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dialogue

dialogue

Volume 50 Issue 1
Calvin College's Creative Journal

Editors' Notes

I've been anticipating this issue for a year and a half.

Once I knew I'd be stepping into this role, I began carefully scripting out my first semester. With so much time to learn from those who held this role before me, I walked into this semester knowing exactly what I wanted to change.

But the funny thing about anticipation is that even when you think you're prepared for something, you learn—almost too late—that you don't actually know anything. This semester has felt like showing up for a test, only to find that I spent a year and a half studying the wrong material.

I didn't expect how natural it would feel to be the editor at some times or how strange it would feel at others.

I didn't expect to not have all the answers.

I hope this issue asks questions you weren't prepared to answer. In these pages, I hope you find something that startles you, something that challenges how you think about art. I hope these pieces provoke you to interrogate and engage and respond.

I'll be anticipating another year and a half of surprises.

Taylor Hartson
Editor-in-Chief

You're holding a distillation of an entire college community's work. So much deliberation goes unseen as we attempt to do your pieces justice. I'm closing this semester having done what I didn't know how to do. I feel saturated with the surreal sort of gratitude that weighs heavy and warm:

For the past editors and old friends that didn't just let me give this a shot but guided me into giving it my best.

For the current staff and new friends who offer their perpetual insight and support.

For Taylor, the gracious partner who's devoted herself to producing this journal with care and intention.

But mostly, for the community that Dialogue hopes to represent. The creative and thoughtful people that submitted their vulnerability, sifted through each other's work, and curated a selection: you make the magazine—we just arrange it.

It's all yours now.

Cotter Koopman
Layout Editor

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Mo

Alejandra Crevier

The demographic
of jackets over one shoulder
consists mostly of
middle-aged women who own
lake houses and eat crepes

Mo
is an exception
she takes long bike rides
and sometimes gets sweaty

Stacked & Packed
Emma Carpenter



Twenty First

Young Kim

baseball, jungles, and the draft
father hated these things until his dying day

he smells of smoke and has eyes like mirrors.
sometimes I hear him cry at night
sitting alone,

“Every day is more amen ‘cause another gook is dead.”

tonight father has two opened beers
he thinks everyone is asleep.
that only God will know
father pours gone the second drink, libations to the sink

earlier today.

the sun was shining, the wind was gentle,
spaghetti sauce was simmering on the stove
the kitchen window shatters
the crowd is wild in raucous noise
victory bounces off the cabinet
and rolls to mother’s ankle
game is done, we have won.
I wave my giant pennant.
leaves dance as I slowly walk inside

sister cries when mother yells.

Sam would have been on my side
but mother never yelled at Sam
he was her Super Sam,
he was always her special boy.

Father does not look up.
he sits at the table as mother serves spaghetti
sister throws her peas. and no one says a word.
I do not eat. I have no plate.

Sam taught me how to tie my shoes,
and break in a glove
One night he brought home a girl from work,
I promised not to tell.

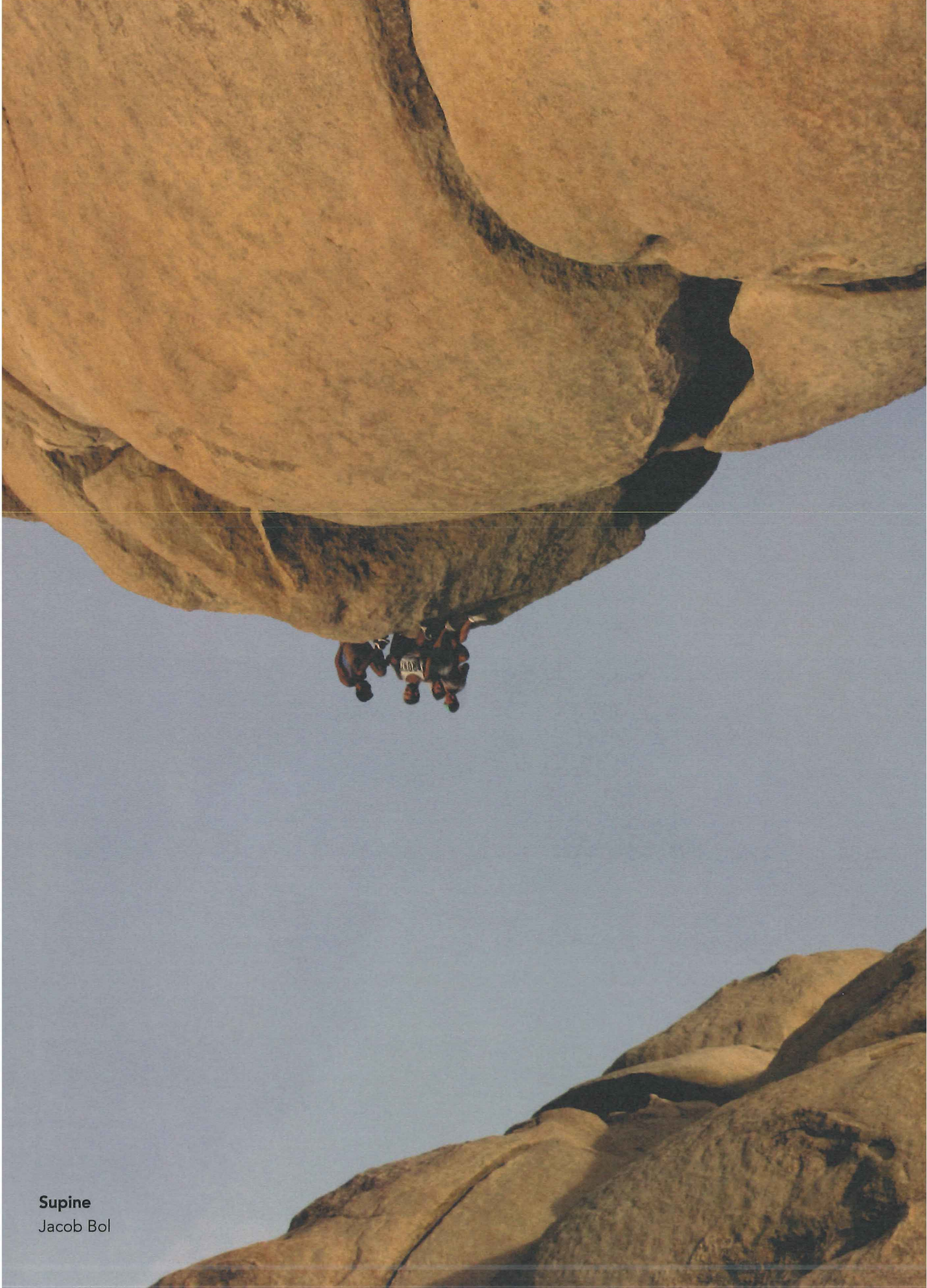
After they finished dinner, I waited on-deck
Father met me in the bathroom.
three strikes.
I'm out.

On the final game of Senior year,
Sam hit two triples and a grand slam.
the game before, he pitched a no-hitter
Father thought Sam was good enough for State,
he was right.

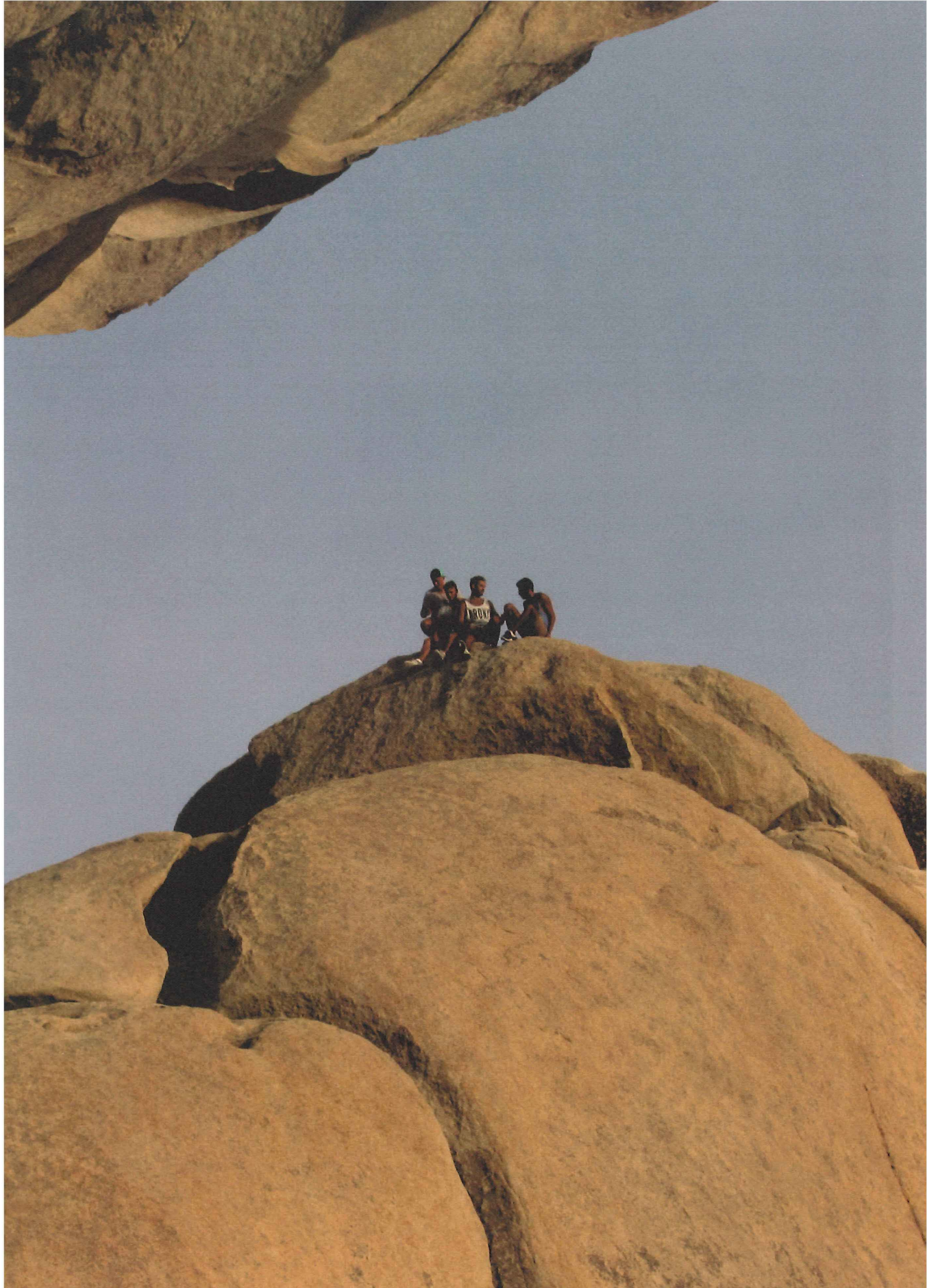
mother and sister asleep
I walk down the stairs
Father is sitting next to Sam's chair,
empty beer in his hand.
two bottle caps on the table

Father does not notice me.
I slowly climb back to my room
I pray to God, whispering like I was telling him a secret.

I sing happy birthday to Sam before I fall asleep.



Supine
Jacob Bol





past tense Kendra Larsen

10,000 Years After My Twelfth Birthday

Daniel Hickey

I fucked up communion when I was twelve years old.

Just two weeks—he had the nerve, the gall, to say—
“Do this in remembrance...”

The cup—weak plastic—flimsy—shot-glass sized.

19 days earlier, he was at our house. A bucket of cold Kentucky Fried Chicken—
our bread to break. A rubber-banded, unfinished bag of Twizzlers and a foregone
two-liter bottle of 2008 Olympics-themed Coca-Cola resting on the counter—
our diptych icon.

The blood was juice. Baptists, generally, do not drink wine.

16 days earlier, he eulogized, standing at the same spot. Like most compulsive liars,
he spoke beautiful truths.

“Amazing Grace” in the ICU waiting-room. My aunt, a Catholic church-choir veteran,
offered transubstantiate harmony.

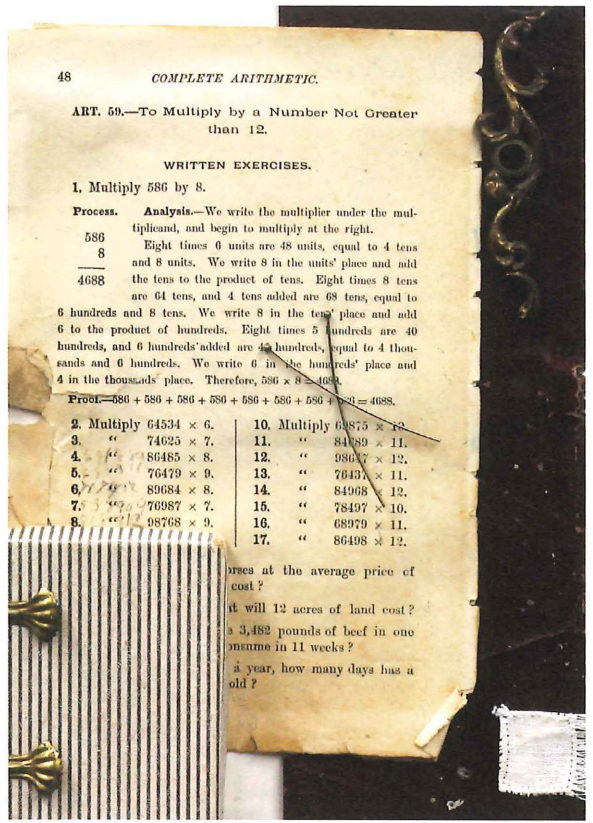
3,285 days later, juice blood corrodes—

Death does not dissolve like snow.

A Word, Please

Molly J. Vander Werp

I wanted to have a word
with you.
Not this, this, like
hitting two typewriter keys
at the same time, and
no. Yes? I'm sorry. Please?
lit-up kitchen window, a passerby pantomime.
inundation of immiscible innuendo,
our
conversation an emulsion, cacophonous crescendo and—
!
that one hurt, why—
(*
a duet turned two soloists on reckless compulsion.
the ultimate tongue tie. Listening to the
crash ^
of sea shells, that she
sold.
I wanted to have a word
with you.
Like:
It has your eyes.
+
Though a few sentences later
one might surmise it is my nose, really,
not yet the right size
but growing each day:
witty repartee playing hopscotch on the driveway,
skipping around in Sunday sunlight in
spite of so many loose ends.
A quasi-genetic blend of dialogue,
=
a brain child analogue
of multiplicative force.
Vocal discourse seeking not coherence
but transparency,
our conversation's first words are
vulnerable and warm
and
we are proud parents.



Multiplicand Allie Tuit



laundry day Ashley deRamos





Draped Laura DeVries

your bowl of cherries

Gregory Manni

carved dark and wooded
glistening crisp deep lip
tongue stem
sweet pop spit
or swallow

dried they make me bitter

July third order of worship:

Connor Bechler

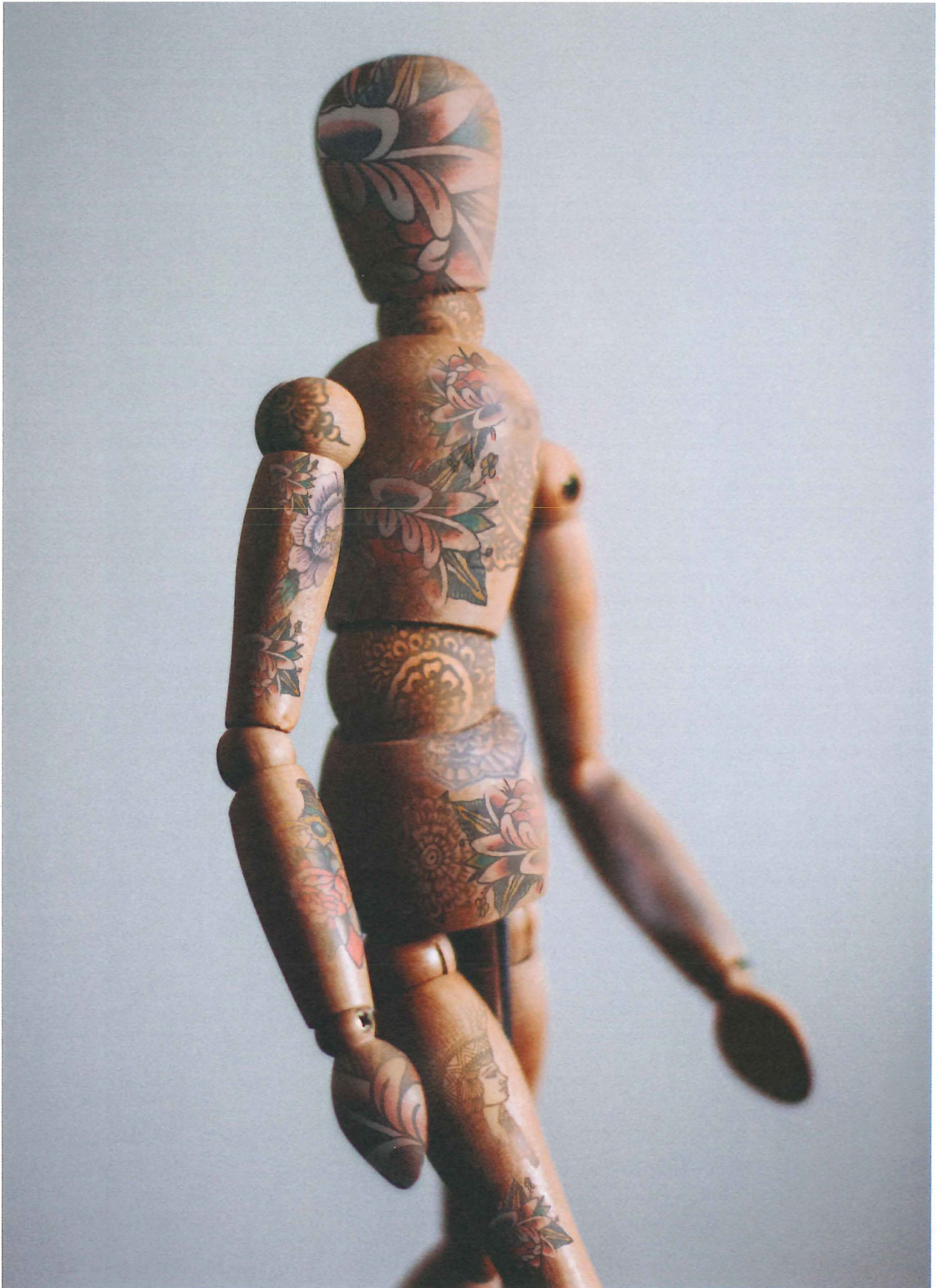
Below brazen blushing clouds
Rain-shafts skim the horizon
Bright ashes flit from a smoky sky
Brief effigies of the fireflies' dancing Gods
Shocks of luminous devotees worship
In the surrounding soybean pews
Their prayers are answered in incandescent bursts;
The croaking chant of frog-bellows
A single citronella candle
In the field's flame-lit sacristy



Hanbok - Beauty of Korea Lynn Park







skin Claire Shigeno Murashima

Trading Sins

Daniel Hickey

My mother drinks far more coffee than any human ought to. Around her upper lip there are wrinkles—time-trodden crevices—formed by the lip-pursing that the average disposable coffee lid requires of the coffee drinker.

She is an ardently reformed cigarette smoker. My oldest brother, as a child, asked her kindly not to die. My mother gracefully complied. She made a trade.

The trading of sins—the allocation of crucial, exasperated gulps of air—is constant. Sometimes one is caught gasping, like the scene in films that depict nautical tragedy: the sailors, in utter duress, press their faces to ceiling of the ship's cabin—a fading reality and a final desperation—as air is replaced by rushing water.

The desire to stop versus the often greater desire to be free of guilt, to continue sans regret: for my mother, choosing to breathe was choosing to forfeit the particular, well-known and intermittently charming cadence that her respiratory process had adopted—trading a strained exhale for an uninhibited cold-gasp.

Trading sins is universal, ever-appendaged. “I’ll quit someday” echoes through some woods like the blaring noiselessness of a mostly frozen creek in January. “Soon” reverberates in the throat like the imperceptibly weighty steps of a tumor with the legs of a black widow.

My mother decided she did not want to die. She’s yet to die. My mother believes, and that terrifies me. She rests confidently in the deals she has made. Having traded death for life, she lets her choice hang there, unexamined: a dead self exchanged. The old is gone.

...

We walked to the spot, myself and my childhood-companion-turned-endearing-nostalgist. It had changed—the trees looked more like wispy bird bones, half-buried, time-bleached.

*HAVING TRADED
DEATH FOR LIFE,
SHE LETS HER
CHOICE HANG THERE,
UNEXAMINED: A DEAD
SELF EXCHANGED.
THE OLD IS GONE.*

My shoes noiselessly rustled the wet-but-not-quite-frozen leaves as my addled friend lit a cigarette—a place-held ritual. The leaves were compacted and soaked through, not dried up and dying—they defied the season.

...

Patterns fade and reemerge. Christlike leaves and bridled lust.

Omnipresent dispositions. I am a villain and a fraud, for refusing to continue being a villain and a fraud.

Attempting to avert my gaze, failing to deter my psychosomatic nostrils—I can’t quit swallowing this air, there isn’t any other air to swallow.

My mother knows this.

The air beatifies. The old is gone. The new is—

Trading sins for sins.

Linoleum

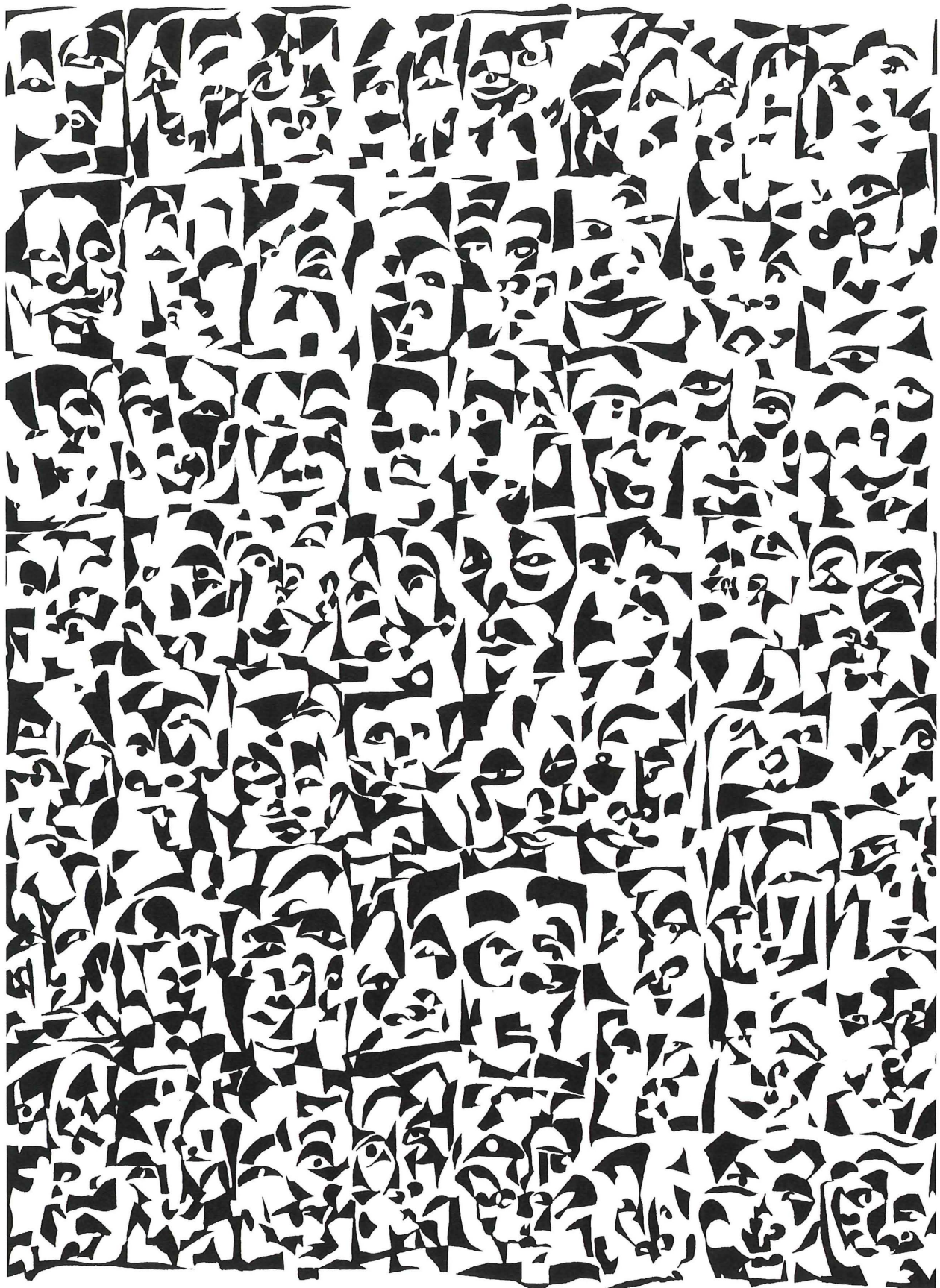
Patrick Jonker

It was yellow in the kitchen that day
and the sun was low in the window
just under the trees, outlining them in blood and gold
against what was like pale blue-orange sheets
fading with each wash.

When the room included both of you we gasped for air and
around each other's necks hung heavy bones that broke
and swung like the weights of a clock in yellow paste.
And as we held onto the floor and sank into the cabinets that
creased our backs and pushed against us we
fell into the things that hurt and
the things that reminded us of our bodies.

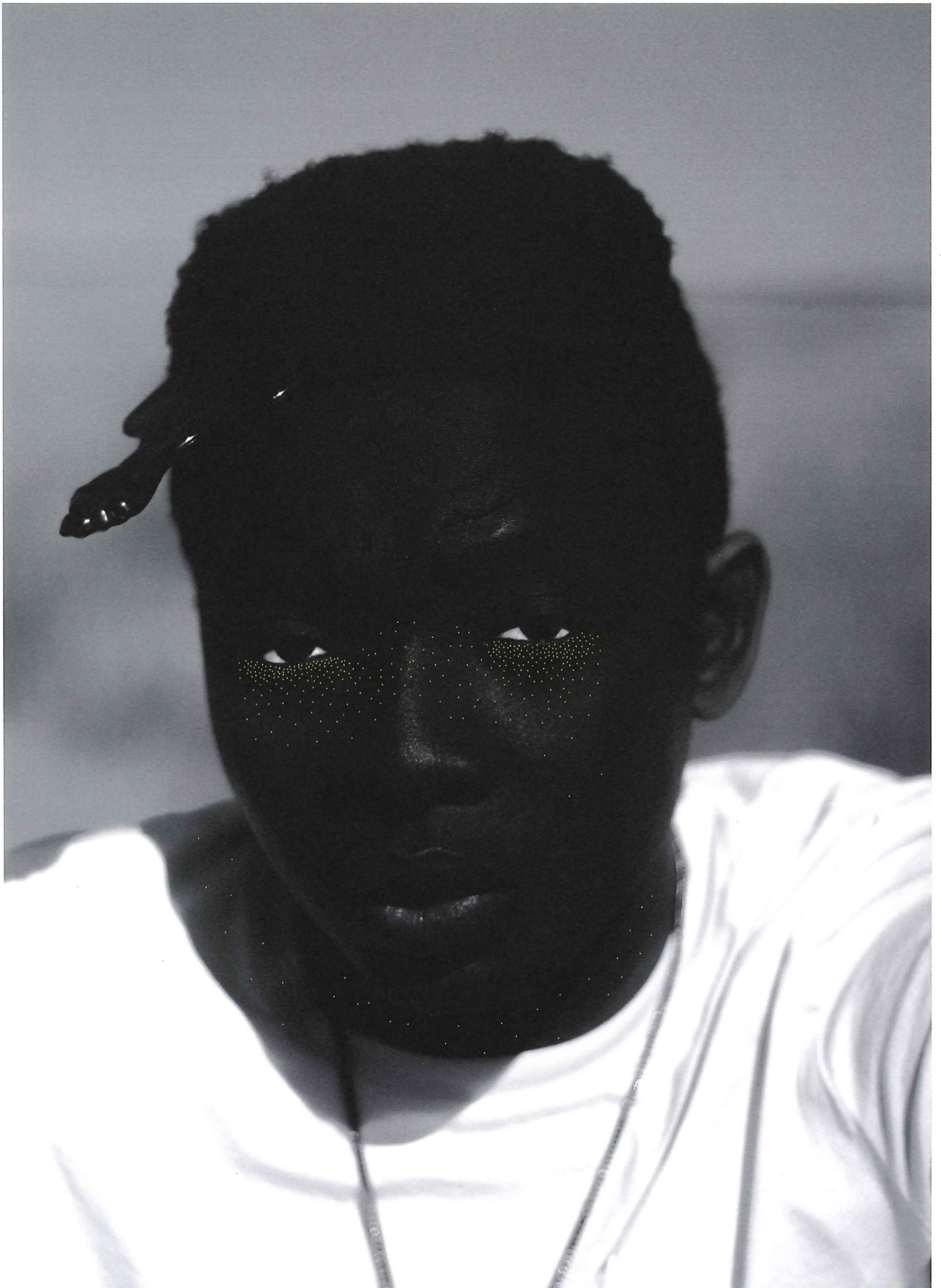
Though the floor was tile it felt like linoleum
as we broke our nails against it,
and through the red of our eyes and in the red of the sun
we looked at our hands and arms lying
crucified and remembered that
God is a place that comes in tears
and hands pushing each other up
in the wake of a pale-yellow kitchen.

And in times of golden wheat,
of cactuses and music,
of nights of rain and morning stomping,
I don't always remember you smiling,
but I remember you there
with creased backs
and broken nails.





Yves
Gene Hill



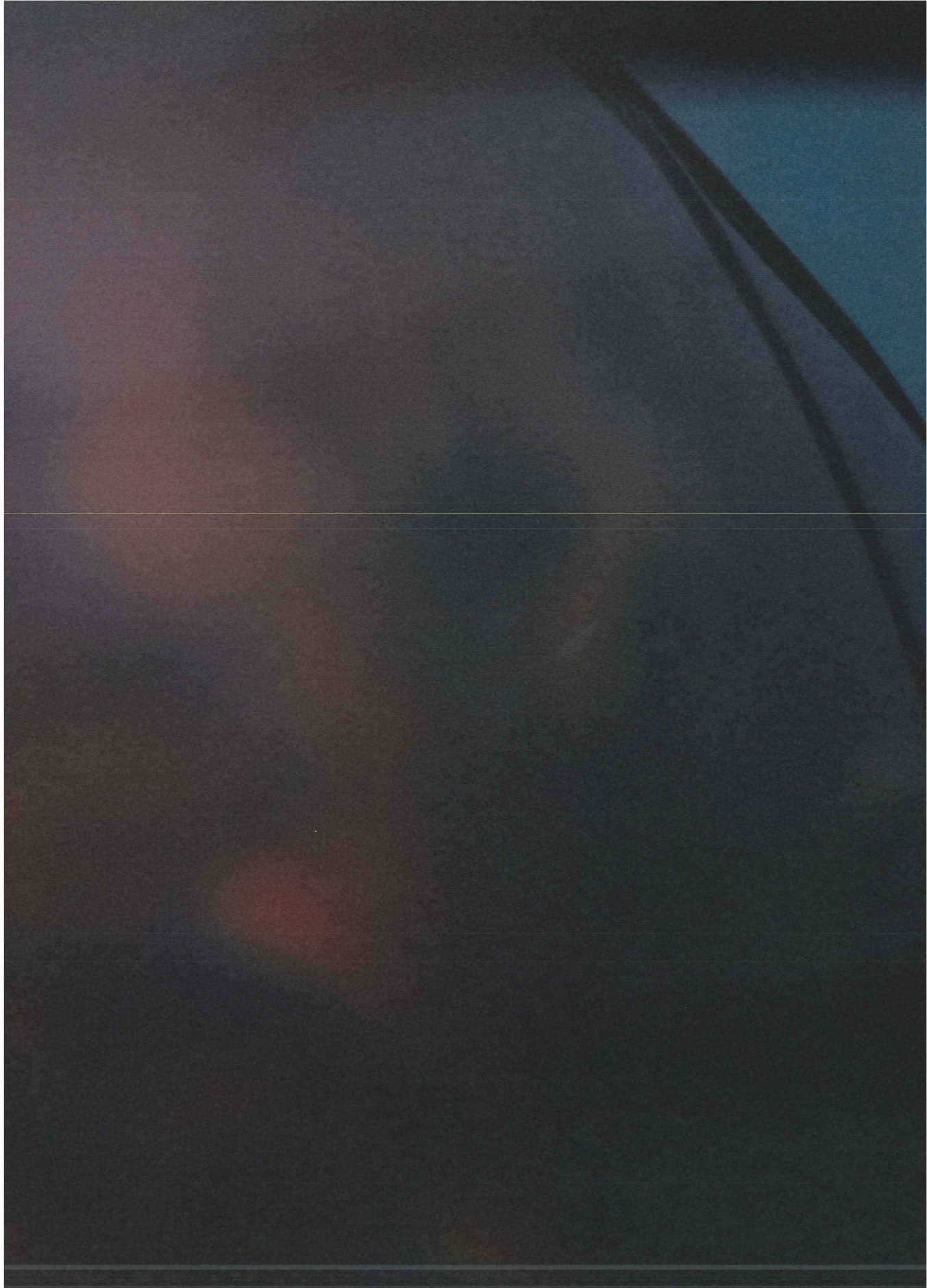
Au Boy Mimi Mutesa

cold face warm hands

Ethan Hohn

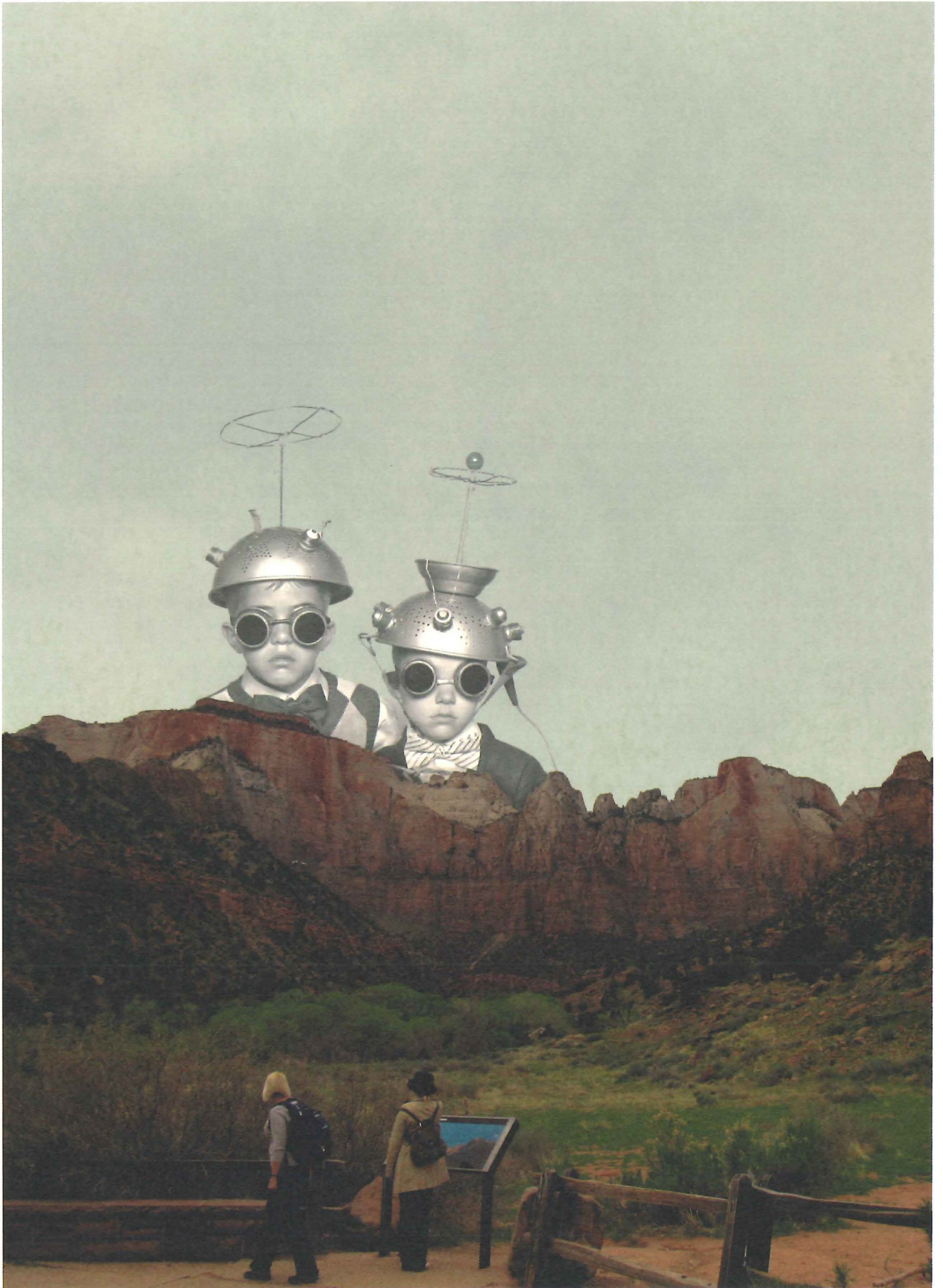
noise in the clouds electric
shook the rose water warm
same place different time
cold face warm hands
can't shrink this fear again
he hid himself from her
only when his mind was sure
that water keeps his mind awake
with fear and shame
for heaven's sake
can i even keep this up?
when do i forgive the one
that gave me pain
that wrote my name
in ashes black
as i have done before







growing pains
Kendra Larsen



Wild Youth Jacob Bol

Græy Matters

Molly J. Vander Werp

At the age of 5, it is the color she chooses for the owl in the October entry of her journal. In the Crayola box it is “shadow,” but in the caption she calls it “grrrrrrrrrea-y” and the student teacher wonders if perhaps she has been eating too many Frosted Flakes. She has, though it reflects not neglect but the very utmost of parental affection. She is the product of pterodactyl-shaped pancakes and weekly puppet shows, paid-for piano lessons and “this little piggy” on ten little toes. When she excels at her sums it is only because of a multiplicative love, one that does cereal subtraction before work every morning and never forgets to kiss the top of her innocent curls goodbye. And Mama’s. One plus two equals three: she can do the familial math in her head, and it all adds up.

In high school, it is the color attributed to sixty percent of the human brain. “But don’t be fooled, in a healthy brain, these bundles of neurons are actually a light pink!” She wonders who could have confirmed that fact, but the thought scatters like a flock of seagulls as he floats down the hall. A familiar figure—he is a careful gait and rolled-up sleeves, the kind of wrinkles you don’t want to iron out, and smiling. The smiling is what gets her. Blushing, she thinks, I am the color of living gray matter. The blush lasts as summer seeps into fall, and everything is infused with heat. They make like the maple leaves: shedding green garments to reveal true colors, vulnerable and on fire. The first day it gets cold is the day the smile leaves. She can hear them crunching beneath his shoes as he walks away, and the sun is gone, and the sky is gray. Gray with an *a*, this time. Perhaps because it can be a word all on its own.

By the time she is what her elderly relatives call “all grown up,” it is the color of her life. When she

describes this feeling to a woman with a wall diploma and a clipboard it gets another word, but she does not like that one, so she visits the eye doctor instead. She leaves the office with near-sightedness and a pair of spectacles the color of her life, but they do not help. She has forgotten how to see in color. It is summer. The lake next to the city is an otherworldly blue, and bumblebees dance alongside in flowers of her favorite hue. But none of this is what she sees, only what she once knew. She picks up chess. Maybe because the black and white squares are comforting, or because she’s sick of serving bad coffee, or because the queen is so strong. But, this evening, one move from checkmate, she is wishing for an in-between space, a no man’s land—a grey square. An *e*, now, softer than *a*. An *e* because it is incomplete. An *e* because she daydreams about going in through its little opening under the overhang, curling up in the half moon curve, and falling asleep. *E zzzs.*

*THEY ENDED UP
WITH GRÆY. AND
THEY PAINTED THE
CEILING. AND THEY
LIVED BENEATH IT
UNTIL THEY HAD
HAIR TO MATCH.*

When she is old it is the color of the ceiling in her house. The nursing home, she means. The hospital? She forgets. It is the color of the ceiling in her house. She cannot remember much but she remembers the day they painted it. The two of them—three, really, but don’t tell—fresh from the church, nothing to their names but 1.3 college degrees, an old split level half a mile from their favorite restaurant, and a quart of paint in every color under the sun. In a stroke of creative genius she suggested they mix them all together. He agreed (he probably knew better) and they ended up with græy. And they painted the ceiling. And they lived beneath it until they had hair to match.

Græy. That is the way she spells it now. Her young son assumes it is because she is old, and because she forgets, but that is not the reason.

Tones of the fall(en)

Rae Gernant

A lightning-struck apple tree
cracked in half
and left to the mercy
of bruises
and bite marks

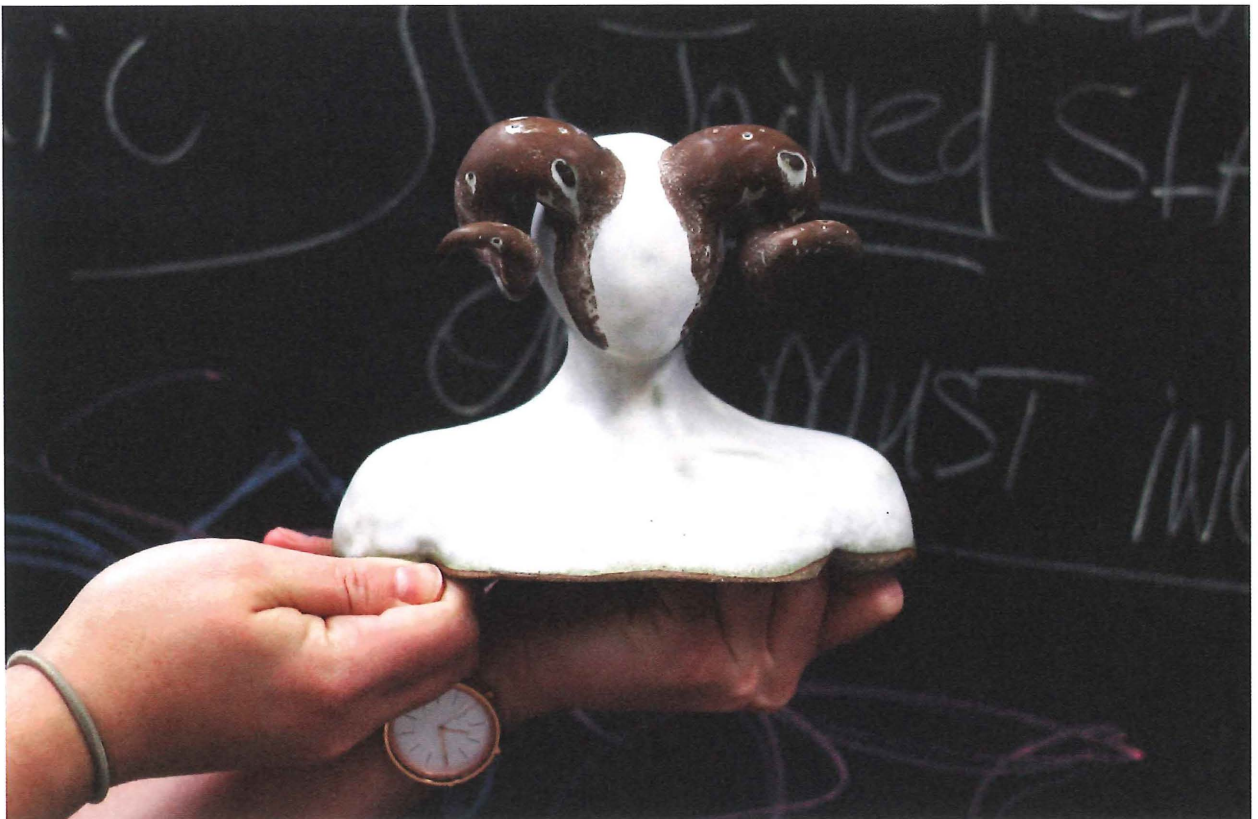
small and undesirable apples
rot and feed growing maggot colonies
that remind us what problem started
before someone began to
say,

“We’re for you”

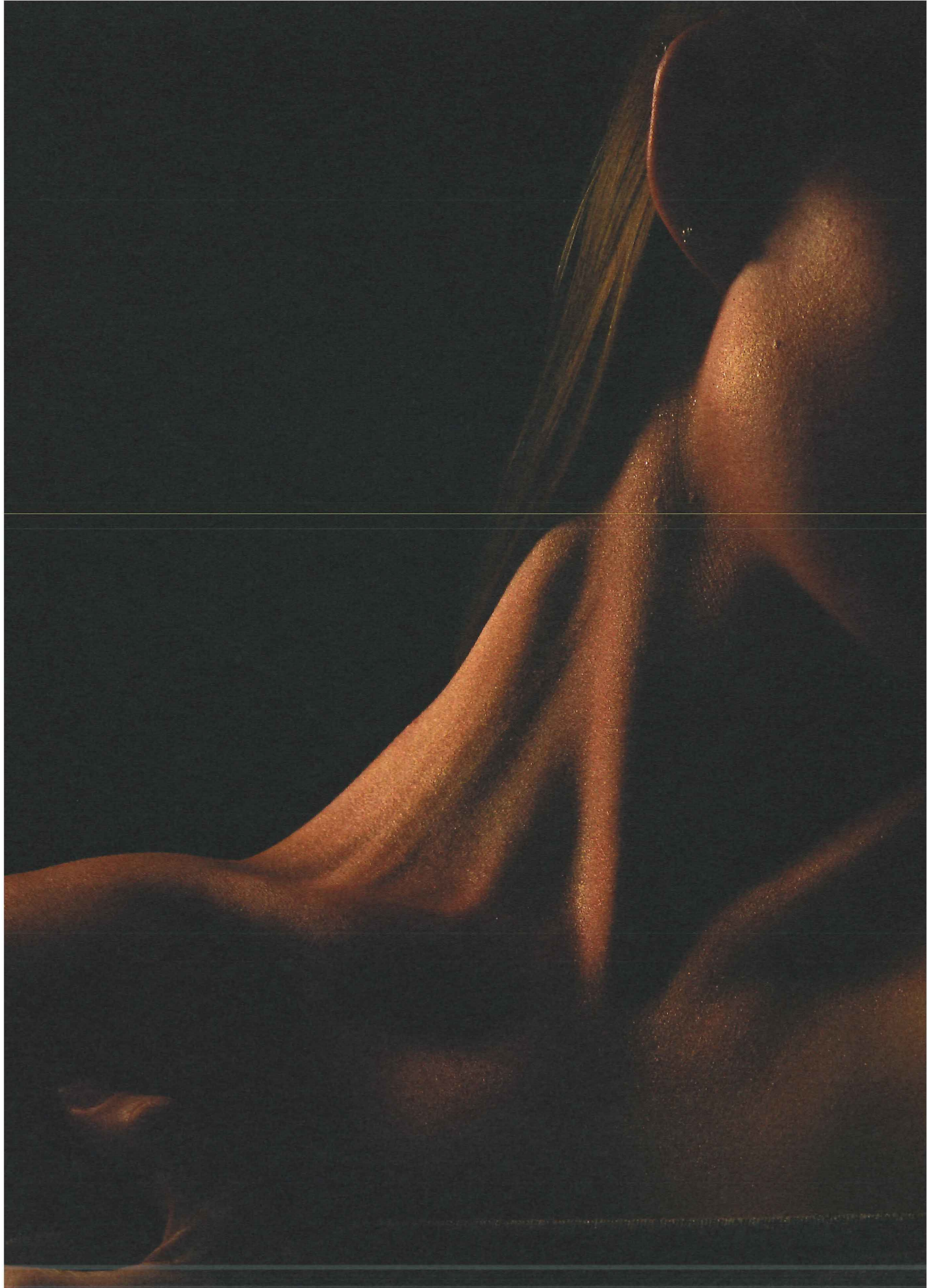
The Bari sax sound of
resonate darkness
and resonate
richness

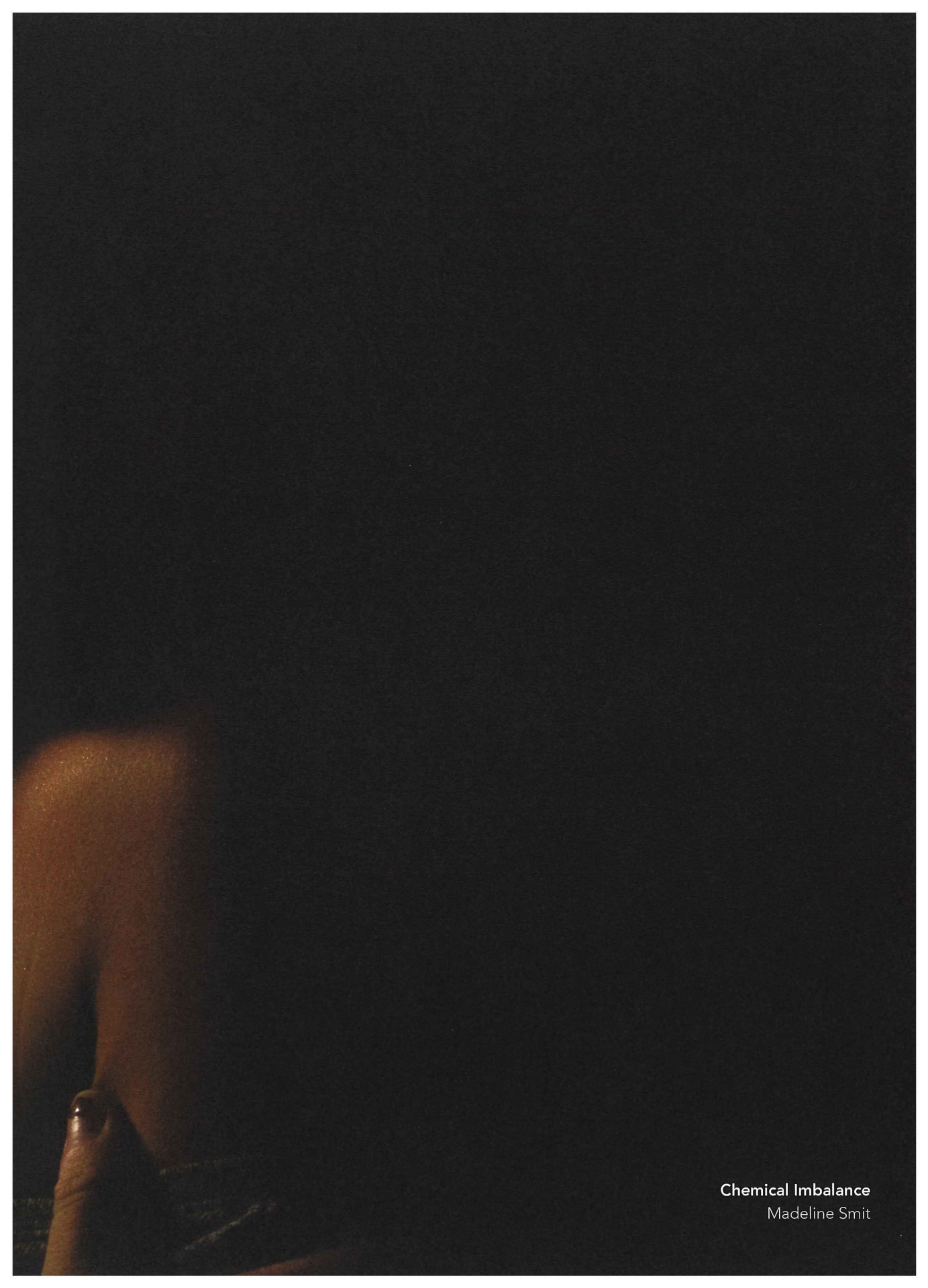
Passivity so loud it mutes
the hand striking
in the streets we abandoned

after Genesis changed its increments
And God said, “there was darkness,
and there was richness—”



Horns Morgan Anderson





Chemical Imbalance
Madeline Smit

grief's in all my stories

Katrina Jane Haaksma

death is real

I told Ale about it last summer, on the roof of the parking garage on Pearl and Monroe, while she spat at the concrete six stories below. Ale's never watched anybody die. But as I told her: grief is not measured by quality or quantity but by proximity. When we grieve the death of a family member, a friend, a pet, a relationship, we participate in the same human experience. Grief is always the same, just as death is always already contained by life. I lived at the epicenter of my father's death and the silent gravity of loss drew those close to me into it as well. Ale is close to me as I was close to my father. And so Ale dropped tears as well as spit onto the distant pavement.

Grief's not perennial. It's not occasional. It isn't birthdays and Christmas. Nor anniversaries, nor graduations. The grieving process isn't a series, and time doesn't heal. That's the biggest lie they tell you. Regardless of what may be learned about the pathology (the counseling, the "stages"), grief does not answer to our timeline. Loss is chronicled in reified events, but grief is atemporal. It can't be considered in relation to time. Time is made up, anyway. Grief is not. It saturates the present, seeps into the past, and taints the well you draw from in the future. I can't articulate the way that close death changes the way I see the things that are alive. They don't become more beautiful, more precious—at least, not always. From that first encounter with the words carved in granite: [LOVED ONE] BORN...DIED, everything that I experience is confined by my own

ellipsis. KATRINA: BORN...DIED. Reality persists, unrelenting, infinitely before *you* and infinitely after *you*. The rawness of the pain of death is dulled by the living world. It will allow you no respite from its realness. Morgan (who is dear to me) said when she wrote about Carolyn (who is dear to her), in grieving her dead mother, "Pain is a harbinger of something worse, a series of signals telling your brain to stop." Even in the first touch of the headstone, the loss completely absolute, the things that still exist rage against the sudden lack. Pure pain occludes with rough granite, rose thorns, numb toes. It is adulterated by sleet and dirt and snot. Stop.

Loss is easy to romanticize until it happens. The daily artifacts marked by loss become conduits for grief. The details of death are vested with collective pain. Sound and taste and touch are harbingers as much as a sweater, a letter, or an empty place at the table. In particularity there is universality. Some things are incommunicable beyond painful detail. Grief's in all my stories. It's in films and photos. It's in my newsfeed and textbooks. It's in my friends. It's there and it can be shared, not remedied.

It's dumb. That's the purest thought codified in my biography of grief. It's the same hot, blind pain you feel when you're a kid and something is taken away from you. Sometimes you cry for no reason other than confusion. Your anguish is your smallness—your inability to understand. There is no explanation for a

dead father, a dead mother, a dead friend. If there was, I don't think we could contain it. I don't think I'd want to. I don't want to learn anything from this.

But I do learn. I learn from those I love who still live and grieve with me in whatever way they can. We experience the same grief when we mourn the loss of people or places or possibilities, and reality persists. The mundanity of the universe carries on, irrespective of death. Even when we want the sun to stop rising. Even when the dawn feels like mockery. It's hard to live forward, towards the absence. There is no way to brace yourself against grief's spontaneity. You can't prepare for the first time you dial his phone, out of habit. You can't prepare for hearing his recorded voice when no one answers. You can't prepare for folding his sweaters or framing the last words he wrote to your mom. You can't prepare for two months in a house where someone somewhere is always weeping. You can't prepare for those whose grief you will share and those who will share in yours.

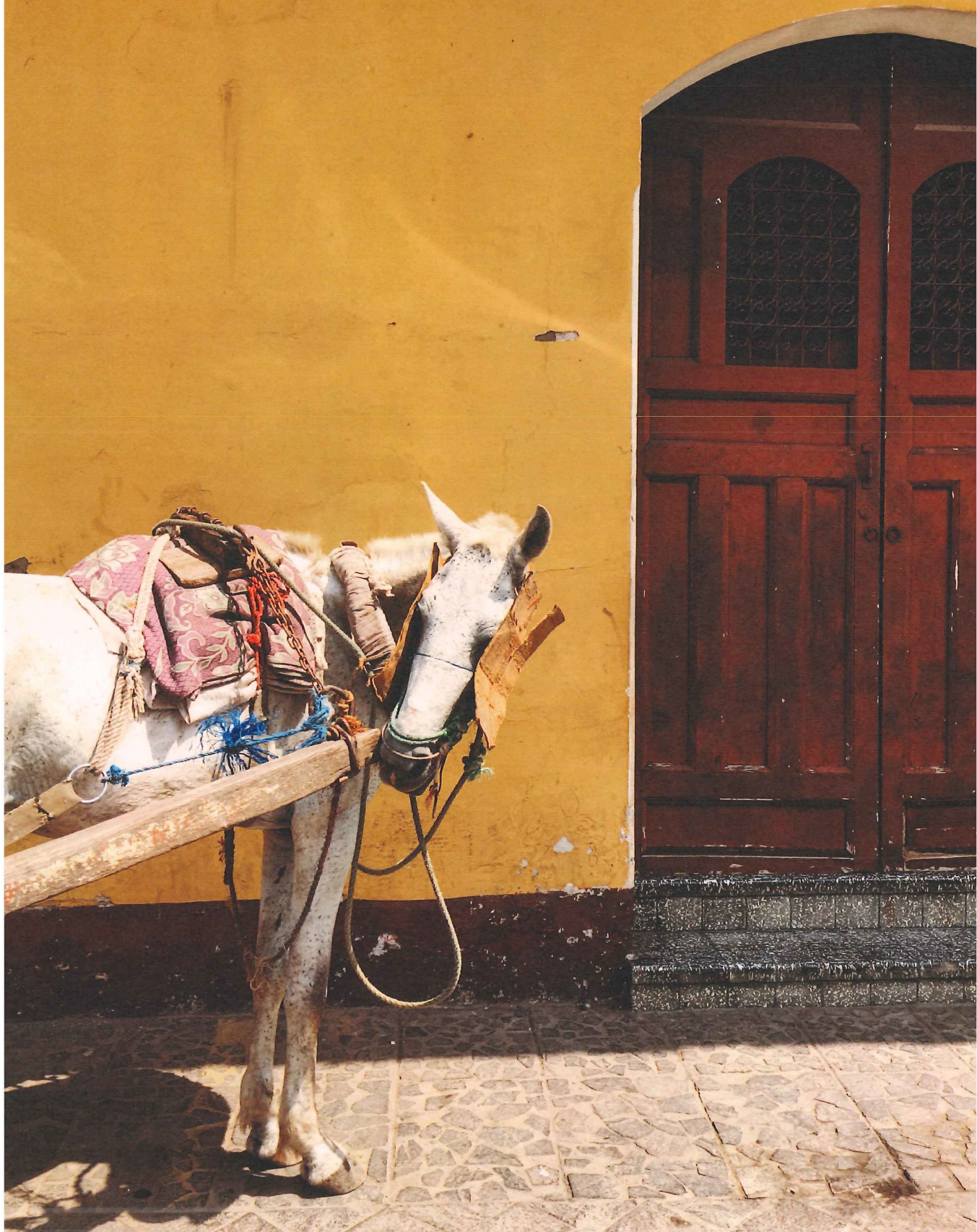
The sun will rise, and it's not a metaphor. The sun will rise and shine on the lack, illuminating absence. As I descended six stories back to the pavement from the parking garage that night last summer, the setting sun shone on the absence, and I grieved. Grief is in sweaty rooftop talks with your best friend. It permeates our present, past, and future. We learn. And in spite of death, we live.

*Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Ps. 42:11*





burdensome
McKinley Anderson



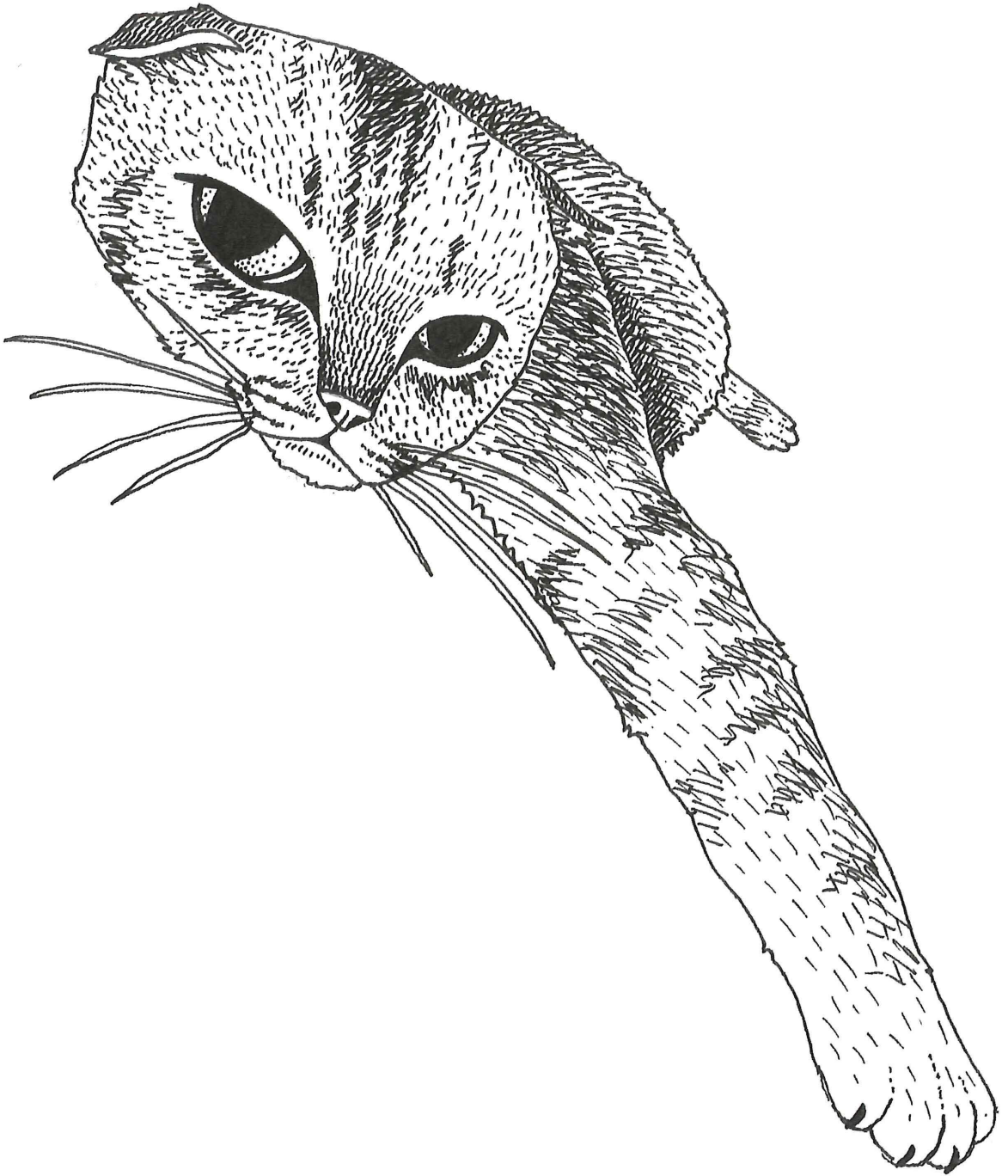
Inevitably, we look down

Gwyneth Findlay

When you look up—and I hope you do—what do you see in that vast, unending expanse? It's simpler, sometimes, when clouds huff along, breaking the thankless blue eternity with a tangible nearness; when stars dot the darkness, an assurance of somewhere beyond ourselves; when sun and moon settle into the horizon, teasing companionship for a moment in this eternal grind. We can hardly fathom it for long, looking up with no such comfort present. We study each faint dot of light, each wisp of water molecules, each flare and rock and orbit and gravitational warp, desperate for something to see.

Yet on a bright, clear day, it's just me and the sky; no feeling, no scent, no sound, nothing but two eyes and one giant, incomprehensible universe.







Pandemonium Madeline Smit

Love is Cacophony

Rachel J. House

Love is cacophony—
a clashing of syllabic cymbals,
flutes forming idiosyncratic songs,
melodies strung in mint floss
a dancing, sounding, pounding beat,
unceasing, save scattered breath marks
tympani tuning towards middle C:
flat, sharp, sliding notes,

suddenly, overtone rings
and we hold our breath,
savoring second harmonic
until strings stretch,
wooden bodies warm,
cold notes condense,

jabber on, jabber on, blow humid air,
wipe sweaty palms on black concert-wear,
dissolve your cares in dissonant prayers,
love is cacophony.

A Conocer Este Lugar

Katie Ulrich

Hours pass by on a rickety old school bus, traveling from one city to the next. The dirt road in front of us is so bumpy that I have to hold on tight to prevent myself from flying out of the seat. With each passing moment, I wonder when we will arrive and how much farther it could be. I stare out the window, noticing nothing but endless fields of green on either side of me and marveling at the depths I see.

Hours pass by around the dining room table: one that isn't mine yet strangely feels like it is. As I struggle to express my thoughts, I settle for halfway explanations full of words that become less foreign to me with each day that passes. I listen closely as my eight-year-old "sister" explains the ways of the world to me and laugh as her mother rolls her eyes and tries to set her straight.

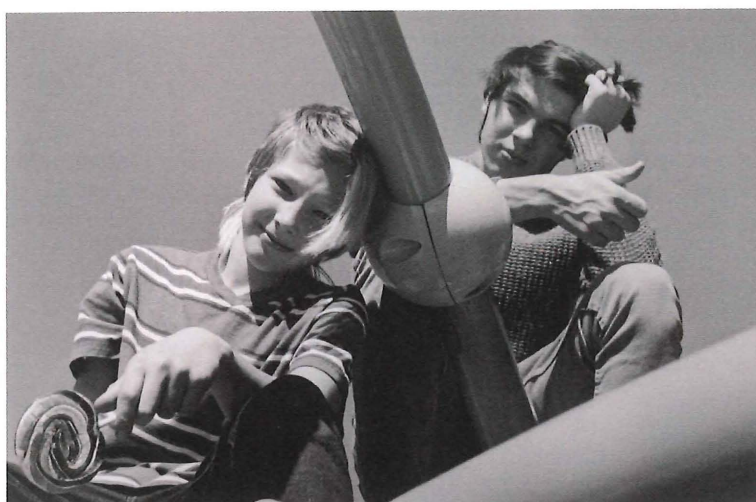
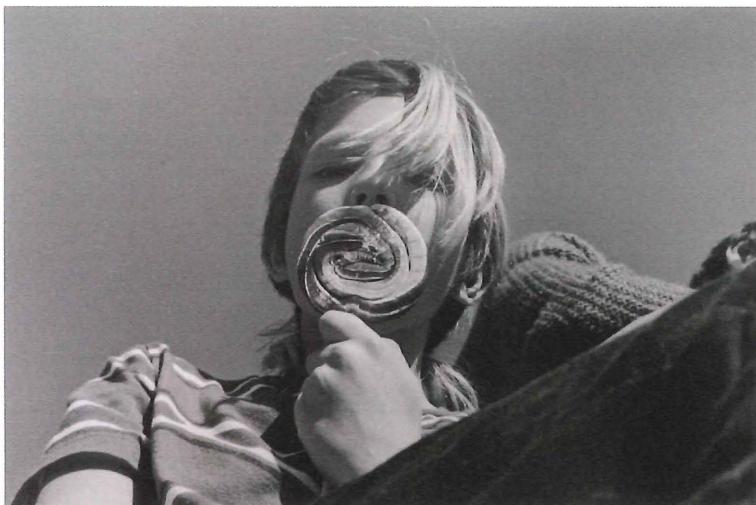
Hours pass by in the café across the street, in the place that has become our home away from home. We stay there as the day turns into night, forgetting about the work in front of us and spending countless hours together without ever running out of things to talk about. I look over this city that once seemed so scary, so distant, so new, but now feels so much like home.

Hours pass by inside my room, where the sounds of others leak through these pink cement walls. Amidst the joy of this place, there is the ubiquitous loneliness that makes me long for elsewhere. The unfamiliar is exhilarating and terrifying all at the same time, yet I find myself enduring it all for the sake of this place.

Hours pass by wandering through the cobblestone streets, walking in the chilly mountain air. Our new friends share their stories with us and laugh alongside us. Before long, we end up back at the same spot as always: our favorite baleada stand. After I kiss my friends goodbye on their cheeks, I start to wonder how I'll ever be able to actually say goodbye to all this.

AMIDST THE JOY OF THIS PLACE, THERE IS THE UBIQUITOUS LONELINESS THAT MAKES ME LONG FOR ELSEWHERE.

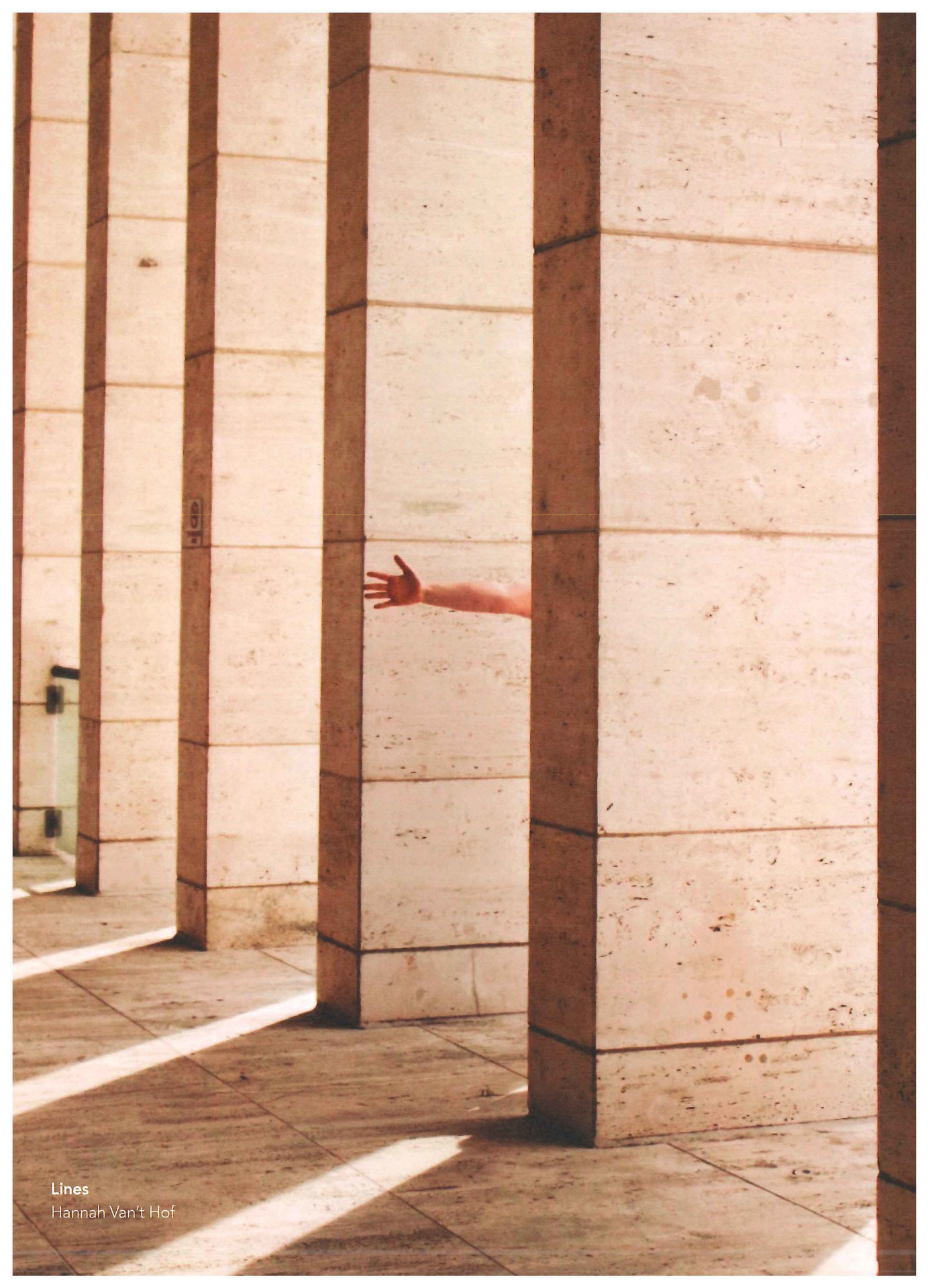
Hours pass by in the spaces in between, in the little moments I find myself clinging to, in the memories marked inside my mind. I'll hold onto each moment, living in it one more time, thinking of how grateful I am to know this place.







Study of Fragility I & II
J. Andrew Gilbert



Lines
Hannah Van't Hof

Flash makes negative the night

Rae Gernant

hold your breath quiet and count
the heartbeats after a lightning strike—
the distance between sight and sound

how close to you did light meet ground,
shock arrested body-earth, and take
hold your breath? quiet and count

with head on his rising chest like a vow;
when eyes close, let heartbeats speak
the distance between sight and sound

wonder while you lie helplessly roused
how long the sky can bear a choke-
hold, your breath quiet. And count

in tears the space that drowned
out heartbeats after the vow broke;
the distance between sight and sound

like waiting for thunder clouds'
crash to end time's ache from
holding your breath, quiet: counting
the distance between sight and sound





Pure White
Arianna Koeman

what happens to country

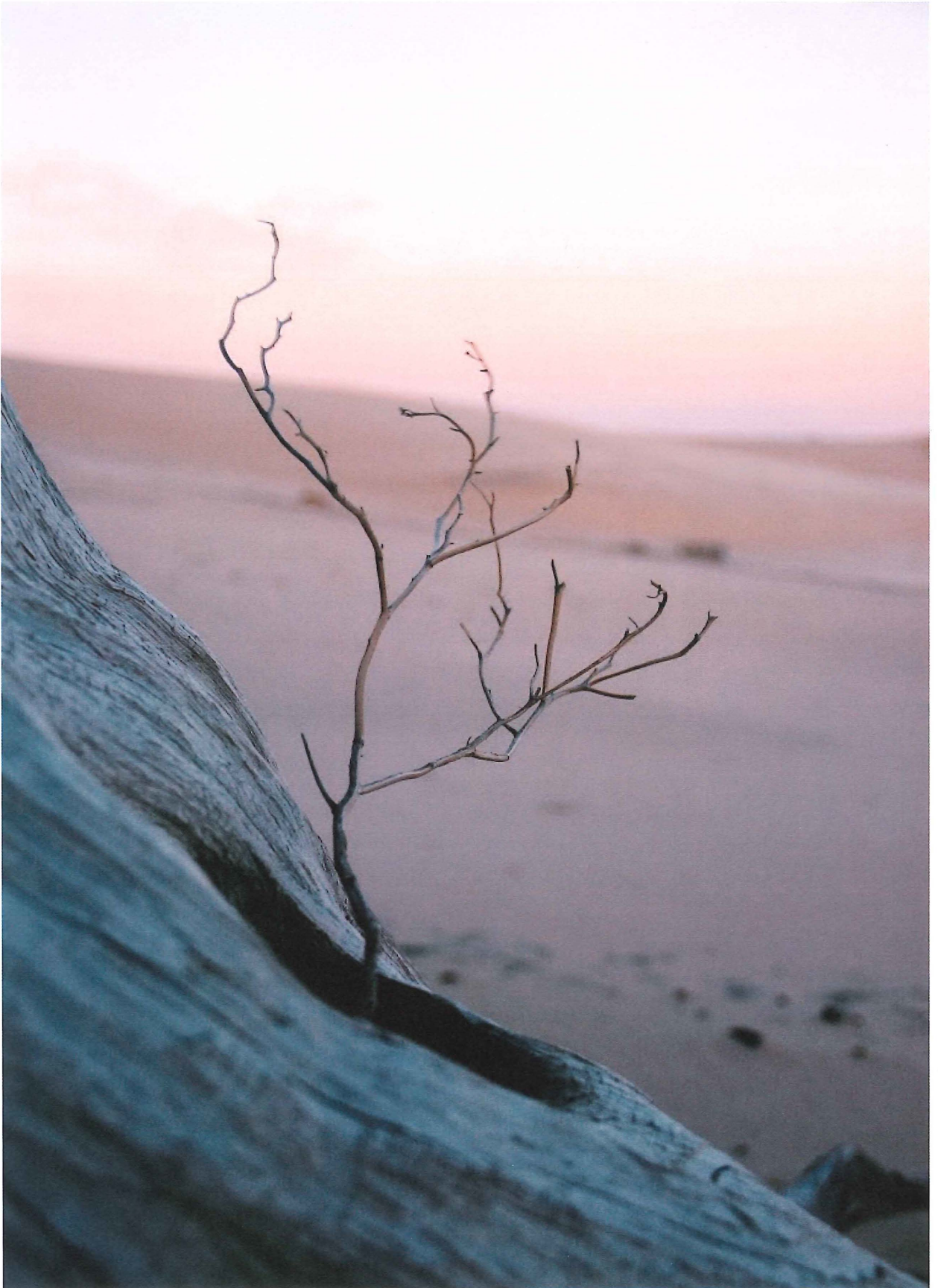
Patrick Jonker

i was not raised in oil
or on sweating backs in bluebonnet sunlight
cracking blue-brown crusted earth
with sunned backs and scalloped hands
pushing freckled hooves across the expanse of
scabbing ground and
blighting sky.

i was not raised in border checks
tied neatly with a lassoed chord
and a green card,
nor was i raised where blue cans shepherded
into small rivets in slow canals rest
posterior to drunk communion
to corral stench
and drown reeds.

i was not raised to
lift walls
or take a good life
and stomp once
to quiet
and twice
to be sure.

yet if you split my seam
instead of water and blood
you would find what happens to country
and see tumbling weeds churning in oil
beer laden immigration bills
a barbed wire fence
a brick for the wall
and a prayer written,
unspoken.



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Founded in 1968, Dialogue is Calvin College's student-run creative journal, showcasing pieces submitted, edited, and curated by undergraduate students.

Dialogue publishes work in six categories: prose, poetry, visual art, photography, music, and film. Blind student juries for each genre evaluate all submissions and select the finest pieces for publication.

In addition to submissions, the Dialogue editorial staff is always looking for students interested in doing layout, helping with promotions, or serving as a juror.

Visit calvin.edu/dialogue to learn how to join the staff, join a jury, or submit your work.

