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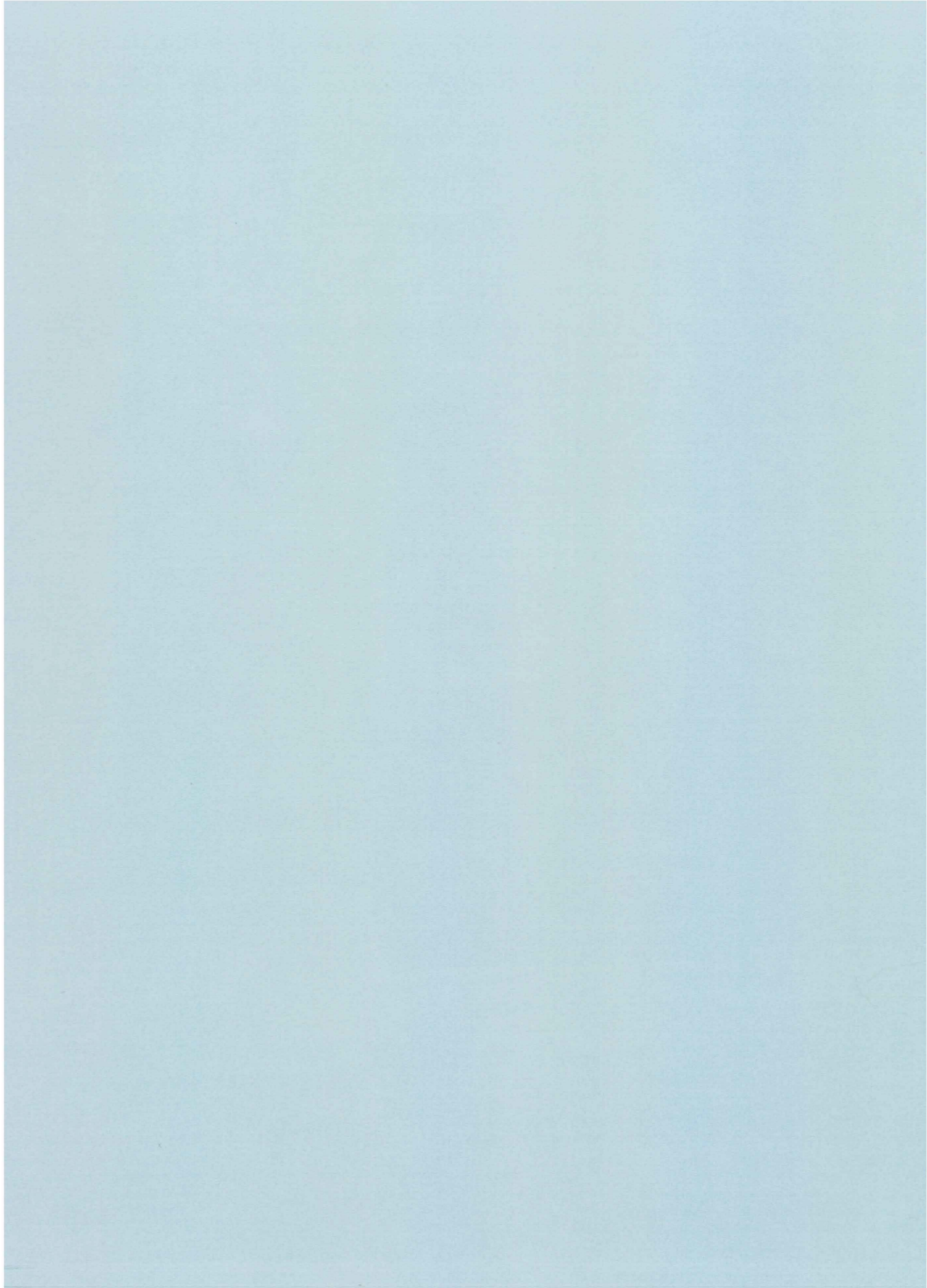
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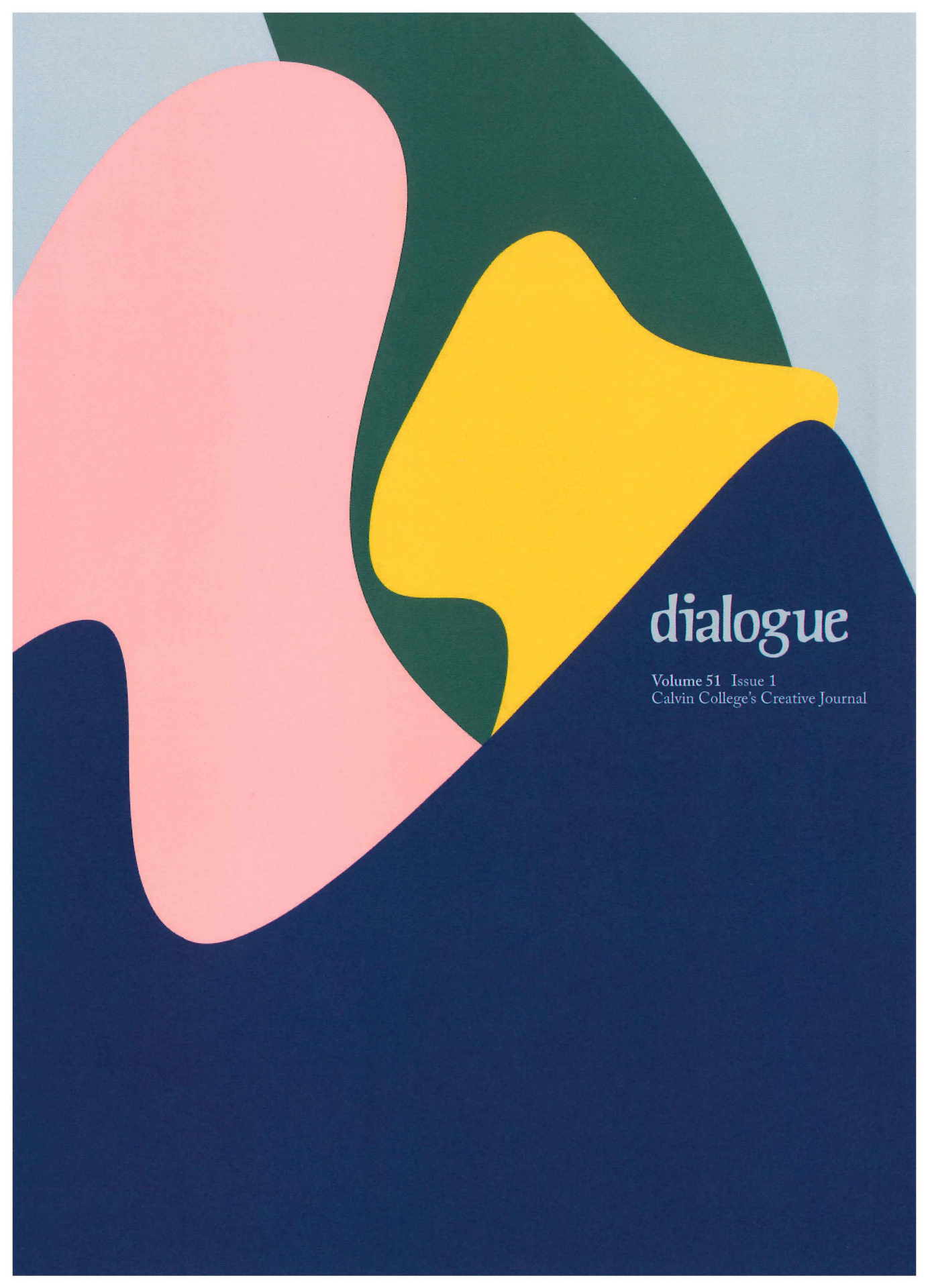
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dialogue





dialogue

Volume 51 Issue 1
Calvin College's Creative Journal



Editors' Notes

After working on two issues and now serving as the Layout Editor, I can firmly say Dialogue is more than just a book full of pretty pictures and literature. It truly is a conversation between the artists and the audience—an attempt to understand the meanings behind each stroke, word, and color. This conversation, as any, has its conflicts within—along with its insights into—Calvin's student body. I hope through this issue, you will have a chance to dialogue with art and its deeper meanings.

Special thanks to Taylor, without whom I would not have been able to lay out this issue, and to the whole Dialogue staff for their love and support.

Annake VandeBrake
Layout Editor

After three years of doing something, it's easy to settle into a rhythm. When I joined Dialogue three years ago, I quickly began marking time by deadlines: submissions, juries, layout, release parties.

But, if you're not careful, it's easy to wear those rhythms thin. After working on six issues of this magazine, I found myself getting lost in the repetition and sameness of it all. Knowing where to take my seventh—and ultimately, the two-hundred-something-th—issue of this magazine required creative energy that I just didn't have. But just because creative stamina doesn't suddenly reappear when you finish one project and move onto the next doesn't mean that deadlines can wait for you.

I won't pretend like I've figured this all out, that I've found some remedy to my exhaustion—because I haven't. I don't have a perfect cure-all for pushing through the frustration of creative exhaustion, but what I can say is that I'm grateful I don't have to do this alone.

So much of my job is listening attentively to feedback, collaborating with groups of brilliant people, and caring for a new set of work. Even when exhaustion whittles away at my creativity, the energy of this community is what keeps Dialogue's heart beating. It is not always regular or predictable, but it is there.

It repeats, and I am learning to find comfort in that.

Taylor Hartson
Editor-in-Chief

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Ethereal
Mimi Mutesa



Sunburn

Gresham I. Bergeron

Within five minutes, I was dunked,
Ducked helplessly in the green Willamette stew.
Samuel and I came up spluttering through
Sunlight, and (giggling?) yelled, "You sunk

Us!" The river flowed off and around,
Dried on our skin and faces, ate at sunscreen
On white shoulders, carved traces of sunbeam
Circuitry like fingerprint grooves bound

To us. A day at the river is not
A moment, but a process of seeping,
A sitting and waiting, swimming, steeping.
Are you seeking? Have you forgot

To find a timeless space, a binding
Place where frames are stretched like
Mountain ranges, just little distant spikes
Which poke above the woody landing.

I had a little camera in my pocket,
Catching snatches from the river's flow,
Fishing in the undertow for snippets glowing
As they passed. That water inundated sockets

And my video was baptized on accident,
Wet through the workings, then baked into
The traces. I dried it out, thinking, "This too
Sunk." And yet, the wetness did not dent

I caught a moment: You pose
Upon a rock, about to jump again.
Your bathing suit as green as the river den,
Bare legs and arms relaxed, toes

Gripping rock, hair sleek and slaked
With water. My skin was burned,
But I cared not a bit, and churned
Into the slew after you. I staked

My bet on red. The yellow ball hung
Motionless. That wheel had slowed, and in
That moment I am forever sunburned again,
Pores taking in the song I swam among.

Today, my shoulders smart
Like coals in a sun furnace, but yesterday
We were filled with river fire. We stay
Forever, flicking in dive and dart.





pachystachys lutea

Jocelyn Coria

Favoritism murmured some

Juliana Knot

Looking at him in the corner, tracing the air with quarter notes and staccatos, she knew he was going to get remarried.

It wasn't any fault of his. He was a teacher, the only music director that their tiny school had. Someone needed to touch his shoulder in the days leading up to band competitions, when his high schoolers did everything but care, and tell him that it would all be fine.

Sitting in the hospital bed, softly pressing her hands on her stomach to fight nausea from rolling over her, she let that thought soak. It became too heavy for the time being, and she changed the subject before it could flatten her.

"Honey, what songs are you playing again?" she asked her husband sitting in the hospital chair.

Her call caught him off guard, and he paused for a second to let her words break into the staccatos. She was supposed to remember this.

She did remember, but she let him explain it again. It did him good to talk and be listened to, and it did her good to see him light up instead of deflate at doctors and prescriptions and bills that were too much for a school teacher paying for four kids' tuition. He told her that they were playing a hymn and started to hum. It was an unspoken rule to include at least one in every performance.

She focused on the humming while her nausea rocked and her chemo dripped.

It was far less of an occasion now than it once was—children gathered around, her siblings and cousins flying over to make sure that the doctors weren't scamming them. As the disease became reality, they all began to scatter. She didn't blame them, either. The world couldn't stop for her absence, let alone the beginnings of it.

Now, watercolor bruises covered her limbs from bumping into the wrong doorframes. She had lost weight, and her hair had grown back in tight spirals where it had once been waves. This was all ritual. The chemo would drip onward, and her hair would fall out once more.

So with her nausea rocking, she closed her eyes to her husband's distracted humming—now less directed at her and more directed towards what was ahead.

...

The boat smelled like vomit, and the stench moved her stomach in rhythm with the waves. Her mother hummed distractedly, more to hide sound than produce it, all while trying to corral her other siblings.

The deck had organized itself on its own. All the tongues that made sense surrounded her family, while the others found a different corner to inhabit. One small group orbited around their corner of the deck. Their hovering suggested alienation. No one wanted them. Most groups were oblivious to one another; all groups were hostile to them. This puzzled her, because out of all the strangers, they sounded the most like her family. However, her father held them in the most disgust.

“German cockroaches,” he whispered to her mother. “They’ve destroyed one continent. Why let them destroy another?”

Her mother responded with halfhearted shushing, pulling clothes and food out of various bags. Another patriarch looked at him knowingly, and for a second, they bonded over their shared hatred for those who were almost but not quite them.

These sounds and smells obscured much of the past few years, but the destruction her father had whispered lingered in her head. She remembered the smoking buildings on the main street of town, the church tower yet unscathed.

“God’s mercy,” murmured some.

“Favoritism,” murmured the buildings’ owners.

But her house was still left standing, which made the boat all the more infuriating. Her brothers shrieked the protest she couldn’t form.

“There’s something here for us! Why there? Why now?”

Her father had slapped them both and responded curtly, “It will be better there. Quiet.”

Her brothers knew to shut up, at least to their father. But on the boat, the whole family carried the doubt and anger her father had dismissed. The smoke was still rising at home, but it was still home. What if the land of plenty had nothing to offer them?

Her father’s face had betrayed no fear up until that point, but rocking there in the middle of the Atlantic, she noticed him scan their faces. They locked eyes briefly, and his dread was made plain. Turning suddenly, he chose to stare daggers at the foreigners instead.

• • •

She woke up to her husband lightly squeezing her hand.

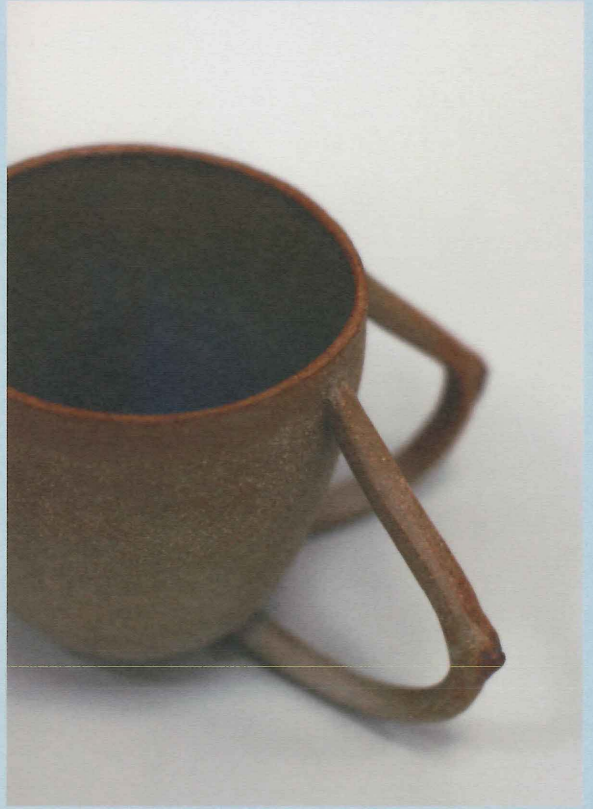
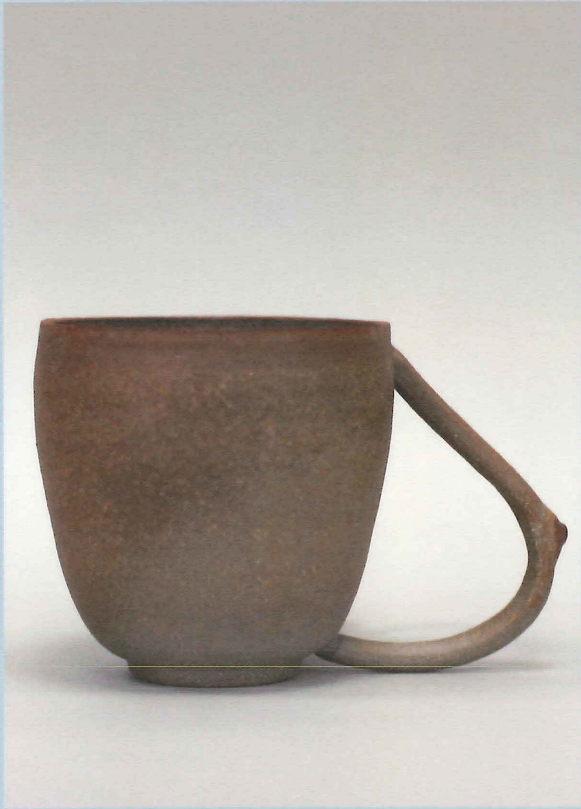
“The doctor gave you the green light. We can go home,” he said.

She held his hand and beheld his face, so full of dread, and she thought about ships that reeked of vomit and places she had never asked to leave.

“I’m sure she’ll be wonderful,” she said.

“Who?” he asked.

She decided not to push it and just smiled instead. He shook his head and grabbed her wheelchair, humming softly and holding her close as he lowered her down. On the way out, she could still see the buildings not burned and prayed for those who rebuilt the ones that did.



Breast Mug Jamie Whitten

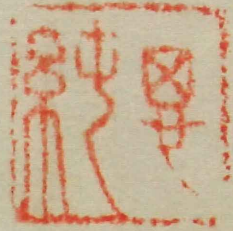


longing
McKinley Anderson



Winter Camellia
Grace Yang

思純



House Show (Spring 2017)

Daniel Howard Hickey

The only concert that has made me cry without having to try was barely a concert at all. It took place, briefly so, in the living room of a man named Ken Heffner.

During a goodbye party for a dear friend, John, whose position at the college was being eliminated at the end of that year, three young women by the name of F. U. D. assumed their positions at the head of the living room, calling the partygoers to a hush. They had written a song for John and intended to perform it for him as a parting gift—a thank-you.

He had believed so hard in the more-idea-than-reality band these women had started a year earlier, even buying them a small library's worth of feminist-punk biographies and talking about them online and in person as if they were legends before they had even decided which instruments they would play. These micro-stories are indicative of John's attentiveness and generosity on the whole. Likewise, these stories and many like them served as a backdrop to the sad-grateful conglomeration that permeated the space that night.

It was like New Year's Eve without the presupposed future of New Year's Day—a monument of a moment, tinged with the realness of an ending.

Then we all yelled, *What do you do with the mad that you feel?* The words are lifted from a Mr. Rogers song intended primarily for the moral instruction of children. But there we were—adults being ushered into an act of collective grief via the words of Mr. Rogers as sung by a college feminist-punk band.

Then we cried (read: I cried).

Our friend was about to be let go, but it felt like more: a beautiful moment of intersection in our personal histories was abruptly and inexplicably ending. And yet, as we sang, the hurt, the loss, the mad that we felt was made—to borrow again from Mr. Rogers—mentionable and manageable. A song written to honor a good friend managed to usher us all into a more honest space. We were allowed to admit and admitted to allow the absurd mix-and-match of experience to bear its weight. Permission was given to name our pain with simultaneous laughter and tears. It was okay to feel incapable of handling what was next. It was okay to cry, and in the same breath, be immeasurably thankful for the individually minuscule yet collectively mountainous miracles it takes to know and to love and to grieve the loss of another person.

The Walk Home
Alison Bouman



Hessel

Patrick Jonker

The door swung ajar as he left the general store for the streetside. He had an iced tea and a string cheese, which he carried in one hand, and in the other, he held up his phone, searching for a map signal as he walked. The cracks in the pavement met at several angles, forming a web of dirt and weeds, and the sidewalk glared off the bright blue-gray walls of the two remaining buildings of the street.

As he walked toward the first gas pump, a breeze off the water dislodged his hair from its nest. He tried to fix it, but couldn't, and instead sat on the bumper of his gold sedan, surveying the town one last time before he continued on. There weren't people that he could see other than two store clerks and a mother and daughter easing their way to the beach.

There were two sailboats in the small harbor, each too small to handle what Lake Huron could threaten at its most irascible. A dinghy and a small wooden speedboat waited there. The town was poor, but it was not depressed. It was not home, but it reminded him of his sister—since she left, things began to resemble her.

“will you be keeping your boat here next year?”

He had not seen the man approaching from the back. The man wore a gray cap. He smelled like fried fish.

“no, i don't think so.”

“we do have consummate prices. only fifty dollars for a small vessel. one-hundred for a large one. sailboats are also one-hundred.”

“i don't really sail.”

“we also have small and large vessel spots. fifty for a smaller vessel and one hundr—”

“yes, you said already. i don't drive boats either.”

The man sat down, took off a boot, and began to massage the top of his foot. He looked up at the boy, and his eyes sang dimly as he winked.

“when you are my age, you will find you need things like this to keep you going.”

He didn't want to respond to that. The man chuckled quietly, and the waves continued to beat against the shore while the silt and rocks scraped against each other in a steady orchestra. The mother and daughter were in the water now, taking tentative steps—the mother dunked the daughter, who screamed in protest but surfaced and took the mother in with her.

“i don't think i'll come back, anyway.”

“we hope you do. we love visitors in our little City.”

“is this a city?”

“yes. this is Hessel.”

“okay.”

His tea had begun to sweat, and it was time he should go. The man left and began to sweep the dock and

bring out cans of stain to refurbish it as best he could—on his knees with the tiny brush, sweeping away each brown chip. He looked humble, as if in front of an altar.

...

He woke up lying on a picnic table, cursing himself for sleeping. Pulling himself upright, he surveyed what was left of the day. There was no one in sight, only the faint echo of Paul Simon from a shack-like house three rows down the beach. Night had come, and light from the lamps was blurry on the street. It made golden glowing fringes on each storm drain, and the tree shadows looked like fingers.

The water was now still and looked like a quilt. He went to the dock and sat on the edge. The water was still and inviting. Even in the dark, the rocks below allowed him to see to the bottom of the lake, and where he was, it seemed deep enough to dive. His eyes flitted, making sure no one was watching, and he stripped off his shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. Jumping in felt like the night was wrapping its arms around him like a lover.

He surfaced to laughter.

“you are naked, boy!”

The man was sitting on the neighboring dock, masked by the dark and the wood pilings, looking as though he were petrified, a piece of the port.

“i didn’t see you there. could i have my shirt?”

“what are you doing out here, boy?”

“swimming.”

“i mean in Hessel. why are you traveling on your own?”

“my sister left, i guess. that’s just something that happened. it isn’t a reason or anything. i think it was my fault.”

“you looking for her?”

“she’s not lost. she just left.”

The man laughed thinly, each contraction painful, each thought out.

“most people do.”

He looked at the dock.

“especially if you give them a reason. that’s the way it goes, i guess.”

He paused and looked at the street.

“i love that i can see the back and front of my City. i think it makes it feel close—like my head rests on the water and the City wraps me up like a blanket, as long as i get on in and burrow a little. i can see everything right here in my little house. no need for a telescope. not many places where i feel like that. not many places, i do not think.”

He paused again.

“don’t you feel wrapped up here?”

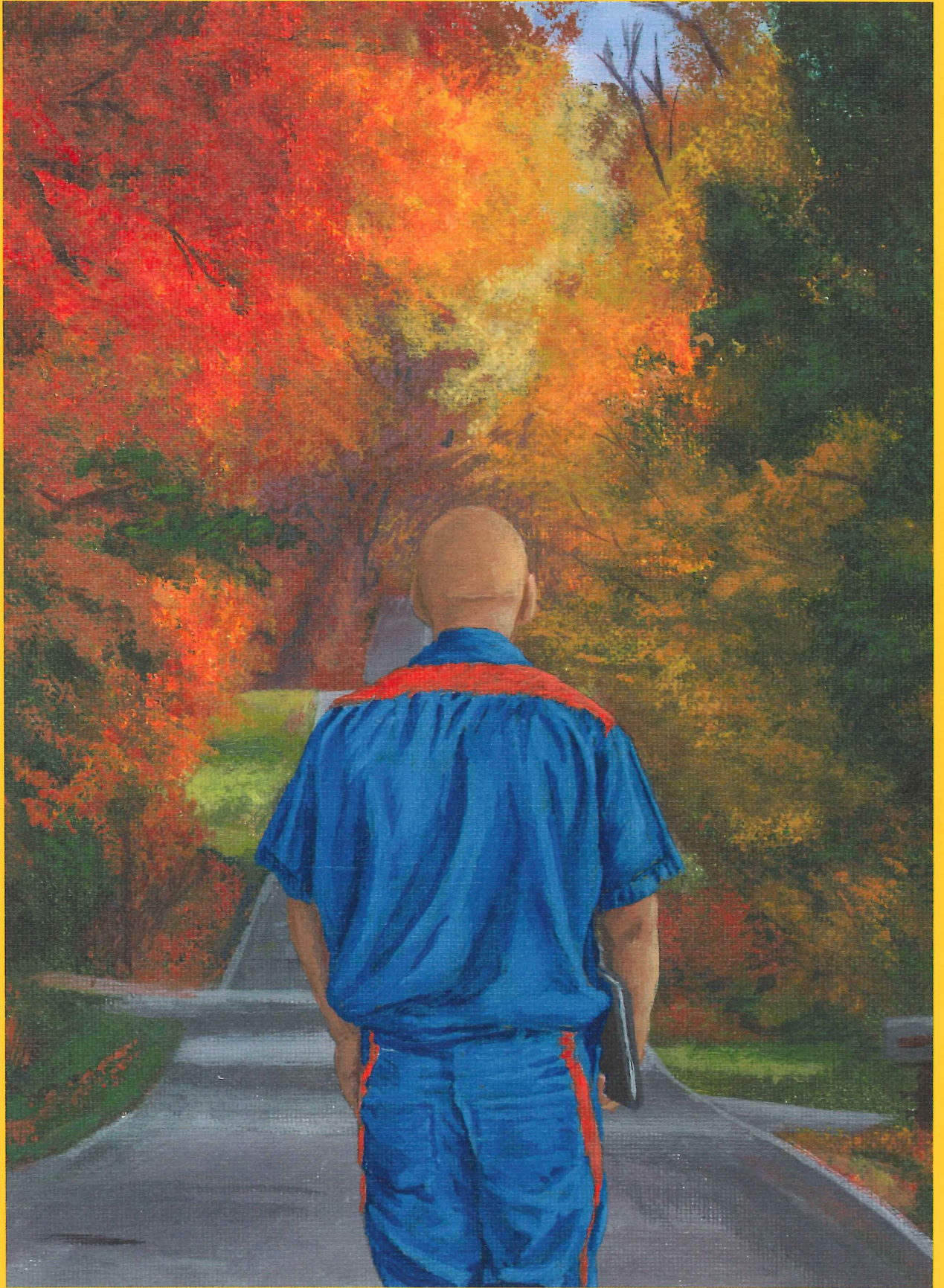
The boy offered a nod, which was lost in an ensuing shrug and said, “i’m not sure this is a city.”

The man shrugged.

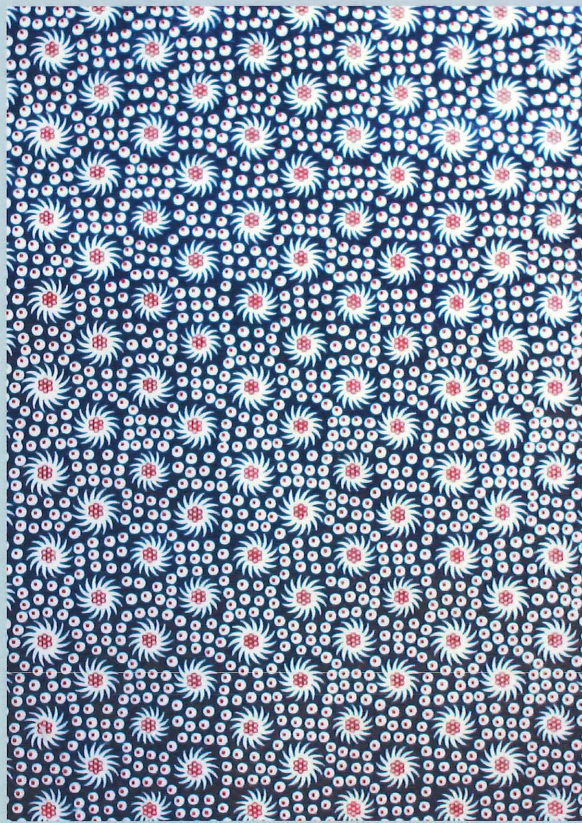
“i think you will see it. next time you come, i think you will know.”

The man gave him some fish. He brought it to his car and left to find somewhere to sleep for the night. He drove slowly out between the golden rims offered by the streetlamps and allowed the sound of the sea to permeate the glass between him and it. It was a beautiful little place. In his phone, he marked it “small City.”

In the night, the pale blue of the grocer was the color of water, and the man’s shack light looked like a lighthouse. The wind dipped into his car, caressing him like a hand gliding over his shoulder. The sound of the water came with him, led by shells clacking together and the wood of the dock pattering against the sterns of dinghies and empty sailboats.



Season of Hope David A. Jones



Papillon 001 Madeleine Wiering





Bitter Rebellion Gracie Smith

surround me

Ethan Hohn

salty waves in violent currents,
shreds of tea leaves.
why did you stop steeping?

you long for it:
watery immersion.

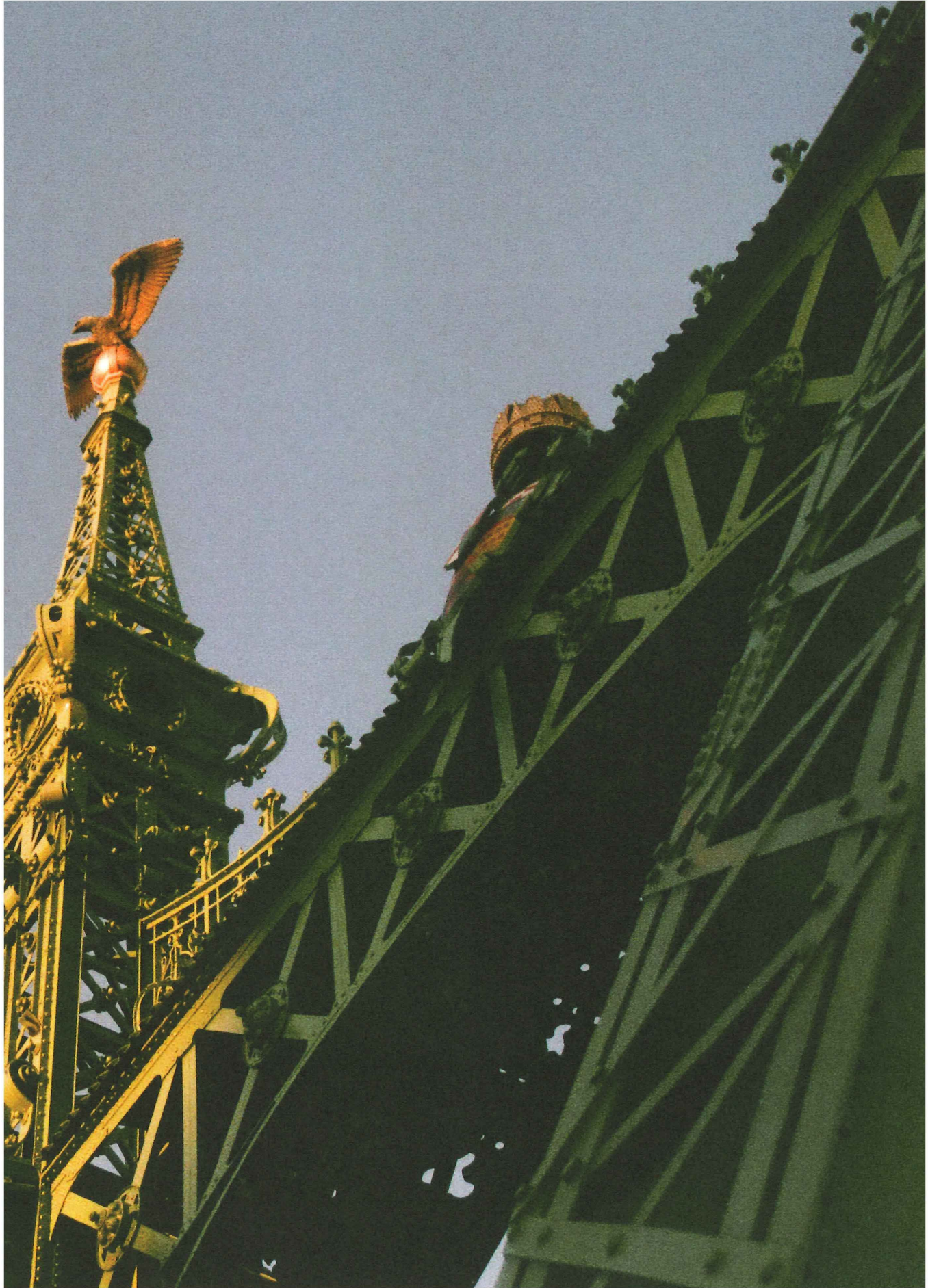
five senses become one.
crash
in a crescendo
of blue.

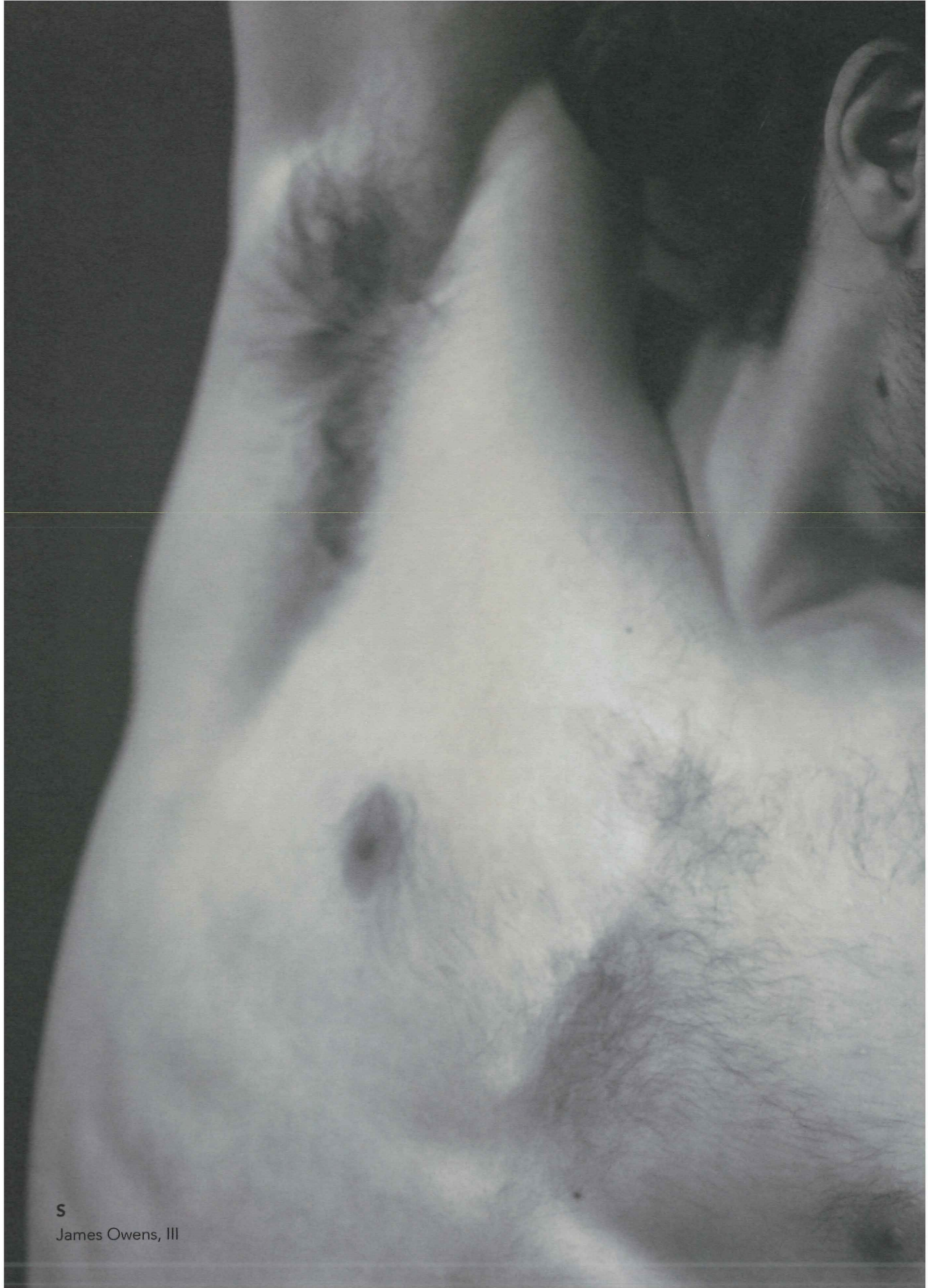
in a frenzy,
you close your bedroom door.

how about a nap?

Liberty
Grace Einfeld







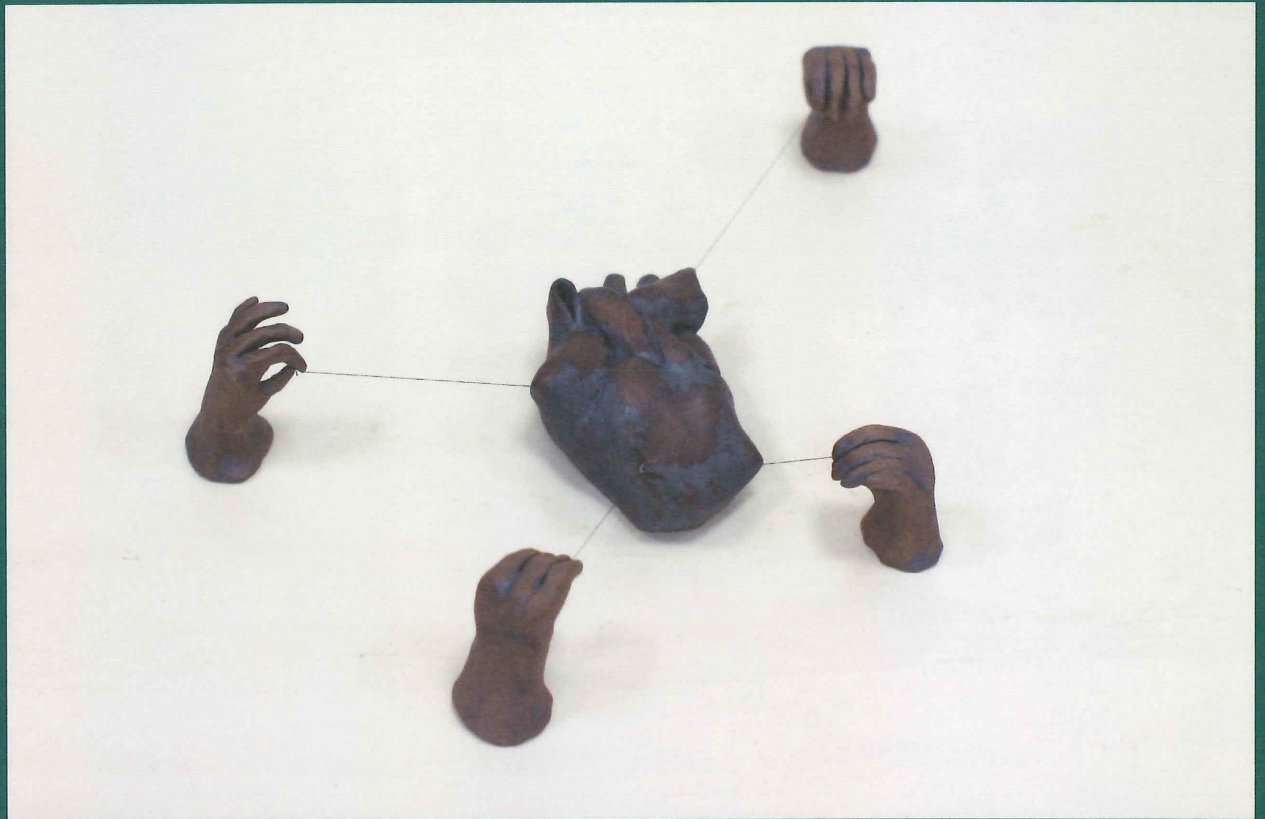
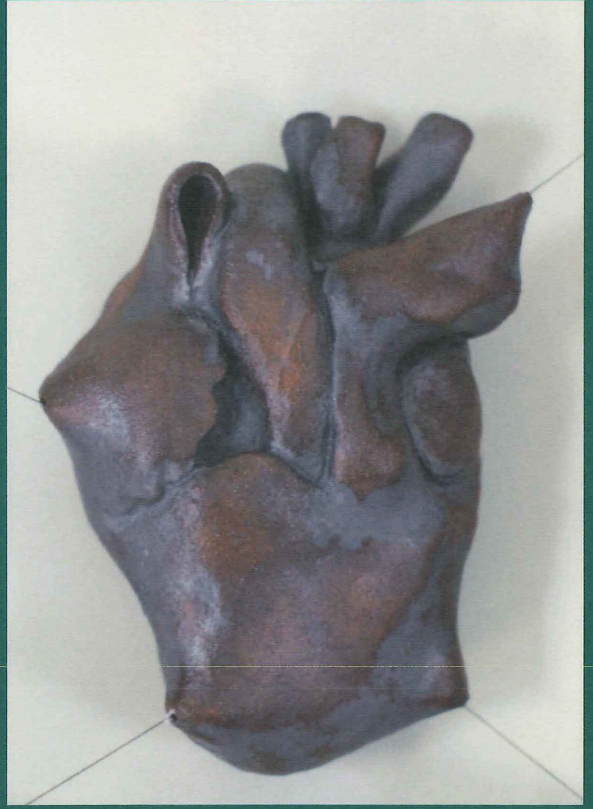
S

James Owens, III

And

Daniel Howard Hickey

how could one speak mercy killing for a living knowing that it must be done but must it praise be for that friend's darting eyes lying on the table not knowing only loving the absence in petrified purified thrusts & how could one speak after bearing witness tasting the tongue twisted love that could not bear to watch death & watching it on their behalf because goddammit someone has to lock themselves in that hidden unwanted room pull the trigger of last rites place a foreign hand calm the writhing & grace is not enough for this i'll say it crying on the couch i rarely do this & do not give me some cosmic equation some teleologism for why mothers must stumble over past present headstones choking on would coughing up does on dead sons' dead birthdays & there's no metaphor for that but i don't have to keep the dead alive with words & there is vivisected grace in that letting did seep from my lips without the shock of bad faith forgetfulness moving on leaving that room letting love die in the company of a stranger



Pulled Grace Einfeld

The Artist's Point

Simon Post



A Eulogy for an Automobile

Garrett Strpko

Some months ago, as I was coming back to Grand Rapids after celebrating the Fourth of July with family and friends in Lansing, my beloved 1997 Lincoln Continental was destroyed in an automobile accident. Upon reaching GR, I had just finished my dual-album power-pop summer drive soundtrack. (If I were to complete said soundtrack before reaching home, I had a couple of Jimi Hendrix favorites queued afterwards.)

I sat at the intersection of Beltline and Cascade, wondering whether I should go home, don my work uniform, and then travel to Alger Heights to water the plants of a former boss while he and his family were away. Or, alternatively, I could just go water the plants first and then get ready for work. As the light turned green, I was resolving to do the latter, picturing myself scrambling to get to Donkey on time from Alger Heights, whereas watering the plants first would save me some the grief of driving back and forth from the eastern-most end of town to Easttown proper. I believe I was shamelessly singing along with Tancred (“We’ve got my mother’s car if we feel like driving faster”) as I began making my way through the intersection.

Wham-o.

Suddenly and without warning, I was facing north on Beltline with both my airbags deployed. I can still recall that awful smell as my beloved Lincoln pattered out its final breaths from those airbags, so musty and toxic. I knew right then and there that she was done for. No more unairconditioned trips back and

forth between Lansing and GR with the windows down and the music loud. No more stapling the roof upholstery that refused to stay put. No more angling the turn signal switch just right so that the hi-beams would stay on. No more scraping that mysterious crust and goop off the steering wheel with a razor.

The sweaty seventeen-year-old child that so blatantly and aimlessly ran that red light on the Beltline probably still has no clue what it was he destroyed.

That boy might have seen a car; I saw the memory of my late grandfather, who could never miss out on a perceived deal. With great enthusiasm, he led us to his church friend Tony, a former criminal looking to sell an older Lincoln Continental, which we were in the market to buy for me as a first car. I remember driving that car back up to Ithaca some months later in February to spend the day with him, when we fired his bolt-action .22 rifle at targets set up on a burn-barrel he had in his backyard facing a cornfield—something we had done many times before, though this time for the last. I remember leaving, driving past the graveyard across the street where I knew he would eventually be laid to rest—and there he was a little over a year later.

That boy might have seen a car; I saw the first time I drove by myself from Jacob and Alex’s house the summer I got my license, gaining a sudden boost of confidence when I realized I was really doing it. I saw the many drives I had to and from there that summer when we watched so many movies and had so many bonfires.

That boy might have seen a car; I saw a part of my story and so many others' stories—a part that was supposed to continue to drive that story for years to come, taking it to all kinds of new places. I saw that part of my story stopped dead in its tracks, smashed to bits.

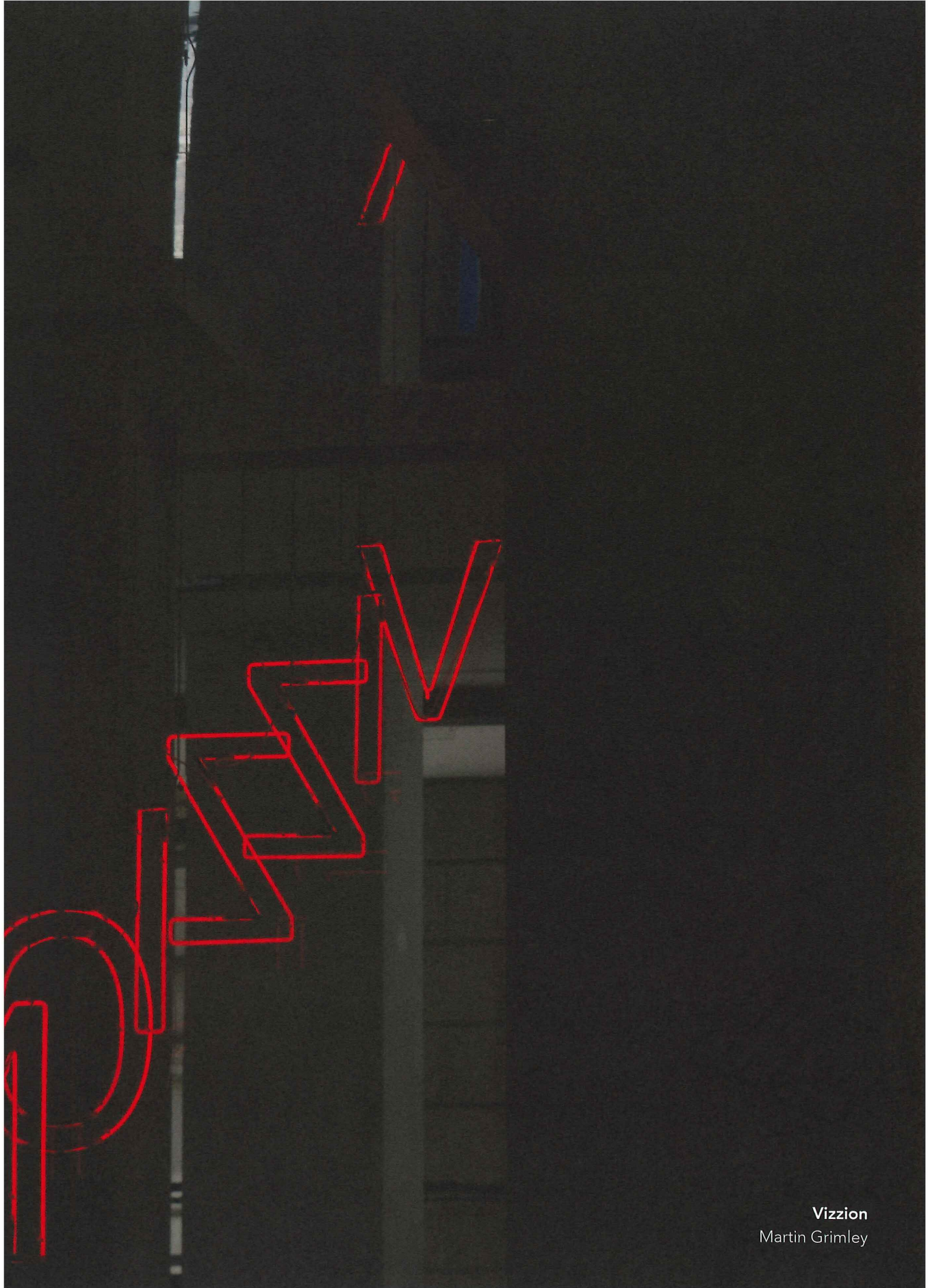
And, to be fair, there's a sense in which that boy wasn't wrong about what he saw. We shouldn't be placing undue value on those kinds of material objects as compared to, let's say, the living bodies of other human beings. But there are those objects that very much define who we are in our history, our day-to-day, and our hopes and dreams—whether it be an automobile, a vinyl record, a guitar, or a hairbrush—objects like the rusty .22 casings that sit in my room back in Lansing which I scraped off the ground and put in my pocket on that mercifully warm late-February afternoon. I had plans for that car. I was going to drive that thing out to Los Angeles one day, dammit. But now that story has changed, as they always do, and perhaps as they often should.

And so, I have a new car now. It's the same kind, a few years newer, and it's all black. It's similar enough where jumping into it and driving off was a cakewalk. I didn't even have to look at the shifter to know I was putting her in drive. As an added bonus, most everything works—I can now drive down the highway in the summer without the wind blowing in my face. But it still feels temporary. I find myself in that awkward stage of grief where the damage doesn't seem complete, where the loss seems like it will only last a little while, as if one of these days soon my

real car will show back up in my driveway, and I'll crank the windows down and put on Exile on Main St. like the badass I always felt I was when I drove that thing. Yet life will go on without it, and I'm sure I'll own many-a-car, and perhaps someday I'll have gone through so many that they won't have that same quality of attachment, and something else will take up that space.

So, in the spirit of destruction of body and soul alike, that they might develop—here's to chaos. May we always be reminded of the absurdity of plans, especially those thought up at a red light.





Vizzion
Martin Grimley

Tryptych in three colors

Connor Bechler

1

Red creeps up the many tips
Of the broom-trees, as if
Their fibers were burning into being:
Dim flames retreating to unsheathe
Spindly newborns, who leap to lap
The embers of the fleeting day

2

Yellow-wheeling the moon strains
Against the cheesecloth clouds
Yellow soft bursts of lightning flick
Along the tree-line's edge

3

Somebody spilled pale blue light
from the early morning sky
and it runs in through the window
soaking my bed
with waxy color



AFRICA

Mama Afrika
Mayva Elizabeth Anyango



The Bitter End Avery Gill

Breaking

Patrick Jonker

while he placed his hand on the counter

her eyes did not (fall)

lift

graphite in her skin

where needles have burrowed flimsy

she asked if he had spit off the bluffs on the ocean
he was young once, too.

had he seen himself in the (waves)

water.

they shake hands with lime while

each breaking clangs

an ivory drone. a

foam baptism for every stone.

her chromosomes missense—his voice strains too
high. It breaks

from the taste of the salt and the air—

thronged

a saline rinse irreparable, the saccharine

bed beneath her, soft

the silence of a wave pulled low

a thumb laced in sheets, still, while she grows.

, (quiet).

The Chintath Tree

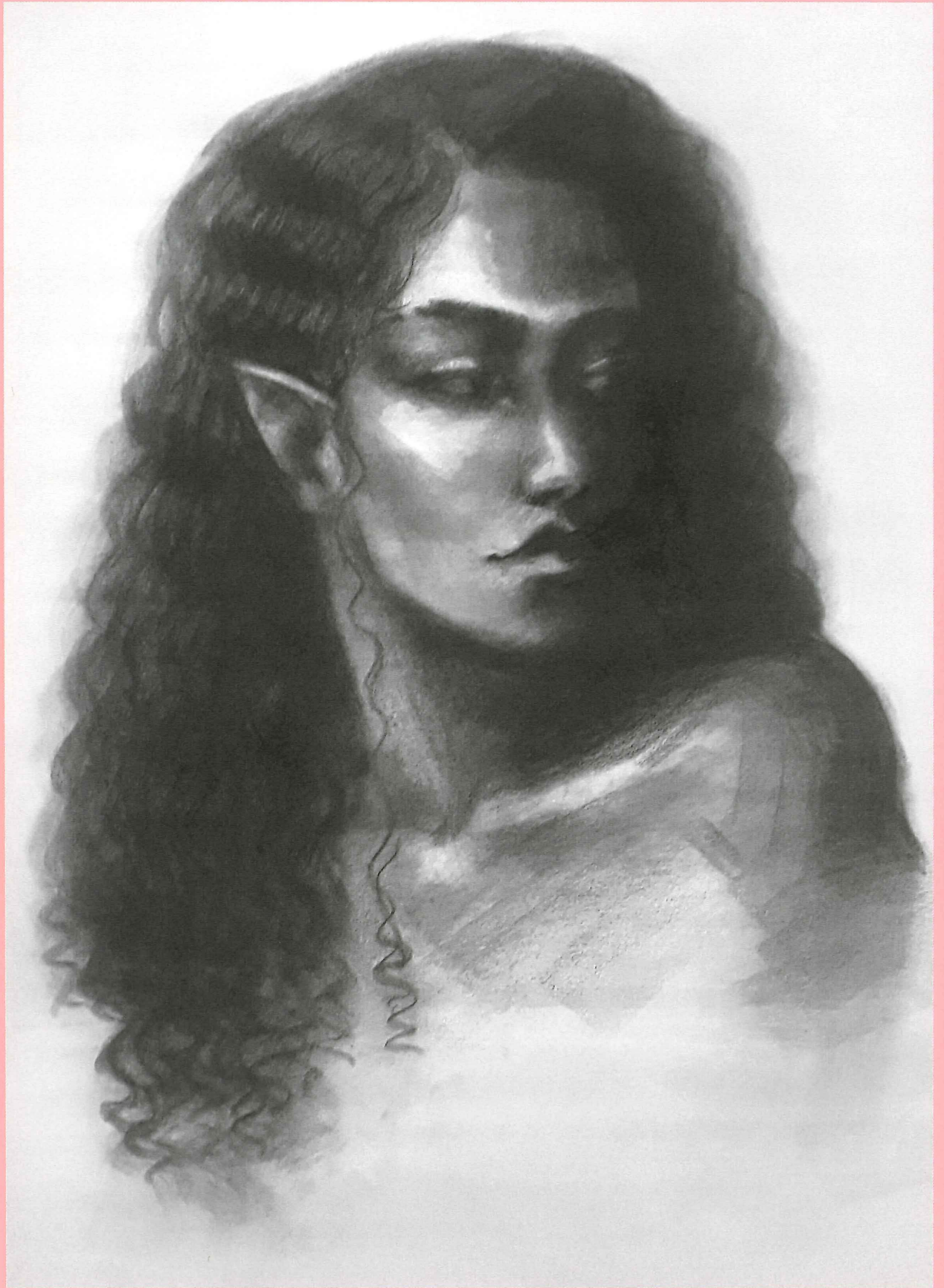
Morgan Anderson

Hum of the Chintath tree follow
Me home to house-fueled nibbling
On blast, until the clock plucks one
Pea out of chaff chafing meadow
That no full-face princess e'er snored.

Whisper of lovers that aren't mine
Mingle with crickets and boon owls,
Hooting at my grimy, calloused
Feet slapping grandfather bridge until
Raucous eardrums oscillate.

Gather secrets so close they boil,
Dripping thick, tomato-sauce drips
Up the gong of mountain song, e'er
I how'd into thorny crags,
Expecting nothing in return.

Hum of the Chintath tree follow me
Home.



Mae Alese Jensine Owens



Punalu'u
Addie Winkelman



Like Gravity, Like Breath

J. Andrew Gilbert

This week, a friend asked forgiveness for saying to me, “Be a man.” Another friend asked me why it hurt so much when I was called gay. It all brought back memories.

...

He looks around him. He is on a sidewalk named *Calçada* (or Big Sidewalk), which can fit two cars side-by-side. Lining its sides are shops; in the middle, there are benches and trees. People are everywhere—walking up and down, in and out, diagonals drawn from shop to shop. To the side, sitting against the shops and a palisade wall, hippies sell their handmade jewelry and crafts.

In the middle of it all, a little boy.

His mother?

Nowhere.

Where is she?

He breathes quicker. His head spins; his eyes dart. Face-to-face with a red-haired woman, a black kid, a group of teenagers laughing—no comforting presence that the boy could identify as mother.

Breathe.

And he’s crying. Softly, quietly. Tears roll off his face, but he barely makes a sound. His lips tremble but

don’t open. He doesn’t want to show the world his pain. Because after all, he’s strong, right? He’s strong because he’s a boy, and boys become men, and men are strong, right?

Right?

His mother reappears, almost as if she was standing there the whole time next to him and he couldn’t see her. She puts a hand on his shoulder and crouches, reaching his level. She gives him a hug.

“It’s okay. I’m here.”

His brother is by her side. He is only two years older than the little boy.

“Such a sissy,” he says.

And I cry. I remember it because it never did heal, did it?

A sissy. For crying. I cried more. Such a sissy.

That was me. *André*, or *Andrézinbo*, as I was called by most at school and at church.

It was hard living with my brother—we were so different. I was tiny, blond, with a heart for the arts, books, and what now I see as intuitive learning. He was stronger, faster, braver, smarter, louder. He liked cars and engines, organization, and practicality. He

came up with plans and schedules and ways to save and make more money. I came up with dreams and stories of a pilgrim, *Grifo*, in a far-off land; of a star to whom I could talk and whom I dated for awhile; and of orcs to be killed in my backyard. I ran around the house singing the ballads of the great imaginary adventures I survived. But I looked up to him; I admired him. He taught me about the world—why the sky is blue and the square roots of 9, 16, and 81.

He influenced and shaped my world with his words.

“I’m the only one that can punch you. No one else can.”

I was both hurt and comforted by his words. It gave me security and confidence: the world can’t hurt me. It provided order: I’m above you, and you’re under me. Obey me, and life will be good. But it was hard to please a tyrant of a brother.

It didn’t help that I was such a rebel either. It didn’t help that I read and believed in movies that told me I could be anything I wanted. It didn’t help that we were so different.

One of these differences was that I fell in love with words while, for the longest time, he never read the books assigned in class. I would carry a book with me everywhere, reading in busy streets and sidewalks, following my parents from the corner of my eyes. Words would create and create and create.

They gained shape and form within me and helped me breathe. Words felt as real as gravity. When my brother called me a sissy or gay, those words pulled me down.

• • •

Andrew means virile. A Man. When he found that out, he laughed.

“Yeah. Such a Man you are.”

I almost cried. I almost hit him. But I didn’t. When a friend would call me gay at youth group or at school, or when I saw another kid being called gay or a faggot, it pulled me down as if the weight of this world was upon my shoulders.

But words can also heal. They can also help breathe.

• • •

I was called *Râmis* back then.

Râmis was in high school while his brother Lucas had started college and gone on a yearlong abroad program to England. *Râmis* was free, living in Brazil with a host family while his parents were on furlough to the United States. But he was trapped. Struggling with his identity: Gay or bisexual? What am I? Why am I this—whatever it is? Why? And words from childhood rang in his ears, denouncing his difference, his queerness, his otherness. Words that rang and rang and simmered in a pot of distrust and rejection.

He searched for a way out.

He read.

Books.

Articles.

Poems.

He read, and read, and read.

And he cried. Such a sissy. So gay.

But, as he sat in front of his computer, he got a message from his brother in England. In recent years, much had changed. They found out how different they were and how so much of their fights and struggles derived from this difference that had so often gone unacknowledged. The recognition of the other as an individual, existing fully on their own. Words like introverted and extroverted had helped clear the air between them. Words that explained who they are and how they are just that: different.

And in the message his brother wrote him, *Râmîs* found other beautiful words. Words like, "Forgive me," and, "I'm sorry."

Words that washed over me, swept me off my feet, and had me dancing with the pilgrim of so long ago.

Words that now let me breathe and give me a little bit of hope for what can change in this world.



Understanding Alese Jensine Owens



Canyon
Sarah Nichols



Words on Pen #15

Young Kim

Oui? Oui.
Dice que es.
See, oh Sea; kiss.
En tu país, sí.
C'est levé.

peonies in deco pink
Elyse Rhoades



Narrow Shadows

Abby Jonker

There are beams that break across the bars in the railing. They create lines of shadows that push and pull and string us out like yarn. In the stairwell, people become thinner and stretched out, and the sun in the window pulls us up and out of ourselves. Narrow shadows sit on the stairs. Narrow shadows talk to parents.

One is laughing. Her voice echoes in the tall space, and from every floor you can hear the bittersweet sound of Dad's jokes and Mom's dinners.

I hear crying—unsteady and piercing sobs that hang in the air. Arguments pinch and scratch at the brick and carpet. In that exhausting time and space, tension pulls shadows even thinner, and footsteps quickly dodge around them. But three flights of stairs are a lot to climb, and the sun's fading light grabs me for longer than expected—long enough to feel the tension of the quarreling phone call.

As the sun sets, our bodies begin to uncoil: here, we remember we are still narrow shadows on a stairwell.

Then the sky is gray, and the fluorescent light on the ceiling flickers on and off. There are no more tears or jokes or arguments to tip-toe around. Shadows vanish, and we, still thinly stretched, hold up our heads in empty rooms, colored by leaden skies.



stripe
Hannah Van't Hof



of God's ser
"Great a
Lord
Just an
King
"Who

ents, O Holy
re;
d of your holy
ophets,
blood to
drink as they deserve."

ard the altar respond:
Lord God Almighty,
e and just are your judgments."

fourth angel poured out his bowl on
n, and the sun was allowed to scorch
ple with fire. ⁹They were seared by the
intense heat and they cursed the name of
d, who had control over these plagues, but
sed to repent and glorify him.

h angel poured out his bowl on
the beast, and its kingdom
to darkness. People gnawed
in agony ¹¹ and cursed the God
ause of their pains and their
ey refused to repent of what they

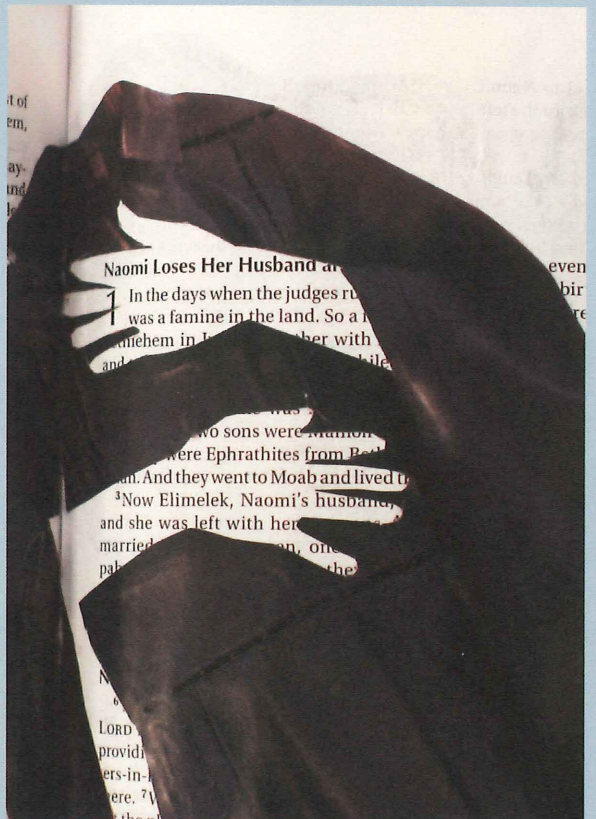
xth angel poured out his bowl on
river Euphrates, and its water was
o prepare the way for the kings
East. ¹³Then I saw three impure
looked like frogs; they came out
of the dragon, out of the mouth
nd out of the mouth of the false
they are demonic spirits that per-
and they go out to the kings of the
ld, to gather them for the battle on
great day of God Almighty.

¹⁵"Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is
the one who stays awake and remains
clothed, so as not to go naked and be
shamefully exposed."

en they gathered the kings together to
t in Hebrew is called Armaged-

th angel poured out his bowl
nd out of the temple came a loud
e throne, saying, "It is done!"
ame flashes of lightning, rum-
thunder and a severe earth-
quake like it has ever oc-
kind has been on earth, so
quake. ¹⁹The great city





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Stay here
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esting, and
ave told the
d. And whenever
go and get a drink from the
water jars the men have filled."
10At this, she bowed down with her face
to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I
found such favor in your eyes that you notice
me—a foreigner?"
11Boaz replied, "I've been told all about
what you have done for your mother-in-law
since the death of your husband—how you
left your father and mother and your home-
land and came to live with a people you did
not know before. 12May the LORD repay you
for what you have done. May you be richly re-
warded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under
whose wings you have come to take refuge."
13"May I continue to find favor in your
eyes, my lord," she said. "You have put me
at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—
though I do not have the standing of one of
your servants."

14Then Boaz said to his servant, "Tie up
the sheaves of wheat and barley in bundles,
and let them go, and go and get a drink from the
water jars the men have filled."
15At this, she bowed down with her face
to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I
found such favor in your eyes that you notice
me—a foreigner?"
16Boaz replied, "I've been told all about
what you have done for your mother-in-law
since the death of your husband—how you
left your father and mother and your home-
land and came to live with a people you did
not know before. 17May the LORD repay you
for what you have done. May you be richly re-
warded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under
whose wings you have come to take refuge."
18"May I continue to find favor in your
eyes, my lord," she said. "You have put me
at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—
though I do not have the standing of one of
your servants."

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor

3 One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi
said to her, "My daughter, I must find a
home" for you, where you will be well provid-
ed for. 2Now Boaz, with whose women you
have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight

* 17 That is, probably about 30 pounds or about 13 kilograms.
 b 20 The Hebrew word for guardian-redeemer is a legal term for one who has the obligation to redeem a relative in serious difficulty (see Lev. 25:25-55).
 c 1 Hebrew *find rest* (see 1:9).

Naomi Loses Her Husband

1 In the days when the judges ruled,
there was a famine in the land. So a man
from Bethlehem in Judah went with his wife
and two sons to live in the land of Moab,
because the famine was so severe in the land of
Judah that they had to go there to find food.
2The man's name was Elimelek, and his wife's
name was Naomi. 3They had two sons who were
Ephrathites from Bethlehem. And they went to
Moab and lived there for some time.
4Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and
she was left with her two sons.
5The Lord visited Naomi and she became
pregnant and bore a son.
6The name of the child was Obed, and he was
the father of Jesse, the father of David.



18 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"
19 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 20 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 21 For no word from God will ever fail."
22 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

23 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 24 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 25 But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 26 From now on all generations will call me blessed. 27 For the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. 28 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation."

Mary's Song

29 And Mary said:
"My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me
blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great
things for me—
holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation."

30 On so the child to be born will be called holy.

31 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud
in their inmost thoughts.
32 He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
33 He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
34 He has helped his servant Mary,
remembering his promise.
35 He has raised up his servant David,
just as he promised,
and from now on
he will reign over Israel
forever, just as he promised.
36 Mary stayed with Elizabeth three months and then returned to her home.

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

37 When it was time for her to have the baby, Mary gave birth to a son. 38 When she had wrapped him in swaddling clothes, she laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn.

39 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:
68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and
redeemed them.



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