




Spring 2020

2020 Greenleaf Review (no. 33)

Sigma Tau Delta

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THE GREENLEAF REVIEW



The Greenleaf Review

The Greenleaf Review is edited and published by Whittier College students to reflect the wide variety of voices and experiences comprising our dynamic community. This unwavering representation of who we are aims to nurture and steward the experiment in openness, inclusion and leadership that is Whittier at its best.

This is us, have a look!

Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We want to thank everyone who made this reimagination of The Greenleaf Review possible, from Media Council, to our staff, and, most importantly, our contributors — without whom this goal would not have been realized. Our team has worked tirelessly to put together this volume under extraordinary circumstances, all of which is testament to the Whittier community's extraordinary resiliency and spirit.

This issue showcases the dynamic and diverse voices of Whittier College across departments and creative mediums. We also hope it will serve as an enduring representation of this chaotic time in history through the eyes of Whittier's Poets. The Greenleaf Review will continue to grow, and with the support of its readers and contributors, will also continue to embody Whittier in 3D.

We would like to express a special thanks to Professor Joe Donnelly whose guidance throughout this process has helped to shape not only the Review, but also those who worked on it.

Sincerely,
The Executive Editors

Letter on Behalf of Sigma Tau Delta

Even before my invitation to join, my view of Sigma Tau Delta was solidified by the issue of The Greenleaf Review that was released each year. I was touched by this collection of student work.

This issue strives to improve inclusivity, bringing in voices, concerns, and styles from across the campus. What hasn't changed is the dedication of the journal's staff to see this publication make it to the students, regardless of what challenges arise.

I want to acknowledge my Vice Presidents, Dylan Stolte and Melanie Stoffel, for their continued representation of Sigma Tau Delta throughout this year. And of course, I want to give my sincere thanks to ENGL 290 for making The Greenleaf Review what our campus needs. I hope this journal not only provides the escape and engagement that its readers need, all of which testifies to the perseverance of the literary arts through the diligence of its creators, contributors and audience.

CJ Esparza, Sigma Tau Delta President 2020

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Special Thanks To:

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Drive Straight for 990 miles + The 575 project

by *Evan Wyno*

Gone are my blue skies framed by palm trees, replaced now with gray clouds and pine trees. My drive back to Portland from LA was a somber event, almost like a funeral for a friend. If only our SUV was the color black the picture of our journey back home would have been more complete. Somehow, as the treads of our tires warmed to the asphalt skin of I-5, and the sound of a worn fan belt betrayed an overworked engine, my abrupt departure from LA during this pandemic felt as if I was leaving a part of my soul behind.

During the drive back to Portland, I sat in the back of our SUV in half of a seat carved out among overstuffed bags of clothes, lacrosse gear and a small succulent plant shaped like an octopus. The outstretched arms of the succulent grasping towards the sky seemed like an apt metaphor. Through a shard of space in the window, I could see the world speed by – mileposts, half of a golden arch, a “Jesus Is The Answer” billboard

followed by a weathered Vote Republican banner. I burrowed into my seat as the mile markers flew past the window and the things that crowned against me, things that only yesterday served as my home away from home, now served as epitaphs of how much has changed in the time it takes to sneeze.

Making the journey seem even more surreal and uneasy was the endless background conversations of my Dad desperately giving CPR to LA and OC small businesses trying to stay afloat and provide relief to their panicked employees. All of this intertwined with my Mom listening to a public radio podcast updating the latest Covid-19 statistics. My small space suddenly seemed a little smaller.

When reality set in and I felt overwhelmed, I decided to try this Navy Seal breathing technique I learned on YouTube that lowers your heart rate. Inhale through your nose for seven seconds, hold your breath for four seconds and breathe out for eight seconds. Repeat

as needed. I did a lot breathing.

It took forever for day to turn to night as we drove on. Familiar things outside our window became dark silhouettes to paint with our imaginations. It was like the world turned out the lights and all you were left with is an afterimage. Perhaps, this is the best way to describe the feeling in the pit of my stomach. The things we grew familiar with and accustomed to seeing were suddenly being pulled away by this beast. All we see and hear are the afterimages of people, places and experiences that are gone forever. Say goodbye to summer, adios to your favorite uncle and farewell to friendly gatherings on the weekend.

As we pulled into our dark street and our gate grumbled like an old man reluctant to move after a nap, I realized that some things will never change and soon the only afterimage we will be left with is the one of a beast that once had its way with country and people.

The 575

a collection of Haiku - written on a highway in a world where numbers mean more than our creative souls.

Foreign Virus Stop Tanning Booth Incompetence Social distancing

High tide paddle fast
Sea foam swirls carried by waves
Wet sand love affair

*Talking through a mask
Is it time to say goodbye
The future is here*

Trump Card lay it down
You Playing with a full deck?
I have got huge hands

ASTEROIDS APPROACH
TURN AWAY DISAPPOINTED
HUMAN UNKINDNESS

*Who lives or who dies
No longer is it God's will
Twelve hundred dollars*

No Less Than Six Feet Apart Is Better Than Deep Eulogy is Read

Distant siren sound
Nighttime is sleepless
Dawn repeats itself

Sneeze guard love affair
Condensation blurs my thoughts
Lip marks on plastic

Homemade mask will do
Cotton bandana disguise
Scissors left behind

Grocery shelves bare
Reaching for something not there
I grasp for hope now

Empty Shelves Wiped Clean
Bingo Event Canceled
Hey Look Vacancy

Unhappy hour drink Stacked coasters await their moment Colorless neon

TEMPER AND TAN LINES
BRIONI AND BAD TIMES
FACE MASK AND LONG LINES

CORONAVIRUS
LABORED BREATHE RESPIRATOR
BLUE SUITS AND BLUSTER

Mother Nature Please
Forgive Us For What We Do
The Green Turns To Brown

I have a fever
Goodbye for at least two weeks
I may not come back

Hood Pie

by Noah Humphrey

Crack open a sauntering beetle within a bowl of milk and cereal crumbs
Open a plate of food stamps and dump its value in the bowl
After that sprinkle a work of salty oppression and hefty colonialism
Leave in the project oven for 15 minutes

Take it out of the oven, scorch it, then say a limitless prayer about its crust and
batter the pie with the Statue of Liberty over and over again
Do that until the pie tastes bitter when someone kneels during the National
Anthem

Attack the murky conclusions of race and social class
Cut open the loping officers strung along the sidewalk
Piece apart their guns and simmer the pie for more than a minute

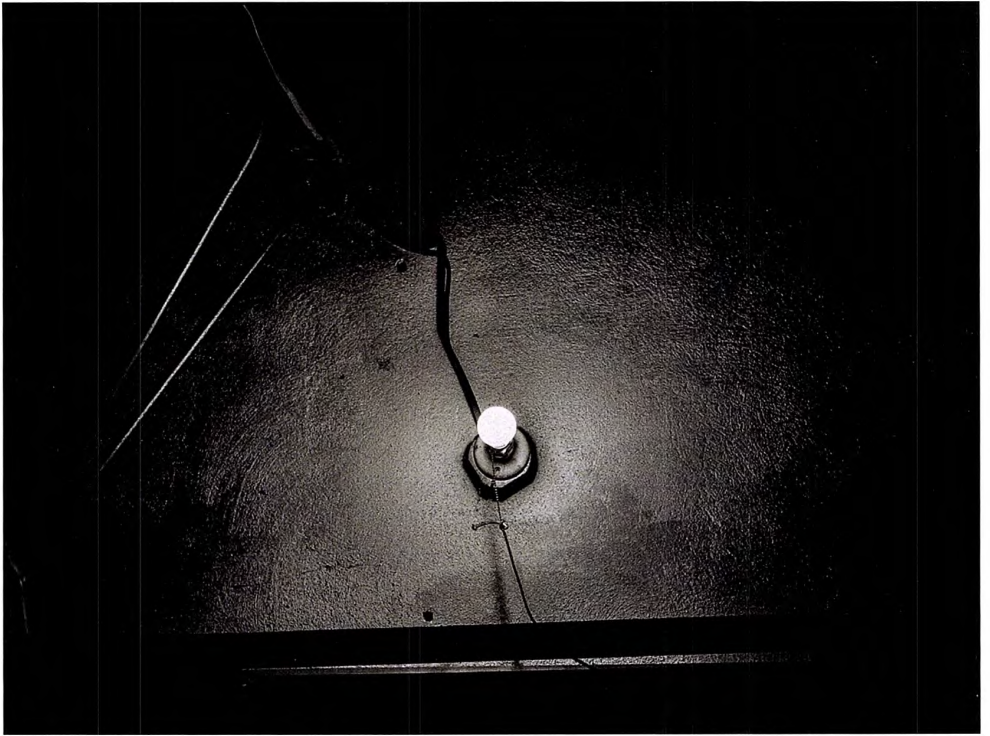
Stir and say I can't breathe [powerful line]

Proceed to flatten the pie with more lethal force
Flatten gently as only darker pies get this treatment,
Remove the impurities from lighter pies but with
darker pies, they need more color.

Until the pie is purple and ripe with
the smell of boysenberry death
It's almost done!!

Place fake trimmings and chains along the sides of the pie
Adorn the pie with false convictions, media disapproval, and social inequities
that's how you obtain the infamous hood pie.,
Hesitantly more pies are popping in the shops
of South Central All for the great cause, right!?





A LIGHT IN THE DARK

by Emerson Little

Days of Heat and Plants

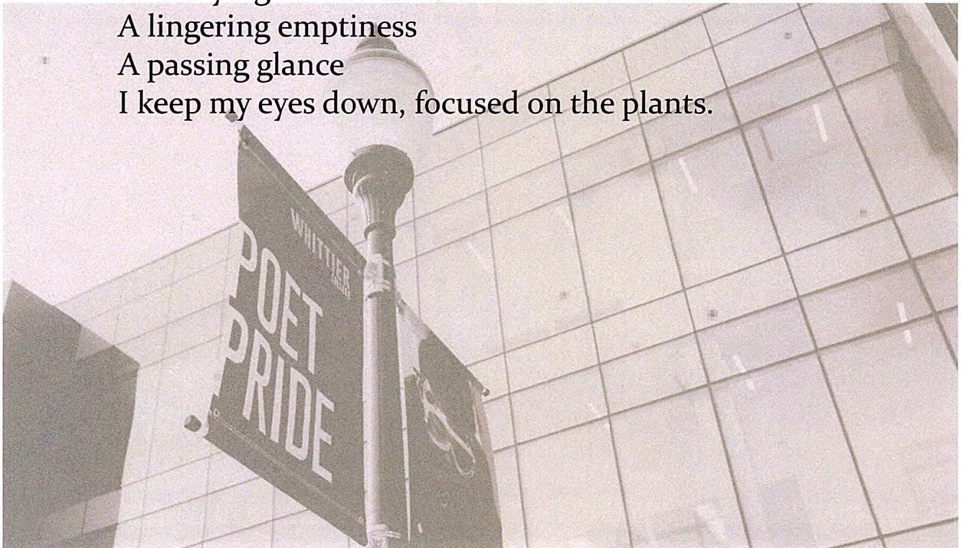
by Bailey Francis


The green out the window.
The seamless edges,
I'm stuck in limbo
And it's filled with trimmed hedges.
Shadows of thoughts around me have turned stale.
The heat is draped over campus like a veil.

The cold air of the SLC
Fills me with a sterile anxiety.
The sleek facilities seem to disrupt my state of mind.
The proteins fall away and bind
To the rose bushes that guard the facilities,
warm from the air but ill with time.

I walk up the stairs
To the gym filled with art
I can't tell where the tree roots end and I start
A single black dot painted in the middle of a canvas
Makes me wonder if I myself am the campus.

The same day repeats itself over and over again
As if trying to draw attention to an idea out of focus
A lingering emptiness
A passing glance
I keep my eyes down, focused on the plants.





Under the Yellow Flag

By Dom Wilton

The buildings outside my window were grey, to begin with. Now, under this iron sky, they look so sickly. Like the face of a dying man, they look weathered, beaten, and left behind by the world. The rain, which has been falling heavily for about a week, has turned their walls into an even more deathly shade of pale. The only saving grace comes at dusk when, as weary eyes fail to adjust to their darkening surroundings, a switch is flipped.

Nineteen rectangles of light each appear in different colors and different hues, each reflecting the individuals hidden behind the blinds. It's hard to remember that there is

still a world out there sometimes.

This apartment has four rooms, but only two doors – one being the front. It doesn't get a lot of direct light. The white-washed interior tries to make amends, however, falls achingly short. The bathroom door gets the most use. The front has scarcely been unlocked in the past fortnight. There are voices and footsteps outside it, but the body to which they belong is never seen. Between this and the lights in the windows, there is no other indication of another living thing around.

There's still furniture missing. The lease is only a few months old and a trip to IKEA is out

of the question. All the essentials are here: bed, table, chairs, mirror... Now feels like the time for necessity rather than extravagance. Call it Spartan, but it feels like a Spartan time. Now is about what is needed rather than what is wanted. The miles and miles of supermarket aisles have made people hysterical, furiously hoarding what they can until they're safe and alone behind a wall of soups and tinned beans.

There's a little café around the corner. Inside, mirrors hung and reflected the smiling faces of families, lovers, and, on occasion, myself. The whole thing looked like it had been lifted from a variety of rooms at Versailles.

There were ornate tables, chairs, armoires, and a piano. The owner, Lem, treated strangers like friends. When he spoke, it was with kindness. I cannot imagine him ever raising his voice in anger. His jet-black hair was slowly turning silver and his face was lined from a life lived with an intense joy. His cheeks had long since given up resisting his smile and had instead formed two neat, permanently etched creases as if to more easily accommodate it. I can't imagine it will survive. The last time I was there half the restaurant was under renovation and the food was take-out only. Behind a plastic screen, Lem's partner was painting the floors. Lem sat on the one solitary table doing admin.

It seemed that there hadn't been any other customers that day. It was mid-afternoon.

I hope I don't get used to this. I sound misanthropic, but I'm really not. It's hard to talk about a colorful, populated world when all that seems to be in the past. One day, this will all be over. I know that. Will it be hard to adjust back?

Will I want to go back to how things were? Those last few months before the storm came seemed so fast, so anxious, and so fearful. At least now there's a certain stillness. I'm aware that there is still every reason to be fearful, but the hysteria has gone. This is tangible. Everything before felt so abstract. That's hard when even now the fear is because of something with no color, no odor, no texture. It seems that we've just become afraid of people. On rare occasions, I do venture outside the apartment block. I wait standing in a driveway, almost in the road, for someone approaching to pass me. I want to be as far away as possible. This is not because I'm scared of catching something from them, but rather I'm scared that I myself have it. If they're out they must have good reason to be. If I get them sick then how are they going to be able to work? If they can't work, how are they going to pay their rent? We didn't think about this hard enough in peacetime. I wonder if we'll think about it

more after.

I hate the dishes the most. It sounds so self-centered and trivial, but I really despise doing the dishes. I never used to. It used to simply be something I did as part of the day.

Now, it seems to be all I do. I eat, I wash up. That's how it started at least. Recently, I've got into the habit of eating until there are no plates, bowls, or cutlery and then having to face a daunting mountain of used crockery. I just don't want that to be the memorable moment of my day. There used to be so much to occupy myself with.

Sometimes, I'll drive up into the hills. Even then I'm isolated. There's no one around, at least not outside their houses. They look so green after the rain; it reminds me of home. I'm fine with a bit of rain. Even the filthiest backstreets smell fresh after the rain. I wish I could see rain in a desert. That must really be a sight. Every so often I get the urge to pack my bags and wait it out somewhere void of industry and commerce. I'll build myself a little

shack in Topanga, far away from the general store and rich, old hippies. I'll grow enough food to live.

I'll have a bicycle and basket ready if I ever need to buy anything. I could have people stay after a hard night of living, maybe make it extended if we really want with a couple of additions here and there. I could be comfortable with that. Until then, maybe a tent. How the hell am I going to buy land in Topanga? Why would I spend money on a tent at this time?

And so, the dream dies until it resurfaces before withering once more.

Above the apartments, I can see the top of 'Big Blue', the imposing Scientology building. Where I grew up, they closed all the places of worship. I wonder what's going on in there. I've never thought about what a Scientology church would look like. Big Blue is obviously an abbey by some definition, but what about anything smaller? I've never seen one. One day I might pluck up the courage and ask them, but I really don't want

the hassle of being followed. I've heard from friends of friends about how they took their "personality test" and then started seeing the same cars behind them at stop signs. I'd rather just not.

Anything or anyone who feels that they need their name written that big in light-up letters probably doesn't have the answers. I wonder, what does a Scientology funeral look like?

Last night I dreamed of a bright, cloudless day. I was home and the wind lifted the leaves of the trees so gently that it bordered on affection. My shadow was long, but the air was not yet cold. I was sitting at a table surrounded by my friends. I could not see their faces, but I knew who they were. Each had a glass in their hand. We talked, and laughed, and drank like nothing had changed. I can't remember specifics. Around us, others were doing the same.

I couldn't tell if this was some ekphrastic rumination on a past memory or if it was a symbol of hope for what is sure to come in the future. It was just a

moment in time cut off from the rest like a bubble. That's what dreams are after all-isolated creations. That seems fitting.

When I stirred, I wished to return, to retreat away from this painful present and back to my own little perfect world. I think everyone could use a sunny day about now.

Other nights I dream about running. I'm not really running to or away from anything.

That's all I can remember. I want to know more. I want to know why I'm running. If there's something behind me, I want to turn and confront it. If there's something ahead, I want to get there. It's nice to run, though. Especially now, I think the change of pace is nice if nothing else. I'm so sedentary, despite the occasional outing. It feels like we've stopped dead.

Anyone outside seems to have been animated supernaturally. At least writing is therapeutic. I wish I was moving more than just my hand. I wish it felt like anything else was moving at all.



CAPTURED
by Heidi Metro



chasm

by Ariel Horton

her home-bleached hair, the strong smallness of her,
the slippage of her soft walk in the rain,
today this girl reminded me of you—
the thrumming weight of how I wounded you,
somehow inside the curve her shoulders made.
I watched her blue shoes stir up limpid pools
of cloud-water, and my expired want
for you mixed itself in, gasping and soaked.
last time we spoke was when the cancer spread
and wrung your father out of his body.
you asked me if the grief would always feel
the way it feels to swallow a void whole.
I told you that time heals—gentle, cliché.
the chasm in me screamed. I told her, shhh.

Held Captive in Love

By Madison VanWinkle

“Mirror, mirror, on the wall who is the fairest of them all?” she repeats under her shaking breath with eyes that dare to stare into her own broken reflection. There once stood a strong, self-assured woman with ruby nails, a pointed smile, bright shining eyes that sent mischievous winks to her pursuer and an aura of confidence that evoked fear

In the mirror now stands a little girl with a shaded face and a quivering smile to match the shaking of her bones when he touched her. Delicately, she lifts up her shirt and watches herself in the mirror slowly twirl around. Clothes and makeup conceal his anger.

She once stood strong with fearless power radiating off her bones, but now marks of her lover’s power veil her frail body. As she watches herself gently trail her fingers around the deep blue swirled in violet,

the Tyrian purple bruise that now scars her once flawless porcelain skin, she contemplates the irony that the color she sports on her face matches the same shade the fearless rulers once wore.

Mirror, mirror, on the wall, love is mutual appreciation, respect, safety, and comfort. She meets her eyes in the mirror as she applies her ivory foundation to cover the only proof of his once hard, angry fists.

She recalls the memory of the day a miniscule disagreement turned into hands hitting the wall while vases crashed against the floor near her tiny body as she curled up like an infant trying to escape his booming voice that spewed harsh words at her. Fingertips gently sliding around the grass-colored bruises that rest upon her neck, she assures herself that he will not let his anger and jealousy mark her skin again.

Mirror, mirror, on

the wall, love is not fear, control, or explosive anger; however, love is gentle, patient, and kind. While she views a lone teardrop slide down her bony face, her heart clenches in the memory of the earth-shattering hurricane that crashed into her the day he changed. The sirens haunt her ears as she remembers the robotic warning signals installed in her brain during health class; “Domestic violence typically begins as threats, name calling, or hitting inanimate objects, and often progresses to physical acts of violence.”

With despondent eyes that no longer shed tears and a heavy sigh, she examines the latest masterpiece he left on her body, for her body acts as the canvas and his fists the artist. His harsh, minatory voice echoes through her mind like nails on a chalkboard chanting, “Because I love you, I

just want to be with you. Because I love you, I let you see your friends. Because I love you, I don't want you talking to other guys. Because I love you, I smashed your phone. Because I love you, I teach you not to disobey me. Because I

love you..." With one long-held-in scream of pure desperation, she throws her hand out and shatters the mirror which held her broken image captive for so long. Picking up one of the jagged pieces, greeted by the

strong woman with ruby nails and a pointed smile looking back at her, she whispers "Because I love you, I am leaving him." Mirror, mirror, on the wall, that was never love.



SURVIVAL COMIC
by Emily Gage





By Danielle Flores

It sounded like a helicopter was hovering over the cul de sac of my quiet neighborhood on the night of November 11, 2020. Steven Pacheco pulled up in his black, matte 350z. I peeked out the window and then ran out of the house to get my first front-seat view of Itasha car culture.

Itasha is a Japanese term that refers to a car decorated with images of either anime, manga, video games, etc. As I approached Pacheco's car, I was surprised to

see pink and white stars across the sides and a small anime girl on the hood. I crouched down and slid into the passenger seat, but before I could say a word, Pacheco, flipped a switch to turn on red, LED floor lights and we peeled out of there.

Pacheco is the founder of Midnight Drive, a rising Itasha car club that is influenced by anime culture and aesthetics. He has shaggy hair and a black mask illustrated with an anime drawing over his mouth. "The

girl on the car is Kanna Kamui from the anime Miss Kobayashi's Dragon Maid," says Pacheco. "That's what Itasha car culture is, but I'll show you more."

I first met Pacheco at a car show he was hosting in an abandoned warehouse in Los Angeles back in October. At just 20-years-old, Pacheco attends Rio Hondo College full time in an automotive program while also getting his car-club business rolling. At nights after school, he's busy hosting car meets,

vending and promoting meets and related events through social media. He makes a living selling the hentai sweaters, shirts, and car stickers that he designs.

While this accounts for a majority of his income, he has recently begun wrapping cars for clients — applying vinyl graphics and details over the original paint job (sort of a temporary tattoo for cars) — with various anime designs and others inspired by such television shows as *Stranger Things*.

On this night, our destination is Pasadena and, as he cruises around the city, he explains that there are different kinds of scenes within car culture, such as show cars, stance cars, drift cars and Itasha cars like his. Car enthusiasts can become initiated in teams that provide support, exposure and events to showcase your work. These showcases are often car meets, which are free, informal, typically held weekly or bi-weekly and usually attended by locals. Then there are car shows, which are usually larger, more organized, held in park-

ing lots and require a fee to get in and permits to hold.

Car teams most often have their own set of requirements to get in, which can include having a certain number of car modifications, whether to the power train or to the exterior, such as how lowered your car is, what rims you have installed, your ability to do a touge, which is a mountain race. Some have no requirements.

Pacheco, who only recently began hosting his own car events, was initiated into a team designated for Nissans and Infinity cars when he first started. He only owned his Nissan at the time and had yet to begin designing wraps for it or modifying it. He remained with this car team for about a year, before a new president took over and began moving the team in a new direction.

This inspired him to learn all the factors that go into organizing meets and shows and to start hosting them himself.



Before I met Pacheco the only car shows I had ever seen were the annual classic car shows my grandfather would take me to in Uptown Whittier on Saturday mornings or at Santa Anita racetrack. I wasn't familiar with the new car culture represented by Pacheco.

Since October, Pacheco has taken me to small car meets held in grocery stores or small plaza parking lots in cities such as Arcadia, Pico Rivera, Montebello, Los Angeles, City of Industry, and West Covina. The meets are usually held between 8:00 — 11:00 P.M. on weekdays, and typically included around six parking aisles of cars. Everyone is invited to park their car and walk around, so long as they respect the area and don't rev their engines too much or drive irresponsibly.

Some people sport black Midnight Drive hoodies with the small logo in the front and an anime girl covering the back as they stood in groups and talked about their plans for their cars. The vibe is relaxed and people are friendly and talkative as music

Midnight Drive

blasts from car speakers and photographers snapshots of every car design.

There is no show on the night Pacheco takes me for a spin, so we park and take a stroll around Old Town Pasadena. Pacheco talks about the monthly car meet he plans to hold at an In-N-Out on Colima Road in the City of Industry, about 15 minutes from Whittier College. He plans to hold it on the first Friday of every month.

The logistics are a tall order. To get the event together, Pacheco had to contact the manager of the In-N-Out and explain the details of the event and how it can benefit the business as well. He spoke with local law enforcement, explaining that the event is intended to be a calm meet and parking permission had been granted. Then he worked with his team members to ensure that the event is well promoted on social media and through word of mouth. Pacheco also contacts local vendors and small businesses so they can seize the opportunity for exposure to sell art, stick-

ers, pins, and clothing.

Pacheco's events are popular with young adults and college students as they are held within a convenient time where classes and work shifts are over for the day. Being a car enthusiast is not necessary. It's a place where people can simply gather with their friends in groups and talk, walk



says this is a common misconception. He calls those videos as street takeovers and explains, "Our car culture has a big war against takeovers because we make it very clear to them that we don't support it. We even have car pages dedicated to calling cops for these takeovers." Pacheco claims that while his community may do power modifications to their cars, they use it respectfully and only on approved tracks. He explains that it is just a hobby for them.

around and admire the artwork on cars, or even check out small booths and listen to music.

When I ask Pacheco about the stereotypes that are centered around car culture, such as trending videos of cars doing donuts in residential areas and cops maneuvering through crowds to catch them, he laughs and

The evening is cold and we finish hot chocolates and make our way back to his car. Back in the passenger seat, I find myself distracted by Pacheco's car air freshener, which is illustrated with an anime girl wearing a black bra and a provocative look on her face. I ask if the Itasha car community is centered around hentai, a genre of sexualized anime. Pacheco tenses up a bit and then laughs, claiming that while it is a popular topic, you hardly ever see a hentai

wrapped car.

He says they mostly stick to appropriate anime characters and limit hentai to stickers or accessories.

Pacheco had mentioned that he's striving toward working with Tesla. I ask him why, seeing as how different it is from the car community and business he's currently immersed in. Taking off his mask, he replies, "What I have a passion for is the experience. I believe it's important to let yourself be exposed to as many people as possible and be able to apply their knowledge to my own company."



About two weeks after the excursion to Old Pasadena, Pacheco calls me at around 9:30 P.M. on a Sunday evening. He says that a team was trying to do a small meet within the Whittier area. This surprised him — he had previously explained that Whittier didn't seem all that interested in new car culture as it was so deeply rooted in classic cars. This goes back to the days of

cruising

Whittier Boulevard when the Latino youth found its voice and a call to action rooted in Chicano style and lowriders. While this scene has at times been tarnished by stereotypes, seminal events such as the Zoot-Suit Riots and the rise of El Movimiento Chicano helped galvanize its place in the local culture. Expressing yourself by cruising Whittier Boulevard with pinstriped lowrider was as much a political statement as an aesthetic one.

Another barrier for the new, cutting-edge car scene to take root in Whittier has been the lingering perception that the designs and teams are not family-friendly enough for the city. But, as Pacheco said before, the hentai accessories were the only provocative aspects of these cars and often not as visible as the pin-up girls on the classic cars shown annually in Uptown Whittier.

Growing up in Los Angeles, Pacheco was exposed to the classic car culture at an early age, but never felt that same connection with it as

he does the Itasha culture. While this movement has evolved, new car cultures are emerging to serve as voices of self-expression for a new youth.

Jose Correa, a 20-year-old college student who has attended a number of these local meets, is an example of the new enthusiast. Correa explains that while he may not own a car or drive himself, he finds the events interesting and a good way to make friends. He claims he's an introvert and starting conversations can be difficult, but the people he meets at the events are very open and friendly. He says he has learned a lot from the different people he's encountered and the creativity that circles the events has influenced him to express his interests more.

While Whittier has had a deep history in promoting classic car culture and rockabilly style, it seems that with teams such as Midnight Drive and Corrupted Concepts now hosting events with a modern flavor, there is new life in a city long known for loving cars.



LIFE UP CLOSE

by Taylor Telles

Happy Little Accidents

by Isabel Montero

I steady my shaking hand
and bring the tip of the eyeliner pencil
up to my eyelid.

I attempt a cat eye.

I reattempt a cat eye.

I reattempt a cat eye again.

Okay.

I got the left eye perfect.

I am Vincent Van Gogh,

I am Pablo Picasso,

I am Frida Kahlo,

I am Bob. Freaking. Ross.

The tip of my pencil breaks,
smudging my masterpiece.

I throw the traitor across my bathroom.

It bounces off the wall
and falls to the tile floor
with a satisfying clatter.

It rolls tentatively toward my foot.

I glare at it.

It stops rolling.

Bob Ross whispers in my ear,

“We don’t make mistakes, just happy little accidents.”

I feel bad.

I pick up my eyeliner
and apologize to it.

I feel better.

“Thanks Bob Ross.”

“There’s nothing wrong with having a tree as a
friend.”

“Okay.”



Tale of the Unsung Hero

by Ariana Juarez

Oh, praise be to the hero,
That was never asked for.

His shoulders sink from the weight of the world,
That he placed there himself.

His mouth opens, "Glory, glory, for God!"
His eyes searching
for the crowd to sing back praises.
Will of iron and a heart of coal,
a sense of justice,
with a need to be loved.
Where is the crowd, praising his every move?
Where is the damsel, not wanting to be saved,
her need for solace rejected for the stroke of an ego
For the hero that no one had asked for.

What is a hero
if his glory does not shine,
if there are no eyes upon him?
There is no performance
if there is no audience.
Glory, glory, for him and him alone.
Praise, again
For the hero no one asked for.



TURD!
by Lauren Blazey

Six Feet

by Samantha Paladini

Speak to the years of lonely grace
How slow the watches run on blistered feet
In constant circles, repeating a falling climax.

Feel the empty roads rest after years of worn distress.
The absent honking,
 hugging,
 sharing,
 touching.

Calamities in our front yards laugh at the silent
Groans from sinking inspirations.

Lots of talk.
 Lots of long walks.

Smell the stinging aloe unapologetically seeping
Into anxious cuts.
The destructive voice repeating what if

what if
what if



Hear the cries of the dying artist
Reaching for a lost connection, some compassion
In a world in need of lost laughter.



See the mothers and fathers zoom through rooms of news,
Fighting the invisible invasion
Through distant constellations.

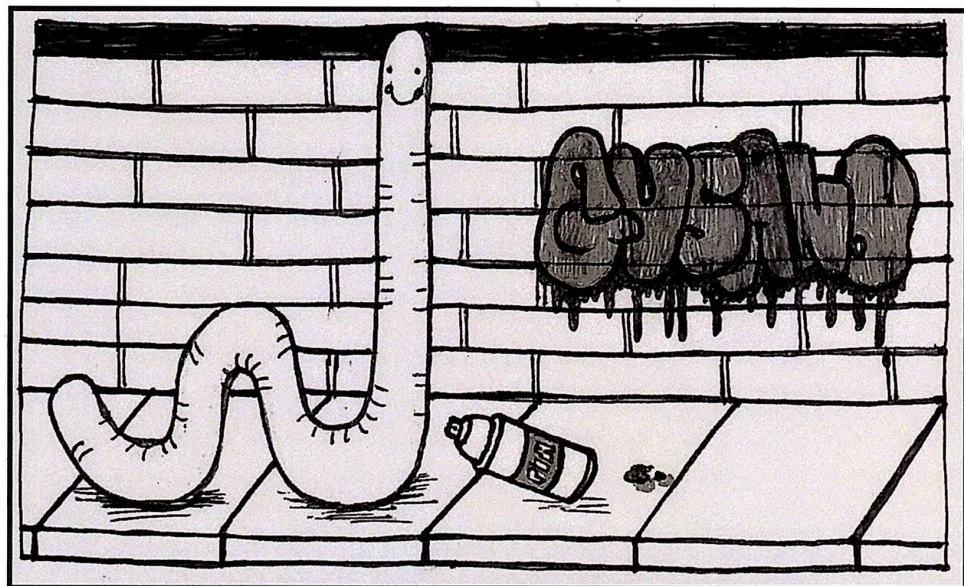
We paid for our ignorance.
The exchange for survival was a price no one
Was prepared to make.

And now, while we wait...

Sing the song of days with hugs and high fives,
Library books, roller coasters, and shared birthday cake.

The future is not a given, but a temporary idea.
So, open the curtains of creation.
Bright lights keep our sights wide and combined,
Fighting the fight from inside

Until another tomorrow.



GUSANO
by Gabriella Rodriguez

What Bees Do Best

by Isabel Montero

Her chest swarms with bees.
The warm golden valleys
housed in her heart
have been overtaken.

The insects feast,
climbing over one another
to reach particularly sweet spots.
Drops of liquid sunshine
are clouded over in black.

Hundreds of paper-thin wings beat,
creating steady pulses,
making it harder to concentrate.
They demand all of her attention.

She hopes the vibration from her chest
is indiscernible,
but when she looks down
she can see the effect of their frenzied flight
each time one of their bodies thuds against her.
How obvious and unashamed they are.

She sits up straight
and takes a big breath.
Expecting the tiny beasts to settle.
She clenches her teeth shut,
creating a barrier between them
and everyone else,

so no one will know
that her chest has become
a honey bee nest.

Light

By Ashley Gonzalez



There was once a young girl who walked through rainstorms.

She was young, pure & breathtakingly beautiful. Even through the black swirling mass of emotions and grey clouds, anybody could see her glow from within, unaffected. She was the gifted one, the darkness and rain never could take her soul for it only came for the cruel, ungrateful ones and its power could only consume her if only she allowed it to.

People all around her were victims of these rainstorms, they were dying slowly for the rain would torment them. It trapped them in a trance and revealed their weaknesses and created monsters in their heads. They would lash out at ones they loved or innocent bystanders

who did not deserve their lashing tongue. They would yell and rage but only she could hear their cries for help as they were drowned from the rain, until finally nobody could hear them anymore. And on and on, and on and on it went.

Until one day she thought what if I took their pain for them. A piece of me for a bit of them. But that bit she soon found would never be enough. She started slowly, she would talk with many victims, hug them, let them feel love and hope again, but for them to get well and survive, she had to shed a bit of herself and light into them. On and on, and on and on, day by day she would go around the world and help as many as she could but to give her light she had

to take their sadness. She soon noticed a grey cloud on top of her, wherever she went. She became empty and depressed. One day there was no light left to give, and she felt the wrath of many who had searched for her help, but she couldn't feel bad for she could barely feel anything anymore.

She was weak and dying, crying out for anyone to help, but many couldn't hear her, she thought. They heard but pretended not to because they themselves knew how to save her, but they couldn't burden themselves with taking her emotional loads off. Why should they have to take her pain onto them. How unfair and vile of her, they thought.

The young girl kept walking and walking,

weeping continuously, until one day she dropped to her knees and gave up. It was then that the rain dove upon her and its floods drowned her soul. The once young, pure beautiful girl was dead. And the others, they carried on, they lived content-

ly now with a piece of pureness in them, but there would always be a huge part of them that feared the rainstorm. Because the rainstorm and they knew that they still had ungratefulness in their hearts. It was simply a matter of time until it could get back to

them.

After all they didn't know better to help one another stay dry and be caring, it didn't make sense and customs rarely got changed. The rainstorm also knew the sun would set, and the young girl's light would also go down.



WEB
by Emerson Little

Tired

by Harmony Albarran

My mind loses itself
beneath a fuzzy cloak
of black and white
television static.

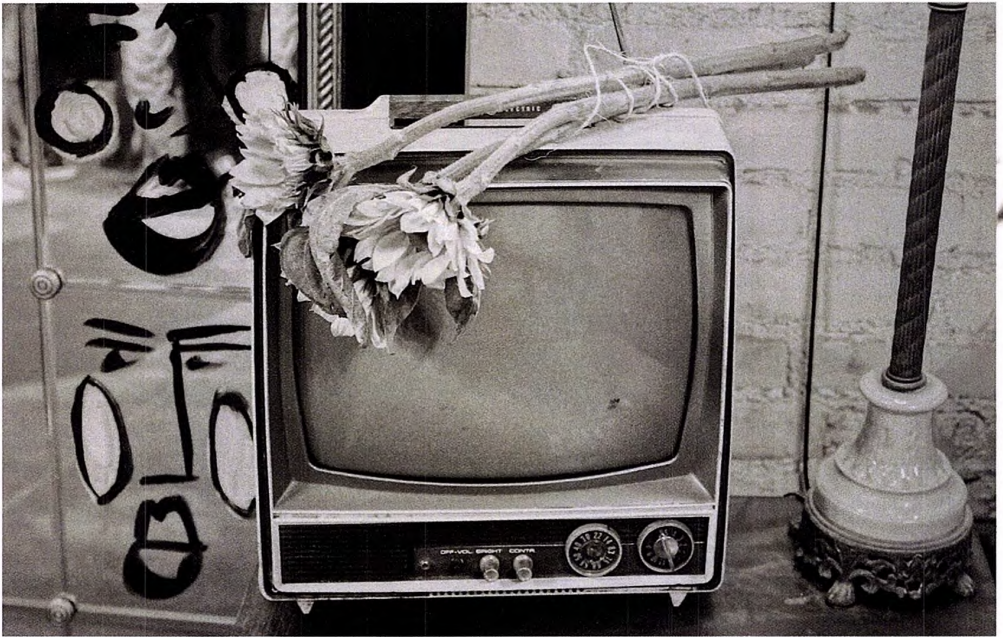
I've stopped looking for hues
that wish to hold me in
warmth as they have
left me to face the night.

The door mutters in soft
indignation but I
resent complaints
and my numbed body crawls,

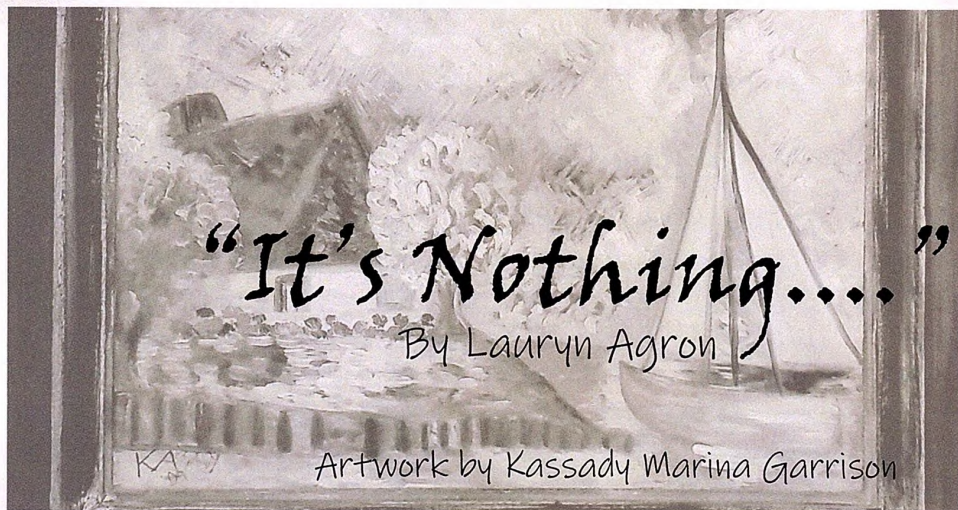
through the mocking doorway.

If only I could stand
the clock's strained gaze
as worry mars its face,

because I let the cold
feast upon my tired bones.
Scabs reopen
and stain my sheets with warmth.



UNTIL THE STATIC FADES
by Tori O'Campo



She sits in the living room of the one-bedroom apartment she shares with her parents — a stay-at-home mom and a dad who leaves every morning at seven and comes home every night twelve hours later because he's still considered an essential worker.

She's frustrated.

Being home with her mother all day — the mother that claims to be nicer now and more patient. Though, this is the same woman who hit her two days ago for sleeping past ten in the morning. The same woman who takes crying for weakness. The same woman who swears

her daughter is the most important person in the world to her, and the same woman who told her daughter to kill herself three months ago. She stays quiet around her mom, now, and never stands up to her anymore. She learned that lesson the hard way. "I thought I raised a stronger person, not a little bitch," says her mother when she sees her daughter crying after yet another bout of abuse.

At least this time she didn't hit me she thought. She waits for her dad to get home every night because he's the only person who will stop her mother from abusing her. Those twelve hours without him, though,

are always threatening. She never knows what kind of mom she will get. One moment her mom could be making her breakfast and a cup of hot tea, and the next moment she could be threatening to hit her if she doesn't "finish all those eggs." It feels like she's walking on eggshells all day. The Saffer-at-Home order didn't really mean it was going to be safe at all.

She can finally be alone for a while because her mom is staying in the bedroom. So, she decides to Facetime her boyfriend while she has the chance. Usually, she'd be at his house for as long as she could, but that wasn't an option anymore. Maybe just see-

ing his face would give her enough strength to get her through the day. He doesn't know about the abuse. No one outside of her apartment knows. So she calls him and manages to put a smile on her face before he answers. He says she looks so happy, and she does everything she can to hold back the tears that are just one blink away from rolling down her face. She's almost ready to tell him everything she endures. She opens her mouth but the wrong words come out. "I'm just happy to hear your voice," she says. What good would it do to tell him, anyway?

She knew no one could do anything to make her problems go away right now. Her boyfriend updates her about his family and their health. "Everyone is doing good over here! How are you doing at home? Is everyone okay?" he asks in a genuinely caring tone. The tears building up finally spill from her eyes as her boyfriend watches and asks what's wrong over and over again until she can catch her breath. Again, the wrong words

escape her lips. "I just miss you," she says, "that's all." Lucky for her, he buys it and tells her that everything will be okay. She nods her head and decides to end the call early.

Her mother left her alone for most of the day. Around 7:30 she sees headlights through the window and feels some relief. Her dad is finally home. She opens the door for him and he asks how her day was. "No hitting today, just some yelling," she says.

He goes into the room, and she can hear him ask her mother, "What'd you do to her today?" Then, she hears the bedroom door closing as it brushes against the carpet and ends with a click as the lock sets into its place. They aren't loud enough to hear, but she already knows what's being said. It's the normal routine. Her dad tells her mom to be more patient, and her mom apologizes to him for acting the way she did to her daughter. Funny how I never get the apology she thinks to herself. Both of her parents emerge from the bedroom, and it's as if they were a per-

fect family. Her parents start making dinner together, and everyone is keeping the peace.

"Get the plates," her mom says in a commanding voice. She follows her order and sets a plate for each of them at the table. She decides to sit outside for a few minutes before dinner is ready. She opens the white screen door and sits on the small porch. At the same time, her new neighbor comes out to get something from his truck. He notices the somber look on her face and asks if she's okay.

She thinks of everything she could say. *My mom abuses me whenever we're home alone. My dad works all day so he can't help me. He stands up to her but won't tell anyone else. I can't go to school for an escape anymore, and I can't go to work because I got laid off last week. I can't go to my boyfriend's house, and I actually can't go anywhere because of this stupid Safer-at-Home order. Yet again, she finds the wrong words to say...*

"Oh, it's nothing."

**NOW
WE KNOW
WHAT
IT'S LIKE
TO BE
ALONE.**

**THE
STRONG,
SENSITIVE
TYPE**



**Not a thing
in the world...
except
each other!**

...me a long way, baby.

NO
QUE
FUT
LY



RA
RA
RA

STRONG SENSITIVE TYPE

by Heidi Metro

SOFT AS A SIGH



Fighting for Ancestral Hawai'i



By Elena Bacckus y Herrera

“It’s powerful to see that this is the beginning... Actually, I take that back. This is the continuation of a long history of resistance against environmental racism.”

It’s raining in Southern California, and The Spot is filled with college students escaping the drizzle. A girl in a windbreaker rushes in, her long hair covered by a purple beanie, and slides into a booth while flashing a bright smile. Her name is Kealohi Minami, or simply Kea. You may see her on the Whittier College campus with flowers in her hair, wearing earrings inscribed with ‘decolonize’. Or maybe you’ll spot her at a local strike or protest holding a microphone, spreading awareness about issues such as environmental

injustices targeting indigenous communities, especially Native Hawaiians.

Minami’s parents are Hawaiian and Vietnamese, but she was born and raised on the coast of Southern California. Minami says she holds both cultures close to her heart and has always strongly identified with each. “I’ve continued to dance hula with a hālau, which is a formal setting with teachers and classes, which I do about twice a week. It’s nice because the whole premise isn’t just about learning to dance, but about learning the meaning and words behind the dance. It’s called kauna,” Minami says, writing down the word as she explains its meaning.

Minami does not speak Hawaiian fluent-

ly but has learned many terms through kauna, the required study for dances’ meanings. Minami dances with the same hālau teacher that her father danced with and studies the same things he learned. Her cross-cultural identity and activism has sparked her interest in the protests over telescopes littering Mauna Kea, the iconic promontory that is the island of Hawai’i’s most recognizable geographic feature.

The protests are in response to the proposed installation of a new Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) atop the Big Island’s iconic dormant volcano. Mauna Kea’s peak reaches 13,803 feet above sea level, the highest point in Hawai’i. Measured from its underwater base,

Ancestral Hawai'i

Mauna Kea measures 33,000 feet, making it the tallest mountain in the world. Mauna Kea is sort of like Mount Olympus to Hawaiians — where they believe their gods originated from. It is the firstborn island and therefore the most important. The mountain is sacred to many Native Hawaiians and widely respected by non-natives living on the islands. Not surprisingly, many natives

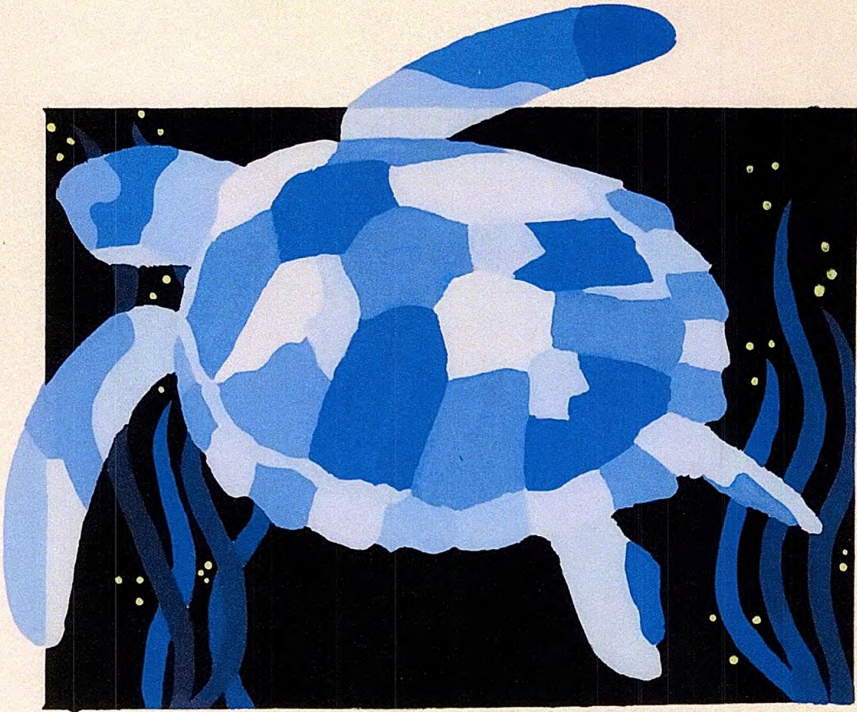
view putting man-made structures on Mauna Kea as a desecration.



Aside from the sacredness of the mountain, Mauna Kea is also essential to the ecosystem as it provides watersheds throughout the island. These watersheds are critical in sustaining sufficient quantity and quality of water alone, they also provide

habitat for the diverse ecosystem, including many endangered species native to the island.

The proposed TMT isn't the only telescope to be on the summit of Mauna Kea. Favorable conditions such as stable atmosphere, high aridity, and elevation make the summit ideal for stargazing. There are currently thirteen telescopes administered by various institutions and government agencies



PEACE IN DARKNESS
by Lauryn Agron

representing 11 countries. There are also five decommissioned telescopes at the summit.

“The decommissioned telescopes are taking up space, and the waste is still up there... so we don’t think another one should be put up if nothing has been cleared,” Minami explains to me. Due to the uncleared telescopes, there is concern that they will continue to sit and desecrate the sacred land.

Anita Hofscheider, a reporter for the Honolulu Civil Beat, explains the facilities have a history of chemical and waste spills. Management has improved due to a switch in leadership by TMT International Observatory, which proposed the new telescope in 2013. TMT plans on building the telescope on a new site (instead of utilizing the space of the decommissioned telescopes) and has acknowledged the threats posed to the ecosystem.

Hawaiian Senator Stanley Chang supports the telescope, but agrees with the concerns protestors have raised over the tele-

scope’s installation and management of the mountain. As he told the Civil Beat, “I think it is very reasonable that they would want some accountability for those issues, and to address some of them in a positive way, a thoughtful way, that takes care of all of the stakeholders before getting into that conversation about a new telescope.”



On September 20th, 2019, approximately 8,000 people attended the climate strike in Downtown Los Angeles — Minami was one of them. She used the platform to spread awareness of the environmental injustices occurring in Hawai’i. “The protest was really good,



there was a surprising amount of response to seeing my sign. I was really surprised, a handful of folks came up and thanked me for bringing attention to the issue here in California,” Minami says of the climate strike.

She explains that California is connected to the issue deeply through the observatory’s donors which include the California Institute of Technology and a handful of UC schools. Another goal of Minami’s is to bring attention to California donors who contributed to the proposed Thirty Meter Telescope. “It’s hard to push this movement further from California,” she says, “but putting pressure on these donors and calling them out for supporting these efforts of environmental injustice, environmental racism.”

Calling, emailing, and boycotting these institutions is the best way to mobilize on this matter, according to Minami. She informs me that the telescopes atop Mauna Kea aren’t the only hazards occurring in Oahu. She shows me an Instagram post from

@Ku_Kiai_Kahuku explaining the current protests in the town of Kahuku, a predominantly native community. Kahuku is facing the threat of wind-energy farms who some say operate too closely to homes, schools and farms.

The wind farm also threatens the survival of Nene (or Hawaiian Goose,) which is the official state bird and the ‘ope’ape’a (Hoary Bat,) the state’s official land mammal. Although Kahuku natives have been protesting the farms and bringing awareness to the issue, so far, they haven’t been able to hold up construction of the wind farm the same way they have done with the TMT.

Minami expects big things from these protests. “I think this is the start of a whole social movement. I think it’s woken up the whole nation of Hawai’i,” she says. “It’s kind of beautiful because whoever you are on the island, you have to have a stance — you can’t stay neutral. Everyone has a stake in this.”

Her goal is to mobilize people, both Hawaiian

and non-Hawaiian. She says others can get involved by “supporting any indigenous movements, either by signing a petition or going out and protesting [...] uplifting indigenous voices and understanding their struggles and history of resistance is the best way to be an ally and show solidarity.”

Minami, a political science major at Whittier, is now considering doubling in sociology after taking a course with Professor Overmier-Velasquez who teaches a class called Indigenous Peoples Movements which focuses on indigenous activism in Latin America.

“It’s such an amazing course,” she says while beaming, “It’s helped me understand how social movements help with the progress of a nation. I didn’t expect it, but it’s way applicable to my life. I feel like she just gave us all the tools for creating a social movement to create change in this world.”



Facebook Ghostship

By Nathan Tolfa

Agi dressed like a skater
boy: flannel button-ups over
graphic tees. Backwards
baseball caps. All that.

Eight months after he died, a relative of his posted
a picture of him of Facebook.
In it, he is kissing a baby on its lumpy baby head.
His eyes are closed. He is wearing a big puffy sweater.
The baby is wearing a pair of fluffy red socks.
I imagine its feet are probably pretty toasty,
like a pair of dinner rolls, heating in the oven.

I see this photo about once every year.
It comes up in my feed because no one ever
deleted his account. It floats out there
in the digital space, occasionally bumping
against Myspace profiles and pirated
butt rock hits and Wordpress manifestos
and all the other artifacts of HTML-past.

I imagine a thousand years from now, teen hackers
with flash drives for fingernails and barcodes
instead of names will shuffle through the detritus
of 21st century humanity. They will find
our social media accounts and be momentarily
reminded that, yes, they too shall die one day,
their bodies put to rest in the astro coffins
that circle our earth in a slow, lazy orbit.
But they'll file that thought away and go
smoke cyberweed on the edge
an anti-gravitational halfpipe.

Anyway, digital Agi is 22 now,
the same age as me. That's four years older
that Agi will get to be.

Q & America

By Dayquan Moeller and the Internet

This art piece features responses to an internet survey created by me in which users were asked, "What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the following words: America, Patriot, Citizen, Borders, Migration, Refugee."

I. America

White, orange hillbillies
Death, Facism
Captain America
The red, red, red,
white, white, white,
And blue, blue, blue,
"America The Beautiful"
Colonizer
Poverty
The land of the free

III. Citizen

Rome
A broken system
People Going to School
Rights, rights,
Someone with rights

V. Migration

Birds, birds
Ducks And birds
Flying, fleeing, moving
Refugees, butterflies &
Native dispossession

II. Patriot

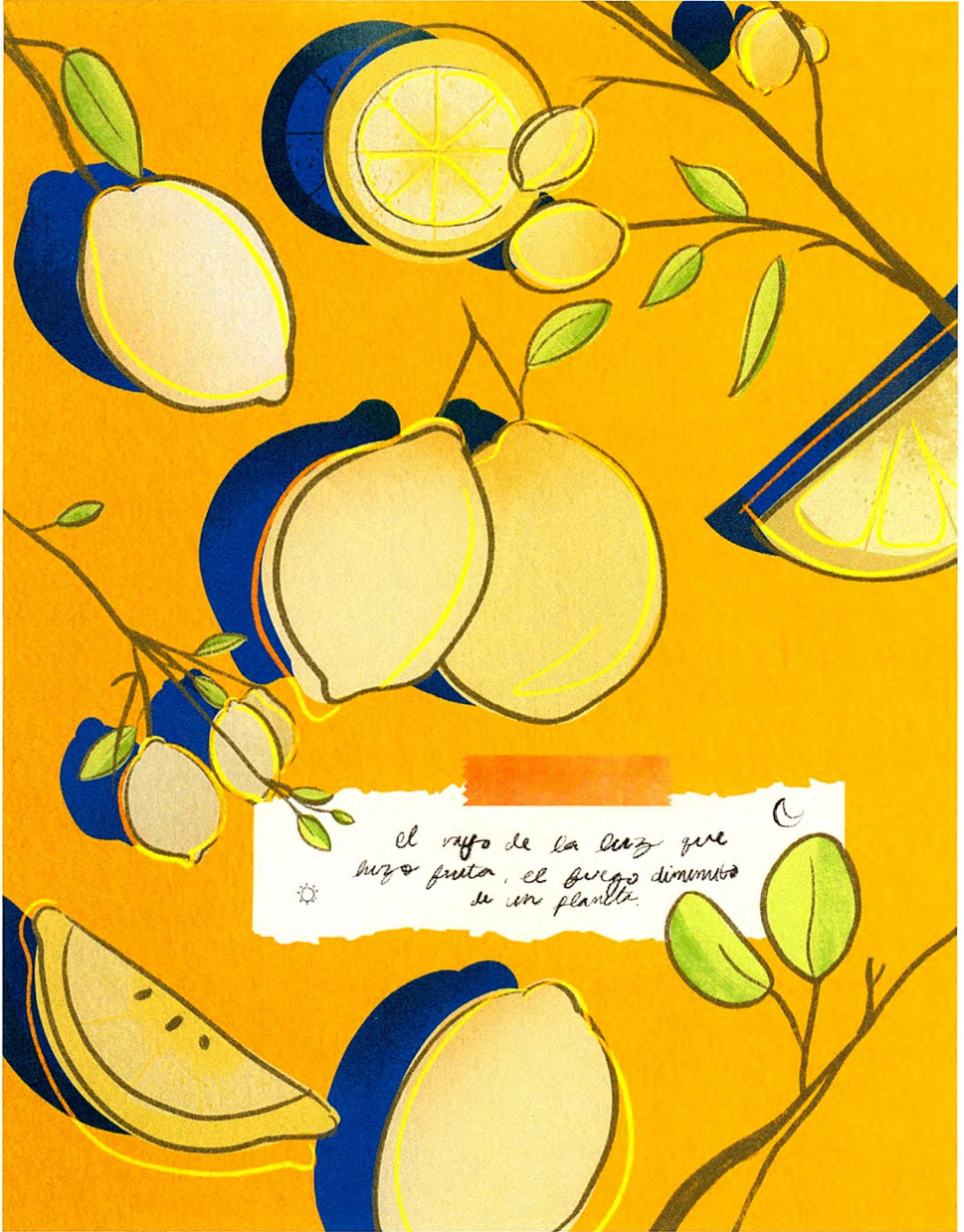
George Washington
Propaganda
Nationalism Gross
Fear, unsafe
A Mel Gibson Movie
White man

IV. Borders

Quilt borders
Open, Closed
Walls, Big Walls
Partition, Patrol

VI. Refugee

Camps
Safe haven
Hunted
Border
Freedom
Children in need
Syria
Hope
Me



el rayo de la Cruz que
hizo fruta, el fuego dorado
de un planeta.

ODA AL LIMÓN
by Haley Vallejo

Fallen Apricot Orphan

By Isabel Montero

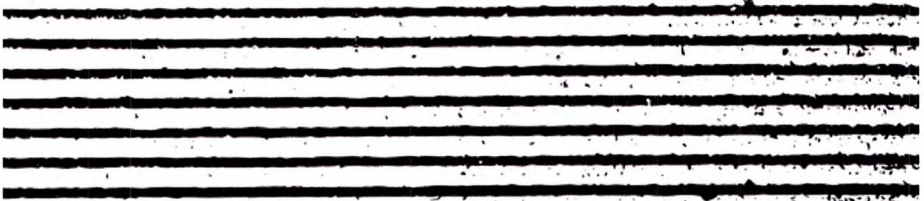
Drops of warm apricoted juice
swam down her fingers, into the palm of her hand,
leaving sweet sour trails of transparent ghost tears.

The fuzzy skin, a baby's newborn smell.
The tender skin, orange red.
The sunset held tightly in her hand.

The mush sloshed inside her mouth,
her tongue surfing ripe seas
of lovely high bliss.
Careful bites around the hardened core pit.

The pit, slimy, lonely,
no longer nestled between
two loving apricoted halves.
A shriveled heart,
tiny and pitiful in her hands.

She slipped the pit inside her pocket for remembrance.
She sighed, "Is this how everything must end?"



Slauson Elegy:
Homage to the martyr of South Central
By Noah Humphrey

Nipsey Hustle had a marathon. I was a spectator. He served
his street, his community. I saw him
hold bandaged homeless soldiers from the results of conflicts
in their hoods.

He was the only soldier to a ragtag group of South Central
cadets, last time I checked.

Reconnecting his community brought gangs together who
were torn at red and blue strings.

Among the Slauson soul food restaurants, he was their king of
Soul, but the toll was whole.

And the flashes of wonder, the thunder that Nipsey came to
be on Metro buses to parks.

When I was bitter enough to see, the whole community had to
wipe their eyes and say RIP.

To his final race, a chase I couldn't dare, or didn't care because
I didn't want bullets near.

And the sign of the people crying, the shooter's family dying,
and graffiti on streets with "TMC"

The babies following their mother's grief, the mothers follow-
ing their husbands and lovers belief.

His homeboys in disbelief, with belief that he hadn't done
enough yet, no not yet Nip.

He shouldn't have been casted out the earth, God why does
the legend die so early.

His marathon shouldn't have been ended, the baton should
not be passed with ghastly prayers.

His sons aren't men yet, they get the baton to fight battles up
steep hills, and cheap thrills.

His widow carries the baton, here husband in spirit with guid-
ance and love.

And Nipsey told me these streets weren't for you, so I dare not
venture out my place.

Where the henny and hash don't pass me up on the bitter
steps to hell where the burning desires.

Of nighttime cheers, of morning blue and night red mixed
with the corpses of innocent children.

For the blood had cycled in reps in Slauson, from the rows of un-
settling greed, that ended Nip.

and it cycled back to the streets, repeating the struggle and the
vicious lie that redeems.

The areas remorse, and find the source of the angry drummers
kneeling and playing vicious beats.

Upon the drums that Nipsey gave to them from his album, gave to
them by Nipsey.

The choir uses their spirited souls to uplift the parted souls of
Ermias to their ideal of heaven.

And we wonder where the Slauson spirit goes, where is it's next
hero, the next fate for a legend.

We wait for guidance upon the trivial nonsense we call human life,
death.

But we give homage to the hero that made an unwanted name to a
brand, to a street,

He made a marathon that will continually continue to stretch
above the earth and the heavens.

The baton is placed, the markers are set, and it's time to break
records, all as an elegy for Nipsey.



DOWNTOWNDANIEL MURAL

by Kristi Weyand



WATER LILY

by Kassady Marina Garrison



Confessional Poem

By Daniel Wolf

I saw him then, unknowing of mine own eyes.
Slender bodies and glossy pecs — pink pebbles on each.
He saw me and I to him — together down that lost
highway on the wrong side of a two-way street — there
our pinkish bodies laid on another.
Unlawful love this was, sinful and demonic.
We are of the Sodomites.

We were among the Seven to behold when we were
both welcomed Home.

From our embrace of flesh, of kisses and penetra-
tions, we watched across the fireplace in bed.

Tired and exhausted, “Another go?” He asked me,
panting on silk cushions and a soaked cover.

Scowling at him, I just rested in unclipped wings as
the sun began to rise again over unlimited lakes of fire.



COVER GIRL SERIES
by Shannon Aguiar

It's All My Fault
By Jillian Spaulding

"It's all your fault."

A hoarse whisper in the bathroom mirror.

I stare back, blue eyes bulging.

"You can't do anything right."

Well that can't be totally true,

But she may have a point.

"You're a waste of space."

Her words have so much conviction.

Maybe this is finally the sour truth I've been waiting for.

"Everyone would be better off if you were —"

I stop her, breathless, clasp onto the hard sink.

"I'm not done with you yet."

White knuckles ache as they blend into the unforgiving porcelain,

"Look at me, and take it like a woman."

I have to stop myself at times, try to ignore her whispers.

"I'm not going away until you do."

Or else who knows what strangely wonderful things might happen.

the give and take
By Kristi Weyand

//the give//

Our most intimate moments
are not the times in which
we bare our softest selves,
but, rather, when we share
our sharpest words

//& take//

I wish I could strip off my emotions,
like layers after a long day,
to tuck them away
& let you dust them off with your calloused touch
feathering along my softened spine



COVER GIRL SERIES
by Shannon Aguiar

A Stone Cold Heartbreaker

By Annalisse Galaviz



She starts at my right hand. Runs her pointer finger along the long line inscribed into my flesh. “Life line,” she says, jerking her feather touch back to her mouth when she gets to the stump of the palm.

“What’s wrong?” I ask. Perhaps my skin has cut her.

“Shit, I think I ruined my nail. It wasn’t dry yet.”

The rich emerald, sure enough, is creased but only slightly. She licks the nail, coaxing its wax cover back into place, then grabs her silver file from the mound of bed sheets between us. In seconds the cuticles are as tan as ever.

“Ok, now close your eyes...”

Tracing more lines. Tapping on the pads of each finger: thumb, ring finger, pinky. Circles into the flesh that

folds when you make a fist. Counting out loud. “One two three four. One two. One two three.”

There’s a night wind from the open window that gives us chills, then flat heat again.

“Los espíritus are here,” Santana laughs.

She’s the one who told the cousins how Charlotte got pregnant. How to wear your jackets off the shoulders and make the boys stare. To walk the right way once your hips come in. How if you stare into the sun and you see a shadow heart when you close your eyes, a boy is thinking of you.

I like her – and not in the mandatory cousin way that I like Stephanie, her sister. I like the way she believes.

“Open them,” she says. The candle on the desk is the only light for my eyes to adjust to. A

star has not fallen, the dark sky with clouds like coffee creamer has not split into two. From down the street, the high school boys still yell into the dark.

“Just as expected,” she says.

“What?”

“You are a stone-cold heartbreaker. You will attract many boys but never love any of them.”

My eyebrows challenge her to a duel. Could it be?

She then falters with a laugh. I join in. As we giggle together, the howling outside grows louder and the candle goes out.

We stay up until midnight, a flashlight between us on the mattress as we whisper secrets. My parents tell us “callate” first at 9, then 10, then 11. The lights have gone out down the hallway but we keep the whis-

pering up anyways. She squeezes my hand during the dramatic parts of the stories I tell her, my bi-yearly update on my life, even if the stories are not dramatic at all. A boy asked me to dance at the Fall Fling but, no, don't get excited because it was only after he asked all my other friends to the dance. I am going to New York next year with the debate team. Yes, that's it.

It's her turn next. Her boyfriend Martin has found a new job parking cars down in Mexicali and her mother in Aguascalientes has begun to tailor clothes on the side for work. Martin insists that he will be done saving the ten thousand dollars to come to California by November and that they can marry in the Spring. Sharing this makes her frown. She says she wants an August wedding but even when I tell her Martin can wait five more months if he's already waited two years, she still frowns.

"How's Jacob and Araceli?" I ask. Our aunt and uncle. She has lived with them for almost two years now. When-

ever mom asks them about Santana they say she is too much trouble and Santana always says they're too uptight.

The last time I saw Santana, for Christmas 6 months ago, she snuck shots all night, hiding them under her dress, insisting too loud on playing cards with the drunk uncles. She'd sit on Uncle Eddy's lap and giggle when he'd ask her to blow on his dice for good luck.

Auntie Araceli yelled about her to mother all night. After Sanatana had left my company for the uncles because I was too "boring" to take shots with them in mother's eyeline, I spent a good hour listening to the women through the kitchen's pocket door.



"Miralo. I can't take it anymore, Martha. Jacob was right, we're sending her back."

"Calmate. It's just a bad night. Tomorrow—"

"No! I'm serious. Julietta can take her back."

Silence.

"Fine," my mother said. "But she can stay with us over the sum-

mer at least. You know how Whitney dotes on her."

And so here she is, some five months later in my bed, slumping her back into my mattress.

"I'm sure they're fine," she says with a tight voice. Her eyes fix on the ceiling and something makes me want to ask more but she changes the subject before I can. "Hey, does your cute neighbor still live there?"

"Robert?"

"Yeah."

I laugh, somewhat forcefully. "You really haven't visited in a long time, have you?" I sit up against the bed frame, so that she can not see my face. "He moved out a few years ago, ran away I think, or maybe finally tracked down his dad."

"God, that's right. I miss him. We'd always have so much fun together."

"You met him like four times."

She giggles, raising her head to see me. "Well they were very good memories." She winks at me. That's right, he was her first kiss. Or maybe she was his.

As a kid, Robert had

a way of smiling at girls and not holding his head too high, even as he and his friends spread out to take up the whole street on their bikes.

They were the kind of guys that made everyone cross to the other side of the road, keeping their eyes peeled straight ahead. The girls always thought he was mysterious, a good guy in a bad boy's get up, even if they'd never talked to him. Still, it wasn't that far from the truth.

Like Santana, as a child, he crossed his fingers and blew out candles waiting for his world to change. But, unlike Santana, when he grew up, he became determined to actually work for a better life. Girls thought that if they could snag the man, he'd give them the future too without lifting a fake nail.



Robert and Santana kissed the first day they met, when she'd first visited the States and stayed at my fami-

ly's house. Robert and I were supposed to go to the park together but when he rode up to

my porch, hands off the grips with his arms spread out in flight, I insisted Santana come with us. I didn't think they'd get along at all. Robert liked giving his all while competing in chess, made jokes about death, and was always the first man to stop a fight. Loyal. Santana didn't compete for anything; she was the kind of person life came easy for. No one ever hated her and she was too pretty to be funny, especially in a sarcastic way, she'd be concerned for the boys in a fight but always be a part of the crowd.

I didn't expect them to talk even but then I was left alone at the park benches, then on the walk home, then as they locked the room door to be together alone. I didn't expect them to like each other. I had expected someone to at least like me.

Two beautiful people like that belonged together, even if I was the one he'd come to those nights when the yelling

was too loud to sleep.

Not that any of that was even fair. Santana didn't live with me back then. Mine and Robert's relationship was a friendship mandated by proximity. This is something I know, have known forever, only it hurts now.

"Sorry I keep doing this," he'd say when I'd let him through my window those late nights when the yelling was too much for his room door to drown out.

"Nonsense."

"No I am. Really. How have you been?"

"I'm not the one with red eyes."

Then he'd really start telling me everything, falling into himself, and I'd listen.

"She's such an idiot. Why doesn't she leave him like dad did?" He'd always say.

After anger came the gloom, the sadness and isolation and darkness that a girl like me couldn't possibly understand.

"What do you know? You have the nicest house on the block, your family goes to church every Sunday!"

Then the sorries.



THE NIGHT CLASS

by Lauren Blazey

"I'm so sorry, Whit. I don't know why I..." He'd take my hand. The world would stop turning. "You're the nicest person I know."

He'd look in my eyes, make me expect something that wasn't coming. Then he'd really lay it on.

"When I get out of here, I'll take you too. I just got a phone, we can do it. Here." That time, a month before he left, he did something

different. He grabbed a pen and paper from my backpack, scribbled numbers into it and put it into my hand, my palm burning, and didn't let go all night.

"Have you talked to him since? You guys were, like, close, weren't you?" Santana asks, beckoning my attention back.

"Um, no I haven't talked to him, actually." Burning beneath the mattress is the slip of

paper with eight numbers, untouched, unused, but unforgotten. I don't know why I don't tell Santana about it; boys are always her favorite topic.

Because Robert is not just another boy.

It is my idea to go out onto the porch for a smoke, which she claps her hands for. She rubs sticky gloss along her bottom lip, then top, and smacks them together three times

quickly. She extends her hand to me but I shake my head. I do, however, change into my jean skirt, the one mom won't let me wear to church.



She hands me a lit cigarette and I pull mom's glass ash-tray from my jacket pocket and put it on the porch railing. I tap it as it burns, only taking a drag every few minutes. In between I watch the moon. Santana looks at it too with her eyes big, her arms wrapped around herself, tight with hope, wishing on a star that isn't a star. It's a habit she's never out-grown.

We can hear the yipping of the boys down the street like wild coyotes. Some are on bikes, some come out from their houses to join their friends just returning from God knows where.

"Devil worship," mother would say.

Santana rests her shoulders on the railing, her breasts spilling off the edge, pushed up from the structure beneath them. She licks

her glossy lips as the boys draw nearer. The radio starts playing a singer with a voice like tar and she turns around to grab my hands.

"Dance with me!" She squeals. It is the same thing she would do when we were children, moving her shoulders loosely and swinging me side to side with her bony arms. She moves under the streetlight, barefoot, spinning on the black gravel of the road.

There are boys in the street now. They look Santana up and down. They will think of her tonight when they use their hands to mimic her sticky lips. They will remember the way she puts her arms around the streetlight and spins around like a ballroom dancer.

"I'll spin you around better than that, girl," one boy calls but Santana only takes another drag off her cigarette.

Santana ignores him like the boys before. She taught me this too so I follow. It is our job to make the boys earn our attention.

The rest whistle at her and I want to believe that if my shirt stopped

higher, or my feet were bare, or my eyes were light like hers, then I would be called at too. I am big enough to know better, to not rely on wishing on stars like Santana, but still, I want to believe.

Only I am frozen looking at them. At one that comes closer than the others, petrified by a night wind that spreads under my shirt and infiltrates my chest. He is on a bike, a rusty red old thing, and his arms hover above the grips though he does not quite fly, but soars.

We are not supposed to look at the boys, they are supposed to earn our attention, but I know this boy. There is no Santana-approved protocol for that. I know him too well and not at all at once. He is larger now, with broader shoulders and longer hair, still that color like straw, and eyes that still make you stop breathing when they look at you. He is looking at me.

"Whitney?" He asks in a lower voice but still that voice.

"Robert?"

I don't know what to do with my hands. They

A Stone Cold Heartbreaker

are flat against my sides. Santana would know what to do.

“Santana?”

“Robert?” Santana asks excitedly, running back to the porch. Of course she assumes he must be here for her. And thank God, finally, an interesting suit-or. Men are never quite as interesting as when they’re focused on another woman.

“What are you doing here?” I ask, frozen still. He climbs the porch steps two at a time to get to us and wraps his arms around me, a desperate embrace.

“You look nice,” he whispers with hot breath into my ear.

I do not want to hug Robert. Not now.

I should have claimed him the way he claimed me.



That summer night two weeks before he left, before he even knew he was going to leave, against that old avocado tree in his backyard, where the withering topsoil is just soft enough to sit in.

“Hey Robert!” San-

tana smiles and pulls him away from me to hug her, makes eye contact with me as she does it. My hands are at my sides and I can not look anywhere except for the ashtray, on its thin porch railing. One small tap and it would fall. Break with a CRASH. Collapse in on itself into a million pieces, blending in with the cold dirt below. Then he would have to look over here, disentangle himself from her.

That night, he didn’t say goodbye. He put his hands around me, down my back, up my skirt, and kept going in silence when I asked what he was doing.

Robert didn’t kiss me softly. That night, for hours, with just us together under a spark light sun. He didn’t kiss me softly. He said, “we’re friends, aren’t we?” Only I didn’t want to be just friends.

I didn’t say no. Why would I? In that heat, with my short skirt folded up, I finally felt like Santana.

Close your eyes, always kiss the top lip, and put your hands around his face. I did

all that she told me and he still didn’t kiss me soft.



He and Santana are all smiles and flirtations as Robert remembers who she is. He’s got his hand hovering around her waist, but not touching it, even though the hug is over. When he talks to her, probably filling her in on all the juicy details of his life she’s begged for, he has a groan in his smile, his neck pulling back from her in an obligatory way, like he wishes he can talk to her longer but he owes it to me to fill me in first.

And he does owe it to me. Owes a lot to me. Only I don’t want to hear it. I want to push the ashtray off the table.

It is Santana who stops the conversation short. Looks at me hard. She’s telling me something I can’t understand.

“Whitney and I need to get back inside but it was nice seeing you. You two can catch up tomorrow.” And there she goes again, the final say when we interact with boys. When we go in-

side, I look at Santana. Beautiful, fun Santana with all the power she “never wanted.” She is holding my arm against hers, almost too tightly, and I pinch her to make her let go.

“What?” She angrily whispers. There are still people asleep inside. The world doesn’t stop turning for our sake.

“What the hell was that? You didn’t even let me talk to him! He was my friend! You don’t even know him!”

She scoffs. “You seriously think I did that for me?”

“That’s the only thing you ever seem to do, so yeah.”

She shakes her head, makes a tight smile with pursed lips, and laughs a fake laugh. “Whitney, I distracted him to protect you. You know how fucking weird you got when he came over? Anyone could see you squirm from a mile away.”

“I...”

“And what did I even do, really? Why can’t I talk to Robert?” Her voice falters. “Why don’t you talk to me about things anymore?”

“You live with me now because I wanted you

here.”

“See! Like that, you know damn well I’m only here because I’m getting kicked out, but you never told me anything. You never have my back like I have yours.”

I pause, nonexistent words stuck in my throat. “I just keep hoping Martin will move here before that happens.”

“Hope is for children, Whit,” she sighs, slumping down against a wall. I sit with her. She looks straight ahead, lost in thought.

“Hey,” I say lightly, holding her hand, “that never made you stop wishing on stars.”

She smiles, small but it’s there. “That’s true... What happened with Robert?”

“Nothing really.”

“Didn’t seem like nothing.” She’s pushing but keeps eyeing me to gauge a reaction. Maybe she really does have my back.

And so I tell her everything.

The first kiss, mid-sentence when he smashed his mouth on mine. How he grabbed my back and pulled me close to him. How

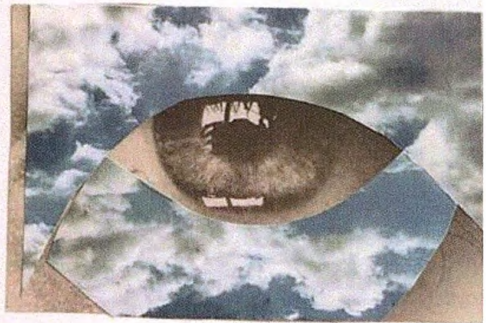
my arms couldn’t even move from being so close to his body. Skipping over touching my cheek or neck or even my breasts, going straight for below. The avocado tree.

I keep expecting her to butt in with questions, the way she usually does when I tell her about the vile of boys, but she stays quiet, her eyes fixed on me.

When I am done something strange happens. Santana doesn’t know what to say. I can see her mind whirling, the way a storm starts, above her head but nothing comes.

A star has not fallen, the sky has not split into two. She just grabs my hands and holds and holds and holds me.





PIECE OF MIND
by Hailey Garcia

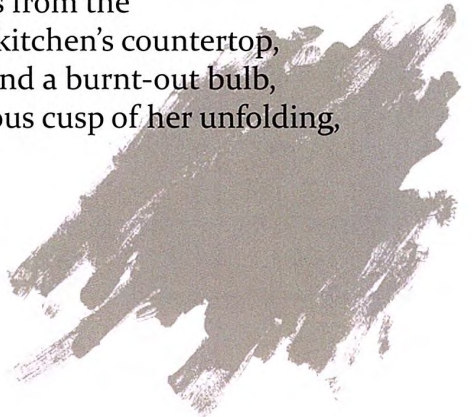


SENSITIVE
by Heidi Metro

That woman

by Ariel Horton

whose youth is a hard drug rushing slowly to the brain
who is always spilling tangled letters from her hands
who has a restless tenderness for thesauruses
and for expressionist paintings and antique coffee cups
and for Monk piano riffs and an incurable
longing to be fluent in French and to live
in a country she's never been to before
and a mind dimly lit with a thousand old voices
like candles flickering in an empty cathedral,
and a tenderness for public transport, where the train-cars
are peopled with dozens of stories all wearing different coats,
and an infatuation with the color blue
and the sound that "M" makes in the mouth
and the soft diffusion of her skin into his hands
and that bad habit, downtown Las Vegas,
and the taste of tangerines, of water
and of his lower lip, sweetness from the
jar of sugar on her childhood kitchen's countertop,
and certain dog-eared pages and a burnt-out bulb,
who, here, stands at the lustrous cusp of her unfolding,
and puts down the pen.





As We Stand

INSTITUTIONAL

(set to Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary)

Brother, Brother, Sister, Mother,
How does our country grow?
With prison bells, and iron cells,
And dark faces all in a row

FINANCIAL

(set to Patty Cake)

Count it up, count it up, banker's man
Count all their cash as fast as you can
Lie for it, steal for it, charge one more fee
So they cannot fight or ever be free

PREFERENTIAL

(set to Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star)

Look here, look here, little girl
Who has watched it all unfurl
It is not your turn to speak,
Though I know now things look bleak
Silence, silence, little girl
Who has watched it all unfurl

JUDICIAL

(set to Are You Sleeping, Brother John?)

Why're you asking, why're you asking
What I am? What I am?
I am still a person, I am still a person,
Uncle Sam, Uncle Sam

AS WE STAND
by Melanie Stoffel

The Presents of Black Skin

by Noah Humphrey

I'm black and gifted
With the knit of gernational love
Of slaves bound by greedy hands
To be freed from using the education they used to barricade
And we are the ones to rise
To prove to the impoverished we have a home in our degrees
To show how black is an equation that can't be solved with the same
effort you put out
Everything is all of that
Within the lines of a soldier
We slaved away
We faced the fears of patriarchy and saw through white man's motives
We sat upon the laurels of our skins lying on guns
We used our fists as mantle to our educational pieces
We call it black magic
We call it black redemption
Which we can never give up on black mirages of feeling
The pride we face upon the grounds of instinct beings
Of feeling through the black fears of a slave
And here we are lying ahead of ourselves that dug into the grave
Of disappointments, conjoinments, they tried to take our skin
We ran through all the races, and the places they called us kin
And we meddle with our lives that we seek as a prize to black justice
And we aggravate ourselves, only to find peace in our goals
We look back to the ships
We look back at the plantations
We look at the black ancestry
We look at our brothers and sisters lost in the sea
We look at the brothers and sisters lost in war
We look at the brothers and sisters lost to racism and colonial greed
And we say that their black gifts gave us life
We stand here upon the ground of generational pains
And from us a new generation will grow
I will continue to be black and proud
I will not face my ancestors, encircle them in a shroud.



FLIGHT
by Karen Romero

flower

by Catherine Tang

I often wish I
were a flower, so I could
photosynthesize.

Then, when I spend time
soaking up the bright sunlight,
I would be able
to make my own energy
instead of becoming burnt.

There is a downside —
If I were a flower, then
Winter's chill would be
much more bitter than before,
making my petaled self wilt.

Someone might also
pluck me cruelly from my stem —
humans seem to have
a morbid fascination
with putting things in glass jars.

If only I could
possess the best of both worlds,
I'd be Flower-Girl.

From a Devil's Tongue

by Danielle Pesqueria

The only blood I've ever spilt has been my own,
but its taste was much sweeter than the red communion wine
on my adolescent tongue.

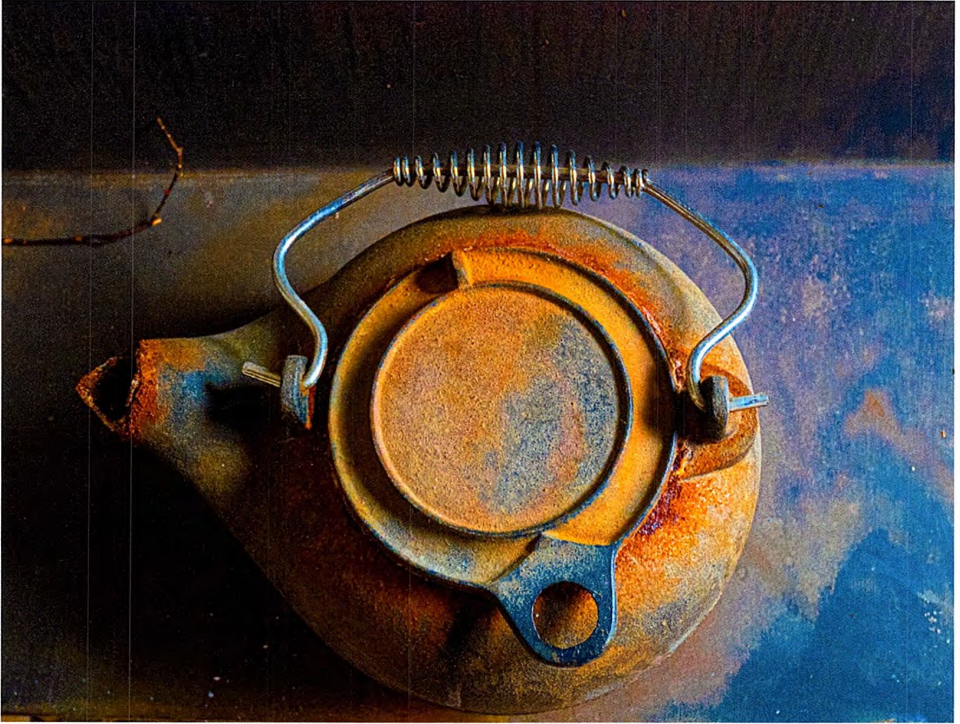
All I hear is violent silence
as adrenaline drills into my marrow
I feel the weight of every bone.

I consider how many times I've cried
please forgive me to the facelessness inside my mirror,
My eyes are lidded, heavy, open-doors staring blankly back at me

My chest is a hollow vestibule,
Empty and aching for someone to walk the aisle to the pit of my stomach
and save me from being cast out of heaven with all the other devils

I don't have what it takes to be a saint,
I don't think I'm capable of white dove love,
Nothing good can come from these lips

Pierced palms, and the warm blood
and vinegar running down my hips
Remind me I am no stigmata, just nails in flesh



RUST NEVER SLEEPS
by Emerson Little



The Price

By Keylee Leong

William Bassett sits in a black office chair in the training room in the Graham Athletic Center moving and clicking a mouse across a desktop computer. This lacrosse player is taking his fifth imPACT concussion assessment test. His curly, black hair, still slick with sweat from practice, gets in his eyes- he wonders if that's what's slowing him down.

When the test is over, he looks over at his trainers and heads to the locker room to change before he gets his results. It's a slow Friday afternoon in the training room — only about 15 athletes have signed in.

College athletics have long provided “physical fitness, leadership skills, discipline, rec-

reation and entertainment to student-athletes and others, often at a relatively low cost,” writes Forbes reporter Richard Vedder in the March 2018 article “The Three Reasons College Sports Is An Ugly Business”. The article discusses how athletes at major schools generate millions of dollars in revenue for institutions but often are treated badly in the process.

These Division 1 athletes don't get a share of the money made. There are numerous examples of colleges purposely dumbing down college classes for athletes in order to keep them on the courts and away from classrooms. Vedder lists many occasions, but this one stuck out: “In North Carolina, thousands of students,

many of them athletes, took phantom courses that made a mockery of academic integrity and the NCAA did nothing substantively.” Just because collegiate athletics are a bargain asset for campuses and their extended communities does not mean it does not come with a cost especially for scholar-athletes who put in thousands of hours of practice and make sacrifices for the chance to play in college. According to the National Collegiate

Athletic Association, the governing body overseeing collegiate athletics, fewer than two percent of college athletes will have a professional career. For most, this is the peak of competition.

Athletics at Whittier



They Pay

College became prominent in the 1920s. Back then, the school competed against national powerhouses such as USC and UCLA. Whittier's struggling football team has a storied history, not the least of which is because former president, Richard M. Nixon, was a benchwarmer.

Currently, the school offers a wide variety of Division 3 sports for student-athletes, including football, basketball, cross country, soccer, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field, lacrosse, water polo, golf, women's softball and volleyball, and men's baseball. Whittier competes in the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic

Conference (SCIAC), against eight other area schools including

Chapman, Occidental, La Verne and other similarly situated schools.

Whittier Poets take their athletics seriously. The student body consists of 30.2 percent athletes according to the Whittier College website. Walking around campus, it's easy to spot the athletes with their Under Armor-sponsored gear, backpacks, hoodies, t-shirts, pants, shoes, etc. Every athlete gets a custom set of apparel each season, as long as they can pay. In Division 3, athletes don't get scholarships and the athletic department does not pay for the apparel and gear for most sports either. Gearing up can range from \$150-\$300 out of pocket.

Even on Whittier's small campus, it takes

two hands to count the number of people on crutches or riding those leg scooters. Most are athletes. It may be hard now to imagine a future price to pay for playing college sports, but a 2017 Sports Illustrated article looking at Division 1 athletes notes that two-thirds sustained major injuries and half of those became chronic. College athletes are 2.5 times more likely to suffer from chronic injuries than non-athletes.

Old injuries are no joke. Studies cited in the Sports Illustrated article indicate that health problems associated with injuries sustained while playing college sports grow over time as the injuries limit former athletes' abilities to exercise —thus leading to an increased risk for

cardiovascular disease. According to the article, one study showed that former college athletes perform worse in physical fitness tests than non-athletes later in life. “You get a physical on the way in,” says Paul Weinacht, a former offensive lineman at Stanford University who is quoted in the article. “But there isn’t a physical on the way out. No one asks about your injuries when you leave.”



“I remember this shooting pain and I knew I had a concussion, but it was also my fifth. You’re not supposed to play after a fifth, so I didn’t get off the field initially. Bassett relaxes in his dorm room five days a week. His woodsman-esque black beard creeping into his mustache. His concussion happened during a practice just days before the start of the spring semester. He attempted to duck a shot ball, but it hit the back of his head.

The helmet helped with the impact, but a lacrosse ball is as hard as a rock and college

players shoot at around 100 mph.

Bassett eventually waved to the trainer on hand, Keith Candelaria, who was also the head athletic trainer at Whittier College at the time. They carted him back to the trainer’s room and he took the concussion test. Will’s memory stats were a few points lower than average. His 2019 season was over.

After his concussion, Bassett had to drop all but two classes, but the school’s Student Disability Services office was able to keep him enrolled with just six credits. “Lacrosse has so much structure to my life and it really helped me organize stuff,” he added, “having that cut out of my life made it really difficult to fill the rest of my time.”

Bassett is not the only athlete to experience this traumatic loss of purpose. Water polo player, Sawyer Bellville, recently transferred to Whittier College from USC but broke her ankle in January which led her to miss the preseason. At first glance, Bellville, who is from Chino, looks like she belongs with the

hippies in Laguna with her wild blonde hair and floral everything.

Windows rolled down and wind raced through our hair, she recently took a break from her busy schedule to speed to the only hotspot in town, Chillin, where she walked in with no shoes and ordered an almond milk tea. Bellville says it killed her not to be able to play while she was injured. Sipping her drink, she recalls how she tripped while running. “I just didn’t see the pinecone, but it saw me,” she laughs, “and I ate it so hard.”

Bellville left USC, the reigning Division 1 national women’s water polo champs and the current top seed in the NCAA tournament, for financial reasons. Her old coach, the legendary Jovan Vavic was recently arrested in the college admissions scandal, which hasn’t put USC athletics in the best of light.

When I asked why she wanted to play Division 3 water polo when she could be doing something else, she said, “Without it, I would totally get fatter, but also I’ve been doing this my

The Price They Pay

whole life. I wouldn't know what else to do with my time." Things seem to be working out, though. Bellville made it back from her injury to play this season and was twice named SCI-AC athlete of the week. She was recently made All-SCIAC.

"I've been doing this my whole life. I wouldn't know what else to do with my time."



Payton Bosque plays for the Division 1 University of Hawaii's women's water polo team. We recently spoke over FaceTime as she sat in her dorm room memorizing player rotations for an upcoming game against UC Davis. Bosque is a biology major who juggles practice, academics, and a busy social life. She recently dislocated a shoulder during practice and had to sit out the second half of the season.

"It was frustrating to sit on the bench and watch. Getting back in was even worse because I don't play the same," she says, talking quickly with her eyes glued

to her paper most of the time. Even though she's not playing, she's still committed to her assignments from the coach.

Her perfect tan and sun-bleached brown bob cut give away that she's been getting in the pool regularly even with her injury. When I tell her about how college athletes often perform worse later in life, she says, "Yeah, I get that. People could burn out after playing at a collegiate level and not pay so much attention to their physical well-being."

I asked her if she was worried about this for herself.

"I'll be fine. I've always been active."

"I'm sure that's what all athletes think when they're younger," I respond.

"Well, are you worried? You play in college, too, remember?"

This catches me off guard, but when I thought about it, I realized that I have tendonitis in both elbows and I sprained my knee last season. Water polo players are known to have really messed up knees and hips later on

in life.

I tell Bosque that I'm worried I won't be able to walk right when I'm old. She nods in agreement and relays that her teammate had to get knee surgery because of water polo.

We sit in silence contemplating whether it was worth all the trouble. Or, at least I do.

Soon, Bosque picks up her notebook and throws it in her backpack, saying she needs to go to the library to study and print out more paperwork from her coach.

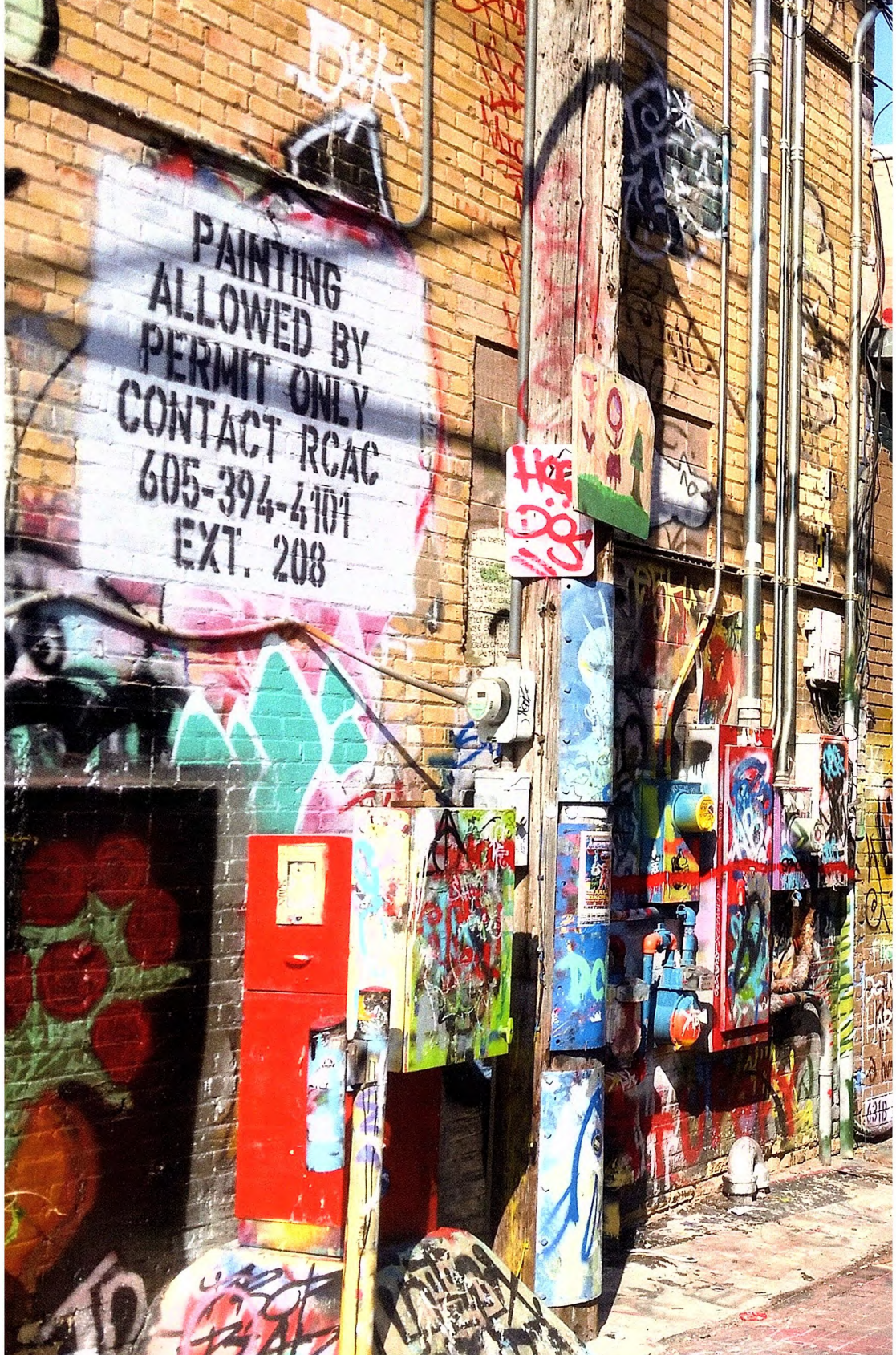
Bosque hangs up, leaving me thinking about my future and why I worked so hard to play a sport I would never be able to really play again after college. Was it for the memories? The lifelong friends I could make? The satisfaction of living a healthy active lifestyle? Was it worth the medical bills in my future?

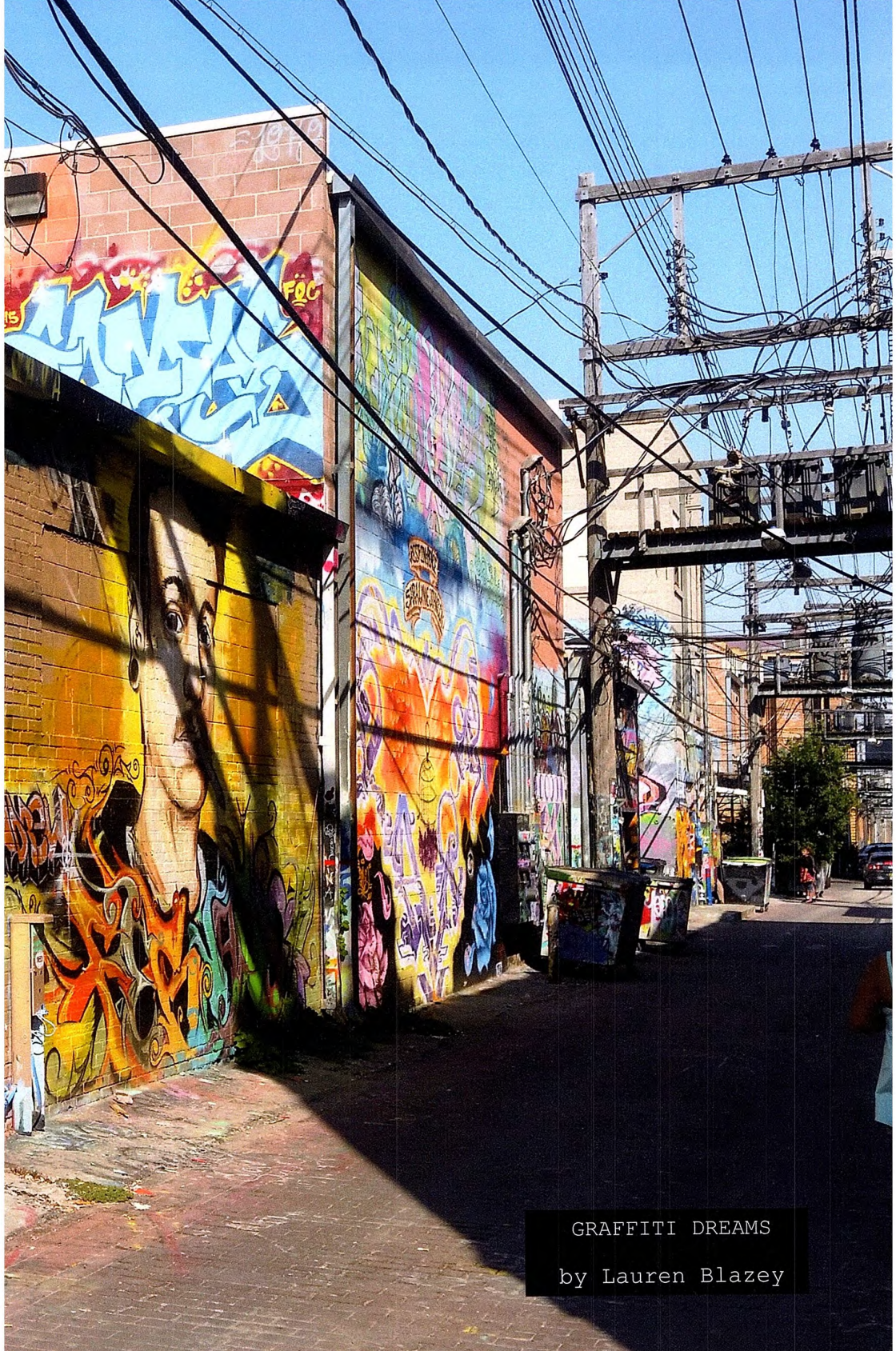
I close my laptop and get ready for practice, pulling out my knee sleeve.

It's counter-attack Monday.



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GRAFFITI DREAMS

by Lauren Blazey

Supermarket in Las Vegas

by Ariel Horton

as her pliant hand brushed mine—
this woman reaching over my check-lane counter
for her groceries—I burst into light like

Proust, who bit into that madeleine
and found all lost time
in a note of lime-blossom and a spoonful of tea.

there was little special about her,
but she smelled like a hotel in Vegas—
past the wilted cigarette smoke,

past the olive tinge of sour liquor and sweat,
to the long clean halls, where the floors are white,
the ceilings are lined with chandeliers and mosaic glass,

and there are fountains and topiaries
and everything is drenched in big-money-opulence,
but is home.

she smelled like the Venetian plaster fountain water,
the geranium-vanilla-cinnamon of what must have been
a cocktail of tile cleaner and Febreze,

like the elevator to the sparkling still-life sublime,
and night spilling fast through the open door
that let out onto the tincan canopy of the Strip,

where we'd drink the city alive,
neon lights flicking and humming
in the back of our throats.

so there, withering into the
seventh hour of my cashiering shift,
I bit into this woman, ate her in small sugared pieces—

and like an overfull cup of Earl Grey,
the ink from her receipt turned my tongue black,
my “have a good day” a half-buzzed billboard light.



ROCK N' ROLL A GO GO
by Shannon Aguiar

Selling Sex



In the Age of Social Media

by Madison VanWinkle

With a sly smile on his face, Andrew, whose name has been changed to protect his identity casually sips on a Nitro Cold Brew as he talks loudly in a bustling Starbucks in Covina, California. Andrew has a confident demeanor, but it slightly fades when asked about his side-hustle running an account on OnlyFans — a London-based social media app for content creators and their subscribers/fans. The content is often, though not exclusively by any means, of adult nature.

With a smooth wink, Andrew tells me I should subscribe. He says, in a flat tone, that his current rate is \$10 a month, but he can inflate or deflate that price. Andrew is thinking about raising the price because

the service, OnlyFans, takes a 20 percent cut and he also may have to pay taxes on his earnings. Furthermore, he only receives a payout from the service every seven days. However, subscribers can tip him through Venmo and other instant money transfer services.

As his leg nervously shakes underneath the metal table, Andrew glances at the men sitting at the table next to us. In a soft voice, he says his motivation to monetize explicit photos and videos of himself was financial. He decided to withdraw from San Francisco State University after one semester because it was too expensive. He currently lives at home with his mother and younger sister, while balancing

his job as a chef with his pursuit of music, visual design, and voice acting. After saying some money up, he plans to return to community college to pursue a degree in business management. He describes his OnlyFans account, which obliges him to create and share content with his subscribers, as another creative outlet. But he says it isn't necessarily fun for him and he often views it as a chore — something he *has* to do.

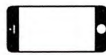
Andrew peeps up, though, when he starts describing his OnlyFans work as entrepreneurial. He says many men and women would send him flirtatious messages on social media. The messages made him realize that there was a demand for him, for his body. Since he was

already sending nudes for free, he decided why not make money off it. "Supply and demand, you know?" he says, with a smirk on his face.

Leaning across the table, Andrew laughs and shakes his head while explaining that he was recently flirting with a man on Instagram, whom he convinced to subscribe to his account. He says he grossed \$350 this week and he predicts he will earn more as his subscriber base grows. He describes his subscribers as clients, interacting with some of them, and charging additional fees to exchange messages with individuals who he provides exclusive content too. Andrew says his target audience is both men and women, some of whom he knows. He advertises his OnlyFans account on his public Twitter. With a laugh, he tells me that the brother of one of his friends from high school recently subscribed and tipped him \$50.

Suddenly though, Andrew's demeanor shifts as he looks up at the sky and blushes when he reveals with a bit of haste

that some of his sister's friends have subscribed to his account. The site allows subscribers to go by pseudonyms, so he is unable to confirm his subscribers' identities unless they share them with him. Chuckling, he says that when he gets a like from someone after promoting his OnlyFans account on social media, followed by a new subscriber; he can kind of assume who it is.



Andrew doesn't attempt to hide his participation with the service. While he doesn't use his legal name on his page, he does use his nickname and links the page to his Twitter account. He has a public, NSFW Twitter account where he posts "teasers," pictures and videos to entice people to subscribe to his account. He says he uses this account to interact with other OnlyFans "creators," a community he describes as supportive, but claims that he doesn't personally subscribe to anyone else's accounts.

Andrew says he has

not received any backlash yet from his friends about using the service, but he wouldn't care if he did since he has to "capture that bag." He also states that he knew what he was getting himself into, as he did his research for two months before starting an account. He says he is comfortable with his body and he already had content, naked pictures he had taken and saved previously. Hence, he figured why not make extra money from the convenience of his phone. He pauses, sipping on his iced drink, before saying softly, "Unfortunately, sex sells. All I can do is, you know, supply it."

He recommends the service to others as long as they are comfortable with themselves, and they do their research. "If you are sending your nudes for free, you need to reconsider," he says with a laugh.

While Andrew isn't obligated to post a certain amount of content per month, keeping his subscribers happy can be a burden as they demand more content and more explicit posts. Posts on his OnlyFans

Selling Sex

page encourage his followers to message him for exclusive content with the warning that all kinks are welcome. Balancing personal and professional relationships can be difficult too. In essence, he knows some of his subscribers and interacts with them individually. He does not believe he would pursue a sexual or romantic relationship with any of his subscribers. Still, he does not judge them for subscribing since they help pay his bills.

When Andrew posts explicit photos and videos to his Onlyfans page, subscribers can take screen-shots, which could open the door to blackmail, because Andrew's face is visible in most of his content. With his jaw slightly tightening, Andrew insists it would not matter as he is transparent about his use of the service and he knew what he was getting into. While his mother does not know about the page, Andrew is confident that if she found out, she'd be okay with it.

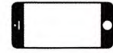
Andrew says he is in

the process of expanding his involvement in the digital sex industry via Premium Snapchat. This is an exclusive Snapchat account on which he will post explicit videos and photos on his story and provide custom videos. This does come with legal risk, though, as the payment is under the table, and it violates Snapchat's Terms of Service.

He is also considering pushing himself even further to act in pornography for PornHub in the future, but he wants to take baby steps. He thinks porn is more professional and will require more time. He does, however, post sex tapes on his OnlyFans page as part of the monthly content he provides to his subscribers.

The Generation Z ideal of being "here for a good time, not a long time" drives people like Andrew, who are using temporary solutions to solve life-long problems. In his case, being from a single-parent, lower-income household. With a laugh, he acknowledges that his

work in the digital sex industry may prevent him from working for companies like Disney. Still, he will deal with it when the time comes.



Howard Klepper, a University of Arizona Philosophy professor, argues in his "Sexual Exploitation and the Value of Persons" that sex workers, digital or not, are inherently perceived and treated as a mere means to an end by their clients. Clients, or subscribers, intend to achieve pleasure for themselves. Klepper's research reflects that this use of sex workers as a means to an end creates a cycle of objectification that tends to prey on vulnerable populations, including lower-income, young people.

Marie, a close friend of Andrew whose name has been changed due to the sensitive nature of this article, dated Andrew for a few months when they were in high school. She says she was shocked when she learned of his par-

ticipation on OnlyFans, but says he has always been a sexually liberated and open person. She recalls the time when they were teenagers, and nude pictures of Andrew were hacked and sent around to many people from multiple schools. Since the photographs were already out there, she can understand why he'd want to make money from them.

While Marie acknowledges that Andrew has had to move around and work multiple jobs to make ends meet, she is concerned that Andrew, whom she described as "lively, kind, genuine and intelligent, but immature," is not thinking of the consequences. For example, the pinned tweet on his public Twitter is a screenshot of a text-message exchange between Andrew and his boss. When the boss chastises Andrew for frequently calling off work, Andrew replied that he quits "...effective immediately." Andrew's public social media pages also show him posting tickets he bought for Raves and concerts, along with frequent posts about getting drunk. This be-

havior is very similar to that of his peers.

When the subject of sex work as a side hustle was broached in his class, Whittier College Professor of Journalism Joseph Donnelly, asked his Introduction to Journalism class [for which this article was done], "Do you guys just think there are no consequences to YOLO-ing all the time?"

The class, composed primarily of 18 to 21-year-olds, laughed and shook their heads. Several students asserted that they either didn't care about the consequences, and some argued that we shouldn't judge Andrew or those hustling for money to live on too harshly. In a 2016 study published by the US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, researchers found that in 2011, when the "You Only Live Once" (YOLO) motto was at peak popularity in teen slang, sex, and alcohol usage was most often associated with a lack of concern for consequences, drawing a connection between popular culture and how slang heavily influenced

teenagers' decision making.

In a 2019 interview with the New York Times, Tim Stokely, the CEO of OnlyFans, expressed an interest in changing the platform from being associated with pornography to being a part of the influencer culture. The OnlyFans website advertises, "Sign up to make money and interact with your fans." This tagline appeals to those in the social-media generation such as Andrew, whose artistic nature and desire to move up in the world drive them to pursue careers as online influencers. OnlyFans has been integral to blurring the line between sex workers and influencers, with some users of the service acting as both.

Andrew, at nineteen-years-old, is business savvy and intelligent. However, he is still a product of his generation and culture. We take a drive to Target so he can do his shopping. While casually smoking a joint, he tells me a guy he knew from high-school subscribed to his OnlyFans and asked him

Selling Sex

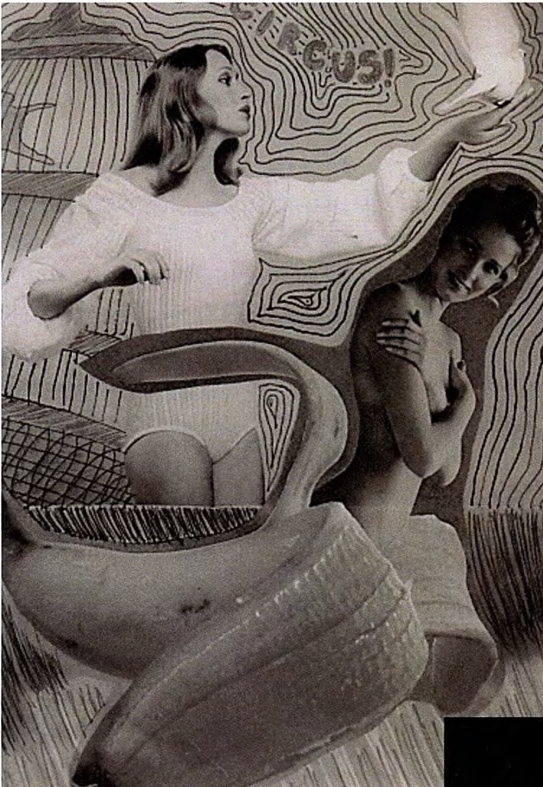
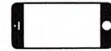
to hook-up over the upcoming Winter-Break. With a laugh, he states to me he may do it, but he needs to see him first.

He says he tries to keep a lid on his personal or identifying information and isn't concerned about stalkers or over-eager fans. Asked if he's encountered any creepiness, Andrew says, "No, thankfully no. But, I mean, I'm not the type to push over to those types of things."

I ask Andrew if he is single. He sarcastically accuses me of flirting with him, before asserting that he is "single as a Pringle." He tells me that if he was dating someone and they asked him to stop using OnlyFans, he would try to get to the root of the problem, which he assumes would be insecurity. If his hypothetical partner insisted that he quit using it, and the relationship was serious, Andrew, after much hesitation,

said he would delete his account and find a different side hustle.

After browsing the aisles at Target, we come upon a seasonal display. With a childlike glee, Andrew asks if we can take a holiday photo in front of an artificial Christmas tree. Laughing, he sets his phone on a timer and runs to wrap an arm around my shoulder, smiling like we're a happy family.



CIRCUS

by Heidi Metro

High Anxiety

by Lorraine DiMauro

You used to tell me you don't like to get high.
I liked that about you, because neither did I.
But you've been to the world's ugliest corners
And you're living proof that heartbreak cuts deep.
It changes people. Instead of me, now
The lighters, blunts, and THC are what you hold closest.
They're your new best friend, the numbing and highs.
The pain the world's caused you turned your heart cold.
And is now only warmed by the poison you breath
Into your lungs, to numb your sense of reality,
To temporarily rid the thought of me.
Does it still give you anxiety?
The flame used to blacken the soul
Of the boy I once knew, the same fire you used
To burn away my memory. Do you still remember me
When you wake in the morning, before your daily dose
Takes you away? Do you still reminisce over times
I was by your side, but put a blunt to your mouth instead,
Knowing it should have been my lips?
You put your wall up and burn the world away,
But sometimes a mere flame can go up
Like wildfire, destroying the good
Along with the bad.
While burning me to the ground,
You caught yourself in the flames.
For you are not you anymore.
I pray you still remember the times
My love for you had you faded,
When you're holding your new lover
Who frees you from your demons.
The faded days, the drunken nights
Anything that causes you to forget
Your fading memories of me.
You used to fear getting high, but now
It's the only thing that distracts you
From your true fear of being loved.
I guess now since you fell in love
With the drugs, and out of love with me,
Now I'm the drug that gives you anxiety.



BILDUNGSROMAN
by Lauren Blazey

9 innings

by Lauren Blazey

Some mornings I wake up
to the crack of a baseball
hitting the bat

Of a boy who lives on my street.
It's a sound
that doesn't do what it's told.

It's a crack that doesn't break,
instead it echoes across fields
through alleys and side streets

And into the bodies of those
baptized in grass stains
and scraped knees.

I've had twenty three years for those
Stains to wash out and the scrapes to heal
But years often don't behave either.

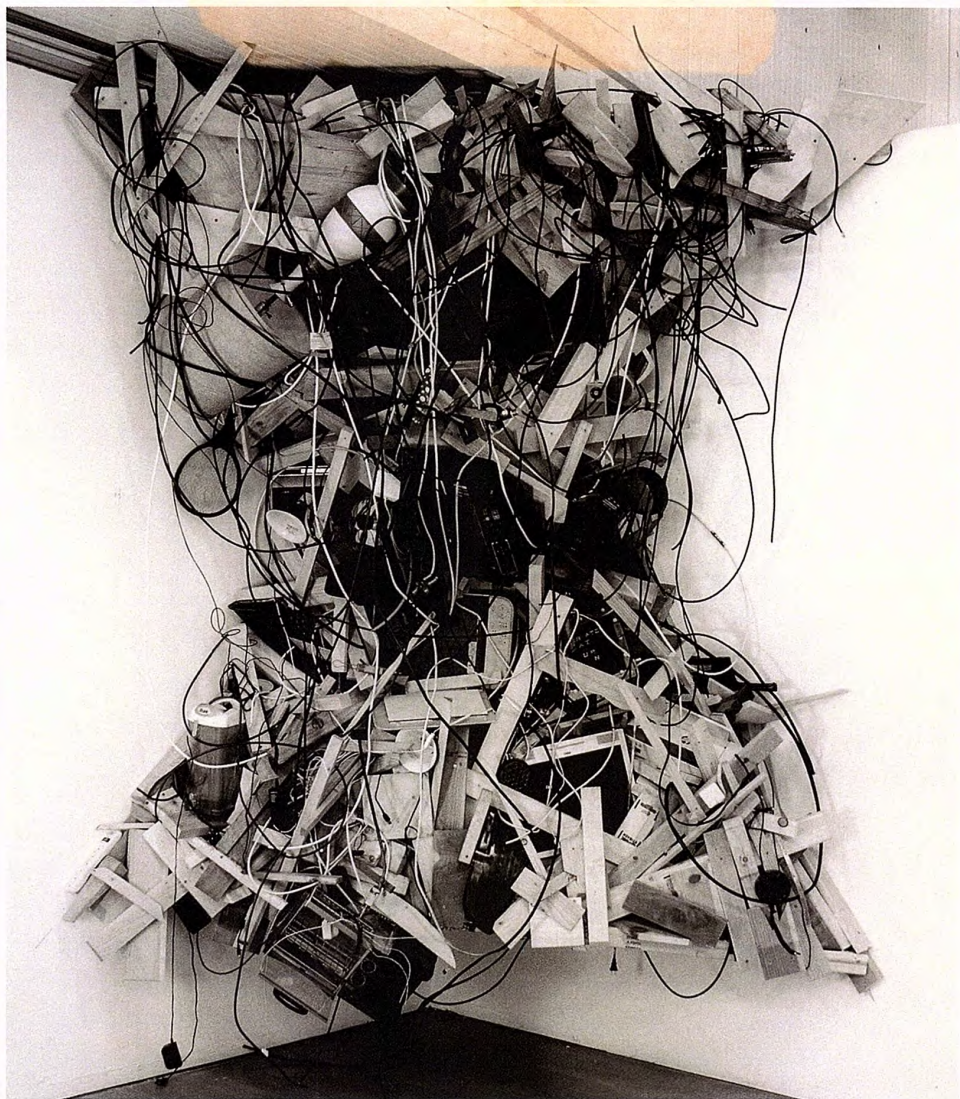
I still see life in batting averages.
Not in stats or percentages
Those don't really matter.

But in feeling, in streaks and slumps
Some days taking nine steps back
and none forward.

I was so much older
when I was that boy's age then I am today
And there are days when

I am as old as the game we both love,
One of the few
that does not bow to time.





CRITICAL MASS
by Shannon Aguiar

Flames Without Justice

by Jillian Spaulding

You do it because you can get away with it.
Everytime I sit and wait for you to cross the line,
and you always do.

A stiff hand's friction on my cheek.
My limp body slammed against cold walls.
Sure as wildfire you destroy me in your path.

I'm burnt beyond skin grafts,
I'm crumbling with every touch.
"It won't happen again."

Words have no weight, certainly not yours.
"I don't know what I would do without you."
I don't know what I would do without you.

I'll let your actions cause quakes.
So, come away and destroy me some more.

My Eyes Were On Philadelphia

by Noah Humphrey

Amber buses
Floating Fed-ex autos moving
making pleasure into padlocked traffic
singing Philadelphia, the home of the Brave
The street of the fallen Honda
The smiling Tesla, unable to falter economic deep water
breakfast is moving like hotcakes

That people love to eat up their space and time like dust
Moving is a homeless mission: Brown, blue, green butterflies of mirages
Greens ever with life and death, Ideals of watchful people
Leaves will never leave above the economic,
The streets will be filled and closed to the needy
Broken buildings were broken before we moved in
Parking that never housed any hearts, but people keep working

Appropriating their ideals of living life
The people on the bottom as the poor sit the benches
And the benches sitting strife
The parking, barking, astounding and the cheers
And the cadavers of the nagers always clear
Available, the complaints

Unavailable, the solutions to house a being
Giveth and giveth ideas but never agreeing
This brotherly road cutting ever deep into the ample traffic
My humble abode, and my eyes were on Philadelphia

in the time of corona

by Tori O'Campo

When I say that I miss you, I do not mean that I cannot live without you. It has only been five days, but in those five days our landscape has forever changed. I can count our time apart on one hand, but the death rates in our country have since doubled. How is any individual meant to process that on their own?

When I say that I miss you, I do not mean that I cannot live without you.

When I say that I miss you, I do not miss you for those few days we have been apart, but I miss you for the future. For the unknown number of days that will continue to stack up. For the quarantines of the future, for the devastations we have yet to anticipate.

If you feel me pulling back, it is not to get away from you. It is to shelter in place within myself, to bury myself in the soil and wait for this winter to pass. At least physical distance is quantifiable — this emotional distance feels as if it has the potential to expand into eternity.

How many Netflix docu-series will we stream at the same time while apart? How many distracted FaceTimes will we fight through as our minds drift in and out of the harrowing statistics? How many cases will be diagnosed as I turn off the news to listen to your favorite record – an attempt to feel closer to you that only leaves me feeling more alone? How many days will it take for this social distance to turn into an isolation, from all that keeps me sane?

You are safer there, it's true, so how selfish of me to long for your arms. As I sit here in my empty bathtub, lost in my own labyrinth of thought, a hug from you would be more comforting than this cold faux-porcelain I have made into my safe space.

If I touch myself when I think of you, do you promise to think of me, too?
And when I cannot tell if I cannot get dressed because I am depressed or if it is because I simply don't have to - will you think of me then, too?
When I say that I miss you - please know I know that it is a poor substitute for the words that are lost within the hurricane of my thoughts. Know that I have yet to reel them all in. Know that it is still you that my mind drifts to in the middle of this chaos.

We are 23 miles apart, and the days keep stacking up. The death toll keeps climbing above the curve. We are selfish and young; we are waiting to become bigger than ourselves. But until then, I will dream of you.

War Zone

by Gabriel Perez

You often wonder if the father of psychoanalysis ever reacted to perico the same way you sometimes do. You wonder if he ever lost 13 pounds in three days, if he suffered from chronic nosebleeds that dyed steaming shower water dark red every morning, thick streams retreating into the rusted drain bearing no resemblance to the chocolate syrup used in Psycho. You wonder if John Belushi ever rummaged through the Pop-Tart wrappers and unpaid parking tickets in his glove compartment for upwards of 13 minutes in search of a residue-lined plastic baggie to rub against his gums. You wonder if Aaron Sorkin was ever pulled over and forced to swallow three solid rocks the size and color of golf balls. You wonder if Thomas Edison ever phoned a compadre a month out of rehab in Guadalajara at 3:13 a.m. on a Tuesday and invited him over to kill a fucking eightball. You wonder if Stephen King ever endured the paralysis that seizes you after one too many key shots, robbing you of equanimity and the power of coherent speech, which you and the homies simply take to calling the stuckness. You wonder if Whitney Houston ever fell under its spell, if she ever thought to remedy it by racking two or three or six more lines, stealing her sister's car, speeding, retreating under the weight of a piercing downpour before losing control, careening across four lanes of a waterlogged two-way street, and plowing into the dying hedges and three feet of humble brick in front of a house belonging to a woman in her early fifty's with a full head of curly Brown hair and uncomfortably sympathetic eyes that tell Whitney she too has ruined her fair share of front yards.

Not likely, you admit to yourself.

Hunter S. Thompson, on the other hand—he probably got into some shit like that. You're willing to bet he was familiar with the dreaded stuckness. All too familiar. You wonder if Richard Pryor, the only known survivor of a semi-successful self-immolation, ever picked up a Schedule II narcotic for his mother, if he ever knowingly, deceitfully accepted more feria from her than the cost of the amount she asked for—so much more, in fact, that he was able to pick up a sack for himself and still have enough for a pack of Marlboro Red 100s.



SQUEAKY CLEAN HELIUM
by Gabriella Rodriguez

My Memories of Her Escape Me

by Danielle Pesqueira

I remember the gold alloy of the necklace was gritty, the tiny engravings of flowers were dull

The necklace was worn and worthless
It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen

I remember how I begged my grandmother to let me have the gold hexagon charm

It was the size of a quarter and weighted in my palms
I snuck into her room every day and took it out of her dresser

I remember how I would run my fingertips over the textured surface as if it were braille,
As if I could understand the grooves
any more than the Spanish on my grandmother's Mexican tongue

I remember one day she looped a chain through the top,
She told me it was mine
I slipped two pennies into it before clasping it together

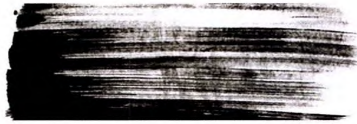
I remember how my tiny fingers fumbled over it
I checked all day to see if it was still around my neck
That night I opened it up

I remember my surprise when I saw the two pennies were gone — instead I found three dimes
I thought the locket must be magic
No one believed me

I remember I wore the gold locket from my grandmother every day
until it broke,
and the little hexagon charm fell to the ground
I picked it up and stuck it in a heart-shaped box made of wood

I remember the taste of her house, strawberry Fanta soda
and red candies on my tongue
Vanilla ice cream mixed with green crystal sprinkles

Nopales and lemons from her yard
I remember her now only when I smell spearmint gum or drink
homemade lemonade,
More lemon juice than sugar



Untitled poem about Chet Baker

by Daniel Wolf

Soothingly, blue glass envelops my fingernails.
This came from a listen to “Born to be Blue” by the bluest of performers —
Chet Baker.
His eyes burst flickers of Moon beams,
Lungs expel silent embers and cigarette smoke,
Voice of genuine crystal records soft and flaccidly empty,
Dampened by the cracks of a needle,
Filled to the brim with heroin and distrust,
Need no explanation for his sign across the grave —
“Almost blue”. . . almost new. . . almost like you
“A slave to your love... my funny valentine... your eyes are red
From crying” —
O dear bluest boy — Mr. Chet Baker



EARLY MORNING
by Samantha Paladini

Soma

by Jennifer Smith

Fire on the horizon. I could see it cresting the mountaintop with the wind whipping it over the peak like a dry hurricane to the east. The chaparral hillsides crackled, animals fled, and yet there I stood, still. Frozen amidst a scorching heat.

There were many voluntary evacuations that year with fire from the west, east, and south all burning my direction. I spent most nights sleepless, ready to flee with a week's worth of essential supplies. I couldn't fathom leaving behind a single part of my 18 years, so I packed Goliath-sized boxes and bags full of my experiences: my grandmother's handwritten letters, my favorite lamp, my dog's ashes. They filled my car so full I couldn't

see out the rearview window.

Late at night on the bare mattress, with nothing but a wall separating me from the safety of my world inside and the uncontrollable firestorms outside, I anxiously waited for the apocalypse.

Our house sat on a slope between the westernmost ridge of Palomar Mountain and a smaller peak to the west. The two-lane road leading to our house split a valley lined with ancient oaks, pines, and forcibly planted Mexican fan palms, stark lime against the muted browns and olive greens of wild California sagebrush, manzanita and pale yucca.

Mornings were dewy and fragrant, smelling of native flora and horseshit, courtesy of the neighbors running

an illegal boarding business. No one here cared about what anyone did, as evidenced by the massive marijuana field that was recently discovered by the Feds and later dug up and helicoptered out. It's a wonder they found it under the marine layer that habitually rolled into the valley, hiding anything 2,000 feet above sea level.

There was no power at the house that summer for a couple of weeks. It was a hot, dry, late September when the winds forced energy companies to shut it down due to the risk of wildfires, or actively burning ones. The fridges were on a strict schedule of when they could and couldn't be opened.

While food wasn't scarce, all the pre-packaged snacks made mealtimes per-

functory. The only solace was the shimmering pool, which had been kept clean despite the dust from the Santa Ana winds due to my insistence that the pool vacuum be hooked up to the gasoline generator that powered our fridges and lamps at night.

I spent hours in the glassy water, floating and looking up to the sky while the sound of gunshots and generators hummed throughout the neighborhood. When no one was home, I left my swim bottoms and tops on the concrete to dry and warm while I dove underwater. My hair pooled above me like a slow, tentative jellyfish gently sitting atop my scalp.

The water was soft, welcoming and easy to move in. I opened my eyes, circled my arms and paddled my legs slowly. Despite being underwater, it was the only time I felt like I could breathe.

Beyond the pool's edge, red-tailed hawks and vultures patrolled our canyon, which was drying up under an unrelenting sun. Staring at them from the pool

float, I wondered what it was like to feel so light, to be held buoyant and steady by wind gusts while looking down hundreds of feet beneath the tops of the old oak trees and sage that hadn't yet burned. I envied their disregard for the looming threats to their habitat. They seemed calm amidst all the ash in the air.



My habitat had been disturbed. After the first voluntary evacuation, the mere mention of wind, fire, or heat sent my mind into a paralyzing freeze. Numbly, I would pack what was left of my things and add it to the pile in the car. Adrenaline kept me moving, but most actions became a blur. My forearms and femurs became independent attachments, moving with primitive instincts.

Diligently, they would water the roof, move objects away from the walls and check the smoke alarms, but anxiety constantly pressed at my chest, hot and heavy like a cast iron. Even

with the constant preparations, the brush clearance, and the building of barricades around the property, I couldn't feel safe. The threat of fire always loomed; the fear never left.

It was a late night in October when I heard the helicopters overhead. Pressing against the window, I watched them fly southbound where a rust-hued glow grew brighter with each breath. Outside, the buzz of the rapidly shaking rain gutters wasn't enough to drown out the sickening crack of manzanita branches breaking off trees being blown by wild gusts of wind.

I'd been here before, many times, but as my heart started to pound, I was immobilized. There was too much noise, too many signals, more than I knew what to do with. I heard my parents shouting, the sound of shoes running through the house, a dog barking, the wind knocking at the screen. Phones were going off with calls from the county - mandatory evacuation. Fire trucks screamed up the road and stopped in our

driveway. I was still.

My body had seized. Men were dragging thick hoses toward my window overlooking the canyon, men bounding down unbeaten terrain to create a fire break, men trying to save me and my family and our home. I stared at the illuminated, dark dust floating in my room, and broke into particles as small as the dust, falling to ashes on the floor.

A sudden jolt at the base of the spine kick-started my femurs and forearms to do their duty. I grabbed the bag waiting in the corner of the room and made it to the car with both cats in their carriers and all dogs squeezed into other vehicles.

We raced down the road, passing red and white lights, almost dim compared to the penetrating spread of orange that stopped just short of the gates of our community. It would be awhile before we could go back.



We were lucky that year. The Witch Fire, which ini-

tially ignited during October 2007 in Southern San Diego County, grew rapidly over the course of the week. The fire eventually merged with the Poomacha and McCoy fires on Palomar Mountain, where the winds pushed it directly toward our 87-home community.

It wasn't until November that the consequentially named Witch-Poomacha Complex Fire had been completely contained. By that time, nearly a million people had been ordered to evacuate. It turned out to be California's second-largest wildfire of the season.

When we were finally able to return, memories from the night of the evacuation were fresh. The sweet, heady scent of the drought-tolerant chaparral replaced by char and burned earth. The tall Mexican fan palms were bizarrely marked, scorched at the base while the bright, green palm fronds 50 feet above were untouched.

Birds looking for prey sat on tentatively held power lines instead of on crumbling trees. No

one's home in our neighborhood had burned, but our friends and family lost theirs. It was a time of resignation, for recognizing what one could and could not control.

My own body, for example. I noticed the odd way in which my left fingertips would be intermittently numb, sensing tingling, little pinpricks on the skin. Then, aches. Aches in unusual places, like hair follicles, and the spaces under the ribs. I often winced at an electric current that shot up my left shin-bone every time I lifted and bent the adjoining knee. Later, fatigue.

I tried all the remedies alongside the suggested doses of turmeric and magnesium and acupuncture. I reliably sought therapists and movement specialists, hoping to organize the chaos happening within, but all without much success, even as the years passed.

I moved shortly after the Witch Fire to pursue a life beyond the mountain. Even with the physical distance, I felt the heat burning my cells, cracking the

Soma

walls. I was desperate to forget that summer and the other years of evacuations.

Still, those memories were buried deep, creating fissures in my foundation that had been shoddily repaired, merely plastered over. I could barely withstand even the slightest breeze.



More than a decade after the fire, I was asked to house sit for the family during their trip abroad. I again found myself alone on the mountaintop, sharing space with only the snakes and roadrunners outside my window. It was hard to sleep the first night, and I wandered out back, barefoot and barely dressed.

The air was fresh and nature still, except for the chirp of crickets, the slight ripple of water in the pool, and me. The water was shocking as I waded down - feet, legs, and hips moving slowly upon the steps so as to not lose my breath. Every muscle tensed when I dropped in, submerged, disrupting the

blue cellophane surface reflecting a tiny moon and a giant Milky Way.

Beneath, I felt every nerve screaming. A dull ache radiated from every crack, but I pushed at the edge of pain and pleasure as the cold water embraced me and lapped at my edges, and my hands felt more than they'd felt in years. I stayed long enough to watch the moon pass overhead.

Two days later, I heard a familiar sound at dawn. Water-dropping helicopters approached this time heading west. Flames rippled up from the base of the canyon, quickly approaching and burning at the edge of the yellow wildflowers that had since regrown.

It was an unlikely time for a fire, as spring was mild, and it had been raining for weeks. The ground was saturated and the creek bed overflowed for the first time in a decade, attracting an army of frogs that could be heard in chorus a mile uphill.

Curiously, I wandered back outside, watching as the helicopter did nothing to stop the flames from rising. The

fire now had ignited the trees and falling ashes covered the pool's surface. I turned back to find the western wall of the house engulfed, searing my skin with a heat I couldn't feel.

Startled, I jerked awake. The cat jumped onto my chest, looking for comfort. I laughed, and laughed, and laughed, until I cried, heaving uncontrollably.

Home at last.



HEAVEN KNOWS

LIFE

MUST ACT ALONE —



I FEAR

THE HORRIBLE CONCEIT OF DEATH AND NIGHT

;

I
A M
TORN OUT OF THE
;

LIVING
IF I WAKE,

MY

GHOST

COME

TO THEE.

Clasping onto my Porcelian

by Jillian Spaulding

It would start when we heard the water run without stopping;
the smell crept up my nose
and my stomach turned.

But my mom would always tell us, "It will be ok."
Then that cold hard porcelain released invisible liquid
That sogged my socks.
My mom yelled, "Well fuck, get the towels.
That's all we can do till the plumber comes."

All we can do was my mom's motto.
Towels are all we can do.
All we can do is wait for someone else to fix it.
Pills are all we can do.
All we can do is wait for the medicine to fix her.

She pricked her finger, but didn't listen to the glucose lance.
Blood sugar, like plumbing, is a tricky thing after all.
Thick toilet paper gets you squishy socks.
Eat terribly and we'll rush you to the hospital.
That day, we didn't have time to get shoes,
A new but familiar cold seeped through me.
My cold feet on the tile of room 6.
A cracked China doll on the bed.
Antiseptic burned the hair in my nostrils.
I breathed in through my mouth,
It was all I could do.

"Well fuck, let's get some coffee.
That's all we can do till the doctors come."
I threw her words back at her, and in my head screamed,
"Pills are not *all* you can do!"

I can still hear the echoes of water if I listen closely.
I can hear us running to the car.
I'm always waiting and listening because
It's in me, the water rising, and the cold.

I clasp her pill list in my shaking hand.

Lunch-Pail Liturgy

by Gabriel Perez

My dad's
digital am/fm radio ear muffs were more
to him than a tool, more
than a simple yard work companion

This fool was transported
the moment he slipped them on: pinche viejo
with a four-inch vertical and weakness for pan dulce
was suddenly Michael Jordan at the 1988 Slam Dunk Contest,
the ear muffs his White Cement IIIs

Like their owner, estas chingaderas
were clumsy, outworn, thick
with sweat and envy, yet
surprisingly durable

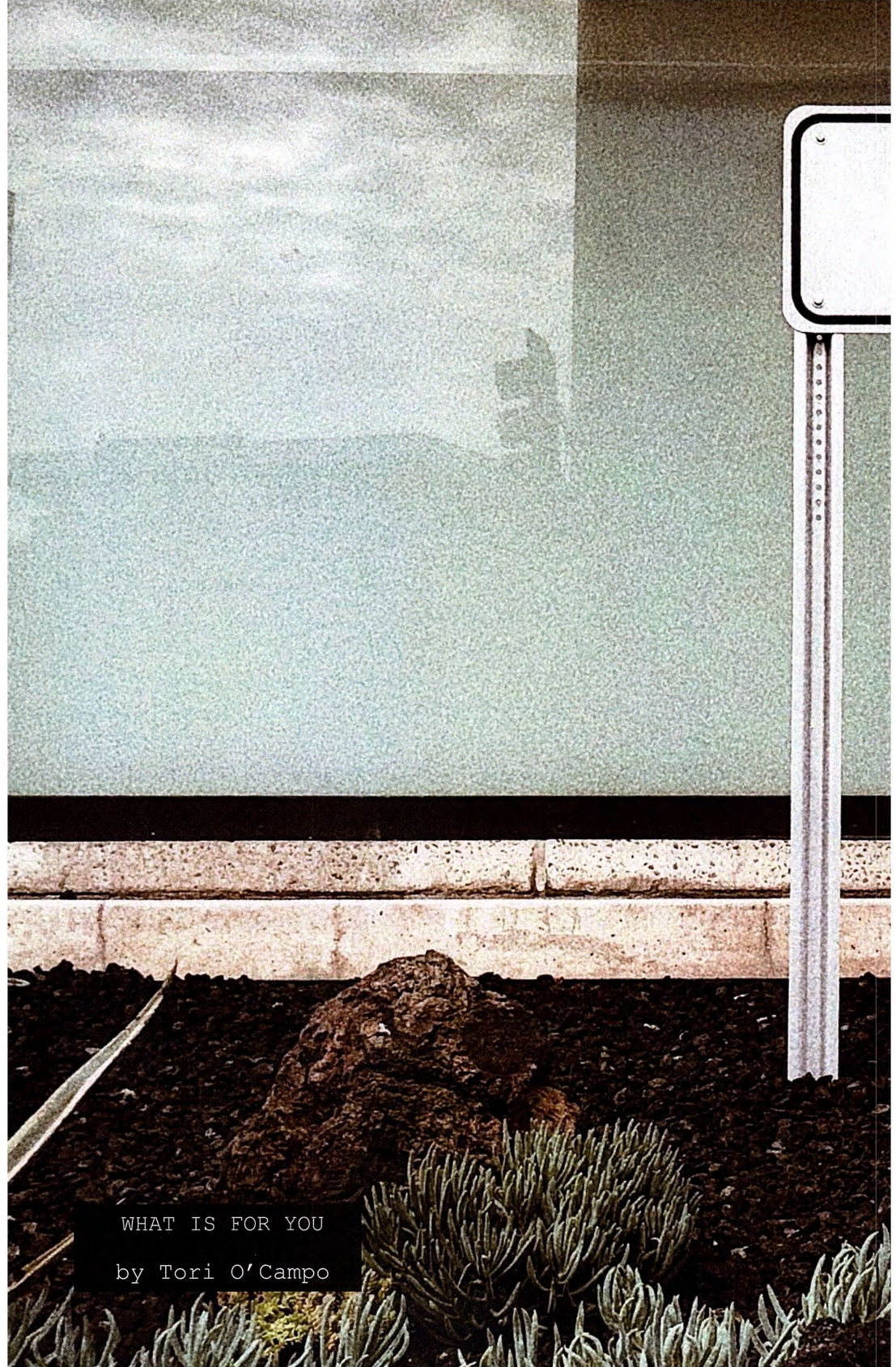
Just as my pops
and his pops
and his pops before him
wore their age plainly in patches of grey
hair and ridged foreheads,

so too were the ear muffs dated
by faded black skin, chipped yellow trim,
crooked antenna—and he rocked that shit
like a crown

Just never in front of company

Mi pinche pobre papá
played the part of the petit-bourgeois paterfamilias
and he played it well—pretending he wasn't
one broken ankle, one uninsured ambulance ride,
one more unplanned pregnancy away from slipping

into the gutter, into oblivion



WHAT IS FOR YOU

by Tori O'Campo

**WHAT IS FOR YOU
WONT GO PAST YOU**



Illusory

by Melanie Stoffel

In a kingdom full of willows, the flash flood filled the glade

Eagerly, I looked for my tree, my sapling

Ah, wailful I was waiting, as the waters encroached

Ever laughing, laughing, laughing

In there stepped a faltering truth, and its lips shaped all the whispers

And so you emerged, gently gasping back into my memories

Holding a seed to cultivate

I threw my heart upon the loam, hoping for the resurrection of roots

Instead, the dark red mud slid between the cracks

And I was left void

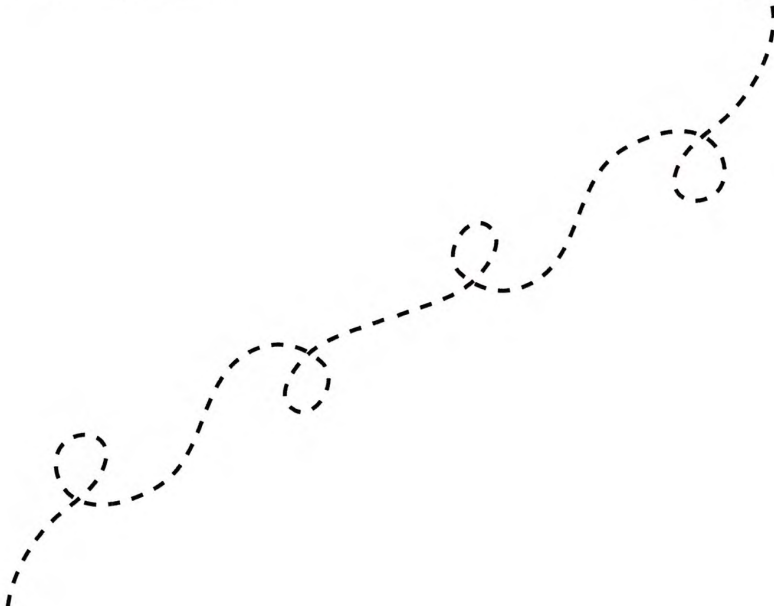
Now they crave the simple, soused submersion

Of a single drop

//**namesake**//
by Kristi Weyand



a fly buzzed
across the scuffed linoleum
under my swinging feet
as I sat, sunken
on a cold metal bench.
it danced under my footprint
dodging between the hustle,
testing fate around those succumbing.
the mechanic beeps and stiff chatter
were mere background to its methodic movements.
and, when it froze before me,
my toes dipped without thought
smudging it along the deep scores,
hoping to still the world with its wings,
yet the ground kept spinning.
and, as she lost her breath, above,
I lost my name.



never gone
by Catherine Tang

If you must leave, love,
then leave me when the rains come,
so if you go, you're never gone.
I'll look to the skies, where all I'll see is you,
the surrounding storm swirling like the grey depths of your eyes,
the tears you shed at our parting
coming down ceaselessly in cold droplets that fall from the sky.
Know that I'll miss you without forgetting
the scent of your skin, petrichor, permeating the earth and everything
around me,
and when I yearn for you,
I'll stand under the sky and substitute
the soft sprinkling against my cheek for your tender touch.
Know, also, that nothing can replace you,
not the roughest of rains nor the darkest of days.
Lingering in the storm, I'll let the wind sting my skin;
breathing in the bitter air, I'll let it bite my lungs.
I'm not afraid. Do you think such superficial cold can compare
to ice picks cutting into the heart chilled by your absence?
As much as I complain, I want to tell you:
don't worry about me, love.
Leave if you must.
I'll relish your rainy season and wait for warmer weather to dry the
skies and my eyes,
bringing you bodily back to me, for
you are the rain; the rain is not you.



RAIN
by Jillian Spaulding

ROMEO AND JULIET. ACT III. SC. V.

SCENE V. — Juliet's Chamber.

Enter ROMEO and JULIET.

JUL. Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,

Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

ROM. It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
love,

Night's candles are burnt out,

I must be gone

JUL. Yon light is not day-light, I know it,

Therefore stay yet, thou need'st not to be gone.

I am content

I'll say,

"Tis

not the lark,

high above our heads

inelegant,

to be awake

2)

3)

ERASURE
by Emily Gage

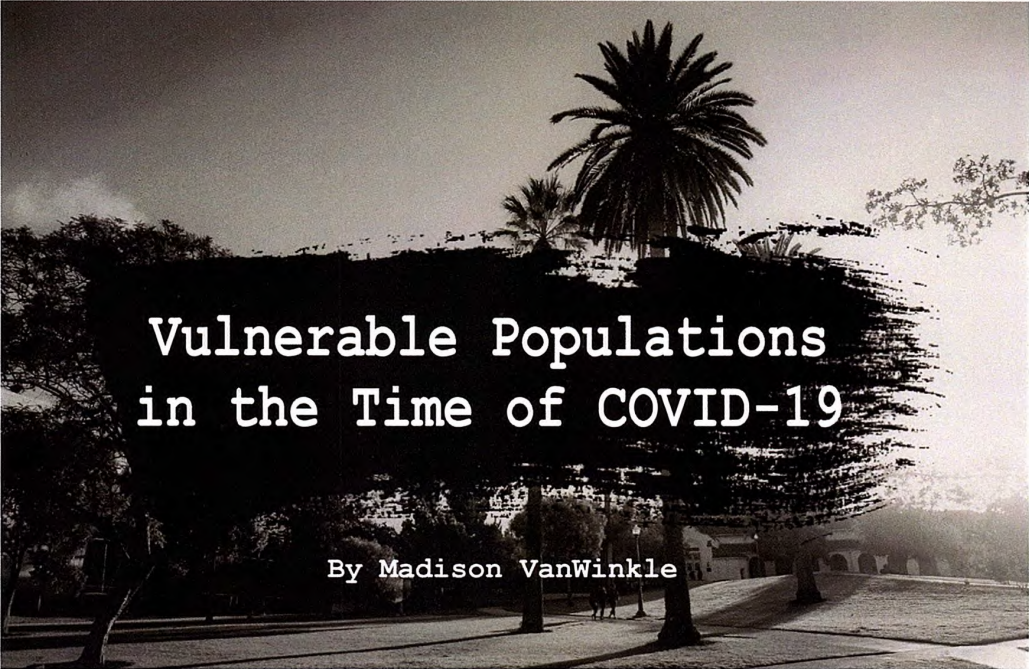
the big bang

by Kim Tsuyuki

Perhaps we were the same star at the start
of the universe: when ultraviolet light swirled
around our figure, letting us flourish in the newborn sky;
when we danced around the Sun
without giving a care for the world.

Then I lost you in that nebula of lovely light.
Our mass collapsed and every
proton, neutron, and electron
was shredded from my body;
only for them to collide once more.

This time, I was alone.
Until I saw you, with your ultraviolet ether
and that same twinkle in your soul.
Then every atom in my body screamed at me,
home.



Vulnerable Populations in the Time of COVID-19

By Madison VanWinkle

The ear-piercing ding of FaceTime blares into my AirPods. Usually, the thought of video chatting makes me nauseous, but I haven't seen Rickey Ortiz in two weeks, despite us having been in the same class before, well, all this. Seated in front of a painting of the Madonna with the sunlight gleaming in, Ortiz smiles into the camera as he greets me. We both laugh at the awkwardness of the situation. After a long week of online classes, Ortiz sighs and tells me he's ready to relax, having just spent days working on his senior project proposal.

Small talk can only last so long as the elephant in the virtual room threatens to stomp on us. Ortiz informs me he is currently staying with his grandparents in Seal Beach and jokes anxiously that he's worried that someone will notice his grandmother's wall décor in the background during Zoom classes. His blue shirt creases as he looks off to the side. After a pause, he explains he will most likely be staying with his grandparents for several weeks because his dad is a firefighter and his sister is an emergency room nurse, thus his household is at risk for

contracting COVID-19.

Ortiz is only 20-years-old, but he has Muscular Dystrophy, a rare group of diseases that affect the muscles and render him immunocompromised. I ask him the obvious trivial and necessary question: "Are you scared?"

Ortiz falls quiet for a moment and then says, confidently, that being a higher risk than other people does make him worried, but he is more concerned about his father and sister. His sister, a young, bubbly, newlywed, who works in a hospital in the Whittier area, has been fortunate enough to have access to masks

and goggles, but there is no guarantee she won't catch the virus or unknowingly pass it to members of the Ortiz household. Ortiz insists he is trying to remain positive, but says he is struggling as it feels like the state of the world is regressing and his life changed significantly almost overnight.

Ortiz, on week three of his social distancing when we speak, shakes his head over the videos of people partying in Florida. "It was dumb... really ignorant and naïve to do," he says. His frustration continues as he explains even when this pandemic ends, it

won't end for him. Ortiz predicts he will continue to socially isolate, in another city away from his immediate family, for at least three weeks after the Stay At Home order is lifted. He cannot afford to take any risks. Viruses don't have clear-cut start and end dates.



"It sucks, but you know that's life," Ortiz says with his lips tight.

Zeneyda Flores, a quiet but fierce 21-year-old student at Whittier College, has Lupus, a common systemic autoimmune disease. An

aspiring art therapist, Flores thanks social distancing for giving her more time to paint and catch up on movies. Her mom, who works as a housemaid, is home now due to the pandemic and her sister, a behavioral therapist, is workin from home.

Flores wishes things were back to normal so she could "... go to Target, Trader Joe's, or even shopping." Flores believes everyone should be taking care of themselves to protect others. Unable to even go for a walk without wearing a mask, Flores says she worries about her mother. "I know my



mom feels stress[ed] about me having a pre-existing condition, but I just tell her I'm ok and not to worry about me," she says, adding that stress can weaken the immune system.

Unfortunately, Plaquenil, a medication used by Flores and others to treat diseases such as Lupus, has been backordered by the manufacturer due to the President tasting it (likely prematurely) as a possible treatment for COVID-19. Flores currently has a two month supply but acknowledges she will have to call her Rheumatologist to see what steps she will have to take if she runs out.



Connie Morales, a graduating senior at Whittier College, hasn't left her house since March 10th. Morales has Mitochondrial Disorder, a rare genetic condition that affects everyone differently. For the 23-year-old the disorder means the mitochondria of her cells do not produce energy correctly, leaving her body, including her immune system, weaker than the

average person's. Morales, who lives alone, expresses gratitude for her home-health care nurses who are taking extra precautions to protect her, themselves, and their families.

With a hint of sass, Morales declares "define normal" but struggles to conclude if things will ever be the same for herself or anyone after the COVID-19 pandemic because "...we all might have settled into a different way of life by the time this [is] over." Hopeful, Morales believes positivity will blossom from this situation, but she currently is avoiding the news to keep her stress low. She already feels mentally and emotionally drained, but Morales reminds herself that her plans and goals are still the same, they have only been delayed.

Morales is concerned about contracting the virus because she fears her body won't be able to fight it, thus leaving her "...hospitalized without any of my loved ones or the people I trust around me."

This is a fear, unfortunately, coming true for many people as hos-

pitals are limiting and even barring visitors in an attempt to stop the spread of COVID-19.



Sitting at the wooden kitchen table she helped her dad sand and stain, Aleigha VanWinkle intently works on a Trolls puzzle. The 18-year-old credits the puzzle for reducing her stress, and eagerly tells me she has a Backyardigans puzzle in her bedroom that she loves too. Aleigha is my younger sister, who lives with Mitochondrial Disorder and Muscular Dystrophy. Snarky, per usual, she tells me she has "...survived worse" than COVID-19. Despite

her declaration, my family is taking precautions by engaging in social distancing, constantly cleaning, and carefully monitoring Aleigha's health.

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that affects the lungs and airway. In the summer of 2017, Aleigha went into septic shock after contracting pneumonia and spent weeks in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit fighting for her life. Almost three years later,

Vulnerable Populations



her body still hasn't recovered fully.

For Aleigha, life has not changed much since sheltering in place three weeks ago, as she typically spends most of her time at home working on art. A recent high school graduate, Aleigha is taking a year off school before pursuing a graphic design degree at a local community college in Temecula, California. Huffing, she tells me she feels frustrated that people are violating the Stay At Home order because "they aren't following rules, and rules are in place for a reason."

The green from her Mike Wazowski pajama pants glimmer as she stands to grab her coloring book. With hesitation, she tells me she is most upset that plans have been changed due to this virus as she had been looking forward to going to Universal Studios to ride the new Secret Life of Pets attraction. She thinks that when the Stay At Home order is lifted, either no one will go out because they will be scared or too many people will go out. Aleigha, who struggles with sensory overload, laughs as she tells me, "Social distancing

is an Autistic person's dream."

Her comment makes me laugh, too, but I can't help worrying about her health, both physically and mentally. Our lives will continue to change as my mother, a Registered Nurse, will be leaving in a week to travel to northern California to help at the Stanford hospitals. She will not return home for several weeks even after she's done there as she cannot risk infecting Aleigha. In addition, my grandfather, who lives in Indiana, is currently hospitalized with acute renal failure and cannot have any visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aleigha asks me how my article is going. Such a simple question, but I struggle to answer. The world is frozen and all I can do is write. My mind goes back to something Connie Morales told me:

"I've learned over many years that at the end of the day all you can do is try your best to maintain and protect your health, the rest is up to the universe."



Camita in the Parking Lot

by Ariel Horton

I thought that I was special in high school
because I asked for pictures of boys' hands
instead of cocks. This one had sent me both.
He called me slut and babygirl. My throat

fit in his hands the way I yearned to fit
inside myself. The only time I left
his car was when Camita started weeping
outside our wet leather and fogged windshield:

A child, all alone, hollow and stiff,
an empty tissue box in a short skirt.
Her dad hit her that morning. Called her whore.

I held her and she softened in my arms.
The world collapsed. The boy watched from his car.
Later he said our embrace made him hard.



PARIS GLOOM
by Tori O'Campo

What if This Storm Ends

by Melanie Stoffel

What if this storm ends?

In through the nose, out through the mouth, eyes closed. She heard the simple the piano part begins in her ear, the left hand descending as the right hand holds steady.

The lawn ornaments littering the grass were going through their set motions, filling the air with the sound of tinkling bells and spinning wheels, creaking gears and whirring hinges.

Another deep breath. Clear air, scented with lavender from the Miller house. From the west, then. The wind picked up slightly, and the sounds around her responded.

Slowly, she began. Her hands lifted into the air like leaves swaying in the breeze, only this

was a simple breeze no longer. She held firm. Prep, push off, twirl. Pointed toes and turned out hips. The brass section had joined the piano now, with graceful swells and echoes.

Spin faster and faster, the wind whispered.

Spin with me. Let go with me.

And she did. She was off, drifting with a sense of purpose, the instruments filling her ears, and her mind, and her thoughts. A trickle of blood down the side of her lip from where she bit it did not deter her. Far off in the distance, the rumble of nature's drums began, and she smiled. She smiled. This was who she was. This was what being alive felt like, not the motions she went through for the purpose of every-

body else. Not the mask she kept in a jar by the door. This feeling of being one with the world around her, and one with the music within.

And then, oh, and then! The melody lifted her in its arms in comfort as the harmony danced around with a mischievous smirk. The music pulled from her all of the heartache and the heartbreak, the headache all for others' sake. The wind plucked at her dress like a small child's fingers, insistent, eager to play, and learn, and live. She opened her eyes, lifted her face to the sky, and in her ear, she heard his voice.

What if this storm ends, and I don't see you as you are now ever again? She sighed, relaxing into her movements, less focused now

on each step she took. The memories of her hurt faded, and were replaced simply with a song.

Yet that song was not simple. Layer after layer of intricate detail began to set in, wrapping her up in its power, settling like a cape around her shoulders. The rumblings of the clouds drew closer, and she could begin to see a flickering along their bellies.

She invited them closer with open arms, and across the open plains they came, casting shadows and distorting shapes. She picked up her tempo in sync with their movements, and felt their call. Something within her responded.

The first drop hit her finger, the second the little crook between her neck and shoulder.

It tickled a bit, and she giggled. The garment draped around her began to look spotted as the clouds began to relieve their burdens upon her. Arms outstretched, head lifted high, she spun gaily in the downpour.

Zeus was the conductor now, with Zephyr at

his side. And she, she was a nymph, an embodiment of nature, a daughter of the world, no longer a simple human dancing in the rain with her headphones. Yet unlike a nymph she was not immortal, and as the air around her began to tighten, she remembered the fickleness of the Father of gods and men.

Was it worth it? This risking her body for the sake of her spirit and soul? There was no

doubt she was the happiest she had been in months, if not years, but would that be enough if she died out here?

Yes, came the hissed reply. Yes.

She paused in her dance, her dress drifting down around her legs, mirroring her hair around her throat. Her toes curled in the moist dirt, and she repeated her question. A pause.

It was broken by the clouds above. With a fhwoom, a streak of lightning shot out across the sky, so quickly one could not tell if it descended to the earth or ascended to the heavens. In its wake the rain grew more insistent for

attention, and the rumble reached her ears. It was answer enough for her. The cold drops tapping across her skin awakened her from the dream, and once more, she began.

"I don't want to run, just overwhelm me..." she whispered with him, and leapt across the muddy plains of her backyard as if dancing along the edge of a cliff. "Be the lightning in me that strikes relentlessly." More wind, she demanded, and the call was answered, picked up, carried off on the wings of Hermes. The sky blue of her little dress was dirt splattered, and her feet were beginning to ache from finding so many stones among the mulch, but she did not stop.

The choir lifted her with aid from the wind, and she no longer knew anything except the steps of her dance, the tune of her song, and the power of the unending sky. The world had watched as a girl became a nymph, and stared in awe as a nymph became a goddess. From the branches of the trees to the blades of grass, all leaned towards this ex-

What if This Storm Ends

quisite beauty, eager to please, to touch, to be one with. At last.

She was unrecognizable, her halo of hair lifted towards Olympus, her eyes wide and her red lips curved in a breathtaking smile. She screamed in exhilaration,

and the sound twisted around her as if it were a ribbon, purple and blue and grey and deep. Her dress flapped like a banner, and her pale face was highlighted by strike after strike of pure energy.

But as he repeated

his first question, it all dropped. Her friends, the clouds, retreated, her melody faded back to its origin, and she sunk to the earth, with tears in her eyes.

Alone and gasping for air and meaning.

Just a girl.



BEHIND THE SCENES

by Samantha Paladini

all that harry ever wanted

by Nathan Tolfa

here the water buzzes and tastes exactly like static
electricity. harry drinks it when
he needs to numb the inner linings
of his eyelids and to put out the fires set
by the memory children who camp in the putrid
fried gray matter that hides from
the sun in the back of his throat.

his tongue doesn't come out to visit much
anymore and maybe that's why he's always so
thirsty. one time he found a
woman on the other side of the silicon sea
and she was as spice-dried and zoinked
as he was and they sat in a cornfield
together waiting to catch fire.

but she must have burned
away without him because
harry turned and beside
him was a crater that smelled like
fire salt and dried sweat.



the sting-nettle prairie-warm wind blew
memories in spirals under harry's bonecap.
he had thought that maybe his ladyfriend could
have scissored out his swollen uvula.
or loosened his tonsils with her sour pliers.
he mourned as time rolled the half deflated
sun over the clouds above.

alone, harry stood on the overpass four
hundred miles above anyone alive.
he spat down at the cars below
holding deep within his fillings
the silver-flavored hope that someday
he could learn to tolerate the taste of himself
enough to suck out all his venom
and swallow it away for good.

Demon

by Antoinette Flores

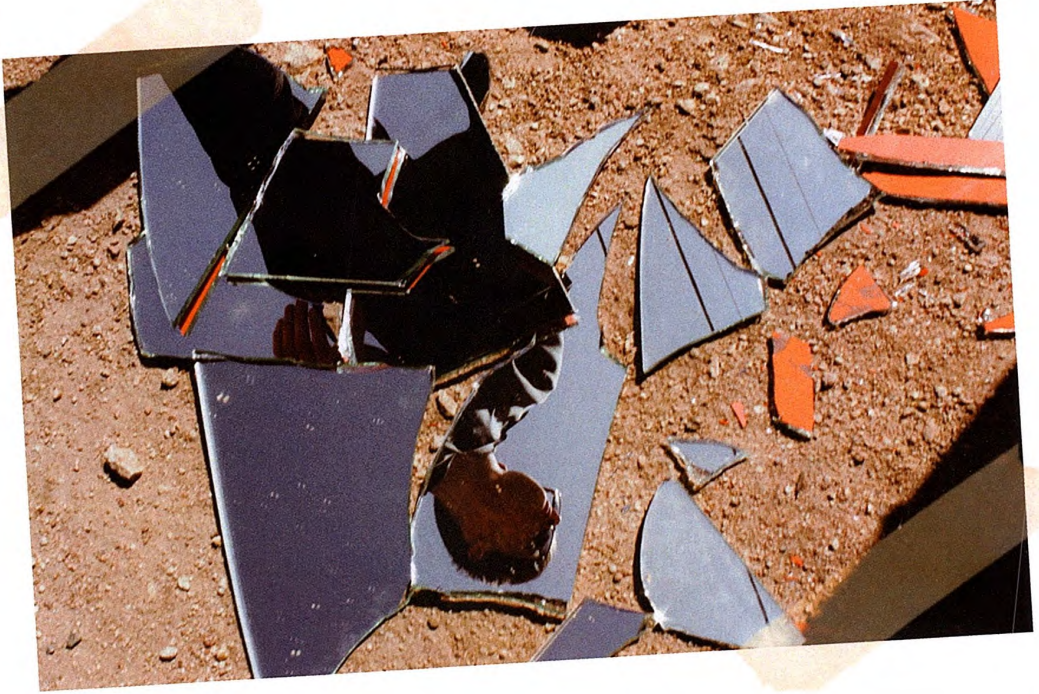
And there he is,
A hidden figure in the dark
Depths of your mind.
He stands in the shadows waiting to attack.
A new day has begun with brightness,
Yet only lasts a split second.

Don't let him catch you.
Run from the darkness.
Don't get swallowed by the shadows-
Fight him off and keep going,
Ignore the voices entering your mind,
Do not fall into his hands.

Be stronger than before.
Be the shining light that overpowers the dark.



WHITTIER AT NIGHT
by Emerson Little



EARTH SHATTERING
by Tori O'Campo

**These Foolish Things
Remind Me of You**
by Madison VanWinkle

Fall. Pumpkins. Corn stalks.
Loud and gleeful laughs.
You throwing me into a pile of hay, where we laid and talked
until we were caught.

Pouring rain. Thunder. Gas Stations.
Looking at me with so much adoration in your caramel eyes.
I can only remember thinking how much you were going to
mean to me.

The color of coffee after two spoonfuls of cream and sugar.
Your eyes seemed lighter when you told me you were leaving.
Grease. Callouses. Mechanics.

I swear you loved that car more than you loved me.
Headlights. Snow. Colorado.
I hope the view is nice where you are.

Brunettes with pixie cuts.
Leather Jackets. Bright red lips.
I hope she loves you.



DELIVERANCE
by Joe Donnelly



Negligence

by Austin Hall

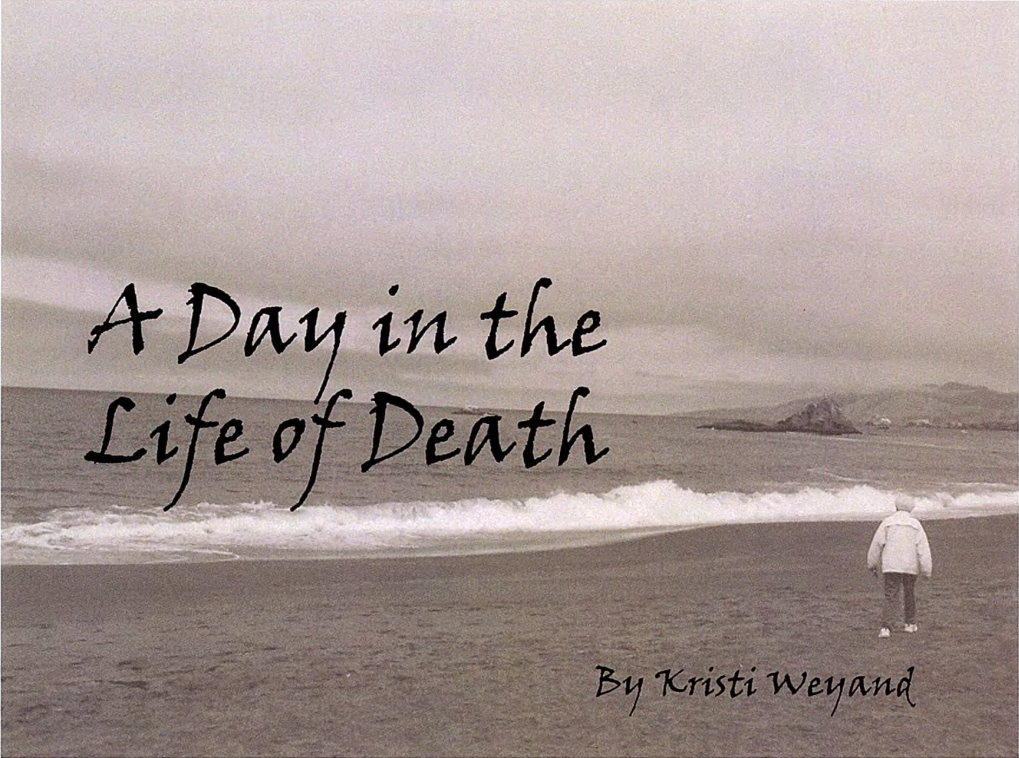
In many ways, her garden was an escape-freedom from the revelries of lives past, from the jail of social dystrophy, from the inside world. It was her own little bubble- a closed-off sanctuary of the outdoors.

First there were succulents, lined on the white wooden railing, encased in brown terracotta pots. From one succulent she propagated ten by delicately plucking the tender leaves off their juicy buds. But the challenge of simply sustaining plants wasn't enough for the eager enthusiast; seeds of every variety, from butterhead lettuce to Carolina reapers, found their homes in her garden.

For months she trimmed the cherry blossoms, watered the lavender, and cared for every stem and seed that she alone brought into the world and just as quickly, torn them down by unwitting hands. As the neighbor's tree trimmer chopped a ten-foot branch of our shared fig tree into our yard, the chainsaw didn't come to a halt until she screamed for them to stop.

Of course, this was *after* the branch toppled over a patio umbrella, breaking the umbrella in half and launching it into the plethora of baby artichokes and bonsai trees. At that moment, her escape became a mortuary- a burying ground for those that she spent so much time loving. The trimmer, seemingly unfazed by the girl crying next to her broken pots on the other side of the fence, called out for his partner for a minute before making eye contact with the girl.

And with the loss never came an apology, not even a simple sorry. Just a pile of cracked pottery and stems strewn about the garden.



A Day in the Life of Death

By Kristi Weyand

On her first full day confined in the half-curtained room, my grandmother was full of her typical snarky humor, threatening to lap us as we took short walks around the respiratory unit. For a woman who was used to walking at least a mile a day, these walks did little to ease the hours of imprisonment in the stiff barred-in bed.

We took her humor as a sign of sure improvement from the previous day when she

had been taken to the hospital by ambulance from my grandparent's house, which is tucked in fields of hay, down pot-hole riddled roads miles from any doctor. My grandmother had fallen three times that morning and was relying on my grandfather, who is four years older than her, to wrestle her from the floor.

Before this, my grandmother seemed indestructible. She had broken ribs and fractured a vertebrae from tripping on gopher

holes and had simply gotten up to continue weeding the garden or filling the hummingbird feeder. Acknowledging that this felt different meant acknowledging that all of our lives may soon be missing our matriarch.

We left her there on her first day, in her room at the end of the sloped hallway encased in lifeless beige walls, with smiles and blown air kisses. The plastic table beside her, sterilized so many times it smelled like alcohol, now held

her most valued possessions, her phone and tablet, and the television anchored to her bed was swung over and set to the local news channel. This is how she'd be spending her time if she was at home, but without the wires taped to her chest that were attached to the beeping machines that kept a tally on how alive she was.

The curtains were drawn shut around her wheezing roommate. The next day the bed would be empty and would remain that way, a luxury in hindsight.

Something had changed during the night. When we arrived at her room the next morning, my grandmother was wheezing in her sleep, her eyelids twitching, and she was muttering about kids and their technology addiction. This was out of character. She liked to keep up with technology. Whenever she felt the need to prove one of her grandkids wrong, she would whip out her tablet and say the magic phrase: "Okay, Google."

Just after noon, my grandmother was woken up for oxygen therapy. Oxygen was now

being pumped into her through nasal prongs. She slumped on top of the closed toilet seat — the only chair in the room that offered enough support. My grandfather had arrived that day with a speckled gift bag that was bulging with cards he had received for his birthday that he hoped would bring some sense of normalcy to my grandmother.

My grandparents divorced about thirty years ago when my mother, the youngest of their five children, was a senior in high school. Twenty years later they found themselves sharing a small modular home, mostly because my grandmother couldn't afford to live on her own anymore. Somehow, the temporary arrangement stuck and the modular home transformed into a headquarters for our family gatherings.

My grandfather took this chance to try to lighten the mood with some of the teasing that had been a hallmark of their relationship. "You look as beautiful as the day of our wedding," he eased, but my grand-

mother couldn't hear him over the hiss of the oxygen. My grandfather gave her the birthday cards, letting her open them for him. Her hands shook and he patiently picked up the cards she dropped. I don't know if my grandmother was able to see me through her eyelids, her icy eyes rolling back. I couldn't say anything if I wanted to, my tongue sat like a stone in my mouth. The most I could do was hold my mother's clammy hand as she texted updates to her brother and sister who lived out of town.

"I don't know if you need to come."

"I don't know how long."

My mother's oldest sister and her daughter had decided to make the six and half hour drive (seven if you don't speed) from Los Angeles and arrived early the next day. At this point, my family outnumbered the staff in the respiratory unit. My grandmother was only coherently-conscious enough that day to complain about the lukewarm hospital broth that ended up mostly spilled by the time she got the spoon to her mouth.

We laughed for the last time.



Then, it was time for her first lung treatment. This time it was delivered via a face mask that she clutched until her hands went white, desperately trying to wrench it from her lips. It felt like needles in her lungs. Her chest labored up and down... and slowly back up again.

Watching, my cousin sank to the hospital floor, her knees to her chest. My mom and aunt held a hushed conversation about not wanting to intubate and my grandmother's order to not resuscitate. Blood rushed in my ears. As much as it stung, we had a choice. If this had happened now, with the shortage of ventilators, we wouldn't have had the luxury of deciding among ourselves.

There's no accurate sense of time in a hospital. It either felt like a hundred years or ten seconds, but soon it was dark outside. My grandmother was on her second lung treatment. She stretched her petite

frame to push her feet against the base of the bed, struggling as doctors wrestled the mask onto her face.

My feet took me away, to the elevator and down to the first floor. It was up to me to call my father and brother to tell them they needed to come. Even though the drive through endless walnut orchards which eventually transitioned to what felt like the world's longest cemetery that surrounds Saint Joseph Hospital in Stockton would take nearly an hour, I couldn't return to the room to see my grandmother convulsing with each breath.

Instead, I saw her dancing along the beach lining Bodega Bay, her feet flicking up sand that matched her hair. I heard her singing while we picked apricots from the tree in her backyard, threatening to knock the occasional rotten or bird-ravaged fruit on my head. I walked alongside her down the gravel streets that soon turned into dirt roads, relishing the memory of her smooth breath-

ing. She never bothered to lower her voice when she complained of the rusted "we don't call 911" sign adorned with guns that hung from a neighbor's white picket fence, even when his jacked-up pickup truck rumbled down the road beside us.

Outside the hospital after making the call to my dad, I sunk into a stainless steel structure that was either a bench or a modernist sculpture. In my hands was a tissue I couldn't remember tearing up.

"It's okay sweetie," commented a passerby, offering a weak smile. "We're all going through the same thing."

I could only muster a blank stare and sat there until my eyes burned from a lack of tears and my brother and father rescued me. When we made it to the room, my aunts', cousins' and mother's eyes all matched mine.

My mother's shoulders caved into her chest as she spoke in a soft rasp, giving an update to our newly arrived support. My father left to smoke a cigarette. The rest of us, feeling fatigue like bricks in our bones,

said our goodbyes. We hoped only for the night.

We were never a family of “I love you’s.” We knew it in our actions. My grandmother and I said it in our special handshake that she was clearly in no shape to complete, her chest rattling with each breath. I stopped at the threshold, where my toes met the seam of the tile in the doorway. My voice came out cracked, *“I love you. Please don’t go.”*

As the sun rose on May 28th, 2018, my grandmother died at age 81 from pneumonia. My mother’s shoes were squeaking along the hallway leading to my grandmother’s room when her phone rang with the hospital’s number. At the end of the hall, a nurse leaned against her wheeled desk, the phone pressed to her ear.

My grandmother’s Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), likely exacerbated from nearly four decades of smoking socially and a lifetime of living and working among agricultural

pesticides and air pollution, pushed this common illness over the line into fatal.

Each time I hear the symptoms of COVID-19— fever, shortness of breath, cough — repeated like it’s the mantra of these times, I see my grandmother clawing the oxygen mask away from her face with shaking hands. Now, I cannot remember my grandmother without remembering watching her fade away.

My grandmother would reassemble her ashes and come back from the dead to slap me if he knew she was being remembered by her death. But in its own small way, this is another symptom of the pandemic. And I can’t help but remember that just as my grandmother was a fighter in life — she once jumped a boy who assaulted her in high school — she knew when not to fight for her breath anymore. This is burned into me each time my breath catches in my throat and my mind races with paranoia. New fears bring these old worries rushing back.

Approximately 1.3

million Americans per year visit the emergency room as a result of pneumonia. Currently, there is a marked uptick in death from respiratory illness as a result of COVID-19. The U.S. is on track for millions of cases and possibly 100,000 to 200,000 deaths (a conservative estimate), many of them older, health-compromised individuals like my grandmother.

I am grateful my grandmother is not alive to witness this pandemic. Memories of her death sting like hand sanitizer and haven’t felt this fresh in a while and my chest is tight with renewed memories of her death. Yet, we were lucky. Her family was able to be with her in the days leading up to her death. That’s a dream in the time of COVID-19.

My grandfather is nearly 90, has diabetes, and, yet, there’s never a shortage of pie and ice cream at his house. My father has smoked since he was a teenager, coughs into his hands, and is working through the pandemic because his job in transportation is considered essential. My mother barely

survived four separate bouts with diverticulitis, during which I wasn't allowed to see her. COVID-19 is forcing medical responders to isolate from their families. People are turning to FaceTiming goodbyes to their loved ones. This new normal has forced me to re-evaluate my sorrow. I was able to be there with my grandmother. I might not be so lucky next time.

It didn't take long for the memories she missed to pile up af-

ter my grandmother's death. The pomp and circumstance of my tumultuous high school career would come to an end in two weeks. My cousin would soon find out she was pregnant, the first of the great-grandkids to be brought into a world without her.

Life and death will change in the wake of COVID-19. Mourning will change in the wake of COVID-19, but people will still live on through memories, even the painful ones. It is not selfish

to remember. Right now, she is remembered through this moment. But, this moment won't last forever and someday, soon, I hope, I will be able to remember her through the long walks we'd take down paths once worn only by her, the (unused) tissues we still find in the pockets of her old jackets, and each time we catch a hummingbird flit to the feeder she placed outside the kitchen window.



TREACHEROUS

by Kristi Weyand

A Still Rememberance

by Noah Humphrey

Once a week I used to take piano lessons, at the whimsical
home of my teacher Mrs. Cates,
a lady whose ghostly fingers were stuck to the piano keys
like an eternity

As she taught me to play, I felt the mastery from her soul
I played sometimes pianissimo
My teacher had her forte crash my style

Her crashing sound was stronger, her frail body didn't match her soul
I saw her soul, blazing and the keys of her life had a mesmerizing tempo
Although taught multiple times, I struggled to know my own notes

"Patience" she said she knew my notes would come soon
As soon as the keys played I forgot time, leaving my dad waiting outside the
concert home
And one day the piano stood dead

I walked to her door to see her husband
The lady that helped me see my tune, is now playing her own
The piano stood dead, among the music notes that held her soul

Her teachings are in forte,
my fears are in pianissimo,
She gave me tears and a new tempo in her breath, dying

I remember the music, the soul
My soul is blazing, the keys of life go farther than the piano
The piano stood dead
I, the piano, and all her students will remember
The whimsical home that found a chord,
within our voiceless,
voidless lives

Contributors

Annalisse Galaviz is a second-year with a passion for fiction writing and basically all other art. She'd like to write a book one day but, until then, will continue practicing her writing as a News Editor for the Quaker Campus newspaper.

Antoinette Flores is a third-year majoring in English with a Creative Writing emphasis. She joined the Whittier College community not only to keep a close connection with her family, but to further her education through a liberal arts program to be a well-rounded individual. She wants her work to tell her story and relate to others. However, it is most important for her that she is able to inspire others.

Ariana Juarez is a second year with aspirations of being an author, who occasionally dabbles in poetry.

Ariel Horton is a creative writing and theatre performance double-major. She has won a handful of awards for poetry-writing and the like. Beyond the pen and the stage, Ariel likes her four sweet dogs, art art art, and all types of cake.

Ashley Gonzalez is a third-year studying Screenwriting and Production. She has always had a creative mind and been passionate when telling her stories. She hopes to move these narrations and works of fiction from the paper to the big screen.

Austin Hall likes plants.

Bailey Francis is a sophomore at Whittier College majoring in English and minoring in Art. She is from Nashville, Tennessee and would like to write poetry and make art for a living.

Cat Tang described herself as a “writer, reader, artist, dreamer” since elementary school. Her love of writing is an inextricable part of her identity, and she most enjoys exploring the intersection of environment and identity in her poetry. As a writer, her ultimate goal is to create a resonance: she hopes her work will evoke emotional experiences, inspiration, or a sense of solidarity in her readers, and she is happy knowing her writing has touched even a single person. Being an all around creative soul, Cat also loves listening to music, singing, dancing, doodling, and journaling in her spare time.

Daniel Wolf is a second-year English major who is studying to teach English to high school and college students. Wolf writes mostly poetry and sometimes, rarely, short prose on varying topics and styles, incorporating whatever he feels about writing about.

Danielle Flores is an incoming senior, who double majors in English and Theater. She aspires to be a high school English teacher and a strong support system to her students. As a future first generation college graduate, she is open to as much opportunity and adventure as possible, and hopes she can bring this to others as well.

Danielle Pesqueira is an Art History major with Gender Studies and Anthropology minors. A lover of music, theatre, and poetry, Danielle appreciates all modes of artistic self-expression.

Dayquan Moeller is a first-year at Whittier College. While Moeller plans on using the Whittier Scholar’s Program to study music and theatre, she is also interested in writing poetry.

Dom Wilton is a History and English Literature exchange student from the UK who has voluntarily stranded himself in Little Armenia. He and his partner are doing their best to keep each other occupied, but during these times, going stir-crazy always feels like one piece of burnt toast away. This is especially hard when his family is not only an expensive flight away, but also knowing that he risks infecting them by passing through a crowded airport. Oh well, one day at a time. He didn’t really want to leave anyway.

Elena Backus y Herrera is a sophomore at Whittier College majoring in history. She plans to take a minor but struggles with her multitude of interests, journalism being one of them. Elena wrote this article for Joe Donnelly's Introduction to Journalism class which she took last fall.

Emerson Little is a third-year Whittier Scholars student majoring in Digital Art and Media Production. In the trunk of his car are twelve Jammy Dodgers and a Fez. He is a photographer and graphic designer whose work has most recently appeared in saltfront, Toho Journal and Burningword Literary Journal. He resides in Southern California in a shady bungalow with his grandmother's cat.

Emily Gage is a first-year art major. This comic is based upon the poem "Survival" by Amanda Lovelace in the poetry book *The Witch Doesn't Burn in this One*.

Evan Wyno is a sensitive jock performing creative cartwheels, fictional flies, poetic pushups and lyrical lunges. He is a Portland, Oregon native running from the rain into the Southern California sunshine.

Gabriel J. Perez is a Xicano native of Hacienda Heights, CA, pursuing his BA in Political Science with a minor in English. His special skills include irony, procrastination, and putting up the Christmas lights.

Gabriella Rodriguez is a third year student at WC double majoring in Psychology and Studio Art. Art is a way to express her inner child and try to tap in to the unconscious part of the human mind. She enjoys incorporating surrealist subjects with ordinary life subjects in her paintings. She hopes to one day work with kids in art therapy.

Hailey Garcia and is a first-year. She was born with a moderate to severe hearing loss, and feels that art is the one thing she can control. She also believes that her hearing has changed the way that she sees. Whittier College, in almost one school year, has widened her perception of the world. It has painted a picture showing her how art and culture says a lot about a community.

Haley Vallejo is a second year digital media major. She is passionate about the following: the arts, activism, and her dog Honey.

Harmony Albarran seeks to know the world and all its secrets but as she has yet to be abducted by the alien overlords, she attempts to make sense of the world around her by writing. Her passion for words and knowledge influenced her motives in college as she wished to be enlisted in a type of Men in Black organization but as she has failed to fulfill any of the prerequisites (like basic skills in math, science, common sense etc) she has decided to one day teach the children of the United States. Some of her hobbies include embroidery, looking cute and writing bogus bios about herself.

Heidi Metro is an artist that usually works with collage and refurbished furniture to turn the old into something new. Her work can be found on her instagram [@heidi_lyn422](#). She also runs an art collective called Desolation Row ([@desrow.collective](#)) with close friend Rayne Cross which organizes workshops and events to engage with the community and to encourage local artists to explore their talents.

Isabel Montero is a third-year English major from Whittier, CA. She brings a book with me everywhere she goes, and writes anytime she can.

Jennifer Smith is a transfer student returning to school to change careers from electrical engineering to clinical psychology. Her passions include teaching yoga, bridging the gap between Eastern and Western psychology, and writing just for fun. In 2019, she was awarded the First Year Writing award at the Honors Convocation. She graduated with her Bachelor's of Arts in Psychology in December, 2019.

Jillian Spaulding is a fourth-year working towards making a difference in the world through journalism. Her passion for writing began when she was super young because she had so much to say, and wanted people to be able to relate to it.

Karen Romero is currently in her third year at Whittier College. She's from Southern California and is majoring in Political Science and minor-ing in Film Studies.

Kassidy “Marina” Garrison is a current sophomore pursuing a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting, International Business and Management. All of this seems pretty unrelated to the arts but she has always needed an outlet for her creativity. Whether it’s painting, sewing, crafting, it’s always been her way to get away from the world and cope with anxiety.

Keylee Leong is a junior at Whittier college. She is from Oahu, and is majoring in English. Some of her favorite things to do are going to the beach or baking at home. She has played water polo for almost 10 years now. One day she hopes to coach a team of her own to further the sport here on the islands.

Kristi Weyand is a second-year studying English and Political Science. In her free time, she enjoys indulging in all things creative. While procrastinating on actually creating her own works, she can be found baking bread under the careful watch of her pets.

Lauren Blazey is out of here.

Lauryn Agron is a soon-to-be senior who is pursuing a major in English and a minor in History. She currently works part-time at a golf course as a banquet server and bartender. After graduation, she plans on working toward becoming an editor and social media manager.

Lorraine DiMauro is a second-year Communications and Psychology double major. Her passion for writing began in high school and developed further during her time working for The Slate at Shippensburg University. She has a deep connection to understanding people and finding a way to relate to them through words. She plans to graduate Whittier college in 2022 and wishes to pursue a career in journalism.

Madison VanWinkle is a third year student majoring in Entertainment Management. She would like to thank Professor Joe Donnelly for his undying support of this endeavor.

Melanie Stoffel is a versatile and artistic writer who fuses a background in the humanities with the visual acuity of the arts to deliver quality ideas and content that span a wide range of disciplines and industries.

She is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in English as she aims to publish a collection of short stories and flash fiction while also continuing to work on her larger works.

Nathan Tolfa is a fourth-year at Whittier College. His favorite color is purple, he wears glasses and dreams that someday a fairy will drift in through his window at night, kiss him on the tip of his nose, and turn him into a real boy so that he can get into heaven when he dies.

Noah Humphrey is a fourth-year Religious Studies major and Holistic Care minor. Through his second voice, poetry, he is able to portray and express his experiences in South Central LA, his faith, and the lessons he has learned in his environments. His goal is to use his poetry to inspire others to keep moving forward and be distinctive with their thinking on other perspectives.

Samantha Paladini is a fourth year, graduating with a double major in English and Theatre. She's a member of both Theatre and English Honor Societies and is President of WC's Drama Club. Samantha loves working as an LSA in the library and is a proud Ravendor. She's had a blast being a part of WC's Improv Club and appreciates the many theatrical productions she's had the privilege to work on or off the stage.

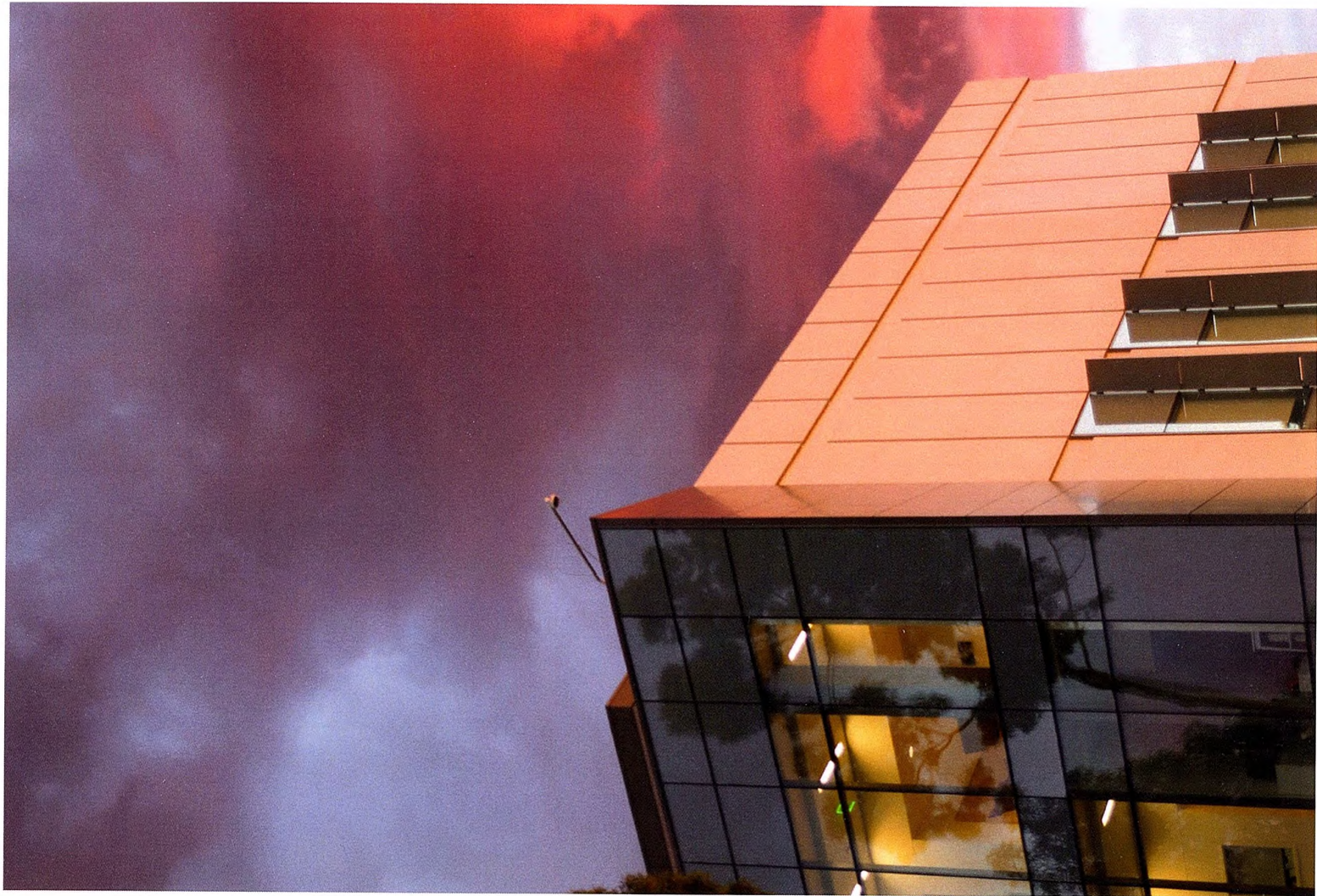
Shannon Aguiar is a senior at Whittier College. I majored in Political Science and Minored in Studio Art. I am passionate about photojournalism. During my time at Whittier College, my photography has been published in the Tokyo Journal, Pasadena Magazine, Los Angeles Magazine and OC Weekly.

Taylor Telles is a wonder.

Tori O'Campo cares too much and shares too little. She describes her life as being stuck riding an ever looping Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. The seat is uncomfortable. It's hot. There are flashing lights everywhere. The steering wheel doesn't actually do anything, it's just there to give you the false sensation of control.

Front Cover photo by Tori O'Campo

Back Cover & Vulnerable Populations photo credit to Office of Marketing and Communications





The Greenleaf Review is edited and published by Whittier College students to reflect the wide variety of voices and experiences comprising our dynamic community. This unwavering representation of who we are aims to nurture and steward the experiment in openness, inclusion and leadership that is Whittier at its best.

This is us, have a look!