring at your shirt and not your awkward tan lines. I bet they don't even notice the fact that you've been singing "Rock the Boat" for thirty minutes straight.



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**Helmets Through the Ages**

Digital  
Kara Der '18

Here's the key: embrace the ugly neon shirt. Yes, everyone within a fifty mile radius will be able to see you at all times, and yes there's a good chance every attractive being in the world will probably walk by you while you're in said ugly neon shirt, but there is one important thing to keep in mind: What doesn't kill you makes you stronger... and brighter.

## 2. Dress Up Days Are Definitely Not Optional

It's been a long week. You're tired; you're aching. You could really use a nap. But—wait! Tomorrow is dress up day, and you still haven't picked out your costume! Well, your boss said that dress up days aren't mandatory, right? Wrong.

Imagine: You're fidgeting as you walk in from the parking lot, reassuring yourself that no one will notice that you're wearing your ugly neon staff shirt instead of some other ridiculous outfit (see the previous section for reasons why you won't go unnoticed). As you walk through the front door, you encounter your first camper. She doesn't say a word, but you can see the silent disappointment in her eyes. Down the hall are more campers clad from head to toe in pink feathers and glitter. Walking into the main hall, all eyes are on you. Yes, you. Fifty smiling little faces suddenly freeze when they realize that you're not dressed up like them.

Your coworkers are even less sympathetic. Unlike you, they took that extra 30 minutes the night before to turn their ugly old gym shirt inside out and tape some pipe cleaners and paper cutouts to it. Would their costume make it past the Fashion Police? No. Are they at least wearing a costume? Yes.

Bottom line: just throw something together. Even if it looks bad, at least it will look just as bad as everyone else's costume.

## 3. The Bathrooms are Disgusting (Sorry There's No Bright Side to This One)

Read the heading once more. Accept it. Move on.

## 4. Field Trips Have the Potential to Break Even the Strongest Day Camp Counselor

Field trips are high-stress situations. Oh sure, they sound like fun. How about a trip to the amusement park? The science museum? The beach is always fun, right? Do not, under any circumstance, let someone convince you that a field trip will be easy.

First of all, you're alone with a bunch of children. There's one of you, ten of them. In case you can't tell, these odds aren't in your favor. What happens when little Jimmy decides to wander off to see the ducks? What happens when Lucy decides not to ask before she goes to the bathroom? What in the world will you do if poor Dylan gets left behind in the gift shop?

DON'T PANIC.

Well, I mean, panic because one of your kids is missing, but do it calmly. You don't need nine other children freaking out with you.

Second of all, you're alone with a bunch of children in a busy place. You'll quickly learn that children become completely incapable of listening once they're in public. Crossing the street becomes quite an

operation when your day campers don't care about green lights. Lunch time is a real struggle when half of your kids brought food, and the other half are buying food. Waiting for the bus is practically impossible when everyone is still full of energy from their super extra fun day of stressing you out.

Don't be discouraged, though. Field trips are difficult for everyone. Just stay alert and hope for the best.

## 5. If You Aren't Up to Your Elbows in Paint by the Time You Leave, You're Doing Something Wrong

The basic requirements for day camp include sports, games, swimming... and of course crafts. Crafting is an essential part of day camping and the most important part of the day for some of your kids. You have to remember that not all of these campers are gonna enjoy physical activity. That's why it's your job as a day camp counselor to reassure them that their capture-the-flag and carlot skills, or lack thereof, doesn't define them as a person. (But you'll totally crush them if they try to gang up on you during dodgeball).

Here's how it works:

-Step #1: Spend two hours each weekend picking crafts for the following week.

-Step #2: Realize that you're working with children and not real artists.

-Step #3: Spend two more hours picking new crafts that children can do.

-Step #4: Ask your boss to buy supplies.

-Step #5: Have your boss tell you that they won't spend \$100 on supplies.

-Step #6: Spend three hours picking new crafts that children can do that also don't cost \$100 in supplies.

-Step #7: Prepare your craft for all of the campers.

-Step #8: Blow their minds with your craft's sheer awesomeness.

-Step #9: Try to figure out how to get all of that sheer awesomeness off of your clothes.

-Step #10: Repeat.

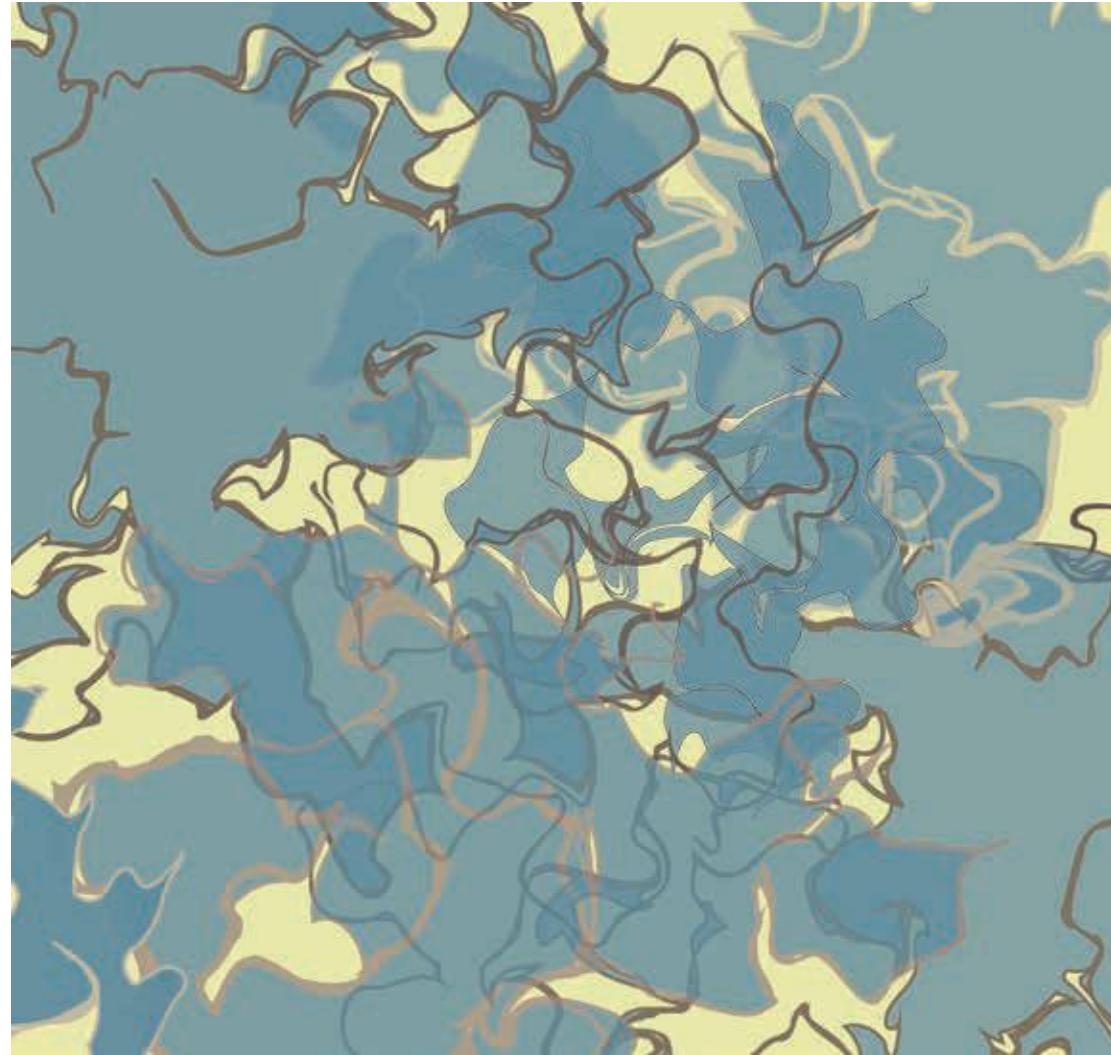
The most important advice I can give you here is that no one should ever come out of craft time looking clean. There better be popsicle sticks in your shoe, glitter in your eye, and seven different colors of puffy paint smeared into your skin. Honestly, there better be paint covering your legs and, at least, one major hot glue injury every summer. If you never have to stand in the checkout line in Walmart and have people wonder why you look like you've gone to war against an army of kindergarteners, then you obviously aren't trying hard enough.

So find fun crafts, be creative, and don't be afraid to get messy.

~~~~~

What did you think guys? Pretty cool. Just something for you guys to think about before you embark on this crazy journey. It's stressful at times, but I promise you that it's always worth it. Anyways, congratulations once again on getting hired! We are so grateful to have you here, and we know that the kids will feel the same. Don't forget to finish up this packet and get your certifications in order by training day on June 11th. See you there!

Fiction
Elisa Andersen '17



Cyan Blueness in Yellow

Digital
MacKenzie Ayers '18

wigaloo wigaloos

silvers ping pong through a soupy expanse
a green that spreads over the tongue like smoothies
or mommy's mashed peas for licking infants

whistling with a brittle brightness
the triad of pearls wiggle in and out
of melting didbits and dudbits

one stray pearl boinks a feather
out poots a wee bit of red
adding a heartbeat to the green

the bitsies are wigaloo wigaloos
dissipating from the Blue Caterpillar's hookah
into viscous voids before scattering

green and black absorb wigaloos
even pearls are gobbled up
by a depth dripping with dizziness

Poetry
Anna Joy Tanksley '18

Good Mourning

When I was young, I listened to a little brown bird that called quiet in morning air. Its voice told me to lay in the tickling cold of dew-flecked grass and count the different blues of the sky. I'd hear that voice call small and unseen from trees and power lines, layering with the hush of tires on asphalt and the wind's brush through sycamore branches. I heard someone call it a "morning dove," and it fit for me because its call crawled through early air like the steam that rose from my mother's coffee mug. The little voice asked, "Who?" It wondered who was awake, who was ready for school, and I answered, "Me." I was awake, ready, alive.

One day my teacher corrected the spelling of my bird's name. I wrote that my favorite bird was the morning dove, and that her song reminded me of my mother's voice calling to me when I slept, drifting through a dream and drawing me back to the world with a soft, "Good morning." But my teacher said, "No. It's 'mourning' dove, because its voice is sad, like a person that is crying." I refused to believe him, and each time the cooing call floated on the morning air I was not sad, just like each time my mother asked if I was awake and ready for school I was not sad. I would never spell "morning" wrong.

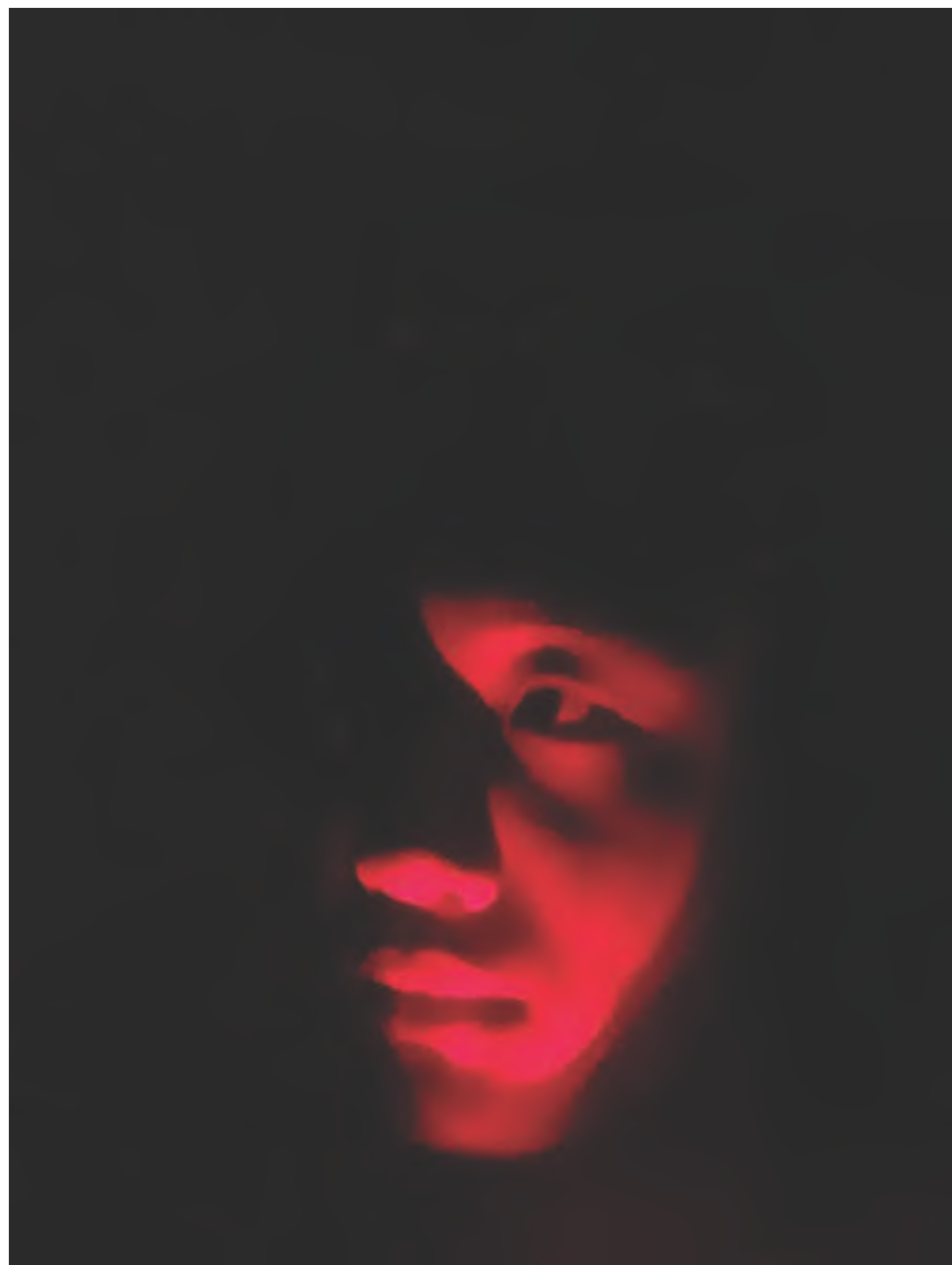
It's morning now, and a dove calls to me from a tree somewhere down the street. I remain in my chair on the porch and squint at the sunlight that burns the east. Today I woke to the sound of my mother saying, "Good morning," but saw only her photo beside my bed. The dove calls again and waits for an answer, for another cry to break the morning silence. I wait, too. As usual, there is none, but she calls still in her good mourning. She is still my favorite bird, even though now I too spell her name wrong.

Prose Poem
Spencer Lane '16



Cityscape

Acrylic
Stephanie Rodriguez '17



Red
Digital Photograph
Rio Nakasone '17

Burn

"I don't mean to scare you, but if you don't make some serious changes, your health is going to rapidly deteriorate." Dr. Snyder's office is cold: the temperature, the blue color on the walls, and the fact that he doesn't look at me when he says this. My mother's next to me, staring into space with a look on her face I know too well.

. . .

I've heard about that July, which happened almost fourteen years ago (though sometimes I don't even remember it was fourteen years). We were on vacation in Nebraska, and Mom came down to the basement to see if I was awake. I was, but I was also staring into space and shoveling Skittles into my mouth like a zombie. *I knew something was wrong then*, she always told me. She started making appointments for when we got back home. Of course, I never made it to those; they rushed me to the hospital a week later. The nurses figured out it was Type 1 Diabetes pretty quickly.

I don't remember much of my time in the hospital. I know they taught me how to test my blood sugar and told me it wasn't my fault. They gave me a bear named Rufus. It had colorful patches to show where you could give yourself shots. Almost every kid diagnosed with Type 1 has that hospital-mandated bear. Mine's in a box back home with a bunch of my old toys. I always hated it.

Type 1 Diabetes used to be called Juvenile Diabetes back in the day. They changed it not long after I was diagnosed. The reason was because (1) it made people think only kids got Type 1, which they didn't, and (2) it (apparently) gave the impression that once someone turned eighteen, they wouldn't have the disease anymore. I was part of a group of kids with Type 1 at the time—the Ambassadors. Our volunteer organization was international, but they always told us we had one of the strongest chapters in the country. That's why they schooled us on the change and so many other facts, making sure we had them down to a T before we did anything (and we did do anything). When a seven-year-old girl says one out of every three children born after the year 2000 will develop some form of diabetes, people suddenly want to give her money to find a cure. Sympathy money, but it was still money.

I hated all of the 'woe is me' in books and interviews. "Why aren't there happy books about diabetes?" I remember my friend Mike asking after we found *Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls*. Despite the name, it's one of the most depressing books ever written (I mean, it opens talking about the history of the disease, getting tumors, and dentists. There's an owl on the cover. A cute owl). I echoed the sentiments because I didn't want to be seen for the rest of my life as a person with a life-threatening disease; I just wanted to be a person. But it's hard to be a person when you're laying in the nurse's office feeling like crap because there's sugar rushing through your bloodstream and your friend Angelica Hass looks over at you and says Mr. Green was making fun of you in class today.

I wish I had heard him say those things about me. It's easy enough to make fun of someone when they're not around. I think it's because people aren't people in stories like that; they become an inconvenience, a connotation of negative traits spun around for the storyteller's benefit. I never asked Mr. Green about his jabs directly, but considering how mad the school nurse was when she told the principal, I assumed something happened. The only other encounter I remember having with him was walking to the nurse after lunch. We weren't allowed in the main building until the bell, and Mr. Green was patrolling the door when I walked past him, only offering an *I'm going to the nurse*. He looked annoyed, but nevertheless, let me through. He never apologized, but I didn't really want an apology because that meant I could stay mad.

'Diabetes Burnout' was another common phrase they taught us in the Ambassadors. It referred to a period when a person with diabetes stopped checking blood sugar and doing insulin, or did it very minimally. Most people were teens, and they did it because they were tired of having so much responsibility during what was supposed to be their only carefree years. Doctors tell patients it happens to everyone, and then demand said patients stop acting like it or else they'll lose a foot or go blind. We learned about it, had books that were given to us on it (never with such pretend happy titles as *Let's Explore Diabetes With Owls*), but we never mentioned it to people in interviews. When you imply medical complications arise because teenagers are behaving like teenagers, they stop giving you money. We need money if we want a cure.

I went through Diabetes Burnout; almost everyone I knew went through it (Dina didn't, but Dina was perfect at almost everything, so she didn't count). It wrecked me. I couldn't focus in any of my classes because my blood sugar was high, and when your blood sugar is high it feels like a sugar rush except it doesn't end, and after twenty minutes you feel exhausted. When I wasn't in class not focusing, I was in Nurse Ramona's office not focusing. There I was often accompanied by Chase, a younger Type 1 who was also in Diabetes Burnout, and less often Dina, who stopped in to check her always-perfect blood sugar and go back to class.

I always got the impression that teenagers ended up with Diabetes Burnout because of hormones. Hormones and environment were always factors people talked about with Type 1; they affected blood sugar, and more often than not they couldn't be stopped until the body adjusted. That took weeks, and by the time those weeks were up, you were under the impression that nothing could control your disease, so why bother to try? Throwing constant stress out the window to be with non-diabetic friends doesn't seem like such a bad idea then. And by the time you're ready to look at fixing said health, people are yelling at you.

It can happen more than once. It can happen more than once because people are people, and constantly messing up isn't anything new. There's an old saying: fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. The first time you get burnout, the people around you get angry. If it happens again, they get disappointed. They don't yell at you, just give a look of pity and quietly shake their heads. That always made me feel more guilty than the yelling.

I snap back to reality as Dr. Snyder takes his eyes off the computer screen and looks at me. "You need to do better," he says. His voice is hard.

"I know" is all I can say.

Nonfiction
Reed Gialketsis '18

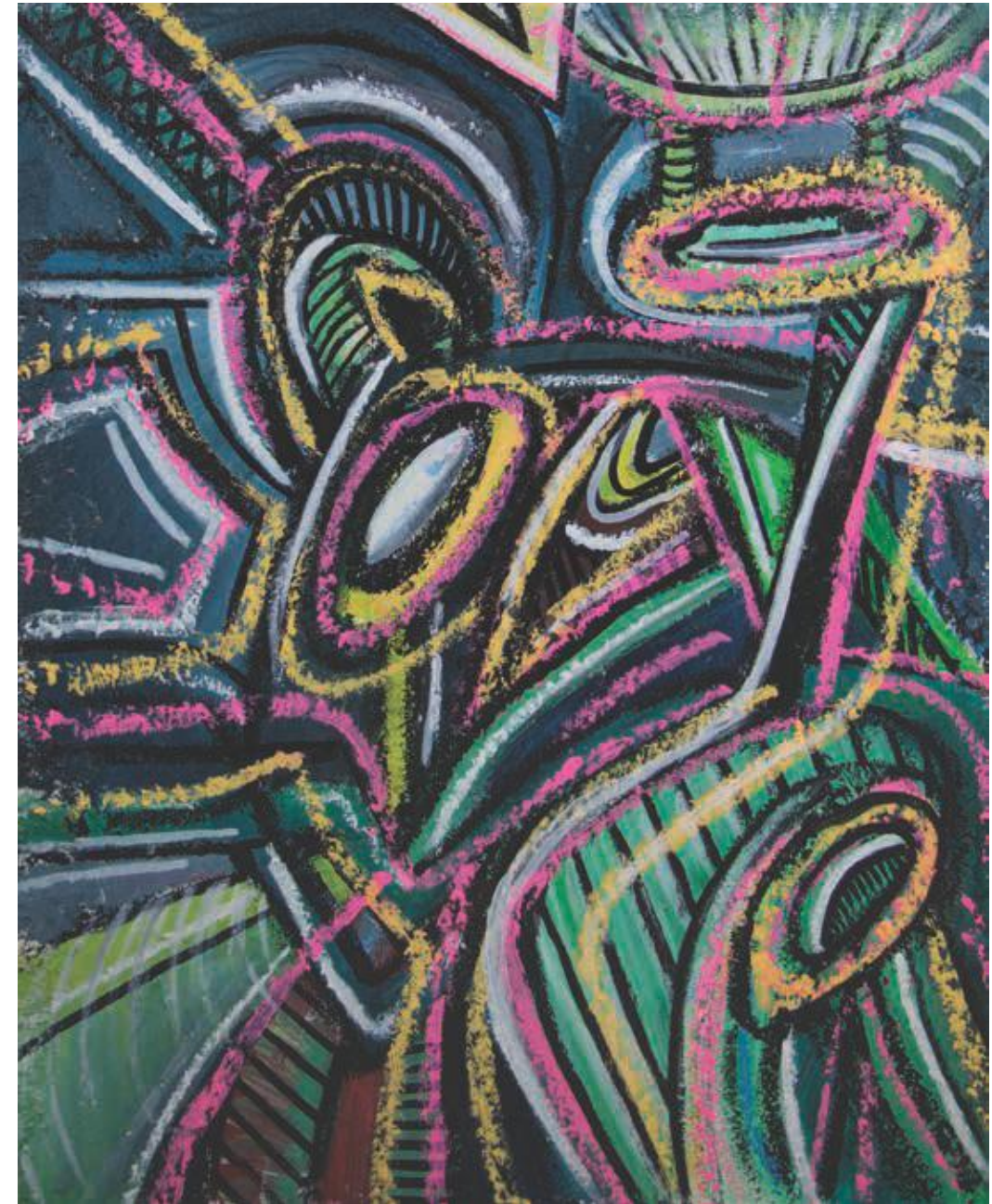


Kickin' It With Nobody
Digital
Kara Der '18

The Ebbinghaus Effect

The moon looks so much bigger on the nights when your family is away. White and wispy like the flyaway strands of your grandmother's hair, clouds like pins and curlers that she keeps in the drawer on her nightstand. A lamp sits there, never on; in fact you aren't sure there's even a light bulb inside. Don't worry dear, your grandmother says, your grandfather will light it later. But he doesn't and he won't, because then the pins that are really clouds will roll into the shadows of the nightstand drawer and your grandmother's hair will remain unpinned as it was in her youth, when the two of them would dance in the moon that is biggest when your family is away. The one that looks like your grandmother's hair in a darkened room.

Prose Poem
Samantha Gross '17



Bask
Acrylic, solid paint markers, and oil markers
Brandon Sutliff '18



Angel Warrior

Digital Photograph
Jennifer Swink '18

Preserved

Saturday

I didn't realize that my grandma was dying until a weathered scrapbook arrived in the mail. My mother had told us a few weeks ago as she had stared blankly into her green tea with honey. I waited for the news to settle in, but somehow, it wouldn't. My hope was an autumn leaf, still fiercely clinging to life even as its fiery red began to turn brown at the edges. When I read the address on the brown package, I noticed how jagged and faint the letters were. Grandma used to have the most beautiful, looping signature. Now, her fingers were so weak that she was losing her ability to write. I felt an aching pressure behind my eyes as I walked back inside the house from the mailbox. I slammed the door behind me like I could somehow funnel all of my emotions into the dull boom that it made.

When I walked inside, I realized that my sister was in the kitchen, her mixer humming as the smell of vanilla extract saturated the air. Mia's hair had started out in a loose bun that morning, but so many of its tendrils had fallen out that the blond strands stuck outward in the same way that uncooked spaghetti juts out of the top of a pot. She was a strong believer in never buying something that she could make it herself. On the dining room table were unfinished sewing projects and half-strung beaded bracelets that were eventually supposed to be Christmas gifts for her friends. "Did anything good come?" she asked.

"Yeah, it looks like grandma sent you something."

"Really?" she wiped her flour-ridden hands on her apron. "Let me see." She tore it open carefully, exposing the edge of a faded floral scrapbook. When I saw what it was, I felt a tense coiling in the center of my chest. The laminated pages crackled as Mia opened the book to the first page and pulled out a greeting card. "Grandma says that she wants me to have it since I just turned eighteen. Apparently, that was when her mother gave the scrapbook to her as a kid." After staring at it for a moment, Mia placed the gift on the counter, stared at it for a moment, and then pushed it aside so she could root through one of the drawers for her measuring cups. As I watched her, my throat became thick. Pudding-thick. California's air pollution thick. I wanted to say something about how honored she should feel to have been given such an important gift, but no matter how I formulated the words in my head, it sounded selfish and rude. Instead, I changed the subject. "Aren't you going to use a recipe?" I asked.

"It's called experimentation," she said. "All the best things were invented by ignoring the recipe and screwing around."

"But what if you put too much salt in them and they turn out nasty?"

"Then I'll give them to the dog. Unlike you, he doesn't whine about my cooking."

"You'd better not poison Vincent."

"Only you would name a dog after a crazy old painter. Didn't that guy chop an ear off and send it to some girl? Now that's nasty."

As she went off to get the flour out of the cupboard, my eyes drifted back to the book on the counter. I remembered the plants and flowers that were trapped in those pages back when they still felt velvety with life. Ten years ago, my family visited my grandmother in Wisconsin. It was August, and I was sitting outside next to my grandma on the porch swing. My shoulders were hunched over as I worked on a coloring page, making sure that none of my streaks of color drifted outside the lines. When I glanced up, I could see Mia sitting at a table inside, gleefully snipping the outline of paper dolls out of printer paper. She was always good at that—taking something blank and trimming away the excess until only what she wanted was left. Suddenly, Grandma put her hand on my shoulder and spoke to me in her nasally Midwestern accent: "Do you see this page? It looks so empty. Would you mind looking for another flower for the corner here?"

“Sure,” I said. I abandoned my coloring page and dashed down to the tree line, the hum of the bugs and the simmering, mid-morning heat made me aware that some kind of life was brewing. After a minute of searching, I found a little burst of pale blue jutting up from the grass. I plucked it and made my way back to where my grandma was waiting.

Grandma gasped and clapped her hands together as I showed her the flower that I had located. “Oh Zoey, it’s perfect!” she said. “I don’t think I have any other cornflowers in my collection.” She opened up the book to a page where a row of flowers was fossilized under the laminated page of the scrapbook. There was a blank spot on the end, one that would nicely fit the shape of my blue bounty. With each one, her perfect, slanting script spelled out the kind of flower it was, along with the date that it was discovered. “You know, men used to wear these flowers in their buttonholes. If the color faded, it meant that the person they loved wouldn’t be true to them. If the color lasted, then they had found a good one.”

“Do we have to press it, Grandma? Couldn’t we just put it in a vase so that it can stay alive?”

I looked at my Grandma’s curls, which had been bleached so many times in her life that she couldn’t remember the original color. Each ringlet was imprisoned under a thick sheen of hairspray that glistened in the light. “We could do that, honey, but eventually it will turn brown and rotten, and we’ll have to throw it out. If we press it, we can keep it forever.” She removed a four-leaf clover from next to the blank spot. “Do you see this? My mama pressed this clover when I was a little girl. Now that she’s gone, all I have to do is take it out and I can feel my mother’s hands again.” I took the clover from her fingers and twisted the stem back and forth. It was like I could feel the delicate touch of history in the tiny fans of the leaves.

“Maybe I’ll give this to one of you girls someday.”

“You mean like tomorrow?”

She laughed. “No, a little later than that. Maybe when you graduate or you get married. I have to wait until you’re ready.”

Sunday

The next morning, I crept into the forest that surrounded our house, checking the base of every evergreen, birch, and willow for the ideal specimen. It was cold that morning, and the dew on the grass sloshed against my sneakers as I waded through the lakes of clover.

There. A candy flower for the giant candy jar in my grandmother’s kitchen that Mia and I raided as kids. A little blue aster for my grandmother’s perfume, which hung in an overripe cloud when she took me on shopping trips. A clover for luck, because that was what everyone in our family needed right now. I could hear Grandma’s voice as she spoke to my parents over the phone, and it had sounded so weak and shriveled. My mother had to brace her hands on the counter while she spoke so that she didn’t break down.

When I got back to the house, I found that the cramped room that Mia and I shared was empty. I heard the hiss of rushing water from our bathroom and realized that she was in the shower. I placed my backpack and a handful of blooms on the dresser and glanced around. Where had she put that scrapbook, anyway? I loved my sister, but that didn’t quiet the jealousy that percolated under my skin. Mia never cared about that family heirloom stuff anyway. My aunt had given Mia a couple of antique brooches last year, but I’ve never seen them outside of her jewelry box. If I slipped it into my backpack, she probably wouldn’t even notice it was gone....

I rifled through each of the presents that she had stacked in the corner, checking over my shoulder every few seconds to make sure no one was coming. It wasn’t there. Cautiously, I tiptoed over to her bedside table and peeked inside the drawer. There it was, partially hidden beneath one of her magazine collages. I sat cross-legged on the bed, leafing through the pages.

Right away, something unfamiliar seized my attention. A tiny picture had been pressed into the inside of the cover. It was a photo of Grandma, with a pair of sisters bookending her on either side. The little girls weren’t used to the Midwestern heat, and wispy tendrils of hair floated out of their ponytails. I remembered taking that picture. I could still feel the papery hands folding each of us together, with Grandma’s pulse flickering against her ribcage as we leaned against her.

I could see my grandma then, her muscles withering under her skin, her nerves becoming more and more brittle by the second. Her voice shriveled away in her throat, and her frame heaved as she struggled to suck in a breath. Pressure welled behind my eyes as her pulse dwindled away, leaving nothing behind but the shells of dried flowers.

When my sister emerged from the bathroom with a towel wrapped around her head, I gasped. I thought that she would judge me for riffling through her things to find the book. Instead, she sat down next to me. “So you found it, huh? It’s okay. You can look at it if you want to.” I flipped a few of the pages until I found a cornflower. It was much smaller than I remembered it, and the stem was twisted and bent. However, there was still a little blue left in it after all these years.

“Why did you hide it away?” I asked my sister.

She sighed. “I don’t know...it just didn’t seem right to me, taking her stuff. I mean, she’s still alive. She’s not...” she stopped there. I knew that she was going to say dying, but I understood why she didn’t. Dying becomes a dirty word when someone you love is sick. I saw her lip wobble a bit as she aimed her face downward. “I don’t know what to do. She sent me an e-mail the other day, asking me if I liked the present. I didn’t know what to tell her. What is there that I can say that could possibly make any difference? ‘Thanks, Grandma, I hope you feel better?’ I wasn’t going to say that it would remind me of her after she was...gone. It just felt too morbid.”

I looked down at the scrapbook in my hands. I took out the four-leaf clover and rubbed it between my fingers. It felt soft like her hands.

A beeping sound bounced up the stairs and into the room. “Oh, look. My cookies are done,” she said.

“What kind of concoction are these ones going to be?”

Mia gave me a weak smile, “Actually, I’m trying something new. It’s Grandma’s famous chocolate chip cookies.”

Fiction

Lauren Taylor ’16



Duality

Digital
Kevin Lopez '17

Snowfield

Winter nights leave the world in bridal white.
A bittersweetness on the wind
like frozen dust,
silver-shrouded silence,
skeletal stillness.
Not colorblind, but color-deaf.
Like a tomb, undisturbed.
Angel feathers drift down,
they fall without sound.
Mute serenity, heavy with hesitation,
drowns all but itself.
Born from ice,
a concert of cold,
a blackout of sound.
Peace draped with lace.
Beneath the veil, the world waits for rebirth.

Poetry
Kaitlynn Otte '17

My Mama, the Prison's Laundry Woman

A sestina

My mama emerges from the jail cells with a copper tub
Heaping with shirts bleached a glaring cream.
Today she carries these shirts from the prison to the wash,
Where she proceeds to groan and hold her back,
Scrubbing and beating the shirts again and again in our basement
Until, at last, they are pinned and left to hang.

On Tuesday Gordon McAllister will be the first to hang
For slitting his wife's pretty little neck in their tub;
Dividing the corpse cleanly, he left her in the basement
Of his mistress's house, behind large cans labeled, "Cream."
He paces his cell now, desperately wishing for his life back
Before his brain is taken and canned by doctors in formaldehyde wash.

Any criminal bodies left unclaimed are chucked in Severin's Wash,
A lovely-smelling ditch where madmen and bad men alike hang.
A melodramatic sign above it reads, "Enter, and you will never come back!"
Posted by some bored schoolboy escaping his mother's call to the tub
Preferring to spend his allowance money on a corpse's offering: shaving cream.
The dead always remember who was abandoned, whether in a ditch or a basement.

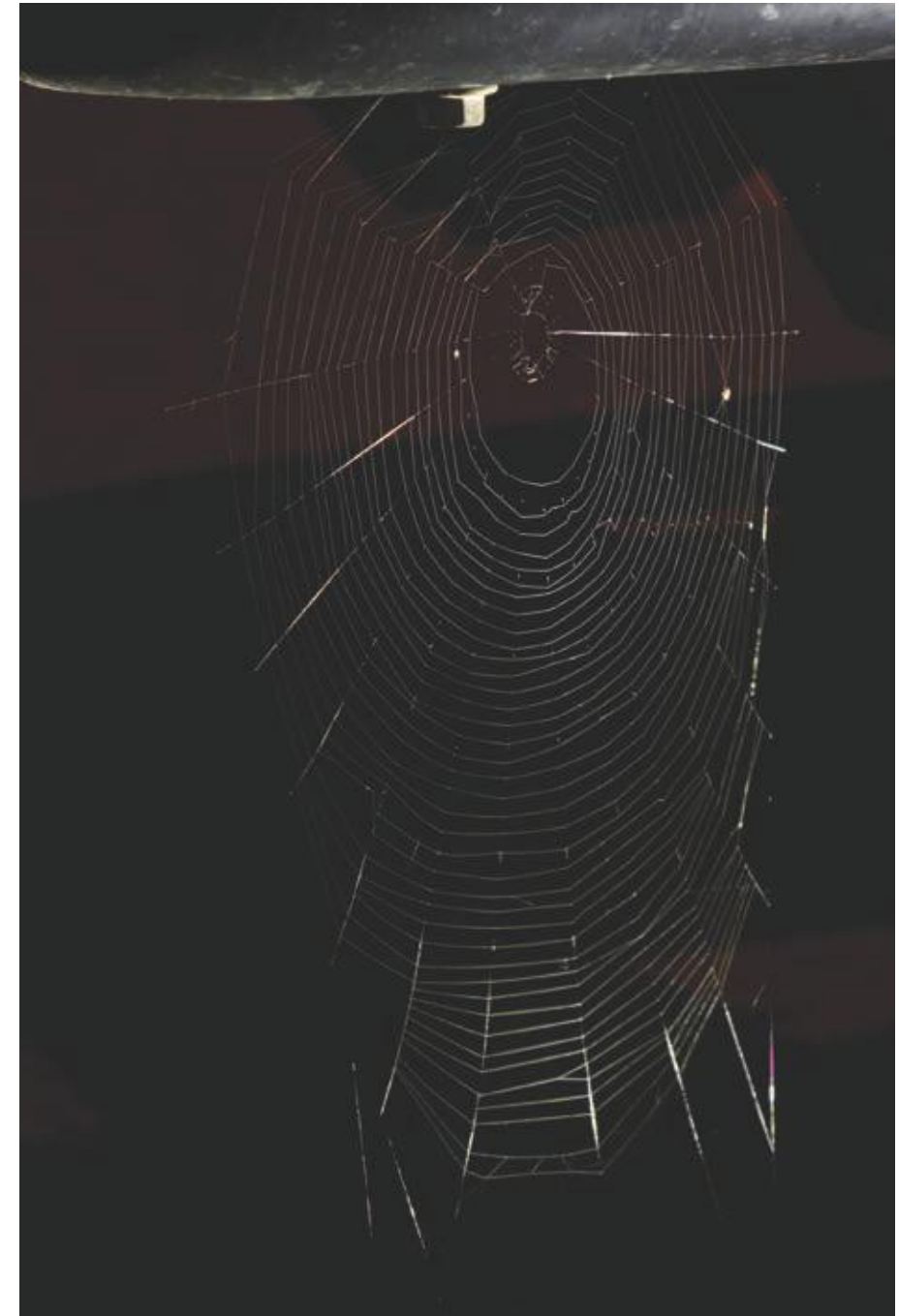
Today my mama goes downstairs to do her daily scrubbing in the basement.
She notices something peculiar about this wash.
A massive clot of red invades the shirts, spoiling their sheen of cream;
Swearing, she rewashes them, disregarding their need to hang.
Once again, they are tossed to soak in that damned tub.
Yet somehow, not fully washed out, the bloody stain comes back.

It is merely a superstition: "Step on a crack, break your mother's back."
Yet a chill overcomes the poor woman frozen in that basement,
Staring at the wretched stain that now seeps into the water of the tub.
With the bloody water, the shirts are now impossible to re-wash,
And even more impossible, obviously, to pin and re-hang,
The scarlet masses that one shone of a glaring cream.

For breakfast, I make a simple cup of black coffee and cream
Wondering if the police will finally catch on and come back.
I think of my poor mama, who I left, feet dangling, to hang.
Unfortunate woman! She caught me bloody in the basement
Breaking the law, pulling each blessed corpse out of Severin's Wash
To give it a proper burial beneath the tiles of our bath tub.

Covering my crime well, I wash my mama's body with creamy soap in the copper laundry tub
Where thousands of loads are rinsed daily. A pity she never got to finish today's wash,
Rinsing the blood out of her son's shirt. Her matronly head hangs, abashed, in the basement.

Poetry
Anna Joy Tanksley '18



Stowaway

Digital Photograph
Teresa Rhynard '17

Beyond My Reach

The twins are Aries.

It's not that I believe in astrology, or think that the signs mean anything at all; it's just that the stars tell stories, and I think some of them need to be heard.

I keep track of these things, pouring over the myths of Andromeda and Ganymede and trying to find where they are imprisoned in the night sky. But the city, where the only tiny pinpricks of light that illuminate the night sky are towering windows and street lamps, isn't the best place to go stargazing. That never stopped me from learning the stories with rigor and intensity. Rationality has a place in space, and as high up as they are, the stars are incredibly grounding.

There is enough familiar and constantly expanding material to write a hundred poems and a thousand stories, and somehow I always end up here, the words to tell the stories of the stars tingling on my fingertips. I use the stars to find my voice, and since they're speaking back to me, it's really not that far to reach.

The twins would've been Aries.

It's not that I think about astrology too often, or think that flimsy future predictions mean anything; it's just that the stars might hold some truth in their stories, and maybe listening to them is worthwhile.

My mom doesn't believe in astrology. But she does believe in angels.

People say my mother has the voice of an angel. Her song soars above the congregation every Sunday, weaving through the stained glass windows and wandering down the organ pipes. She uses her voice to carry her through anything that tries to silence her, keeping time with the angels that sit on her desk, on her walls, around her neck. Her attachment to angels is the cornerstone of her faith.

The ancient Greeks used to worship the stars as their gods, and maybe that's not quite what my mother is doing, but there is a similarity in the way she looks to angels for comfort. They both look skyward for answers. The stars tell stories, the angels sing songs, and the sky just makes a lot of noise. But it's an incredibly beautiful sound: an angel-filled sky that my mother lends her voice to every Sunday in a church where faith and music collide like meteors. She is a chorus member in a concert of angels, and I am the writer who tries to make sense of the tragedies and triumphs of the stars.

I think my mother uses music to try and reach the angels, the same way I use mythology to reach the stars. It's not a desperate reach, just an unending one. Her voice brushes the soft undersides of the clouds as she hums melodies that only half her children get to hear. I scatter words like stars on a page with ink the color of the night sky, a galaxy that no one will get to read. We both want to touch something without actually going where they are.

The twins could've been Aries.

It's not that I really think there's much truth in astrology, but I think the signs might possibly mean something. The stars burn with the necessity of stories within them, and I think there are some that should be heard.

My dad doesn't believe in astrology. He's also an Aries.

The word Aries looks too similar to the name Ares. The pronunciation is even the same. Ares is the Greek god of war and violence. My father is not a violent man, but there is an unshakable discord in him. He was an athlete before he was hurt, an incredible runner, and a part of him still craves the thrill of competition and the feeling of sprinting as fast as he can. He can't anymore, his back and knees and unforgiving time prevent him from reaching the speed and recovery of his youth. Now when he runs, the pain chases him away from the track lines.

Running is a method of escape, but now my father is unable to outrun what feels like a war waged on his body. I have inherited my own methods of escape, and the evidence of it spills out from my pen with the desperation runners feel when they are nearing the finish line.

I think my father hoped that one of his children would choose to run, and while we both stayed away from track races, my sister and I are both runners. It's easy to be light on our feet when we're running from something we don't want to face.

While my father looks to the ground, where his feet hold him steady, I look to the stars, where pinpricks of light guide my way, and somehow we are both reaching for the same thing.

The twins should've been Aries.

It's not that I think all astrology is true. It's just that there are stars and babies being born every day, so I don't see why we can't look up to the universe and see a bit of ourselves in it.

My sister doesn't believe in astrology. But she loves the stars as much as I do.

Unlike me, my sister understands the mechanics of space. She knows that the Earth we live on rests on a tilted axis, so the stars that align in the sky above us are crooked. Or maybe that's just us.

She finds less interest in the follies of Orion or the tragedy of Helle and Phrixus on their ram—the very Aries constellation I remain so fascinated by—and looks more closely at the scientific nature of our solar system. She tells me why Andromeda is placed where she is, with numbers and pictures and graphs, and I explain the hubris of parents and the price that children sometimes have to pay.

Where I string words like stars spun into constellations, she shapes the fire and physics that makes up our galaxy. She has dreams of piecing together airplanes that will take her high above the Earth, sailing through the limbo between the stars and the ground. Maybe she will find a balance between a mother reaching for the clouds and a father trying to find his footing on a planet with a tilted axis.

We differ and fracture like the broken bits of starlight filtering through the pollution that lives in our city, but the bewildering wonder of the universe draws us both in. We face the world in different ways, but she still stands and stares at the stars with me, and that links us more than our blood ever could.

The twins were born far too prematurely and left far too prematurely in the month of March. So really, they shouldn't have been Aries. I'd say they aren't Aries, but I'd like to think that astrology doesn't only apply to the living. They were supposed to be Cancers, like me, but thinking about that makes it more difficult for me to find the right words, to catch my breath, and I no longer know what it is I'm trying to convey. It's easier to say that they would've, could've, should've been Aries, even if they shouldn't have.

My sister and I don't ask the question, and my parents have never answered it, but we all know that if the twins had survived, my sister and I wouldn't exist. My family doesn't talk about things, especially the things that keep us reaching for the clouds and rocking where we stand. We run and we sing and stare up at the sky because all of that's easier than staring at the hole in the middle of our family. None of that changes the fact that there are four sisters in my family and two of them are Aries.

My sister is a Taurus, and my mom is an Aquarius, and my dad is an Aries, and I am a Cancer, and nobody but me thinks about the signs of the unmentioned members of our family.

My mom may not believe in astrology, but she has all of our birthstones lined up on a ring that rests on her right hand's ring finger, and the colors all match with our signs. My dad may not believe in astrology, but he shares a birth month with his two eldest daughters, neither of which are here to help him celebrate. My sister may not believe in astrology, but that doesn't stop her from listening to me when I say that I do.

It's not that I depend on astrology; it's just that medical science has let my family down and it's much easier to look to the stars for answers. It's not that far of a reach because the stars all have something to say and none of it is ever disappointing. Maybe their stories hold the answers for a family moving on and a girl attempting to find her words among the stars.

Nonfiction
Samantha Gross '17

Nonno Who

After "Abuelito Who" by Sandra Cisneros

Nonno who grows his mustache like a smile
but never asks who loves him
who is ball caps and egg plants
who is a golden chain and glass of wine
whose hair is full of dirt
is too stubborn to rest for a day
who tells me in Sicilian that he's made me lunch
who tells me in English to get my homework done
whose big eyes are fishing line
watches me as I play
sleeps in his recliner in the night and day
who still laughs even when he's in pain
is lonely
is a lawnmower buzzing at sunrise
is calling pick up the phone
doesn't work anymore
is spending days between sunflowers
who calls to get no reply
who is handkerchiefs and pocket watches and jingling change
who snores wheeze and breathe wheeze and breathe wheeze and breathe again
is the smile that grows on my face
never asking who loves him
never knowing it too

Poetry
Elisa Andersen '17



Bond
Watercolor
Yeon Jin Kim '18



Revelation

Acrylic

Izaya VandeGuchte '17

Filling the Void

Date: 10/24/16

Dear Isbel,

My therapist says that I need to write to somebody. Not to somebody real, but just to write to somebody with a name. I wish I could just say "Dear Diary." I feel stupid writing to somebody that doesn't exist. But I suppose I must do what Dr. Clarence says. She almost cried the last time I didn't participate in one of her dumb "activities." She says that I have a lot of anger and that I need to find something that makes me happy. Well, Dr. Clarence, what makes me happy is not writing to an imaginary person like I'm crazy.

Okay, tantrum over. This whole writing thing isn't what's bothering me, and Dr. Clarence says the point of this whole exercise is to document the things that really get under my skin, like my Neanderthal sister Harriet.

She is dumb. So dumb. Maybe it would help if we hadn't been sharing the same room for ten years. Maybe it would help if she didn't rebel and leave Mom and Dad fuming every night. Maybe if she took out that stupid nose ring, I wouldn't be so angry. Seriously, it looks more like a booger and less like a sophisticated fashion statement. She also wears makeup like a china doll.

Well, that's it for now. Sounds like Harriet is getting in another fight with the parentals. Time for me to cover my ears with a pillow and pretend that I don't hear what's happening.

Forever Hating,
Sybil

Date: 10/25/16

Dear Isbel,

Dr. Clarence says I didn't do this exercise right because I didn't "properly introduce myself." This includes hobbies, likes, dislikes, etc. Pretty sure I took care of the dislikes part in the previous entry. So let's address the other stuff.

What I like to do is solve problems. For example, my sister's ex's brother said something very inappropriate about Harriet so I socked him. Problem solved. Unfortunately, I made him angry, and he punched me back, knocking me to the asphalt. The rest of the day I walked with burning streaks over my cheeks. As much as I enjoyed hitting that dingbat, I wish I hadn't. Did my sister ever thank me? No. Did she realize how dumb she was and try to change her ways? No. Do I wish that she would just shape up and stop making my parents mad? Definitely. But we don't always get what we wish.

Still Hating Life,
Sybil

Date: 10/26/16

Dear Isbel,

Today kinda sucked. I got heated up after Dr. Clarence's session today. We started talking about hobbies and stuff. But everything got more complicated the more questions she asked. I had told her about how I used to sketch a lot. She asked why I said "used to."

"Because I stopped liking it," I told her.

"What made you stop?"

"Things."

"Have you ever tried picking up the pencil again?"

"No."

"Why not? What makes you not want to try it?"

"Because I just don't want to, okay?"

It was a short session.

Later I showed my frustration by stomping around the house. My parents didn't ask—they're used to it. Harriet just rolled her eyes and told me to get over it. To feel better, I imagined ripping her nose ring out and throwing water on her clown face. It didn't do much, so now I'm just lying in bed and trying to write out this entry without breaking the lead on my pencil. Maybe breaking apart all of Harriet's lipsticks will make me feel better. I'll let you how that goes.

Exhausted from Hating,
Sybil

Date: 10/27/16

Dear Isbel,

My parents just had a big fight with my sister. I was by myself in the bedroom when I heard someone breaking a glass vase against the wall—an obvious sign that Harriet was upset. I tried to use my pillow trick, but even that didn't work. I'm starting to get scared for my family. How did things get so bad? I understand we all have issues, but I don't understand why things had to get so bad that Harriet decided to live a life of partying and rebellion.

Things did die down, and then I heard something like a troll doing a line dance. The door swung open and slammed shut. Harriet trudged to her bed, plopping herself amidst a tangle of bed sheets. She and I made eye contact, but I quickly looked away and pretended I was picking at something on my pillow. I was surprised when she started talking to me.

"Do you miss him?"

I felt my throat swell. "Would be pretty cold of me to say no."

"I think we have it the worst. Now that Mom and Dad's favorite is gone, we have to try to live up to that standard." She wiped away a couple of mascara-covered tears. "It's not fair."

Normally, anything my sister says makes me furious, but this time my heart sank. "No, it's not."

That's all I want to talk about for now.

A Little Heartbroken,
Sybil

Date: 10/31/16

Dear Isbel,

It's been a few days, but it was rough for a while after the big fight. Harriet decided it would be best to spend the night at a friend's house for a bit until things cooled down. Mom and Dad didn't object. Of course, I should say Dad didn't object. Mom was busy bawling in her bedroom.

Things were quiet a couple days after, so I tried to do what Dr. Clarence recommended and sketch. It wasn't as hard as I thought. Not that I drew anything that special—just a couple trees. But it was satisfying once I put the pencil to paper. As I drew each leaf, it seemed as though a heavy weight was being slowly lifted off my shoulders. My portrait of two maple trees was no masterpiece, but I was still satisfied nonetheless. I had just finished shading the bark when I heard voices coming from the living room. I stuffed my sketchbook under my pillow and cracked open the door. Someone was crying. At first I figured it was Mom sobbing again about Harriet. My legs almost gave out when I saw that Mom, Dad, and Harriet were all clumped together into a group hug.

"It's been so hard," Harriet cried. "You acted as though Sybil and I needed to fill the void."

"We know, sweetheart," Dad said. I couldn't believe that he was crying. Dad is the emotionally stable one—never shows any emotion. Now, that stoic mountain was dripping from his eyes and his nose. "That was how we tried to cope."

Mom, blinking through tears, saw me peeking through my cracked door. She smiled and motioned for me to come out.

Harriet and Dad smiled too and created an opening so I could join the group hug. Without any hesitation, I found myself running into their embrace.

"Things will get better," said Mom. "They have to."

I think that I'll show Dr. Clarence my drawings the next time I meet with her.

Starting to Recover,
Sybil

Fiction

Mary McQuistan '17

A Picture of Ecuador for My Saviors

My team saved me:
let me give you a picture.
It's green, but in patches
a quilt of farms stretches up—to the peaks of the Andes
clouds pillow in circles around them.

When the pain which weakens me wakes me,
these are the beauties of Ecuador I see travelling from Quito to Cuenca.

My team who saves, we rise to ear-popping heights.
Tan ground mixes into the green landscape; colors cool and strong
rest in circular shadows from clouds above.

The honey-colored sphere behind mountains parts the clouds,
subdues the skies into the shades of a sepia photo.
These views I want to wake you for.
Look! The valley is full of clouds—bright ones and chilled ones and drowning ones
Sun slices, these clouds transform—cotton-candy ones and tangerines-on-a-hot-summer-day
ones and homemade-lemon-curd ones.
My team, don't you want to wake up for these pictures which slip quick past cameras?

But you are tired; all I can give you is my words in past tense—
you are tired because you have helped me.
I walk beside you heaving everything of mine and yours, our lives in
four backpacks.
Thank you, I want to say (but can't).
I know it is tiring; I know it is hard.
I want to rip it from your arms, the arms of a team saving me.
My team who saved me, do you want to see Ecuador?

On the way back we see it once more.
Now I carry my own bag, feeling like a foreign object again.
Twelve hours of driving showed this:
fairies spun between clouds flossing their iridescent teeth on the soft accumulation of rain drops
fog filled the basin of a circle of mountains and slipped up like smoke from a witch's cauldron
the muscles of the mountain ridges shook off dew drops which race down our windows.
You still help me.

I don't need it anymore.
I'm neither desperate nor in pain.
No, I am happy.

Yet
you help me put on my backpack, still oversized,
you give me an avocado, your hate and my love,
you let me lay across your lap, my turn to sleep.
My team, you saved me.
Now here I say thank you.
Here is my picture for you.



The Last Frontier

Graphite
Izaya VandeGuchte '17

Trains

The trains that run through Wadena, Minnesota shriek every time they rattle past the town. No matter the time, no matter the season, the house walls shake and clatter and the train whistle screams. They make the windows shake in their frames, and the second story houses quiver on their foundations. The clattering of wheels on tracks is relentless.

“You can always tell which way the train runs by how many whistles it blows,” Melvin said, hands shaking almost as much as the walls. “Two whistles from that way.” He raises a frail hand to point back toward the window, the one that looks out over Jefferson Street. “One whistle from the other.”

I didn't come to Minnesota to write a story, but if I did, I would write his.

“I took the train back home after the war,” Melvin, my great grandfather, explained, passing the deck of cards to me to shuffle. They're worn at the edges, the cards and his hands. I shuffled the cards, and he adjusted his glasses before continuing. “It was three in the morning, and nobody was up, except a police officer in his car. The train station was a few miles out of town, but when we asked for a ride, he said no. We had to walk back into town with our bags at three o'clock in the morning.”

“How rude!” I said, indignant on his behalf, as I dealt the cards between us.

My great grandfather just laughed and picked up his cards.

I have forgotten how to write the words of the story. It seems I will never finish. It feels as if I slid them from my tongue to my fingers eons ago, typed to the echo of train whistles.

When I sleep the first night in Minnesota, almost exactly one year later, the first night I've spent in the state without him there, all I can hear is the quiet. Nature is a different sort of quiet. There are wind and thunder and the sharp drill of cicadas. California has the manmade drone of freeway air and ambulance drivers listening to the city with bated breath. Here, there is silence. Unending and invasive.

I am relieved when I hear the train.

The couple on the third floor of a building on South Jefferson Street have seen a lot of the town's history. They do. They did. He used to.

I want his stories, but I selfishly want to hear them in his voice. He had a particular way of telling them, the details jumbled specifically and scattered through the story. He is a man who has lived through 90 years of change in a small town in Minnesota, where the trains run every time the silence seems to settle too deep.

“When I was born, we were supposed to pay the doctor five dollars, but we didn't have the money, so we gave him a chicken.”

I have heard the story countless times. He told it whenever anyone is in the room. The story of his birth. It seems I have to be the one to tell the story of his death.

People want to talk about him, share the stories he used to tell. But for all that I am a writer, I fail with my words. I am an intruder on several generations of grief.

I write postcards instead of learning how to mourn.

Dear Sara.

Margaret, my great grandmother, seems smaller, more frail. It is not that Melvin was sturdy, but the two of them together made steady sense, puzzle pieces that have witnessed a century roll by with train whistles and grandchildren, too many changes for one person to survive alone. They seemed less fractured together.

The apartment is larger than I remember and his chair is empty even if I can still hear his voice and that makes a difference.

I am not expecting it to still smell like him, like them, the inescapably familiar smell that I always remember, regardless of how long it's been since I last stepped through the door.

It looks exactly the same. Porcelain and silver and quilted squares. M&M's by the door. A deck of cards on the table. I want to believe that everything is the same, even if I know it is not.

Somehow, my great grandmother and her lonely apartment are less whole without him.

The town is full of people, in a way that only small towns can be full and empty all at once.

“We didn't want to name your grandmother until after we found him,” Margaret said, looking at me with eyes I have seen staring out of my own face. “I went into labor while Mel was still missing, somewhere out there on the battlefields, but I didn't want to name our baby girl without him.”

“That was when he had malaria, right?” I asked, shuffling cards in my hands. It felt like I was always shuffling cards.

“That's right,” Margaret said. She smiled at her husband from across the table, picking up her own cards with shriveled and veiny hands. “Mel, you were in Japan, the Pacific Coast.” She turned to me with an ancient grin. “Contracted malaria and was kept in a tent out there. Didn't know where he was for a while. But he came back to us, just like he always does.”

“And then we got to pick a name,” Melvin said, briskly, as if trying to brush aside the war that almost took him from his family. There is a reason they are landlocked in a tiny town in Minnesota, where the only remnants of the outside world are the trains that come and go.

I spend a lot of time in a room with two windows and painted walls a shade between white and blue and the train is the only sound, rattling the walls as it clicks by and shaking the bed, my foundation.

I don't have enough stamps for another postcard, but I write one anyway. If I don't, I will be trapped between the two windows and a corner wall neither blue nor white that waves when the train rolls by.

“Dear Sara,” I write because there is nothing else to write.

“Dear Sara,” I write. “Dear Sara Dear Sara Dear Sara,” scattered across a dozen postcards from the state of Minnesota. It is never anything serious, never anything more than passing comments that will entertain postal workers from the Midwest to Arizona.

“Dear Sara, the walls are blue but not.”

“Dear Sara, my great grandfather is dead,” I want to write, but she already knows, and I don't know if a single postcard can contain the weight of a train whistle threading through town.

“Dear Sara, the trains rattle the walls when they roll by, and it is the only kind of earthquake this town will ever get. The earthquakes that shake my family are the kind that rolls through mountains, not main streets, and send rubble soaring into places we didn’t think would ever see rocks. The kind that leave us shivering on foundations less solid than they were before, the kind that makes you unable to believe that anyone could ever see themselves as invincible. The kind that makes you realize that no one is invincible.”

“Dear Sara, my great grandfather is dead.”

I scrap the words that never left my pen and start over.

“Dear Sara,” I don’t write. “I ran out of postcard stamps in Minnesota, so this one is coming from California, where the trains, like my family, aren’t close enough to my house to leave us shaking.”

When I am back in the California air, surrounded by the familiar noise I only remember when I leave, I do what I have always done when the words fill too much of my mind: I write. In the introspective hours of the early morning, I can finally breathe the words I am afraid to speak out loud.

“Dear Melvin,” I write. “The trains are still running.”

And in the midst of screaming sirens and passing cars, I can almost convince myself that I can hear the trains that run through Wadena, Minnesota.

Nonfiction
Samantha Gross '17

Visions of Hood Canal

Back in the glory days,

my father would come wake me up at 4:30 in the morning
to go chum salmon fishing.

Those were the days when my little brother could not do anything besides sleep
Or sit around smiling like a little duckling with his downy hair sticking straight up,
immobile—a foreshadowing of his stubbornness to come.

Back in the days of yore,

Dad would come to my room before the sun had gotten up,
before the clouds had mustered themselves together to start raining,
and would take me and my sister to go fishing.

Oh the clouds were glorious, the rain relentless,

And the smell of fishes’ blood stained the boat—
my young father’s first boat:

the one with the front cubby hardly larger than a cupboard,
but big enough to fit my sister and me and our little pigtails.

In those days, we stopped at the gas station and picked up doughnuts,
sunflower seeds, and chocolate milk

for our breakfasts and to keep us quiet on the drive.

The irritable October sky could not deter any of the dozens of
fishermen who turned out in the first weeks of the season since
their black or green waders like high-waisted rain boots
probably had holes in the toes anyway.

What I would not give on in this 74° Irvine day in April

to trade places with one of those smelly old fishermen,
standing for hours and hours in the 37° saltwater, waiting with rippled
brows, but grinning coffee-stained teeth

for their counter-partners, the little striped sharks, the gnarled chum salmon to bite.

Reel it in, Washington’s own crocodile—

emerald green with dragon’s jaws, bruised purple stripes.

And the Maker, whose voice cries from the shore, who bids us rather
fish for men, who formed the salmon’s beaked mouth, who
painted him plume and sage

observes all and buoys up the soul.

Poetry
Natalie Bartels '17

Cardiff Nights

Like the Welsh winds, my cares lift and
my breath mingles with the mist.

Your whisper interrupts the cricket's quip—
He finds our ways uncouth.

But I find no error in your midnight murmur,

Whisper on.

Ribald croaks call to us, lampooning our caresses—
Their jealousy does not faze me,

Carry on.

From a bustle in the bushes comes a grunt—
The buck cannot let his own brawn go unnoticed

His pomp could never rouse my distracted eye,

Boast on.

Atop the dewy earth
We have our hazy rendezvous,

And though the creatures vie for my attention,
I only have ears for you.

Poetry
Marissa Bearss '17



Space Explorer
Digital
Jenica Shipley '17

The Map from Lebanon to Greece

Her face was a map. The lines around her eyes, lips, and forehead charted the mountains, seas, and roads traversed in her journey for refuge. The plains of her cheeks sectioned apart dual homes—one abandoned in Lebanon, one discovered in Athens. The slope of a nose between the two existences jutted forth to separate homes with hardship. Black kohl traced the oceans of her eyes. Her smile was rolling like a tide of past tragedy and present joy; the contours of her teeth offering a peek at a dream renewed each time. The topography revealed inside the folds of Fatima's turquoise hijab spoke of the experiences cast away from memory, only returning as nightmares.

In the Alliance Relief Center, Fatima embodied the humanization of my journalistic curiosity. Two years of intentional research in the refugee crisis sat before me. As a not-yet-realized journalist, I pondered but did not have to make the ethical decisions that communicators of painful truth must. I shied from pressuring her when the story that gave her a psychiatrist, a social worker, and a Greek teacher scaled the wells of her eyes only to recede to less painful memories. Instead, I imagined the statistics of Human Rights Watch, the emotion-drenched photojournalism of Aris Messinis, the travel stories alongside refugees of Anemona Hartocollis lifting from the static pages to be personified in the lively woman sitting across from me.

The quake of trauma leaving the body through story already occurred months before our arrival. To bring back the memory by being asked to recount it would cause an aftershock. The memory now drifted away from the sea of her mind like the bodies of the people who drowned in her boat from Turkey. She recounted the recent events robotically as if she practiced memorizing the emotion out of memory. The bare facts still rattled tears to the edges of the kohl around her eyes. She recounted holding her daughters close on the boat (“I told them, at least if we die, we die together”), watching others die (“mothers and children separated, husbands and wives, their bodies floating”), arriving for two months of debilitating depression (“I cried every day. I never left the room”). She carefully navigated around the gap between her education in Lebanon and exodus from Turkey.

I first faced Fatima in a refugee center with mirrored walls extending the grid of latitudinal chairs and tables into a sideways infinity. In the adjacent room, children left the chains of their parents and jumped chaotically from tables onto plastic houses while volunteer Vinh Vu calmly practiced scales on his guitar in the center of the floor. The clang of children's screams and guitar strings did not leave the boundary of the room, so quiet cloaked the wide room in which I spoke to Fatima.

While Fatima studied for her upcoming test in English class, fellow travelers Alanna, Jessica, and I learned about her experiences on either side of this gorge in memory through a mosaic of anecdotes and adages. She explained that she found the Center after overcoming her fear of leaving her room in Athens. A Greek volunteer told her to stop taking the antidepressants she depended upon and simply go out into the city each day—a remedy that worked. Fatima described her shock at the hospitality and kindness of the Greek people who welcomed her and her two daughters.

She now planned on applying for permanent residence in Greece and work as a translator while her daughters attended college. “If you love the people, you will love the language,” she told us as she flipped through a detailed notebook with pages in English and Greek overlaid with small Arabic

notes around the edges. Fatima proudly told us of Lebanon's education system in which she learned both French and English in early childhood. “French is beautiful, I think, especially for women,” breathed Fatima as her lips formed a kiss, the expression of the language. She assured us that she also liked English. “It's the common language. When we were in Turkey we didn't use Arabic to get around, we used English,” she instructed. I saw an opportunity to learn something beyond her immigrations status and asked, “May I practice my Arabic with you?”

“Yes, of course!”

“As-salamu alaykum.”

Her eyes grew tall, her lips short as she burst, “That is a greeting among Muslims.” Her tone gentler, “For you, *marhabaan*.” She wrapped her hands around mine to soften the uncomfortable moment. The warmth of her fingers spread from my wrists to my shoulders until the muscles of my back eased.

After her rejection of the greeting, I adjusted my questions to which gender *kayf halik* is for and if it was appropriate to use, “If God wills it.” Finally, I asked what the phrase so often plastered across Arabic restaurants means.

“If you don't say *bismillah* before you eat, the devil will eat with you,” Fatima chirped.

I stared, confused.

“The devil will eat with you, so even if you eat and eat you will never be satisfied. But if you say *bismillah*, the devil cannot eat with you. If you eat a small amount you will still be full,” she continued.

Learning from her fascinated me. So much more than an object of curiosity or compassion, Fatima informed me in things beyond a temporary political situation in a distant country. Her life was not a picture of tragedy, but a relic of dreams and determination.

Before time felt stagnant, the teacher for her English class stood at the door. For 45 minutes, we had laughed and learned together.

During the following visit, I would only see her while I meandered through the furniture-filled center as she bound towards her Greek lesson. “I got 100% on my English test,” she announced then. Her Greek teacher, who spoke no English, asked Jessica and me a few questions through Fatima's deft translation before they left to continue training in Fatima's fourth language. That day, we busied ourselves with quietly braiding bracelets for her daughters as we adjusted to the large room empty of her presence. As she left, she picked out two bracelets which coordinated with the flower imagery embroidered on the edge of the black, tissuey hijab bordering her confident face. She thanked us as she swept from the room.

Sad to see the teacher and translator leave so quickly, I was comforted with her statement from the day before.

Fatima said, “We are in a bad time right now. When you are in a bad time, you remember each person that helps you. I may not remember the name, but I know the face of each person who visited the center since our arrival. They came to help us, so I remember them.”

Shukran Fatima.



Breathe of the Past

Digital Photograph
Mariah Kohl '18

Beautiful Feet

Based On Isaiah 52:7

Throw
off your sandals,
strap on peace.
Dust off your feet,
dirty them with good tidings.
Allow your calluses to heal,
then crack your heels for salvation.

Up the cragged mountain,
slipping on the rubble of unbelieving doubt.
Harnessed to the Word. Inching up the cliff.
Reaching the summit,
looking down, feet cloaked with earth.
Separating soil to plant a seed.
My work is done. God will nourish. God will provide.
Moving on to new mountains, my feet's glimmer is not of this world.
As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."

Poetry
Megan Carbiener '18



Becoming Grand Canyon

Photography
Thea Gavin



About Concordia University Irvine

Concordia University Irvine prepares students for their vocations—their various callings in life. CUI offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in a beautiful Southern California location, with online and regional cohort options. Concordia's undergraduate program is distinctive among universities in California because of its nationally recognized Enduring Questions & Ideas (Q&I) curriculum and its Lutheran heritage that provides a thoughtful and caring Christian community that lives out the theology of “Grace Alone. Faith Alone.”

Location

Just 40 miles south of Los Angeles, Concordia University Irvine is located in the heart of Orange County, minutes from beaches, jobs, internships, world-class shopping, and a diversity of cultural experiences. Yet, Concordia's campus is secluded and tucked away in rolling green hillsides overlooking the city of Irvine and Orange County.

Accreditation

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education
- International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education
- California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

Schools

- School of Arts and Sciences
- School of Business
- School of Professional Studies
- School of Education
- Christ College

Faculty

- Full Time Faculty: 105 (Percentage of Faculty with Ph.D. or other terminal degree: 64.8%)
- FTE Faculty: 206
- Student to faculty ratio: 18:1

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