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PORTRAIT

Literary Arts Magazine



SPRING 2018

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Front Cover Piece:

Jacob Herring, "Voices of Reason: Chaos and Nonsense"

Inside Cover Piece:

Katherine Sehr, "Detail in Process"

Editors' Note Piece:

LaStarsha McGarity, "Vandals"

Back Cover Piece:

Adamy Abdulrahman, "[Untitled]"

About Portrait

Portrait was founded on the Buffalo State campus as a creative outlet for students. It has appeared sporadically throughout the years, last reaching print in the mid-2000s. *Portrait* was revived last year, and many thanks go to the members of the faculty, in all departments, who helped (and continue to help) *Portrait* come into existence.

This revival of *Portrait* provides students the opportunity to be recognized for their creative work. Through *Portrait*, students are provided with a platform to share their voice with the minds of the Buffalo State College student body.

This magazine is made entirely from student work. Without you, there is no *Portrait*. It is you, the students, who actually make it what it is. Your efforts have directly led to the publication of the Spring 2018 edition of *Portrait* that is in your hands today.

With the support of the School of Arts and Humanities, the help of countless Buffalo State faculty and staff, and the efforts of our editorial staff, we present to you - *Portrait*.

Submissions are now being accepted for the Spring 2019 edition of *Portrait*.

We are accepting student creations of all forms:

Poetry, short stories, nonfiction, flash fiction, interviews, memoir, personal essays, photography, graphic designs, collage, plays, podcasts, recorded music, etc.

Please send a maximum of 5 submissions to Portrait@Buffalostate.edu
Include your name, works' title, and works' medium.

We will see you next year, and thank you for making this possible!

Portrait is published by the editorial team at the State University of New York College at Buffalo. The work which appears in this magazine is the creation of students at the State University of New York College at Buffalo and cannot be reproduced elsewhere without the consent of the author/artist.

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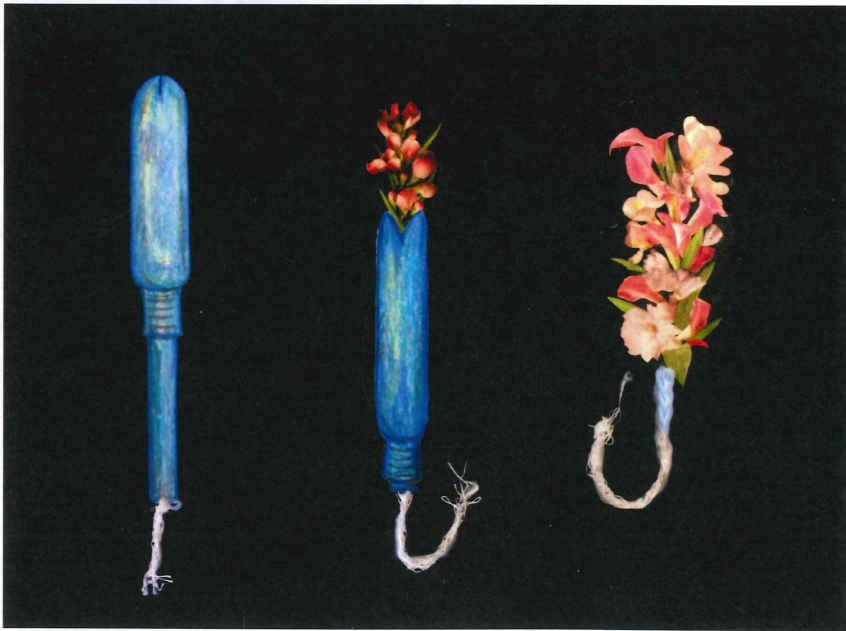
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Sabrina Parsons



Poem to My Vagina (After Lucille Clifton)

Emma Dryden

you vagina
 you have been angry
 as a bull shark
 while I have allowed debasement
 ignoring the talent you hold
 again
 they want me to forget
 the acts you have championed
 who am i
 who am i
 young lady
 without you
 vagina
 my bloody accessory

my brick wall
 my volcanic island
 my teary-eyed baby
 my bitch
 my pussy
 my cunt
 who can I trust
 bumbling
 fumbling
 stumbling
 with you
 who will defend you
 without me

Indigo Man

Andrea Vaughn

Hiding your perceptions
 like a woman and her body;
 Turn the lights off
 and pull me in.
 Your eyes betray you;
 that vulnerable blue flowers
 like a fragile eruption.
 I feel your callouses
 cradling the space around my thoughts
 and I wonder
 if they will always itch that way?

Idea

Anne Sullivan

Sometimes I hold an idea in my mouth like an egg
 And I pump warm air from my stomach into my mouth
 So that the egg will stay hot
 I run my tongue across the hard bumpy shell
 Cleaning off all the dirt and the chicken shit
 I roll it over so that each side is cooked equally

But sometimes I think about how delicious the white would taste
 running down my throat
 And I bite through the scrumptious shell
 I crush the shell to dust under my teeth
 Crunch the bones that have just formed
 And press the mixture against my gums
 And my stomach fills with regret but is so comfortably full

Other times when my intentions are good
 I fall asleep on my back
 I cradle the egg against the roof of my mouth
 But in the morning it's gone and I have feathers stuck between my
 molars

But sometimes I let it hatch

Woke

Lashawn Taylor

40 acres and a mule later, and we are still at a major deficiency within our society. Perhaps, the real problem is more than just the capital gap between the affluent and the poor. Conflict amongst members of various minority groups are influenced by the rich to keep us from uniting and retrieving what's rightfully ours: our freedom, equal access to education, our rights, and our lives.

Show and Tell

Ke-nijah Holloman Wilson

It was show and tell today at school and I decided to show and tell my roots

Mrs. C asked what I will be presenting today and I told her that I have a presentation a representation that will blow her mind!

I said "look at me!"

I present to you today a dynasty!

A legacy of strength inner beauty and loyalty.

She's speaks her mind and endured all the hatred of society

She built America as her fist hold up strong and proud as she fought for liberty at which she hasn't truly fulfilled

From her coils to her curls, to her kinky hips

She's a strong black woman who's the definition of independent

It's her strength that attracts you to her as her heart burst with unconditional love

She mends lives although she is broken

There's a power from within that's to mighty to understand

A leader of a pack of cubs

A queen whose skin harmonizes with the sun

Whose wisdom you shall not take for granted

Her versatility is so unique and she is all flavors into one

Today I present to pure Blackness! Pure Melaniness! I am your show and tell!

[Untitled]

Danielle Iris S. Planter



Queen Vee
Mukrimat Sanusi



Transition
Mukrimat Sanusi



The Preacher

Taylor Luisa Seymour

The preacher scanned the bar from left to right. The coast was clear. Slithering through the front door, he approached the bar.

"Let me get an Old Fashioned," he said.

"No problem, boss," the bartender replied while drying a martini glass. "You from around here?"

"Um, I live right outside of town."

"Oh that's nice, what part?"

"Wichita."

"Oh, you're a little far from home," the bartender smiled.

"Yeah. I am."

"What brings you to Dall-?"

"You know what, sir. I didn't come in here to talk. I came to drink and my glass is empty."

The bartender rolled his eyes, took the glass and refilled it.

The preacher chugged it and handed the glass back.

"Another."

This was the preacher's typical Saturday night. After being at the bar all night, he got into his car and drove home. The ride home was done by muscle memory. Almost robotic like. He stumbled through the front door and headed for the study. His wife opened her eyes, sighed and went back to sleep. The preacher wrote tirelessly until the early hours of the morning. Once his sermon was finished, he crawled into bed with his wife. He went to touch her and she turned over.

"You stink. You need to go take a shower."

The sun came up and the preacher did as he was told.

Afterwards, he put on his dry cleaned suit, pinned his cross pin to his chest then put his flask in his jacket pocket. He and his wife drove in silence. It was not until they entered the church together that she held his hand. Appearance, appearances, appearances. The preacher

disappeared into his office to make sense of the chicken scratches he wrote last night. One swig won't kill me. The chicken scratches began to morph into handwriting. Another swig. The writing moved in front of him, forming sentences and adding punctuation. Another swig. The sermon was ready and the clock struck ten. The preacher went out in front of the congregation delivered a powerful sermon. The congregation was bewitched. Applauding, amenning, and the Holy Spirit was in the room.

"And may God bless you all. Have a wonderful Sunday and a blessed week."

A little boy came up to the preacher.

"Mr. Preacher, how do you do these sermons so good? I wanna preach just like you when I grow up."

The preacher's eyes widened. No one asked him that before. He assumed that the people assumed that he was born for this. It was some sort of greatness he was awarded. He knew that was crap. He knew that telling this kid that was just plain wrong. Then this kid would grow up thinking about what he did wrong and why he couldn't do it. He'd become a tortured soul who can't preach. Nobody wants a sad preacher. Preachers bring the light. Bring the hope. So what was he to say? He was in the house of the Lord, the house he father built and his father before had built. What would it look like to lie as a preacher in church? Perhaps it wasn't the worst thing he could do. Well he is supposed to bring the hope and he is supposed to be part of the light. Maybe this kid saw through him. Maybe this kid wanted to catch him. He didn't want to be caught.

"Mr. Preacher, are you alright?"

"Yeah, son. To be a good preacher, you just have to really have a connection with the Lord. When you do, you can write and everything will make sense."

"Everything."

"Yes, son. Everything."

William and Marie

Andrea Vaughn

"How was the walk?"

Marie untucked the hand towel from her soft yellow apron and dried her hands. William loved that apron on her, the pastel color made her look so innocent. The brown splattered stain on the pocket had nearly disappeared by now. Their hot breakfast steamed by the window, the smoke mingling with sunrays.

"It was fine – long, rather. The back of my knee cramped up near the creek so I had to sit, and wouldn't ya know it Marie?"

"What honey?"

She put their plates on the blue-checkered table between the silverware. The sunlight turned their grey hair to silver as it rose above the horizon and poured over them.

"An Egret flew right past me! Nearly scared the dickens out of me! He landed across the way just starin' at me, I swear. One heck of a sight for a day like today, let me tell ya."

William broke the yokes of his eggs and let them bleed out slowly as he always did. Marie passed him the pepper and buried her toast in cinnamon sugar as she always did, and they carried on as if it were a normal day; as if they were normal.

Sirens whirred vaguely in the background of their chatter like screaming vultures over their prey and Marie laughed at William as he read the comics to her from last week's paper.

"Oh, you really are somethin' you know that?"

And they let the joy linger, savoring the sweet taste of giggles on their tongues. She cleared the dishes from the table and drowned the sponge with lavender soap.

"Miss Marie, I really do love you in that apron."

William snuck up behind her and grabbed the sponge out of her hand, scrubbing the pan with his arms in place of hers. He hummed in her ear and she lowered her eyes, swaying in rhythm with his song until her chest became heavy and she whispered,

"I'm scared, Billy."

He kissed her cheek and spun her around, singing louder in competition with the wailing sirens. They danced around the kitchen table and left the dishes unclean, and the front door unlocked.

All at once, the sirens stopped. William continued to sing and Marie wiped the salty tear from his cheek. The men in black burst open their unlocked door and Marie froze, still clinging to William. The strong men ripped them apart and pushed them over the table, still warm from breakfast. Cold cuffs latched around their wrists.

"Where are the maps?" they screamed.

The strong men pushed their arms toward their skull, threatening to break their now fragile bones.

"I love you, Marie."

"I love you."

Again, they screamed, "Where are the maps?" and the old couple began to laugh eerily for William had hidden them so discreetly just that morning. The pair were then roughly jerked out of their home and into separate cars. And so they were off, just as expected.

The Girl in the Blur

Brock Tetreault

I don't pay attention to the dosage on the bottle
But it pays attention to me
An overdose makes me remember
Memories I can all but bury
Often it's the prettiest one that pains me the most
The way her hair falls in her face
A little breeze is all it ever takes
Just one of a thousand ways
She became the girl I see in the blur
As the nights come to their close
I feel the last of her in the morning headache too
When I wake up still in yesterday's clothes
Already looking forward twelve hours
To the next time I can visit the blur
And dig up her memory once more
So again I can remember

Warrior

Brianna Keane



Nightfall and Darkness

Anna Cooke

The nightfall that is accompanied by terror envelopes my mind, body, and soul, like dark clouds that envelope the sky during a storm.

As I lay still in my bed in the darkness, my mind tries to brutally battle my heart until my breathing is labored and my body burns with pain.

So, I entrust my mind and body to a wise old soul whose spirit travels all the way from Nigeria.

She willingly shares her wisdom and thoughts with me and refills my cup consistently.

I trust her wisdom, but I so badly only want to trust my I am.

Her wisdom and thoughts send me into a deep sleep, and my battleground is temporarily quiet.

The sinister battleground is replaced by vivid fantasies that I so badly want to be my reality.

About seven hours of darkness and fantasies have passed, and pitch-black clouds in the sky gives way to a beautiful kaleidoscope of brilliant colors.

I have awakened with relief.

My heart is filled with thanks and joy because my I am allowed me to experience another day.

A day passes by that nightfall strategically trails behind and never forgets to appear.

I try to hold on to the promises that my I am made through the Good News until nightfall returns and darkness loosens my hold.

Perhaps one day I will be so terrified of the nightfall's sinister battle that is before me, that fear will send me into an eternal daytime sleep.

However, I cannot let fear win, so I stare it in its black face.

I will fight this merciless battle against the forces that the human eye cannot see until my fantasies or my I am rescues me.

I Never Shot Straight

Danielle Saeva

my heart would burn for the way the sweat used to drip down our
spines,
on a pier where the sun pinched our cheeks and sharpened our
shoulder blades
you couldn't hold my hand because of the heat,
so I straightened my back and offered my bones.

you'd hold her hands like a melting candle,
turn to wax and mold together,
I may have set my wick on fire,
but the smell of burning plastic always made you nauseous.

her eyes mimicked the waves that crashed in mine,
they'd shape into whichever vase you'd pour us into
but hers' were a river in the wake of spring
and mine the ocean on the edge of what you found comfortable
I built you an island and you left me to rot in return

winter would come like the death you would expect,
I'd grow out my coat in hopes that it would spare me from the wind.
that would pose a different set of issues,
delusions I wished I wasn't used to,
but a set of eyes the brightest of blue
made me realize what 'frozen over' really meant.

you came like a storm,
like a raindrop on your nose you swear you couldn't feel,
despite how you swore you'd never ignore
a parting in the clouds,
a kiss on your cheek, a song in my ear,
my chest was warmed with gratitude when the lightening finally struck
the seasons passed within themselves,
time stood still as our hands continued to spin
we were a heat like no other
more than just a candle,
but thousands of summers within our chests
we'd talk of warmer days,
coffee and pancakes,
orange juice and eggs,
just as my bones were beginning to thaw,
I could feel your skin turning cold.

I never shot straight.

Unknown

Declan Rapp

A tragic tale now tells of joy and mirth
Of laughter found within the grief and pain
A method **used to hide** the truth of birth
And faults discovered **within the brain**

Revealed to God, **our Lord**, as black of heart
The burning sin within **can not be fought**
A noble house this fault will tear apart
At early mourning **justice will be sought**

This pure abomination faces hate
Within the church, for simply being **true**
One death will not these **holy bloodhounds** sate
Until through fire their souls are **born anew**

No satisfaction is deserved by those
Who work to torment **truly holy** foes

Eden

Declan Rapp

A tree stands tall in a green **paradise**
Proud and **independent of** all support
This oak is free of **sin and evil** vice
This perfect image time does not distort

Time affects not, but nature has her wrath
Fire rages and gale force **winds do blow**
Strength and pride this **tall oak** no longer hath
Falling deftly towards cold dead earth **below**

A gracious gift given by a **stranger**
Keeps the tree from a definitive end
Denying the price imposed by nature
A helping hand a red maple does lend

The oak standing alone will surely fall
With support, it will never **make landfall**

Two

Emma Dryden

the man stood
tall – tall stood
the man but
I am
Woman
you can tell
by the big
tits round
hips or is
it round tits
big hips – hips
and tits one
forgets such
fine finite details
the man held
firm – firm held
the man but
I am
Woman
you can tell
by the math
when A plus
B equals C
and so forth
and by and by
until letters
are numbers
in full again
the man bore
mass – mass bore
the man but
I am
Woman
you can tell
by the load
I bear bare
bare I bear
in totality of
total with
tits and hips
plus hips and
tits for some sum

[Untitled]

A. K. Stiles

Is the culmination a life one has lived thus far
the definitive resolution of who they now are?
Does a cat not devour his prey simply to eat?
Is his bird being punished for an earlier feast
while the cricket may ponder as he is consumed
If he's paying the price for his song out of tune?
These creatures will fatten at the price of another;
no semblance of rue: an unabashed former lover.
Is there repentance for the sins they've transgressed?
Perhaps another life will be filled with distress?
The cat's human soul filled with love unrequited,
The song of the old/once cricket and his lover delighted.
Into a beautiful maiden the bird's soul manifests
Must she pay for her crimes with her home's empty nest?
These questions I ponder while no resolve seems clear
Is there a sequel - can despair disappear?

Lucca

Bella Panzica



Through the Rift

Jacob Herring



Alzheimer's

Amanda Coleman

Think of the brain as an intricate landscape of canyons
that relay information, scattered

Call this "neuron forest"

These nerve cells become tangles creeping up a tree to strangle it

Trees die off, the landscape eventually shrinks

Alzheimer's runs in reverse,

seizing on the knowledge that's disintegrating and losing

I thought of a book coming apart, pages drifting away

the paper returning to pure white

A book disappearing from the back because

the newest memories faded first

And her words were beginning to vanish

Coping With Change

Alexis Abramo, Jordan Anthony, Brian Arias Cano, Zachary Braunscheidel, Melissa Camp, Sarah Harter, Noah Hill, Josephine Klaczyk, Julianna Kraft, Kassidy Manke, Matthew Matsulavage, Madeline McDonnell, Faith Meyers, Hibbah Mojawalla, Sophia Osmond, America Rodriguez, and Michele Schultz

Javier Rodriguez-Ferreiro grew up in the multiethnic West Side neighborhood in Buffalo. His father Juan Carlos and his mother Teresita left their native land of Colombia in search of a better life for themselves and their three children. Javier, the oldest, was twelve years old, his brother Jaime ten, and his baby sister Leidy was only five. Javier knew very little English when he came to Buffalo, the only words he knew how to say were "yes" and "no." The language barrier put him at a disadvantage; however, Javier knew that he could eventually overcome it.

Javier worked at Burger King through his four years of high school. He used his paycheck to help out his family, and to afford some extra things for himself as well. He also fully participated in his ESL (English as a Second Language) classes each year to practice his English. He soon graduated from Lafayette International High School with a Regents Diploma, and later enrolled at Buffalo State College. He was expected to graduate in May of 2017 with a dual degree in Economics and Finance with a minor in Spanish. He was an excellent student, loved by his professors for his optimism. Little could Javier guess, a series of events would arise that would change his future forever.

During his senior year, his time was stretched between his studies and ECMC (Erie County Medical Center) Hospital. There, his father laid in a hospital bed on the 1st floor. The year prior, Javier noticed his father having trouble doing daily tasks. His father commonly misplaced objects, and began to forget important details. Once brought to the hospital Juan Carlos was diagnosed with a massive brain tumor, causing severe memory loss. The diagnosis was such that surgery would be necessary. However, this surgery would be incredibly dangerous, and his family wanted to put it off as long as possible to look for a safer alternative.

Javier's time at the hospital was awkward, but never boring. He would spend hours by his father's side, running back and forth between nurses and doctors to ask questions that his father couldn't. He would try to find ways to entertain his father - games, cards,

television shows - but nothing he could do was ever enough to distract his father from the future that his whole family knew was coming. Juan Carlos would soon forget his family. For Javier, the thought of becoming the man of the house, and taking care of his family, was terrifying. The stress of his father's illness and school was becoming too much.

As his world seemed to be falling apart around him, he developed an intense desire to help: to create actual change. Had his major been all wrong for him? Had this really made him want to change the course of his future?

One day, in the hospital waiting room, he was studying hard for a financial accounting exam with Dr. Ricigliano, one of the hardest in the Business Department. Hunched over his books, he didn't even notice the doctor come in behind him. Then he heard a hushed voice ask, "Are you Javier Rodriguez-Ferreiro?"

Nervously, Javier responded, "Yes. Is everything okay?"

"Can I speak with you in private?"

With a nod, Javier followed the doctor from the waiting room to an empty hallway adjacent to 157A, his father's assigned room. As they walked, Javier's heart began to race; he could feel the panic rising in his throat when he hesitantly asked, "Where is my father?"

"The tumor was putting a lot of pressure on his brain. He coded ten minutes ago, we were able to save him but are prepping him for emergency surgery. If you'd like, we can call your family and let them know."

"I'll call them."

"We'll keep you posted throughout the procedure." The doctor rushed away, leaving Javier to his thoughts. A brief phone call later, he was back in the waiting room, staring at a closed finance book and waiting for any kind of news.

An hour later, Javier saw his mother and siblings rush through the double doors of the hospital into the lobby. His mother noticed Javier's tearstained face and a sense of dread washed over her. Deep down, she knew she wasn't going to receive any good news.

"Mamá, lo siento pero papá no sobrevivió," Javier said as he burst into tears.

As his mother leaned over to comfort Javier she said, "Hijo, tu padre fue un hombre muy fuerte y amable. Hizo todo que podía hacer. Él está en un lugar muy lindo. Todo va estar bien."

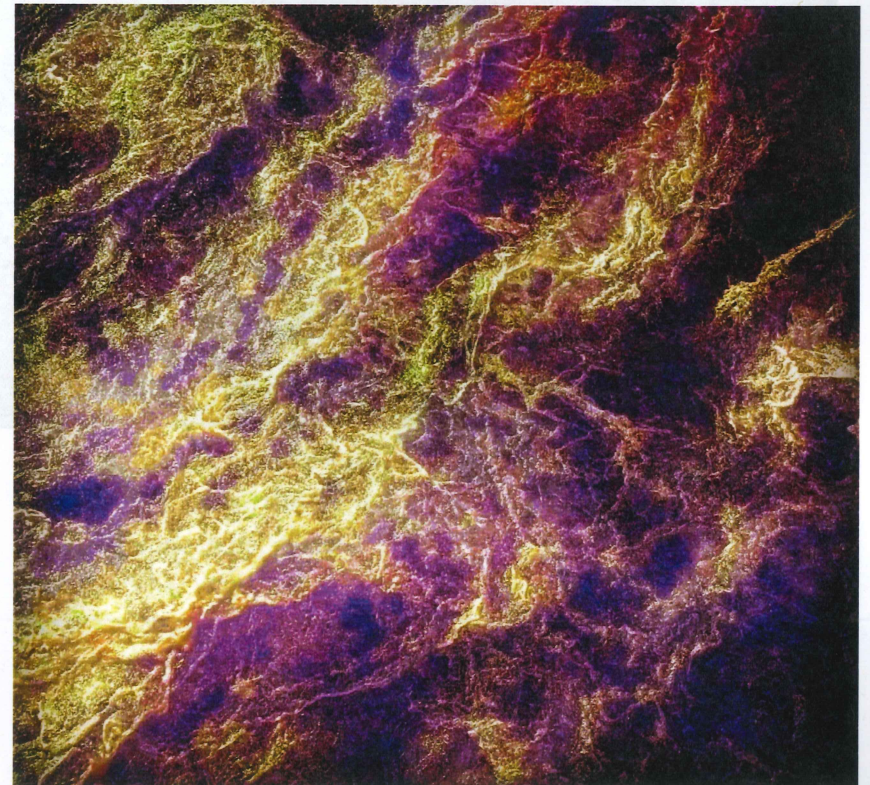
They hugged, comforting each other with words of empathy and kindness. The future was going to be difficult, but they knew that together they would heal from the traumatic experience.

After months of grief, Teresita finds the courage to leave her house in search of a job. In the spirit of staying close to her children, she decided to join the maintenance engineering department at their local elementary school. Jaime and Leidy continued to meet with their guidance counselors for emotional clarity while working through their hardship. On the other hand, Javier searched for temporary peace in his life by delving into his studies. His head was always buried in textbooks. Finally, Javier emailed his advisor, requesting a meeting.

While discussing the courses he would take next semester, he confided that he had lost his passion for finance during the past few months following his father's death, and was searching for something more meaningful.

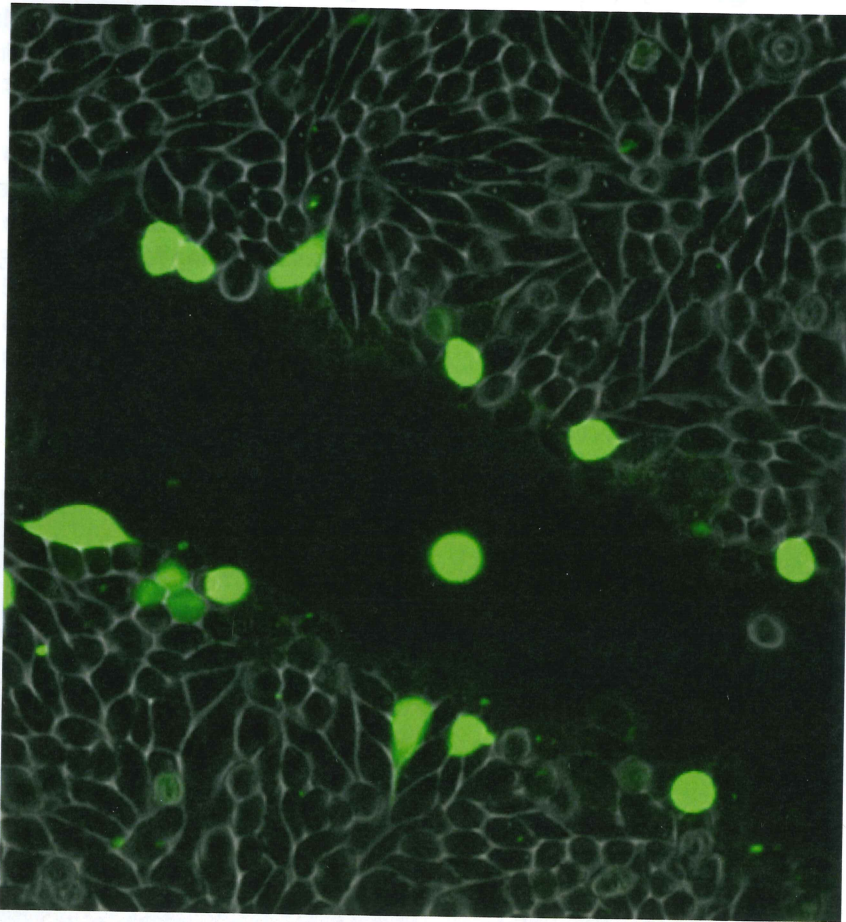
A Scene of the Outside

E. T. R.



4-18 Calcein CD81 FITC P+F 3

Stephen Thompson



The Tool of Creation

Tagen McCabe

The gunfire continues
Reverberating through the house of two
Imprinting the noise in their brains
Muscles twitch and constrict
Each creating life from blankness
Built from memories before
Like packages delivered
More weight is released from the mind
And used to multiply the few pieces remaining
Light turns to dusk
As the sun passes unnoticed behind the hills
Allowing darkness to swallow the room
One small slip of the finger
One waning moment of strength
And all of creation is destroyed to start anew
As the mistakes continue
History is changed, modified, and tossed away
Leading to a story far from what created it
Each new life builds from the one before
Back, back to before the typing started behind the locked door
Starting from a girl screaming for milk
As she grew
The world taught her to create her own
Every day she pulled the blanket from her head
And now alone in her room
With a mother watching over like bear does her cubs
And the tool of creation beneath her fingertips
Her mortal form melts away
Releasing the girl from shackles of humanity
As she becomes a god

The Island

Brayton Lydell

The moon was still in the sky when I started sailing, but I could already hear music coming from the jungle as I secured my boat to a tree. I found footprints dotting the beach, and considered how the early morning parties on the island were usually more tame than the midday and sunset parties. Probably because everyone was so tired from the party the night before.

The familiar smells of cooked meats and bonfires cut through the trees, giving me an easy trail to follow. I walked past a couple making love under a fallen tree. The sight had startled me on my first visit to the island, but was now so commonplace that I would've been more surprised to not see them there. As usual, they paused for a moment to wave at me, and continued.

Before long I came to a clearing, separated from the jungle by a large wooden archway covered in twinkling sparklers. Past it I could see a sea of people, all barely dressed and covered in streaks of paint that seemed to glow. One of them saw me as I approached the entrance - a tall muscular man with long braided hair. He turned to a large wooden funnel pointed at the crowd and shouted into it, his voice amplified over the music. Always my favorite part.

"Newcomer!" he shouted.

A hundred cheers nearly deafened me as I stepped through the archway. Before I could even thank the presenter, I was pulled into the crowd by a group of drunk strangers. I suddenly had a mug of some drink in one hand and the smoked leg of an animal in the other. My new friends dragged me through the crowd towards a stage, where twenty musicians were crammed together and turning blue.

We started spinning. Everyone was dancing, and smiling, and beautiful, and I was one of them. The girl beside me kissed my neck and laughed, and I laughed back. She didn't ask for my name, I didn't ask for hers, it didn't matter—we were having so much fun. I toasted with two larger men on my other side, and our mugs shattered. Behind me, people were taking turns bending backwards underneath

a stick of bamboo, which only a few minutes earlier had been used in a sparring match.

I looked around, and remembered why I loved coming to the island. I couldn't stop smiling, I was laughing at everything and nothing, and everyone around me was doing the same. Their faces began to blur into streaks of bright eyes and glistening smiles, and the paint on their bodies glowed brightly in swirling waves of light. The crowd started to sing with the band, and I did my best to join them. There was so much noise that I would've been better off not being able to hear at all.

Hours passed. I would recount the exciting details if I remembered any of them. I woke up underneath a palm tree, shivering in the night air. The clearing was dark, and the party had moved to the other side of the island. These people had an impressive talent of navigating through thick jungles and managing to continue dancing all the way. For them, the party never stopped. Maybe they were afraid of what would happen if it did.

I returned to that island for selfish reasons. There, I could be happy without having to try at all. I could laugh for no reason. And everyone there was beautiful, and just being around them made me feel beautiful too. They accepted me so easily, because it didn't matter to them who I was or where I was from. It didn't matter what I had done before they were dancing with me, or what I would do after I stopped. I was free from my past, my feelings, and my identity. It felt liberating.

But I always ended up leaving the island. It was nice to forget who I was for a while. But to the wild islanders, I was never anyone. They were always too drunk to remember my name or even recognize me. To them, I was just another body to dance with. I was only known as the newcomer, when really I was just the only person to ever leave the party. It surprised me every time I visited how a place that I was so easily accepted into could make me feel so isolated.

I found my way back to the beach in the dark, turned my boat to the sea, and sailed away. I looked up at the moon, and wondered if the lovers in the jungle ever talked about how dazzling moonlight looked when it shimmered on the ocean waves. Or if they ever talked at all.

Plague Doctor

Brock Tetreault

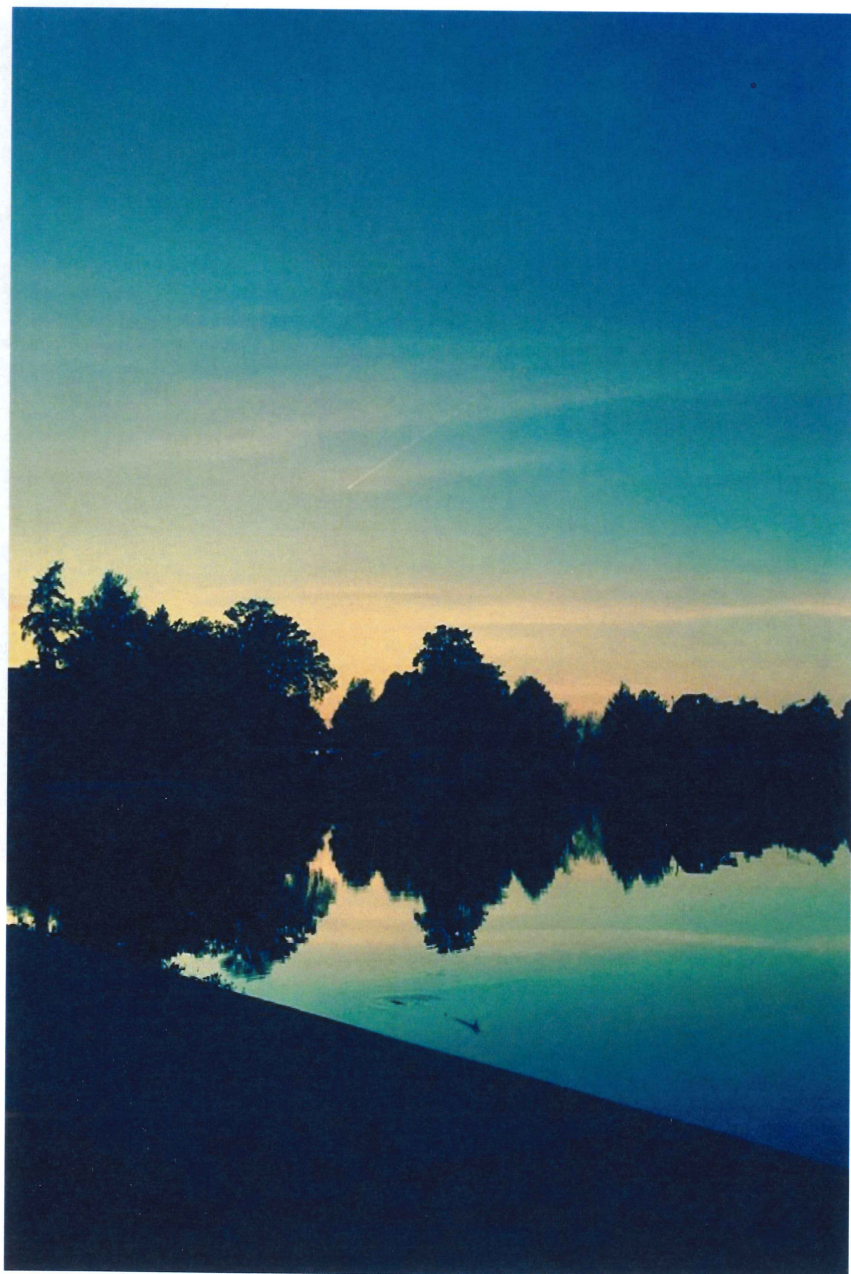
Put your ear to my beak
And listen to my remedies
I have studied for years
The many viral tendencies
If you do what I say
It will all go away
Eventually
If the lavender reeks
Of disease memories
And insomnia spells
With self-diagnosed miseries
Just do what I say
It will all go away
Probably
The answers you seek
Come from invisible enemies
That I have groomed
And nurtured for centuries
But do what I say
It will all go away
Maybe

[Untitled]

Shidoni Desu



Blue
Matthew Glauber



[Untitled]
Lancelot Melin

you're a beach day in
december
not an ounce of blue
in the sky
the sand
cold
the water
colder
the clouds grey
like our year
and no one's gonna go
to your birthday
when it's at a beach
in December

HND-99770
Zachary Wiencierz

So this is what 8 o'clock on a
Saturday morning sounds like;
blissful silence accompanied by
an ever steady rain.
Something was always making a
sound, a noise, a decision.
That's what would happen if
humans died out.
Something would continue to make
noises, to fill the silent environment
we so selfishly destroyed, with noise.
Decisions are always going to be made,
regardless of shortcomings in life.
So whether we continue to exist a thousand
years from now or not, noise will always
continue to be made.

Reflections from a Public Bus Window

Drew Smith

People sit, but don't dare
stay past the bare minimum
of time that they have to.
Some talk to thin air,
some say a prayer
where
they share with YAHWEH
their cares on Friday;
or
last Tuesday,
a girl with the funkiest hair
sat in front of Allison
who shared her headphones
with a friend that stared at
the boy walking up the stairs,
exchanging "hello's" with the driver
but doesn't care to know how his day is going.
I see it all
I'm an all-knowing
transparent,
temporarily unwashed,
pane of glass.
Showing two worlds,
separated by a barrier of my reflections.
I bear irrelevant witness
to the systematic cycle
of passing people:
party-planners, poets,
proletariat plumbers,
pursuers of perfection-
unsatisfied with the momentary reflection-
merely an internal projection
of that which is perceived in their mind.
This, combined with the allotted time to hopefully unwind,
while confined in a glass box
with mankind's random samples,
before back to the habitual grind.
The daily lives of so many are
so different,
yet also seem the same,
because I have seen so many

come and go.
The ebb and flow of days
go and come,
come and go.
Some grow
in front of me, where everyday
I see they
share a partial piece
to be assembled into a unique puzzle that forms a person.
Brown, yellow, Puerto Rican and Haitian,
lovers, dreamers, believers, and tweakers,
along with bookworms and firm's interns that leave with germs.
Wise men, poor men, and businessmen that hate CNN,
all sit beside me.
From windy, wintery days to clear, cool summer nights,
my silence is a virtue.

[Untitled]

Sabrina Parsons



People

Kiera Durning

I appreciate winter air
and its starry nighttime
skies.

I appreciate
talking with people
about their heritage
and how they seem
to resemble
their mom more
than their dad.

I appreciate the way
people look in my eyes
like they're searching for
how I'm feeling.

I appreciate how people
sway like leaves in the wind
when they walk
and how their clothes
fit them like
a glove.

I appreciate when people
take my hands when it's
cold outside
and wrap them up in their
gloved ones.

I appreciate when people
kiss my rosy cheeks
because they were being
neglected by warmth
and looked like
they needed love.

I appreciate sunny skies
and how they
make your eyes
glow like fluorescent light.

I appreciate people
and how loving
they can be
without realizing.

[Untitled]

Sabrina Parsons



EDITORS' NOTE

This year, the Portrait editorial staff is ceding this space to a student of Buffalo State College who captured our mission as creative curators.

Vandals

LaStarsha McGarity

Brush into paint
Paint onto canvas
Like Tigers
We paint

We paint like toddlers
Like savants

Dark into light
Background into foreground
We paint like
Aerosol cans
like birds
Like crayola we paint

Yellow into red
Red into blue
We paint

Like OCD
Like Disney

We paint like poets

Like kisses
Like genitals
We paint

Green into orange
Orange into violet
We paint like like

Like still-lives like
Rain on cement like

Encaustic
We paint

People say, "Why?"
We paint

People say, "but, but..."
We paint

People say, "Get a real major"

We paint like Mambo
Like ink on water
We paint

Our strokes flowing loose
As the disjointed tracks
Of sugar-starved ants
We paint

Black into white
Gray into neutral
Renaissance into post-modern
We paint
Like woodgrain like almost like
Horseshoes and hand grenades
We paint

Past the CAM
Past Project Row House
Past the Rothko
We paint
Shade into tint
Young into old
Badass into Basquiat

Read our rights
We paint
Like priests give blessings
Like Pocahontas with the
Goddamn "Colors of the Wind"
Like "TAPS" on trumpets
We paint like quilts
Like sellouts and money
We paint like
We paint like

Vagrants

Smooth into rough
Dab into smear
Wouldacouldashoulda
We paint

Abstract into avant-garde
Liquitex into golden
People say, "Why?"
We paint
People say, "Huh?!"
We paint
People say, "canyou getajob
doing that?"

We paint like Strange
Fruit like Nina Simone
Like it's not ours to own

Stagnant into frenzy
Graphite into alcohol
Brush into solvent

Like desperation.
Like instability
Like candles
We paint

We paint like the whole
world is watching
We paint like the rent isn't due
We paint like bare feet

We paint like
We paint like

We paint like layers on layers
Like the Enola Gay
Get naked
We paint

Like jumpsuits
Bring out the stretchers

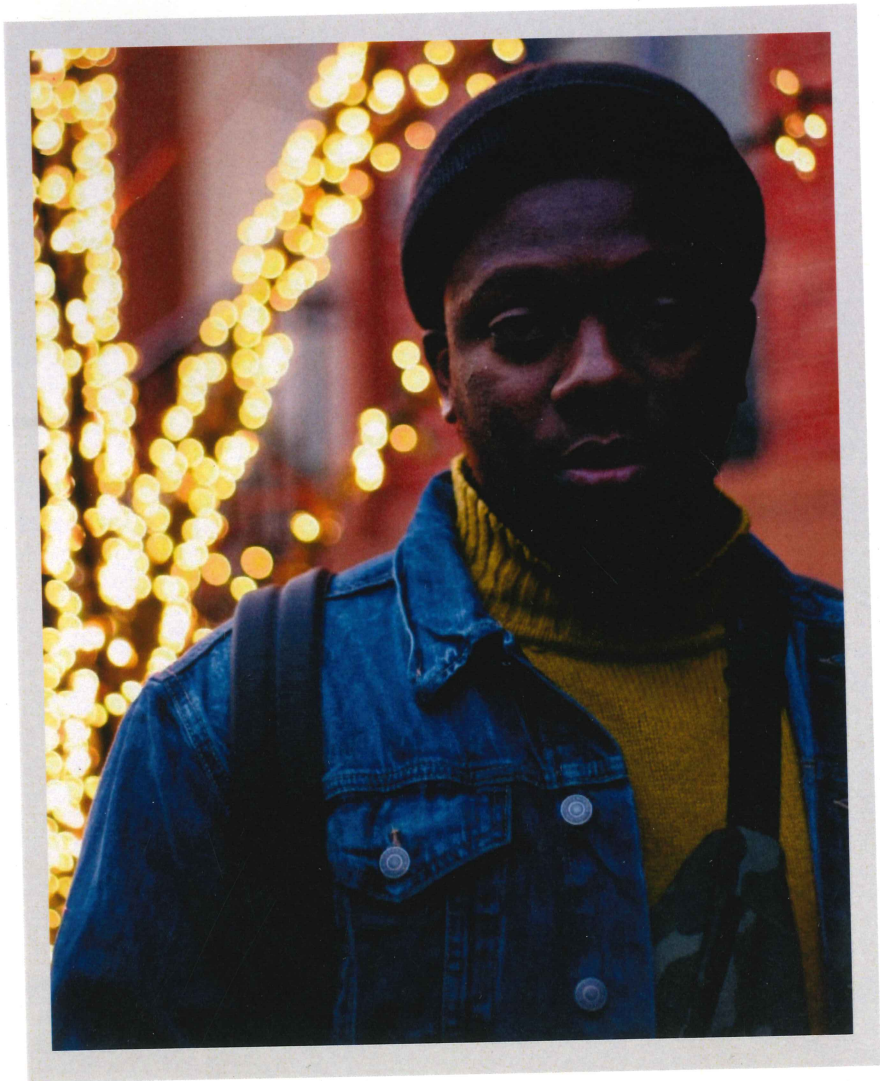
We paint like dreadlocks
Twisted as politicians

Like graffiti on Obama "Hope"
paintings
We paint

You say, "I don't get it"
We paint
You say, "Oh my god, that's
offensive"

We paint
We paint
Like criminals
Like comic books
Like that check was supposed
To be here yesterday
Like salted watercolor
Like kente cloth
We paint like oceans
We paint

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