

THE Gist

Spring 2021



Submission to The Gist
THE GIST

Spring 2021
Volume XIV

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Through months of uncertainty, *The Gist* is proud to publish another collection of exceptional student art and writing. For this edition, we encouraged our contributors to submit pieces that documented the times—and they did not disappoint. We have curated a special edition that captures, celebrates, and challenges our understanding of the experiences we faced through the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, and other societal and political affairs from this past year.

In addition, we're excited to announce several pieces from *The Gist* were selected to be published yet again in Plain China—the national literary anthology for top-notch undergraduate art and writing. Congratulations to these artists and writers!

Despite limitations on our ability to meet and hold events in-person, our club has continued to grow. We are grateful to have had so much participation in our weekly Teams meetings, an increased social media presence, and a full and incredibly talented editorial board this past semester. We are looking forward to meeting again in-person one day soon!

For now, as spring melts into summer, we hope these works inspire you through the dark times and make the hopeful times a little brighter, as they have for us and for so many readers of *The Gist*. Stay safe and healthy, and don't forget to take some time to create!

-The Editors

“Expect nothing. Live frugally on surprise.” -Alice Walker

“You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.” -Angela Davis

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Trilobite

In the deep blue of Cambrian reef,
before myth, before ice, before raw
matter could be refined into polymers
and released into water by complex
machines— hands— before green
and before warm blood,

the tri-lobed creature roved hot
seas, the crystalline north and
the southern soup, cradled by a
living skeleton like a segment of
spine from a beast not yet conceived;
the arthropod, the oracle.

I find you, Trilobite, in Ohio sandhills,
curled into shale's charcoal slate,
your weight like a locket in my hand.
Let me open you up. Tell me what you
know of moving earth, of planet ocean's
spacetime continuum,

how you've managed this great feat
of inertia, of remaining, from recesses
of seacliff and the past, into new sunlight
that colors you waxy black, the sum
of your years all here, in my palm,
in the sandhills of Ohio.

Sparrow

Acrylic on paper



November 3rd

The end of the world
feels like a Tuesday night, with
calculus homework to do
and early snowfall blanketing the green
I exchange selfies with a floormate 4 doors down
and try not to look at my laptop

Tonight feels like the end of the world
We watch states change color
and make plans to move to Europe
because we're white and privileged
and dreams cost nothing
I feel the fear in my chest
This could be the end
When I said it's been an exciting year
this wasn't what I meant

You Can Take the Heart Out of the City, But Not the City Out of the Heart

Clay, paint, paper, flashy fabric, cellophane, sequins, jewel beetle wing, beads, old photograph, watch gears, rhinestones, fake jewels, found objects



The House of the Dragons

The morning's toast is made by a sly little fellow,
A silver-scaled dragon with jaws flaming red,
As likely to eat the proffered bread as to toast it,
Though a bit of blackened bacon sates him.

At his side is a lovely gentleman,
Cherry-red and amethyst,
Who curled 'round a kettle heats
The water for tea, or coffee,
Should I need it.

And in the library where I eat
Sits a solemn sentinel
Emerald wings and spine hide a belly of cream,
Curled atop her literary hoard.

If into the garden I stray,
There waits for me a gardener most charming,
And most studious in her devouring of weeds,
Though I've oft lamented her unfortunate taste for lavender.

In my study is a wonderful little organizer,
Who alone keeps my unfinished works navigable,
And in return asks only for a birdbath
Filled with ink in which to frolic.

At the evening's dawn the candles are lit and the fire set

Gist: Spring 2021

By an impetuous lass, with scales of brilliant orange,
Who as a treat tends to help herself
To bits of my dinner
While I'm off feeding the others.

And on the clearest of nights I may be paid a visit
By a most magnificent being, the sky given form,
Whose wings are nebulae, and whose eyes are galaxies,
And in my backyard tends to rest,
Coiled about itself just like the rest.

it's Ms. Rona, for you

Acrylic on canvas



Pandemic Plea for Pyramid Head

after *Silent Hill 2* by Masahiro Ito

Drag me like your great knife rasping
down these deserted halls, mummy
me in rusted wire, cage me—or toss

me in the trash, for it's been that sort of year
& where'd you order your facemask, Amazon
or Etsy?—but scratch that, keep your gruesome

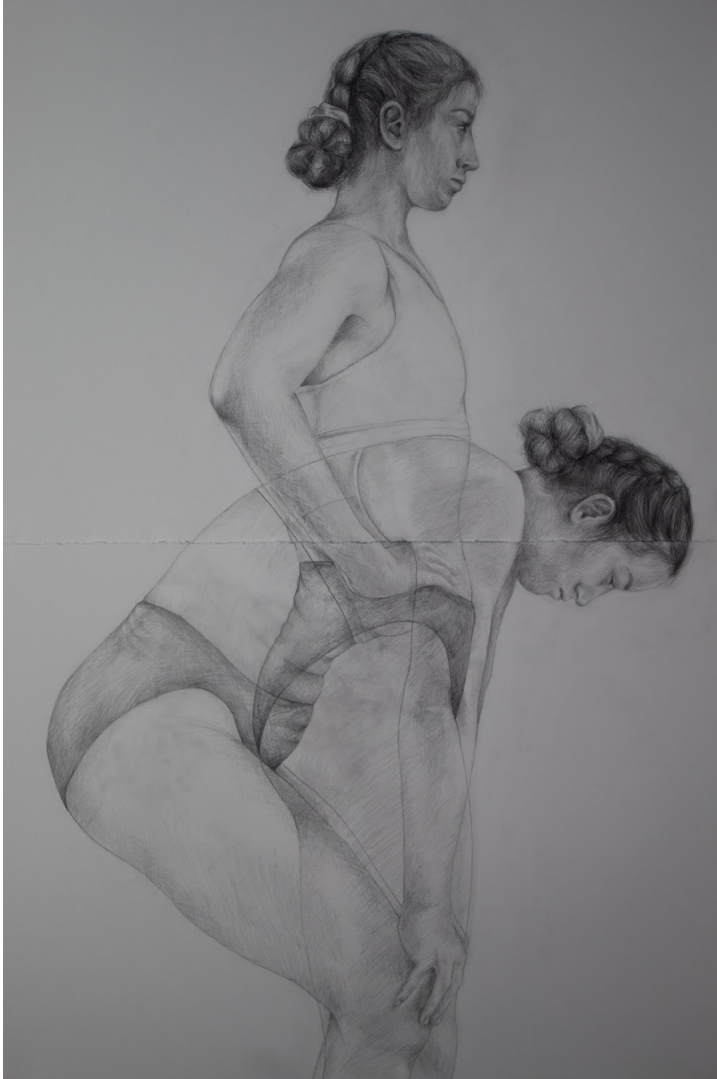
party hat as I no longer stomach this static, this fog,
these nothing days stuffed with primal pixels
staining my sleepless nights as I cower

in the corner because progress never plays fair,
we're stuck with peekaboo justice—so just smite
me already—no one's strong forever &

—who's writing this code, anyways?

Grin and Bear It

Graphite



Ode to showing up when you want to disappear

I ask “how are you?”
you say, “i’m well,
how are you?”
to which I say good
but the mask won’t
mask my eyes
which are tinged red
like a basket.

My bruised knuckles
carefully weigh
your cabbage
my arms might
collapse like a stack
of cans at the end
of the belt
my stomach sloshes
like broth and my sore
eyes shrivel like sundried
tomatoes.

I feel like grains
of sugar as they spill
or meat as it leaks
or a glass bottle
as it wobbles

or a tired child wailing
to go home.

I would rather my cat
sleep on my back
or drink your thirty rack
or have two hundred
dollars to spend but
then, six hours is up,
and I can shut down
and turn off the light.

As I haul my paper
bag through puddles,
I am thankful
I went to work
when I would rather
have vanished
like soda bubbles.

Emotional Music

Digital illustration



This Time I Feel No Obligation

The universe stopped joking with me in that hammock, made me an avocado pit,
I found myself in someone's narrative, I am the meaning of the words they are saying.
I found myself being held in the spongy interval of two white pines
All of our earnest bodies sipping dew from the bend in the bark
I found that we must not thwart a wind, I found I am no better than the grass.
You are so wise and never sedated. (with all my heart I promise)
the granola section is how I tell time; we meet over and over, we carry milk,
Pumpkins cold and full of sinew, apples piled in a bag, (I put it all hanging on my
arms)
I carried it past the apartment full of flags and strange breath and unhinged doors
This time, I did not point. I did not remind you of the place where I put myself.
I was your mitten, I surrounded your fingers with wool,
Your letters that press into paper and become my name (seeing the word)
This is where my heart stands into the gaping ink cosmos
We drink milk on the floor and sing.

2020 Self Portrait

Sculpture





Neither

When you slapped my ass,
my head spun like a sewing machine's thread,
and my eyes saw a blur of
autumn's grass,
biker's pavement,
and the purpose of sunglasses and hats.
When you slapped my ass,
I yelped like a broken plank
and began to shake like salt and pepper
—unsure if I preferred either.

When you slapped my ass,
What the heck!
came from electrocuted
vocal chords while
What the fuck!
stuck to the back of my lips.
And I became stuck because
of an unprecedented ass-slapping.

Head stopped and watching
you get away (with it).
Eyes stopped and wanting
a passerby to be near to (see it).
Body stopped.
Heart stopped.
Heart beating.
Tears holding.

Skin paling.
Skin crawling.
Mind riding the curve
of a question mark.

*Was it a stone from a neighborly lawn mower,
or a large acorn from a frenzied squirrel
that I had mistaken for your hand?
No!*

*Was it my own heels high-kneeing to
my cheeks, or perhaps my own arms
side-body-limped smacking my own ass,
as if my butt was an invitation,
sealed with neon spandex?
NO!*

So when you slapped my ass,
I was running with my legs
and with my head,
and when you slapped my ass,
I woke up from my mind's maze
and each foot's labor,
and when you slapped my ass
I realized then and there
how catcalls sounded like candy
—unsure if I preferred either.

Pandemic

Analog collage



Lemons

This summer, I learned that lemons can be okay.

I've grown into bright colors, mostly—but lemon yellow has always been the exception. The one M&M I wouldn't eat, the only paint that wasn't smeared on every surface; the June sunshine has always been a particular contender of mine. But this summer, for the first time, it touched me and I felt warm all day through. The glow behind my eyelids too early in the morning slowly leaned into the white tipped waves of an afternoon well spent, and I found us, outside, together.

On those days, his hair glinted like the reflection off a cold drink, and his smile was a lingering boardwalk I wanted to spend hours exploring. I caved to SpongeBob ice cream and Snapchat filters and pretty dresses, and when the brightness of everyone around was just a little too much, too yellow, he perched his sunglasses on my nose and said you can give them back tomorrow.

Then there's the taste. Books insisted that lemons are sour and I was too scared to test the truth. In July, I let myself hold with my hands and simply inhale the scent, far enough for lazy temptation yet close enough for the hint of a sting. My friends always implored why don't you take a bite, just a taste but I was more than content without sinking my teeth in.

Instead, I loaned my attention to dimpled skin and peeling secrets. The sharpness of a conversation that never seemed to end lingered on my tongue, and even swallowing the burn of liquor became as effortless as his laughter.

In the end, I guess I got too close after all. In August, all I wanted was to dig my nails in and let citrus drip through my fingers; to keep his weight on

my palms; to dye my hands yellow, yellow, yellow. His eyes found mine in every room, still sparkling with candy sugar, and he left crumbs in my car, in hidden nooks of the library, in my favorite sushi restaurant. Yet—by the time September had begun, his voice echoed the crisp fall breeze with every good morning and good night. Somewhere between bars and classrooms, family vacations and borrowed sweaters, somewhere the shades of golden brown shone too warm, and it all fell to corrupted film, looping over and over until I had no choice but to make the last abrupt cut.

In the end, I guess to admire is different than to hold. Part of me still wonders how sour tastes, if it's something like bittersweet.

It doesn't matter now, anyway; summer is over, and lemons are out of season.

Daily Life

Digital photography



Dark Grey

All of my depressions
have come with a uniform
to which putting on a bra
is a strange and eventful capstone

Something that happens on occasion
like going to the store
for lemons or almond extract

Foreign foam hemispheres and thick taupe straps
a threadbare lace overlay
It reminds me of lust and zest
for life and lemon cakes

None of which I crave now
as I fasten the clasp
between my shoulder blades

My Body, MY Body

Conte crayon, digital



The Nameless' Dirge

So,
Come on young heartless and won't you
Show your compassion or are you
So disillusioned now that
All you can think of is
Burning a world that
Never existed and will you
Weep for the loss of all that you've twisted so far beyond all recognition or will you
Look to the hearts now of
All those you've hoisted
And hope that there is
Some sort of mercy left to
Drag yourself back from these
Unending shoals that you have
Drifted so far into without any
Caution or plan for returning or will you
Let yourself sink and will you
Make peace with your drowning in this
Water that reaches to
Just past your ankles and will you
Depart from this world now that you have
Cast all your judgement upon it?

Oh,
Dream deep you brilliant nobody, oh
Dream deep you brilliant nobody, oh
Dream deep you brilliant nobody, oh

Dream deep you nobody

Come on young faithless and won't you
Give up your loathing if that is
All that you have then you will
Not be left empty you will be
Filled with a love for those that have
Shown you such kindness and you will
Find in yourself that which has been
Forever absent and you will
Watch as it grows if you will
Just let it flourish and you will
Watch as it grows if you will
Just let it flourish and you will
Watch as it grows if you will
Just let it flourish

Pod

Photography



Buzz

*“The dream, the lure, is the prayer’s answer,
which can’t be plotted on any chart —
as we know the world that’s coming together
without our knowing is falling apart.”*

Song of the Shattering Vessels by Peter Cole

There has been only static for months now, weeks according to clocks—but who trusts those anymore? Asher tries to listen to the radio. He’s cocooned in wool blankets, sprawled out on the living room rug, the pungent reek from the kitchen rolling over him. Vinegar and hot pepper and ginger. Granny is boiling more pesticide. This smell makes Asher nauseous. He tries to listen to the radio. And flexing with the static from the radio—hushed one moment then frantic the next—the buzzing, tunneling groan of the flies.

When Asher tries to sleep at night, he thinks happy thoughts: quiet clouds on a sunny day, his father’s laugh, the festivals last winter.

Use mine. Uri had given Asher his last bag of kernels. He and Uri were friends. Their fathers fished together. Their village was a fishing village: homes and shops refurbished from abandoned mills nesting aside a frothing river. Trout was their specialty. Though the river had never frozen before, villagers weren’t worried. They’d enjoyed a surplus for decades. Their reserves would see them through.

Asher tossed the bag. The bag slunk down the hole. He and Uri collected their tickets and traded them for two hot mugs of apple cider. They sipped their prizes while strolling down the web of bridges which zigzagged across the river. Below them, freckles on the ice. Each morning, villagers swept up buckets full of flies that were killed by the pesticides they slathered on their doorframes

and windowsills, then heaved them over the railing. Fishermen joked how nature had delivered their bait to their doorstep. Soon those freckles bloomed a carpet, unfurling thicker each passing morning—after that black maw of night had rolled over their village and the flies came thundering through.

Uri and Asher weren't worried, sipping their cider and pointing out shapes and letters from the black freckles below. After all, the village had a festival every day now. Time wasn't working right; everyone had too much of it. On that day, Asher had eaten breakfast and gone to school and done his homework and eaten dinner with his family and played so many carnival games with Uri, and it was hardly noon.

Granny calls Asher to the kitchen. Won't he take a break from that radio and help her with this puzzle? Asher can tell she's been crying. He knows a lot of things she pretends he doesn't know, like that he won't see Uri again. That his father won't return from the night he left in a bodysuit which his mother fashioned from their leather couch. The last time the sun rose and the flies had left and the world was quiet—so very long ago—mother wouldn't let Asher outside. He kicked and screamed and cried but Granny held him back. He knew his father was dead. His mother had found him only meters from their doorstep. A hole in the suit, at the back of his knee. Flies flooded in. He suffocated. Asher didn't know this but he knew that his father was dead because he saw his mother's face when she returned. And later that night, when Granny told him his father was still out there finding help, he knew better.

Asher helps Granny finish her puzzle. This will be their fortieth time doing so.

For dinner, cabbage soup again. Phlegm green ooze with what looks like floating raisins. Their reserves have dwindled to crumbs. Granny and Asher eat at the table, a wild trumpet blaring from the vinyl spinning in the living room. His mother stays in bed.

The sound of the flies has changed. Buzzing deeper, more distinct. As if they were burrowing into Asher's eardrums, the collective tempo of their swarming syncing with his own thinking, his thoughts so frazzled and their sound so saturating that this aural infestation almost feels natural, so justified,

as if he could hardly hear them at all.

What's wrong? Granny asks.

I'm not hungry. Asher shoves his bowl away.

Eat.

Mother isn't eating, so why should I?

You're not your Mother, are you? You're a growing boy.

It's gross.

Eat.

Asher doesn't budge. Granny clanks her spoon in her bowl, put her hands to her forehead. She starts to tremble.

Boy you eat, you gotta eat. Asher knows Granny is doing her best.

He plugs his nose and spoons from his bowl of cabbage soup, tries not to gag at the crunch of what he tries to tell himself are raisins with wings.

Later, he dreams about life before winter, about one summer he and Uri were chasing fireflies. Drenched with heat, rushing about the riverbank. These little winking lanterns of magic called bugs that they stowed into jars. Father helped them put holes in the lids. Then he wakes with a jolt—he had fallen asleep on the living room rug, waiting by the radio, cocooned in wool blankets—and realizes with sinking heart that this memory left a sour taste. For his village was now like a bookshelf of jars, all his family and friends packed apart, everyone just buzzing around in circles. Then he realizes what had woken him:

Silence.

Even his mother is roused by this quiet, slouched inside her bedroom doorway, gawking at Granny who is opening the blinds to reveal not sunlight but fuzzed blackness pushing against the glass, and yet Asher glues his gaze to a freckle by the wall, a lone fly frozen midflight: wings outstretched, eyes shining, like time was standing still.

Staphylococcus Sequinus: Don't Even Start

Unused petri dishes, flashy fabric, glass beads, bubble wrap, antibiotic box, watercolors, ink, paper, sequins, test tube



Pangaea

Sing me that song again,
the way you used to, in our living room
when the lights glowed orange and dim,
the curtains drawn closed against the cold night.

Where the beetle crawls from Maine to Africa,
Where in the woods the giant gingkos grow,
and in the sea, ancient fish swim,
and the earth is tender; hot and bubbling.
Where we walk, together, in the jurassic night,
along the old world shore,
and as the night turns into day,
we watch our footprints fade away
and we are very sad to leave
Pangaea.

I want to walk through the house like I did when I was small.
Dark wood bookshelves loomed above my head,
small bones, trilobites, seaglass and rocks,
geodes broken open, purple innards shining,
and I'd lie awake at night
and swear I could feel the earth,
the molten core and bedrock thousands of feet below,
lurching toward some new and unknowable form.

Upside Down

Charcoal



Fumus et Specula

How could I
One who speaks fire,
Have loved you,
Whose breath is smoke
And whose scales are mirrors?

Where Do We Go Next?

Graphite and colored pencil on poster paper



Sometimes we like to watch

the blood bubble at our paper cuts.

We are alive after all, so we

soften at the sticky spread it

leaves on our skin after it

branches our fingerprint

valleys like an ink drop

on white pants,

or strawberry jam

on burnt toast.

Measuring Chairs

Sculpture





“I Haven’t Smoked Since”

At five and six years old,
We were the perfect height to peer through the fingerprint stained glass casing
Of baked goods at Colella’s Supermarket
With rings of artificial light glowing in our eyes
And drool reaching the corner of our mouths as
Our mom, whichever one it was that day,
Orders you a frosted gingerbread man and me a chocolate eclair,

But now we’re eighteen and nineteen,
Home for spring break,
High, and fiending ice cream,
So we go to the chain supermarket that got built a few years back
When Colela’s closed and was replaced with the CVS that people protested to
no avail,
And we’re weaving through the isles,
Playing hide-and-seek
By avoiding anyone who looks remotely familiar,

Until we’re back in your basement,
And I’m digging a moat in my gallon of Hood strawberry,
Hypnotized by how smoothly my spoon slices through the frozen milk fat
And scrapes the edges of the cheap carton,
Brought back only by the glug glug glug
Of you pouring yourself a glass filled to the brim with your parent’s plum

brandy

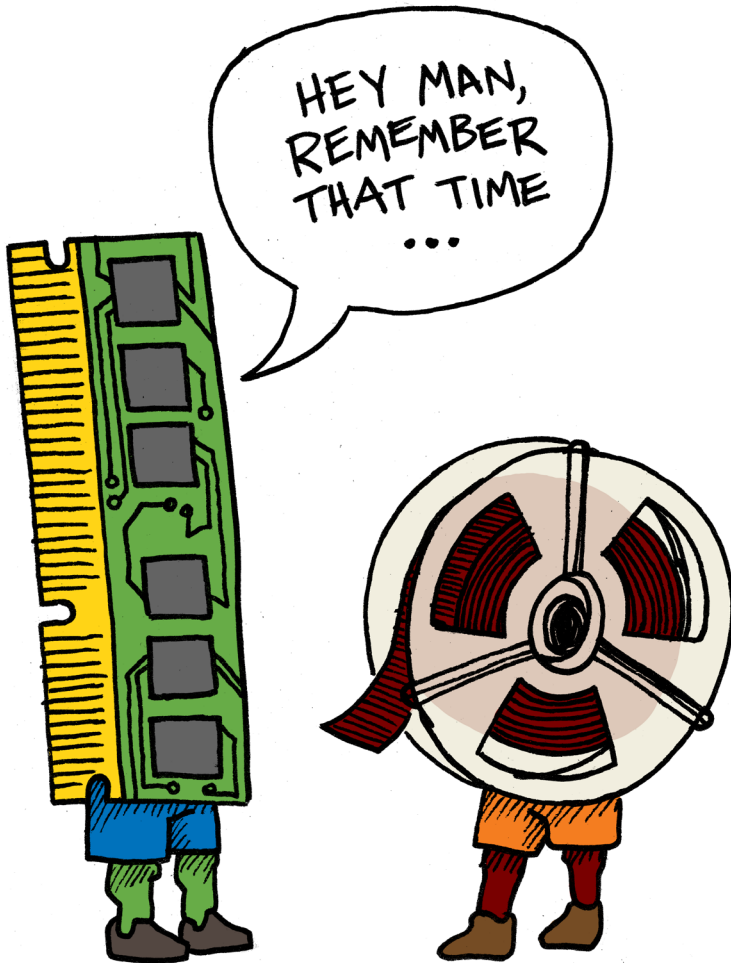
Which goes down faster than any lemonade you ever ordered at Friendly's
And drank through a color-changing straw

Back when you weren't putting on a movie through glassed-over eyes
That I don't watch because you go outside to smoke more on your own
Leaving me wondering how it got this bad without me knowing
And how much you'd hate me if I told my mom who'd definitely tell yours,
But how much more I'd hate myself if I didn't and something happened to you,

But your sister comes home and you seem to get better,
Although you still spend the summer in a cloud
And I spend it down here on Earth worrying about you,
Receiving texts from a far-away faded friend saying "I miss you,"
To which I can only think
I miss frosted gingerbread men and chocolate eclairs,
But ever since that night you scared me half to death
You've been unrecognizable,
And how can I miss someone I don't know?

Memories

Digital illustration



Loose-leaf

there's a security in being certain,
as the ground shakes
when people walk by,
and your skin smells like sleep
and the lavender tea you just poured
freckles the cushions beneath us.
brewed hibiscus and hookah fill the air

i sink back into the corner,
and you sink back too,
your little cup dripping that hot hot tea slowly on my leg.
in that moment,
it might be leaving burns,
or it might not,
but really no matter,
because the night is leaving beautiful
versions of those burns in my memory instead.

woke up to the birds and a vision of you,
every chirp invoking a new flood of your soft soft smile.
the fronds on the windowsill tickle in the wisps of wind,
and the 8 am gold light streams through the window,
painting the wall and your brow bone in stripes

the bed is just too narrow,
the duvet continually and inevitably sliding down onto the rug.
you sigh a small bit, mid-wake,

pull me just ever so slightly closer,
my new source of warmth,
and we both drift back in,
dreaming until most of the day is past.

a rift

afternoons bring tension.
an aimless point in the day when meals and love are ambiguous.
the apartment feels numb, the sharp armchair judging me from the edge of the
room.
you're on the sofa, we're on the sofa, but we're as far as we could be,
scrolling

my eyes watch us from the ceiling
i am completely disassociated, and it takes your attention and your arms to
bring me back down.

dinner breaks the rift's power.
a small amount of salted water in the largest pot i have ever seen,
you bend at the knees to search the fridge,
warm light in a cold place,
washing over the cheekbone that was just under my sweet peppered hand

i'm cross-legged on the couch,
your head in my lap, my bowl of gnocchi balanced upon your crown,
a show i have already watched at your eye level,
and as my rumbling stomach meets your laughs,
and your hair presses against my belly,
i can't shake it:
is this as good as it ever gets?

Wear a Mask!

Analog collage



Kaboom

Our friends all knew about the broken couch, called me wild for it,
They didn't know it was the head and neck of a swan, the last bird that ever
lived,

Yeah we fucked on a swan head. It's a pearl, an ancient planet made of sadness.
The water spreads for its entry, its velvet neck half the width of a wrist
Movements, seemingly calculated in their balance, synchronize every heartbeat
in the forest, even evil
ones.

Its neck broken, its barrel chest quivering, its brain fizzing in its eyes with
glittering light
Someone died, in the bow of the swan's neck, the curve of half a heart,
Someone lay there, swallowing big gulps of air, watching the ceiling grow
smaller,
Pounding in the heavenly space between knees, seeing stars, they're the imprint
Of glow in the dark stars before the room was redone to be more
Mature

The crack bounces us into a spiral, you grow close and hug me, did you ask if
I was okay

It is what I want to know more than anything, what I can't hear, it's us finding
a dead woodpecker, it's
neither of us breathing and waiting for the world to spin again

Someone died thinking about what your room looked like
When you were a little boy

Perhaps

Pen and ink wash



Every Constellation Feels Like A Cleché

I think you gave me your habit of wandering around at night.
I mean, I was already friendly with the grasshoppers that creaked on my way
from your house—
Sure as the wind from the lake climbing my neck,
I'd wisp up the hill a breath before dusk
And if I have to walk by myself
Three in the morning isn't a bad time to do it.
The air just tastes different, you know?

Except, these days I only do it when I can't breathe
And I can't taste the stars and I don't want to.

You gave me your jeans, your sweater
And a shirt to wear to sleep
And every time I wear them I hate myself
But I still call them my favorites
And stare at the paint stains.

Because I keep thinking that if I just practice,
I can separate the aesthetic from the history.

And I think you gave me your sadness
And fuck, you can take it back.
I don't want it!
I have my own brain to deal with
And I was actually getting better at that.
I kept it together when I started recognizing your poetry,

Submission to The Gist

Anonymous and angsty and half of it awful,
And I kept it together when you were in the hospital
And I had to negotiate for permission to bring your favorite snack every morning.

Then you were released and you started smoking weed and walking around at night
And I can only take so much, okay?

I know I made the worst possible choice,
But it was the only choice I had left.
I wouldn't change what I did, probably.
But it doesn't matter anyway—
'Cause you're off in Alaska or somewhere
And my heart still keeps creaking, creaking,
And it's been way too long,
it's been years and I'm a completely different person now
And I just want to get over it already.

So now I walk around dangerous parts of town at night
And I can't breathe and I don't want to, I really don't
And I spit stars at my own feet.

American Healthcare

Digital photography



This photograph was taken during the first pandemic lockdown in New York. City departments were not clearing roadkill—no one was going outside—and this deer was left for more than a month. The balloon appeared after two weeks, and it remained until removal.

College Party

Extended-arm slides,
cobra-like,

until it touches the wall.

Outreached-hand molds,
 goop-like,
 into the ice
 —white bricks.

And I can't decide if I like that
—clay and concrete imprinting my back.

But stone-eyes roll quick,
knife-like,
until they
puncture,
 twist,
and
 pull
mine.

And drink-sticky bodies move,
 cage-like,

into the space I thought I owned.

I decide I don't like that.

So, as we exchange banter
—yelling our answers,
across pitch-black notes,
blocking any real air
left in the couch-cushion,
dungeon of a house—
I decide I do not
like that and you should
leave me to rot on my own,
but instead you crawl
and tangle closer
until I become

a tiny ladybug
with her wings

ripped off

lying among old, forgotten
vegetable vines.

Call Your Mother Please

Oil paint



Wretched

1. My hair is long now.

One more month
and it'll be a year.

Dark hair

cascading
from the back of my head,
saying Look

reaching for my sternum
as if in a peace offering

swinging with my steps
from a tall ponytail
like a pendulum
saying
I am not who you told me I am.

2. My vision retaliates

like tender fingertips flying
from a scorching cookie tray.
Except I don't yank them back
towards myself;

I project them away
as they blister

Submission to The Gist

away from what I did
as they bubble
away from what I did that was so *wretched*
as they scab
aren't they disgusting?
they begin
to scar.

3. There is a special kind of loneliness
that comes with guilt.

It lingers somewhere along a riverbank
as if pulled by gravity,
or logical curiosity

to the overwhelming stench
of something rotten

It tracks the forlorn
by scat and trails of blood

It comes for my limping body
because I am the transgressor

You yank
and I follow
like a leashed dog.

4. Scorched and scorned,
I pick up a pen
or make sounds
on a keyboard

Scorched and scorned
long hair swinging like a pendulum
on a grandfather clock

Scorched and scorned
my fingers are flying
away away away

Scorched and scorned
I think of my grandmothers

Scorched and scorned
I think
there's something

about shame
that is particular
to being
a woman

I retaliate
forward.

5. I am not there anymore—
my hair is long now,
swaying side to side,
jubilant like a waterfall over
the rocky bones of my shoulders
past the soft boulders
of my chest
my hair
can attest:
I am not there—
best not
go looking.

One Brick, Two Brick, Red Brick, Blue Brick

Pen, watercolor



Sparkly Armor: Fighting for Future Freedom

Fabric, glass beads, sequins, plastic stickers, charms, tagua nut, key, crystal, found objects



On the Devil and Time

“And you, my guide, you seem to be a bull.
Horns grow from your head.
Were you a beast all along? For you are a bull now.”
-*Euripides, Bacchae*

“Time is something that defies spring and winter, birth and decay, the good and the bad,
indifferently.”
-*Donna Tartt, The Secret History*

waking up when the day has not yet broke is a feckless thing, & i often find myself inside of my hubristic & withering imagination underneath my striped blue sheets. i cry for madness, for the red haired me that mimics my crooked smile - dear emotive loner! dear arousing heart!- i yearn for substance, fourth of july fireworks, norwegian fjords & up and up rollercoasters floating past the turbulent caramel-starred or scarred space of my skin that may- or may not- look like a constellation. i ache for skyscraper trees, honor's college philosophies, time bending into a swirling hurricane that breaks down crying whenever it runs over stubborn cars, shriveled skin wet from lake-water, searching searching searching finding something that makes me larger than reality. the brunette psychic promised me that the death card meant change; that was two years ago and all i feel is archadian confusion that creeps into my blankets & lukewarm tea while the leaves change day to day night to night minute to minute, and i one day wish to see the dead king that is locked inside of my zealous heart, a god-complex insecure bastard that treks through whirling storms, bull-horned mountains, reeking of peaceful cleverness. the devil once urged me to jump into raging oceans & off of jejune q trains- before i got to my destination- while pricking myself with cacti in the flower shop, my chest exposed to cool-winded detestment; he danced around me, hooves clicking on the pavement, verdant eyes facing the heavens in a false prayer; *rebirth!* he cries while i am washed clean by the retiring rain. *rebirth, rebirth, rebirth!*

Old Man HDD

Digital illustration



When the Plague Hits

Multimedia collage made with magazine clippings and hand drawn images (pen, pastel, colored pencil, and marker)



Silver Unwearing

The dish turns to the spoon in the early morning,
and catches the new light in her once-golden hair, reminding him of the silvery
buttons on that
dress she wore the first time he beheld her.
She had climbed a tree to the very top
A funny woman
But he had liked the way she was perched
Leg bobbing at the knee
Her expression was not one you would find amid the foliage but beneath a
good book.

That summer they had compared hand sizes in the dark
And said, only needing the looping of their fingers,
“You make me ridiculously happy”
“To me, you are truly remarkable”
“Tell me every little thing”
A conversation between palms
That later gripped handlebars
Turned the ignition
As dish and spoon tour off.
You could see them on the hillside that day
Specks so small they could’ve been the cat and his fiddle
The cow and her moon
Love stories that did not know the hyperventilation, the call for open-air
The unholy union of cutlery and china provided.
A home was made that day
On interstate I-90

Submission to The Gist

Between leather jacket and floral blouse whipping in the wind
Dish clutching spoon's slender shoulders –
She really knew how to drive.

In the motel bedroom, they had overlooked sex to observe the deepness of their
inhales.

Laying two inches apart on the sun-faded comforter, they sailed together an
imaginary boat out
into open sea with the fullness of their breath
The deliciousness of cigarettes and dust.

And now, if you were wondering, they do have a dog

He sleeps at the foot of the bed

Where spoon lays newly awoken

Her golden hair somehow a silvery dream

Dish leans down to kiss her

And they made a sort of clanging sound

As they always do

The silverware on porcelain

Their favorite kind of music

Ringing out and out and on

As dish folds himself around spoon

And she into him

And they fall back asleep

Their synchronized breath traveling a thousand sailboats

Their Harley-Davidson leaned tenderly against the side of the house

Their heartbeats, years later, still putting verse to iambic meter

My love my love my love

Before the Race

Pen and ink wash



Search History

s

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sleep deprivation

Search

I'm feeling lucky

Wonderful Life

Acrylic on stretched canvas



Asphyxiation

Gas mask, lace, spray paint, miscellaneous beads



Sweetheart

“I never loved you.”

Four short words, yet each of them is like a slash to your chest, spilling out the scarlet ichor that surely fills you. You can feel yourself hollowing out, becoming half the person you once were.

“You don’t mean that,” you plead as you will the crystalline tears brimming in your eyes to not flood over. Your words are coming from a heart that once beat for them, but not anymore. Not when they never wanted your heart in the first place.

“It doesn’t matter if I mean it or not,” they say robotically. “It’s for your own good.”

Why won’t they look at you? You can’t stop looking at them, as if their unwavering face holds the reasons you seek for this unexpected breakup.

“Was our relationship ever real?” you ask, your voice betraying your raw emotion.

“Nothing’s real,” they reply, demeanor so stiff they could be made of stone. They grab the glass of water sitting forlornly on the table.

The last thing you did for them was pour that water, icy cold, as is their preference. You will never pour them water again.

“You’ll see,” they say. Before you can grab the glass from them, they slam it down, hard.

You wait for the sound of glass shattering, to see it split into a thousand glass butterflies, but it never comes. Instead, it’s a mess of vanilla cake and white buttercream frosting. The sweet mess taunts you.

Cake? You can’t believe your eyes.

You could’ve sworn there was liquid in there, and shiny, fragile glass. Now, the world seems to have shifted beneath your feet without warning.

“This is all for you,” they cry. You watch in horror as their hand plunges into their chest.

“No!” you cry out, lunging towards the love of your life. You get there too late, and their fingers go through the skin like butter through a knife.

You’re speechless. You always called them “sweetheart,” but didn’t take it literally, until you see what they pull out with their delicate fingers.

Strawberry cake and airy rose water frosting are what they’re made of. You’re unable to stop staring at the peony pink cake in front of you.

It breaks your heart, but simultaneously heals it.

Moving towards them, you extend a finger to touch the pillowy softness. You can’t help the tortured gasp that escapes you, torn between the pain and the pleasure, as your finger tingles.

A strange hunger is awoken in you, clawing at you to escape.

You scoop up their cake and slowly bring it up to your mouth. Your tongue darts out to swirl the frosting, and you savagely shove the cake into your mouth, throwing modesty to the wolves.

The tears in your eyes fall, this time out of happiness, as they decorate your past lover like diamonds. The strawberry pairs well with the floral cream, giving you a euphoria like never before.

You need more.

Your hands go to your cheek, scratching at whatever’s there with a vengeance. A jolt of pleasure zips through you as thick pieces fall off. You can’t pick them up fast enough.

Fingers tremble as you look upon the cake, and dark chocolate and salted caramel frosting fill your senses as you consume yourself.

Is this what true love tastes like?

It tastes divine.

Reaching While Bound

Oil on canvas



Inseparable

Watercolor

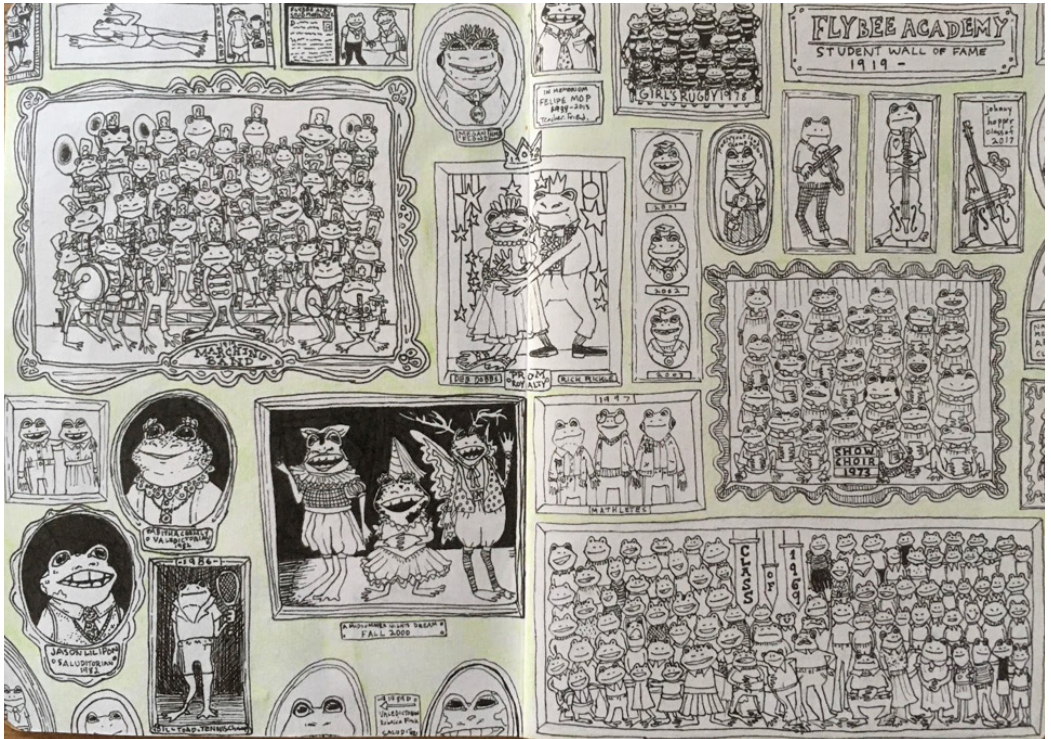


Lying in My Bed

I really want to scream and bark and laugh and smile and pull my hair and pull your hair and shake my arms at love and for hate and lick apples fallen from green orchards and smell my mother's cooking on her good days and feel my father's palms clasping mine when I was five years old and create things with my body like twisters and honey and plant flowers in your mouth so when you speak I can taste something I like for once and build bubbles out of gumballs that are rolling around in my head and press my chest to the sky and give away my heart that feels too much and sends me to places that I should let go of.

Frog School

Micron pen and colored pencil



Occupation

It's fitting that I'm in this dream, in Pennsylvania, feeding pigeons on a corner
Tutting to them gently as they swing close and far, close and far from my gloved fingers
Some of them even come close to my feet, they don't care about the icy sidewalk
They must be alright with winter cause they don't even have teeth to chatter

The space you're occupying makes an indentation in this strange plane your weight is a
block of sugar
and firelight you're thawing your cold toes but this time there are two
People holding your feet laughter is melting out of you and they're playing an album you
all know by
heart you're holding your face it's sore from smiling
Best of all you have the same old wallet, it's such a relief to see there's been no interrup-
tion
Into this sweet scene

There's a feeling of content not knowing how I got to Pennsylvania
There's a familiar suspicion that it was my own fault, or that it was all on purpose
Perhaps I knew this was better to feed the pigeons who need their food and sometimes
Warm fingers for their cold wire feet
But being winter my fingers are white and numb and I'm giggling at the sight
Of a wallet seller setting up on the other side of the street
And brushing dirt off my dinner as the pigeons find the hot telephone lines

American History

Analog collage



Territorial Pissings

Digital photography



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Snag a copy from the English Department in Old Mill or check out current and previous issues online at go.uvm.edu/thegist.

Want to get involved? The Gist meets Wednesdays at 8 pm via Teams. Scan here to join!



SCAN ME

SUBMIT YOUR GIST

Want to see your work published? Submit up to four works for consideration at go.uvm.edu/thegist—we'd love to review your work! We accept all forms of poetry, prose, and visual art. If you create it, we'll publish it!

All works must be titled. Art submissions should detail the medium. There is a 2,000 word limit for prose and a 150 line limit for poetry.

Any questions? Email us at submissions.gist@gmail.com.

Thank you to everyone who contributed. Our success is impossible without the creative talents of our contributors who continue to reawaken this journal's spirit.

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NOBODY

LIKES

WHEN YOU

COUGH