Crosscurrents would like to thank Ricardo Cavolo; the professors who donated their time to review our Select Works; the English Department, the Art Department, the Office of Admissions, and ASUPS for making this issue possible; and Photo Services for helping out with our Art Photoshoots.

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Set in Cardenio Modern, Helvetica Neue, and Adobe Garamond Pro.
In my last semester working on Crosscurrents, I have finally come to understand the intense level of collaboration required to put together our publication. Our editors and staff work together in our meetings, we enlist the help of faculty for our professor reviews, we include the work of a guest artist and we work with so many other students, faculty and staff within our community in the process. But most crucially, and most often overlooked, we rely on the talent and creativity of you, the student body, to provide us with good work! Without you we would only publish a nicely bound interview twice per year.

Crosscurrents has always existed as a showcase of our best student work—we provide a space for students to be recognized for their creative abilities. Each semester provides us with a snapshot of the work being produced and more often than not an overarching theme emerges from the submissions we receive. Looking back on my four years with Crosscurrents, and this past year as the Editor-in-Chief, one of my favorite moments every semester is when we put together the final contents and see the connections that our peers—knowingly or unknowingly—have created among their work. I’m thrilled to see what the next editors and staff will do with this talent and where they will take the magazine.

With thanks,

Maia Raeder, Editor-in-Chief
RICARDO CAVOLO
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Ricardo Cavolo is a Spanish visual artist who works with a wide variety of media, including works on paper, murals, and tattoo design. He is the author of *100 Artists to Listen to Before You Die* (Spanish: 100 artistas sin los no podría vivir), a visual diary about music.

In February 2016, Cavolo completed a residency at the University of Puget Sound through the joint efforts of the Catharine Gould Chism Fund in the Humanities and the Arts, and Puget Sound’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Department of English, and Department of Art and Art History.

Find more of his work at www.ricardocavolo.com.
CCR: You work with a wide variety of media (murals, paper paintings, tattoos, etc.). Do you find that you prefer certain media for certain subject matter? Does it make a difference what you use?

RC: I enjoy to try to show the same concept at any different medias without so many changes. If the message is powerful, you can use just letters, or colors, or a shirt, a wall or an illustration on paper. And I enjoy working on all those different medias as well, so I don’t find any preferences in particular. I just have fun every different time! :)

CCR: Eyes appear a lot in your work. What do eyes mean to you and what do you hope to communicate by depicting them?

RC: My work is always speaking about people coming from the “B-side” of life (the darkest and not the most popular one). Special and non-common people. So my way to show that these people are not regular is, for instance, adding more than two eyes. The more eyes, the more special (and wise) they are. When you live in the “B-side” of life, and still are happy, and make people happy, you are someone special, so you deserve more than the regular two eyes. When I put eyes on “things” like the sun, mountains, flowers… It is to give the idea they are alive. If the mountains have eyes, they are alive. It is about the idea everything is alive and connected in some way.
**CCR:** What differences do you find between doing your own creative work and working for a client (for example, someone who commissions a mural or a tattoo?)

**RC:** When I’m working on something personal, I feel I have a total freedom to develop the concept I want, and the way I want. When I’m working for a brand or any other sort of commission, I have to keep in mind this is for someone, and I have to be respectful with it and work with the briefing in mind. Having said that, I have to say I feel so lucky, because even when the project is a commission, they always give me a huge freedom and they respect 100% my style. That means they really wanted my work, and not just “some art” on it.

**CCR:** What was it like writing and drawing your book? Did you enjoy working in an extended format?

**RC:** The drawing part was great, as always. I enjoy the process very much. The writing process was tougher. I feel weaker expressing my thoughts with words in a proper way. So what I did is to keep it simple and just express myself as I were talking, but with written words. At least it is a true and sincere way to express myself.

**CCR:** What are some of your artistic influences or motivations?

**RC:** The whole history of art is a big inspiration to me. But if I have to choose some specific influences, I would say primitive art, early medieval art and outsider art. The main motivations it is to speak about that B-side of life I said before, with a positive and optimistic background. :)
FRIDA

SAINT DRAGON AND GEORGE
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This meal began when seeds were spread on tepid winds of spring, a time when dormant fields of barren earth beneath the plowman’s blade were turned by labored beasts whose tethers groaned, their furrowed wake a fertile red.

Green flags rebelled against this red while thirsting roots covertly spread; to see this faction fully grown we sacrificed our backs and time to fight the weeds too soon returned, our knees and fingers caked with earth.

When autumn’s art arrived the earth was brushed with strokes of gold and red as rainbow chard and blossoms turned to fruit whose painted colors spread across the canvas fields—a time to reap the rural scene we’d grown.

On market day, crops newly grown still fragrant with soft sodden earth drew cooks who muttered, pressed for time, the names from placards traced in red and culled from vendors’ artful spread the finest of the year’s return.

It’s in the wrist: the toss and turn, the lick of flame and table’s groan beneath the bulk of produce spread then stewed in pots of steel and earth on brickwork hearths of dusty red whose gutter cracks catch salt and thyme.

Dear friends! Now is the best of times to taste each steaming dish in turn: glazed onions, sautéed sprouts, and red wine clinking over pleased groans, the roasted flesh of roots unearthed, thick-crusted loaves, and saucy spreads.

In time, our crumbs, as compost spread will nourish in the new-turned earth spring’s seedlings ready to be grown.
A GEOCENTRIC MODEL
TALENA GRAHAM

Aristotle drowned out a central fire and shifted Earth to the forefront, stars pressed against a stationary celestial sphere where nothing ever changed —

until, with bare eyes, Ptolemy sketched the universe, etched it in with florets of epicycles which spun around in dazzling lines of color, inaccurately defining our existence in over-complication where we were still the center.
Flight home: she stares into the grey. Cloud water, like river water—danger wrapped in beauty, a knife in a blanket. Hometown airport: she picks plants from the indoor landscape, dusty palm leaves and wilting yellow flowers, tied the bouquet together with a backpack thread. He loved airport hash browns, the quick and greasy minutes before boarding group B. The bouquet ended up in the family’s kitchen sink, its petals quivering closer and closer to the garbage disposal blades.

She dreamed: salt mines, old film storage. Her uncle worked there. Her brother and herself would hear about the refrigeration smell, the preserved tapes, the time capsule, the testament to our society, that would live past any of us.

It lived past her brother. If only he could be preserved in the salt mines, a salted ghost watching films from a projector cast onto shadowy peach walls, until she died to join him.

Her brother: loved sticking his face up to aquarium glass, trying to kiss the sharks. Her brother: said the salt mines would be just like that, but in the mines you could really taste the depths of time where the human eye could never see. In the cave darkness, no one would have to quantify the sunsets, and lives wouldn’t need a story arc, they’d be made of all the little trajectories of the movies projected on walls, until each soul was just a patchy constellation of existence in whatever world it pleased. Her brother.

Home now: choking on tears, she walks outside, barefoot in the dark. The big dipper set in the sky, its handle pointed toward the mountain, the scoop near the valley where town lights burst into a movie reel clicking goodbye.
Alan sits in the back corner of Starbucks, holding his venti dark roast in one hand and pressing down the pages of a magazine with the other. He isn’t paying much attention to the words on the page. Something about what women enjoy in bed? Alan yawns into his hand, letting the magazine fall closed. He takes a sip. It’s not the best, but it’s coffee so he can’t complain. What he can complain about is the fact that it is 11 AM on a Saturday morning and he’s sitting here in a Starbucks not sure how to spend his unwanted day off.

“You work too hard, Barrow” Deputy Chief Noa Agnew said to Alan yesterday afternoon, not looking up from the file on her desk. There was a pause. Alan raised an eyebrow.

“Is that all you wanted to tell me?”

Agnew looked up at him with only her eyes, then slid the file to the side with her pinkie. “I called you in here to tell you to go home. You look as though you haven’t slept in days, Commander.”

Alan frowned for a moment. He opened his mouth to say something but then closed it. “You want me to go home early?” he finally asked.

“Yes, and stay home tomorrow. And the day after that.”

Alan exhales and takes another sip of his coffee. The sun is streaming through the window at just the right angle to hit him right in the eye. He shields his face with his hand until he shifts into a comfortable position. It’s quite amazing that anyone really cares about the perpetual bags under his eyes. Maybe he looks as though shadows have eaten his face. Who cares? Agnew certainly doesn’t care enough to tell Alan why she cares. Perhaps he doesn’t really care and is only trying to preserve his quality of work. He tilts his head back and aggressively gulps his coffee.

After downing the last of it, Alan pushes himself up, tosses the empty cup in the trash, and walks outside. The bright Los Angeles sunlight immediately assaults him, bearing down on his glossy black hair. He runs a hand through it and takes a deep breath, taking in the scent of wet asphalt. Children in the park across the street run through the sprinklers, laughing and screaming. Alan saunters over towards the park and plops down on a park bench the color of wet floral foam. The only spot not completely covered in bird shit is the spot in the direct sunlight right next to the overflowing trash can. He wrinkles his nose and swats a couple flies dancing around his head. The other benches are occupied by parents sitting on the edge of their seats, their eyes darting back and forth as they keep track of their children.

Alan closes his eyes and tries to focus on the children’s laughter and the feeling of sunlight on his skin, now determined to enjoy this day even if it kills him. Flies buzzing. Children screaming. Something vibrating in his pocket. The smell of wet grass and garbage. Alan opens his eyes, suddenly aware of his phone ringing. He takes it out and sees the call is from his mother. His brows crease. Odd. Certainly she knows by now that her son is usually at work. He answers the phone, pressing it to the ear that can hear.

“Hello, mom?” There’s a pause. Alan can hear a short intake of breath on the other end of the line.

“Alan. Are you at work?” His mother’s voice is soft and urgent, like sand slowly slipping from one’s hand.

“No, I was given the day off. What’s going on?” Alan says, a bit irritated. He grips the phone a little tighter.

“I just got a call from your father’s prison,” she says, her voice cracking and a slight Filipino accent emerging as she speaks. Alan
stops breathing for a moment, his grip on the phone tightening. His father is exactly the person he doesn’t want to think about today. Or ever.

“Alan?”
“T’m listening.”
“He’s dying.”

Children playing cops and robbers. Children laughing. Children running into their parents arms. Alan is shaking. His fingers grasp at his hair.

“He tried to --”
“Kill himself?”

“...Yes.” His mother was crying. It’s muffled, but he can hear it.

“I’m sorry, I know you don’t love him.”

He shakes his head slowly, even though his mother cannot see it. “Mom, he’s my dad. I -” Alan pauses. All the words fizzle around in his head, grasp his throat. Of course he loves him. Of course he does, but he also hates him. Nothing makes sense. The children disappear. The flies disappear. All he can see and all he can think about is what happened eleven years ago.

Alan was a boy of fifteen years, looking at himself in the courthouse bathroom mirror. His navy blue tie was perfectly tied. His father had done it for him, after all. He sucked in his breath and stared straight at his reflection, trying not to smile - trying to look like the kind of lawyer his father would be proud of. He was only to be an assistant today, but a child can dream, can’t they? The proud boy standing before the mirror and the image of his father reflected back at him was the illusion the man on the park bench wished he could hold onto. Though, it is not the event that burned itself into his mind.

After leaving the bathroom, the boy walked into the room as his father plunged a knife into his client’s chest. A burst of scarlet splashed against Alan, warm against his paled cheeks. William Barrow’s glasses glinted in the cold light streaming through the open blinds as he pulled out the knife and turned to face his son. The knife caught the light, and a brief reflection of Alan’s face, as it clattered to the tiled floor. Father and son stared at each other, the air between them tearing itself to shreds.

Alan lets out a choked sob. He does not fully register his mother worriedly repeating his name over the phone, or the dog sniffing his shoe before its owner yanks it away. People are whispering about him. He gasps, letting the air caught in his throat escape. He feels as though his body is dissolving.

“I love you, mom.”
“Are you okay?”

“I love you too, mom.” He hangs up and tucks his phone into his pocket as he rises from his seat, his mind buzzing. A breeze kicks up, blowing plastic wrappers and debris at his feet. A passing car blasts “Stairway to Heaven.” What a concept. His father was sure as hell not going there, but then again maybe Alan wasn’t either. His father is dying and for a minute he wants for it to be a blessing - a chance for healing. How selfish that is. How pathetic and how utterly and completely foolish. Alan starts walking. His pocket vibrates again, but he does not answer it. There’s no time to be idling here. He has to change into his uniform, grab his badge and keycard, and get to the precinct. Crimes are not going to solve themselves. Nothing is going to solve itself.

Finally dressed in his uniform, Commander Barrow charges into the precinct, pushing through the revolving glass door with commanding force. He pushes everything but his latest case to the back of his mind. There will be no sleep tonight.
THE NEIGHBORHOOD
EMILY ROSTEK

But who is there
and who is dead?

Dead like the slaughtered in the war or—no.
Dead like death
is a change—
so subtle, so quick,
like two strangers exchanging
one glance.

They told him to keep a mind of winter
as the rivers
sweep their dead along.

But no one told him
that the rivers would freeze into sharp crystals
cracking at every harsh breath—
piercing the flesh they move.

Under the moon,
their eyes rolled like a marble.
Back, back, back—noses blue,
fingers black.
Hearts freshly cold—
no voice.

Morning came
and the soldier’s children took their skates
and glided on the faces of their neighbors.
MADNESS
EMILY HARMAN

nights like these
the echo of your fingertip traces the ocean of my veins
and the ghost of your voice runs rampant through my bloodstream
my lifelines blush with the memories

midnight drives
wind whispering across bare shoulders
streetlight shadows playing hide and seek

there is little I know better
than the pain written across your palms
the way your slender fingers gripped your coffee cup
tight
and your jealous eyes followed the steam
curling upwards
gentle
vanishing in the wind.
Good days were days off:
looking through the holes in rusted rainy boat graveyards,
hitchhiking to town in rope tailgated truck beds of tires and many loves,
trespassing in abandoned Greek churches and finding untranslatable Jesus,
becoming acquainted with Wild Turkey and Canadian Hunter at mudflat
solstice egg sacrifices,
feeling like fire and walking on bonfires and never burning up.

Good days were work days:
without hats dripping ballet slipper pink slime,
without calf deep burgundy blood between the entrance and my station,
without water seeping into the 3rd pair of safety gloves I’d cut
without green pus fish gut induced acne
and with all of that.

Good days were full of fish heads:
kissing scale speckled faces,
playing catch with balls of pinbones,
dressing pink tinged snowmen with intestine sweaters and too many eyes,
singing sleep deprivation euphoria on the edge of a one ton tote of
salmon ice,
writing all our love and hate of this place in fish blood cursive on forever
rolling conveyor belts.

Camaraderie germinated in this grime.
Where the daylight was never seen and never ended,
where life was experienced for more than 18 hours a day,
where numb and feeling everything.

Working day in and day out with the same slime covered,
raingear covered,
uncovered
people
got us to the basics,
simplified down to cereal
to kitchen utensils, to alcoholic beverages, to animals, to body parts,
to landscapes.

Repetitive salmon shifting shook down walls,
allowed the finding of something real and true.
Games of 20 questions with the answers of existence and god.
Freckles across the conveyor belt full of existence and god.
Our open minds and open hearts,
all at a stop on a path not meant for the domestic or the complacent.
Rugged honesty and kindred spirits
redefined a good day.
Thoughts curdle as easily as
Sour milk, shoved into the back of
The musty refrigerator between the teriyaki
Chicken and brown cabbage.
The bane of such decay shuns reason.
With hands shaking, and noise wrinkled, the contents
Are examined like the experiment
That smells of formaldehyde.

This feeling festers deep, rooted like blackberries.
Thumb-tack thorns dig deep into the
Flesh of your spirit to rip, tear,
And shred the soft flesh of
The inner most core and beliefs
That you’ve tended lovingly
For years.
But in moments, they tumble
As fast as the words out of mouth
For an impromptu speech.
Just speak already, crowd’s staring
Eyes reflect the nightmare that has just begun.
Our town is small, right on the edge of nowhere and somewhere. We’re not very big and we’re not very populated. There are maybe only about a hundred-fifty of us with eighty percent of us being under the age of sixty. The bakery has a small plaque on the red brick next to the front door: Since 1913. And the church on the corner of 17th and Water Street has crumbling gargoyles. The Josephs and Kent families brag because they are a part of the original history of our town. Their great-great-great-great ancestors were among the first people to drop their bags in our town, and they will probably be among the last to ever leave it. Our City Hall is a building that was, fifty-three years ago, the elementary school. Our town was a pretty normal place until one day a woman none of us had ever seen before walked straight down Main Street. All of us will tell you a different story of when she arrived. Her arrival was not preceded by any earth-shattering revelations or events. One day she wasn’t there and the next she was.

Tom, who lives on Main Street, swears it was a Saturday in June. The sun had been setting and the cicadas were particularly lively. The sun’s rays had glinted off the bakery storefront and almost blinded Main Street Tom. The hem of her pale yellow sundress brushed against her knees with quiet swishes. According to Main Street Tom her skin was pale with scattered spots of freckles. Her hair was long and brown, flowing down her back in waves. The oddest thing, when Main Street Tom tells the story, was her bare feet. They were freshly pedicured with white nail polish with precise pink polka-dots in orderly grids. She had given a small wave and a bright smile. Her two front teeth had a small gap between them. Every time Main Street Tom talks about her, he lets out little sigh at the end of telling the story and says, “I’ve never seen a woman like that again.”

The teenage hoodlums who reek of marijuana on Wednesdays and stolen bourbon on Fridays have a different story. The girl with the curly black hair exploding from a neon pink beanie rolls her eyes and says that the woman was a part of the traveling circus that got lost on the closest highway. “I could tell,” she says, “because she was still dressed in her trapeze leotard.” She tosses her hair back and gloats that the woman stopped to talk to her that Thursday afternoon. Her boyfriend, a young man with long black hair that flops over his dark brown eyes and an eyebrow piercing nods along. He remembers her long straight blonde hair and the small diamond in her nose. According to him it was a Tuesday night in September. She was not wearing anything special, just a pair of paint splattered jeans and a simple black t-shirt. She had a light dusting of soft brown freckles across her nose. “And,” he says, demonstrating with a finger across his eyebrows, “she had a unibrow, like Frida Kahlo.” What he remembers the most is her nose ring and the way it twinkled in the glow of the streetlights. He reaches up and fiddles with his eyebrow ring, “I got this because of the way hers looked, y’know.”

Waters, the homeless man who panhandles at the corner of Water Street and 10th, has a story about her too. He stops anyone who passes him by and tells them the story. We have all heard it, but he stops us anyway. According to Waters, it was a Wednesday in July and she was wearing dark wash denim jeans and a black shirt. Her skin was lightly tanned and her hair was a shock of straight red that stopped at her shoulders. She was wearing a pair of flip-flops and Waters is sure about this because he can remember clearly the smack smack of the soles as she walked past him. At first she had
walked past him, then she had stopped and backed up a few strides. She had shoved her fingers into her pockets and wiggled until a small handful of change popped out. She had apologized that she had not had any more to put in his cup. Waters had been too dumbstruck by the beautiful woman standing in front of him to say anything. In fact, whenever Waters tells his story of the woman, not saying anything back to her was his biggest regret of the whole encounter.

The baker had been preparing to close up shop on a Tuesday evening when she walked in. The small antique shop bell above the door had let out its little ring to tell Baker Joe he had a new customer. He had looked up from where he was rubbing down the counter with a dishrag to tell the person in the door he was closed and stopped to stare at her. Baker Joe swears that she was some type of Italian with deep brown hair and dark roast coffee eyes. Her nose was strong and aquiline and on any other woman, it would have been termed as too big or large. Her lips were full and painted in thick red lipstick. When she spoke it was with an Italian lilt. She first apologized for disturbing him, but asked if he could please make an exception and if he had any dinner rolls left for her to purchase. She had taken hesitant steps toward the counter in her black, patent leather flats and her hand had tensed as she clutched an expensive handbag closer to her torso. She had flipped her long, thick hair over her shoulder and asked politely again. Baker Joe had nodded and moved out from behind the counter to show her the rolls he had left over from the day. The rest of the interaction was over quickly, with her paying cash for the rolls and gathering the four rolls into a bag and exiting the shop. It was not until she was all the way down the block that Baker Joe realized he never asked her for her name. Baker Joe has a list of names that he thinks could belong to her.

The town librarian stops organizing her books to tell her story of the woman. She pushes the book cart along and stops intermittently to place books on shelves. Her lipstick has a tendency to rub off on her front teeth and she wears cat themed sweater vests regularly. According to Ms. Kara Smithoms, the woman passed right by her on a bright and early Saturday morning. Kara had been reading a book when the woman passed her by. She was young with unblemished skin but for a dark mole just beneath the right corner of her mouth. The woman wore a long glowing skirt and a cotton tank top. Her hair was a deep auburn shade but it is her eyes that Ms. Smithoms remembers the most. They were a pale icy gray with a thin ring of dark green around the outermost part of the iris. Her hands were pianist hands, long delicate fingers with neatly trimmed nails. She had a long willowy build and her forearm was covered in bangles that jingled as she moved and walked down Main Street straight to the meadow.

Mr. Franz, the owner of the antique shop has a very different story of the woman. He has a reputation for scoffing at all the other stories surrounding the woman. “Don’t believe them,” he says, “They’re all liars.” She was rude, first stepping into the shop and making snide comments about each of the pieces. Then she had ignored the large “Do Not Touch” signs and trailed greasy fingers over antiques; she left marks on high-shine tables and mirrors. Her hair was a pale blonde, artfully styled to look effortless. With every twist of her head, Mr. Franz got a nose full of the chemical smell of hairspray. A large designer bag hung on the crook of her elbow and tall, thin-heeled pumps clacked against the stained wood of the shop’s floor. When she had finally picked something from the shop and taken it to the counter, the acrylic nails of her left hand had tapped at the countertop while the right hand was focused on her cell phone. She had a habit of rubbing her lips together and then checking her reflection in a small handheld mirror to make sure her bright pink lipstick was still on. Mr. Franz has a tendency
to smack his lips together when he talks about her pink lipstick. Mr. Franz had taken his time to wrap up the antique she had purchased because he both wanted to irritate her and his arthritis made wrapping presents difficult and slow-going. As soon as the item had been finished, she had snapped the bag up by the handles and strode out of the ship quickly. Mr. Franz audibly prayed to God that he would never have to deal with the woman ever again.

Mrs. Josephs swears she saw the woman go from the jewelry shop on 12th Street and walk down Main Street, non-stop to the meadow. In the meadow, the cicadas were chirping and buzzing in the long grasses that swayed with the late afternoon breeze. She bangs her cane up and down and points to the meadow with the long end of it. We all have a tendency to get hit by Mrs. Josephs wildly flying cane because Mrs. Josephs doesn’t have the best hand-eye coordination. “I tell ya, that’s the path she took. There wasn’t no heels or bakery stops. It was once she left the jewelry store that she went to the meadow. And there she stayed.” According to Mrs. Josephs, the woman was a greasy thing. Long, thin, greasy black hair hanging down around her shoulders. It was unevenly cut and not styled well at all. Mrs. Josephs clearly remembers Waters shaking his cup of change at her, but she had ignored him. The bakery was closed as it usually does on Fridays. Her eyes were black and beady and set entirely too far in her pale face. Her right leg limped a little. Her feet were cracked and dry from the cement and her toenails were slightly yellowed. “In short,” Mrs. Josephs says, eyes glinting and cane thumping triumphant on the ground, “she looked like a walking corpse.”

Mrs. Josephs’ husband is a bit of a drama queen and thus waits until Mrs. Josephs gives her final piece. He barges into the conversation, many times interrupting sentences and cutting off thoughts, complete with a wagging, admonishing finger. “Don’t believe this old bat! She don’t know what she’s talking about.” For him, the woman was a tall, ebony skinned goddess. He remembers it was a Monday night, the sun had already gone down but the cicadas were louder than ever. That’s why he was outside, he remembers, listening to the cicadas make their summer music. She was bald, but that only added to her statuesque beauty. She towered over him as she strode past. Mr. Josephs shakes his head and says, “I’d be surprised if she even saw me or knew I existed.” She passed him by so close that he could smell a spicy floral scent on her: cinnamon, jasmine, orchid, paprika. He blushes a little when he mentions it, but she had not been wearing anything when he saw her. She reminded him of a goddess, ethereal beauty and flowing grace.

What we can all agree on, however, is what happened when the woman got to the meadow. No matter what day or hour or age or race or attitude, when we tell the story, the woman falls to her knees and begins to crawl through the meadow. When we tell the story, her fingers skate through the dirt at the end of each stalk of grass and her knees dig into the ground. The long grass bobs and sways with the wind as she disappears into the yellow-green shoots to trace her way through the meadow. When we talk about the woman, she continues like that, searching the meadow, for weeks. When we tell the story, we say we spent the first few days watching her from our house and apartment windows. We say the shopkeepers who had the most direct view of the meadow kept an eye out for her. We say they would keep their eyes peeled for any sign of the woman and spread it around town. When we tell the story of the woman who suddenly came to our town, we say that the food and water we left at the edge of the meadow was picked at by local wildlife.
SELECT WORKS

THE REST
HANNA BRUMLEY

STATUES
OLIVIA SHERMAN

HOW TO BE A GROWN UP
MIKAELA FOREST

Selected for their strength as works of art, both in craftsmanship and insight, the following pieces are explored by Puget Sound faculty to exhibit their depth and recognize their achievement.
THE REST
HANNA BRUMLEY

Violet-tinged toadstools have appeared in my grave.
They care not of the confines of my coffin:
too soft to stop
they poke in curious heads to meet my own.
I fret they might leave me lonely again.

Months pass and I am comforted.
No season seeps here.

Subtle stars have shone above me
in the rotten wood.
The gentle specks elongate and twist into pale roots
winding so close to my face
if I still had a tongue
I'd take a taste.

A family of rabbits lives in my ribcage.
Their little hearts
quickly beat where mine once did
they pay a pleasant visit to my feet
my head
on their many commutes.
Sweet air saunters
through the tunnels of my grave.

Today, it smells like a storm.
I am so excited
I hold my breath.

The tunnels have collapsed into the toadstools.
It is a bone and root and dirt and mushroom soup.
All of the rabbits got out okay.
The day after the storm
I felt warm sunlight on my kneecap
my first warm ray.
I grinned so wide
I used every tooth.

Now I can sleep in the spring.
My bed is equal parts dark earth
and fallen cherry blossoms.
My coffin is a mere skeleton
Each rotten board an aged companion.
I feel sun and wind and rain
and just now, a funny little scratch on my shoulder blade.

A little bird told me
whispered
thank you.
What does it mean to rest? When I read Hanna Brumley’s poem, “The Rest,” I was somehow reminded of the German proverb, “when I rest, I rust,” not because the poem exemplifies this notion, but because it counters it. The poem situates itself in a grave, but is anything but static. It teems with life in the midst of a death.

Within the poem, the body of the speaker is met by many forms of life that enter the “grave” to greet them. “Violet toadstools” playfully poking their little faces into the coffin to meet the speaker as they rest. Unsatisfied with the limitations of the coffin, they leave, which is something the speaker is unable to do. The movement of being and the passage of seasons leave us time to linger on specific images, such as the “stars [shining] ... in the rotten wood,” which don’t remain fixed in the sky of the coffin’s wood, but move up and out and into the earth in a new form. I simply love the movement in these lines. Soon the decaying body of the speaker becomes a shelter to rabbits, as well as the birthplace of a death: the tunnels of the protective earth and coffin and body collapse and mix into a stew of decay and the life cycle continues unabated. There is something comforting in the passing of matter into matter, some ecological truth that the poet confronts not out of fear or sadness, but with a matter-of-factness that capitalizes of rich imagery.

At the heart of Brumley’s poem is the contrast between positive and negative. “My bed is equal parts dark earth / and fallen cherry blossoms” conjures both the fetid, swampy decay of death and the promise of new life. But in a quick turn, that promise the cherry blossoms in their new sweetness provides is whisked away by their state of fallenness. This, too, shows how the final resting place of the poem’s tormented speaker is equal parts release and cause for anxiety. Within this penultimate stanza, the resting place’s (“[m]y coffin”) own physicality (“[e]ach rotten board”) has transcended the role of container and morphed into a kind of physical being undergoing its own form of decay. Through this, the speaker of the poem experiences a kind of resurrection and is lifted from the depths of the earth towards the elements that brought them into being in the first place.

When I reach the end of the poem, I wonder: is the rest that of the German proverb at all? Maybe it’s another kind of rest: that which remains. The way ashes pile up after a fire or leaves decay when the tree has shed them. Maybe in this case, the poem itself is what remains. And what better gift to receive in the absence or passing of a thing?
“Statues” depicts a triad of focal points - fragmented figures - which congregate with an abundance of texture, pattern and material. She provides us with the metaphysical ideas of Roman and Greek mythology, as well as religious tales of the Bible, through reproductions of recognizable classical statues. The full figure, Venus De Milo, an ancient Greek statue depicts Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty. To the left, a bust of David, the biblical hero who defeated Goliath. Originally in its full form, placed prominently in Florence, a stern gaze affixed on the threatening power of Rome. Finally, a fragmented face skewed and cut off by the picture plane. The shawl draped around it builds an image of Michelangelo’s, Madonna of Bruges in my mind. How do we explain the world around us, or the emotions we feel, alongside our belief systems? Icons of our past, these figures represent ideas about what may govern an individual’s psyche, sense of morality and one’s own perceived order of truth.

Pairing these with a variety of textures and natural objects, she achieves diverse tactility. Branches, bark peeled and frayed, and pinecones, with their rough scaling, lay piled and balanced in the foreground. An expanse of polished, glossy tile work of a gold hue dominates the background. Sensibilities of a cold smooth surface are imbued on the statues by rendering them with blues and subtle yellows. Experiences of these textures are telling as they provide a foundation on which we build perceptions of our environment, a wealth of knowledge used to navigate and develop our own awareness, moving closer and closer to universal fact.

While Sherman’s painting is a strong inquiry into how color depicts material, form, pattern, light and space, I find myself poised to question ideas of existence and perception. What is real versus not real, what do I know versus what do I believe? The painted image furthers this notion. It is the task of the artist to both interpret and showcase their perception of the world, thus giving the viewer an opportunity to recall, evaluate and gauge an awareness of how they define themselves.
Pay extra attention this time when Miss Harper stands up to get everyone into their spots. You’re already sitting perfectly still on your carpet square, back straight, head slightly tilt, fingers intertwined into one big fist. You leave your thumbs out for twiddling, just like you’ve seen the investigators do on Law & Order.

Look closely. Watch how Miss Harper stands, how she swats at her bangs, how she places her hands on her hips. Don’t be a perv, like Joshua from fifth grade told you you were when you were watching Isabelle play hopscotch with Kendall and Brianne on the playground. Convince yourself you probably are not a perv. The girls in your class are just nice and they smell like flowers. You don’t pay attention to Joshua, because he isn’t a grown up. Still, make a mental note to figure out exactly what being a perv means. Tap your pointer finger to your head a few times, like mom always does when she is trying to put something to memory.

Now Miss Harper will say settle down, settle down, and no one will listen to her because they aren’t mature like you are. Watch her exhale loudly, roll her eyes and mutter fuck it, under her breath. She will go to her desk, unlock the bottom drawer, and pull out a secret water bottle. Wonder why she has to lock up her water bottle. She will walk outside the classroom, and take a big swig from it. No one will notice but you, because you are the only who cares enough to act like a grown up.

When Miss Harper is back outside the door, note how before she re-enters the room, Mr. Reynolds is with her and he touches her thigh right at the hem of her skirt. He tries to kiss her. Pay attention to how Miss Harper turns her lips away and blushes. Wonder why Mr. Reynolds then grabs her arm so tightly, and why Miss Harper is pulling herself in the other direction. Feel a little bit scared for Miss Harper, but relieved when she finally wiggles her way back inside the door. It reminds you of how your dad grabs your mom sometimes. Look back at Mr. Reynolds red and scrunchy face and see him mouth the word bitch. Wonder what Miss Harper did to make him so angry. Wonder what mom does to make dad so angry. Look away to avoid eye contact with Miss Harper, but you aren’t quick enough. She walks directly up to you and says don’t stare and mind your own business. Wonder if this is advice for kids or for grownups.

After school while your mom is at work and your dad is who knows where, turn on the TV for more observation. Decide to stick with the channel it is already on. It is MTV. You settle in, eyes wide and reflecting the blue hue from the glowing screen. You listen to lots of stories about famous grown ups who are too fat and too skinny.

Pay attention to the stories about the grown ups who go to the normal hospital again and again until they finally have to go to a special hospital for 28 days. Wonder why the special hospital is so bad, because it looks like a vacation. Figure out they go to these places for drinking too much. Make another mental note to find out what kind of stuff they are drinking that makes them all so sick. Wonder if it is just something that everyone will experience when they are grown up.

Remember to look up if cocaine is different than hot cocoa, because from what you can tell it looks more like powdered sugar. Pay extra attention to the pictures and videos of the grown ups you have watched in the movies. Wonder if Isabelle and Kendall and Brianne will be as skinny as Mary-Kate Olsen when they are older.
Wonder why the boy from Home Alone looks so different now, and listen closely to try to understand why he is in jail. Remember the time when you were left home alone for a whole night and most of the next day because your mom was out of town on a last minute work trip and your dad was suppose to watch you but you assume he forgot and that’s why he didn’t show up. Worry that being left home alone when you are a kid leads to going to jail when you are grown up. Consider asking your dad about it, but remember how he told you never to talk about it again, especially not to mom. Remember how he threatened to beat your ass.

Stay focused and pay attention to the music video on the screen now. Recognize the word ‘bitch’ from earlier with Miss Harper and Mr. Reynolds and begin to count the number of times the rapper says the word during the video. You wonder why the rapper has so many girlfriends, what happened to their clothes and why they all want his attention so much. You watch the rest of the video but don’t understand why the girlfriends like his music so much because it doesn’t sound very good to you.

Your dad will walk in the door now. He was supposed to be home when you got home from school to make you a snack. That makes the fourth time this week he has been late. Now it is dinner time and your stomach is growling. You’ll tell him you’re hungry and he’ll grumble. Tell him again because maybe he didn’t hear you. God damn it, he’ll say, give me one fucking second. You watch him stumble around. He opens the fridge and you see his face light up from the glow of the humming machine. Look at his dirty clothes, his unwashed hair. Jacob told you that his dad works at the district attorney’s office. Jacob had said, my dad fights bad guys! You’ve heard your dad complain about that place, and you imagine he works there too, as a judge. Maybe a police man.

You snap out of it because you know that isn’t the case. Your dad will rummage in the fridge some more and suddenly hurl a mostly empty carton of milk behind him. You were standing in its way and you have to quickly leap to the side to dodge it. The milk left in the carton will spill all over the floor. That bitch, your dad will mutter, can’t even keep the damn fridge stocked, he’ll say. You add another ‘bitch’ to the list you had started earlier – it makes 19 times you’ve heard it said by grown ups today. You wonder if it is some sort of nickname boys use for girls, because you think you’ve definitely discovered a pattern. You think back and wonder if the girls in the videos were bitches. You wonder if Miss Harper is a bitch. You wonder if your mom is a bitch.

What the hell do you want? Your dad yells angrily at you as he notices you’re still standing in the entrance of the kitchen. You can smell the beer on his breath all the way from where you are standing. Dart your eyes down and remind him you are hungry. He glares at you and knocks the empty cereal box and a pile of papers off from the counter and nearly tramples you as he heads to the door to leave the house. Assume he is going to get you both food. Hope your mom comes home early because you miss her. Think about all the times you watched your dad scream at your mom late at night after she came home from work. Remember how she apologized for leaving you at home with that monster, but that someone needed to make money around here. You are a little confused because on the TV shows it is usually the mom that stays home and makes the food while the dad goes to work with a suitcase and shiny tie everyday. Wonder why your dad doesn’t make the money so you can stay home with your mom all the time and not always have to miss her. Try to stay strong because you don’t want to turn into a grown up that misses his mom.

When your mom gets home two hours later, your dad hasn’t come back and you’ve been crying. You’ve been trying to distract
Have you ever read a story or poem or novel at two different points in your life and found yourself reacting differently to it each time—feeling almost as if you’d read two separate texts? We bring our perspective and experiences to what we read, and since those change over time, so the text seems to change, too. This phenomenon comes to mind when I read “How to Be a Grown Up,” for the story relies upon the irony of twin perspectives: a child observes and tries to understand the adult world, and the adult reader recognizes how troubling the child’s lessons are. Through first-person narration readers identify with a young boy, recalling, perhaps, painful moments from our own youths; simultaneously, we relate to the adults, recognizing ourselves or others in a series of uncomfortable exchanges, unmet responsibilities, and grand and petty abuses. The strength of the story lies in its insistence upon this double identification. Helplessly, we watch the child retreat from the nurturing and guidance he deserves and internalize the messages that engulf him. Simultaneously, we contend with the fact that, as adults, we are not helpless, should not be helpless, and yet here we are—implicated, responsible, for we know that this boy, though fictional, is also real, and we contribute to the culture that shapes him. I read this story from the perspective of a “grown-up” who is also the mother of a young child. I wonder if it would seem different to me if I were younger and unattached. Perhaps, but I have the uncomfortable sense that I have read it from both perspectives, and I owe that sensation to the author, who has created a complex and emotionally honest work of fiction.

PROSE REVIEW

TIFFANY ALDRICH MACBAIN

Have you ever read a story or poem or novel at two different points in your life and found yourself reacting differently to it each time—feeling almost as if you’d read two separate texts? We bring our perspective and experiences to what we read, and since those change over time, so the text seems to change, too. This phenomenon comes to mind when I read “How to Be a Grown Up,” for the story relies upon the irony of twin perspectives: a child observes and tries to understand the adult world, and the adult reader recognizes how troubling the child’s lessons are. Through first-person narration readers identify with a young boy, recalling, perhaps, painful moments from our own youths; simultaneously, we relate to the adults, recognizing ourselves or others in a series of uncomfortable exchanges, unmet responsibilities, and grand and petty abuses. The strength of the story lies in its insistence upon this double identification. Helplessly, we watch the child retreat from the nurturing and guidance he deserves and internalize the messages that engulf him. Simultaneously, we contend with the fact that, as adults, we are not helpless, should not be helpless, and yet here we are—implicated, responsible, for we know that this boy, though fictional, is also real, and we contribute to the culture that shapes him. I read this story from the perspective of a “grown-up” who is also the mother of a young child. I wonder if it would seem different to me if I were younger and unattached. Perhaps, but I have the uncomfortable sense that I have read it from both perspectives, and I owe that sensation to the author, who has created a complex and emotionally honest work of fiction.
We were massacred. We were executed. We were defeated. We were annihilated. We were put out of our misery. We were a menace to the university. We used to be students at the university, before we turned. We were someone’s children, and we left behind parents who were now forced to contend with the idea of their kids eating other kids. But at any rate, we were finally gone. The trick to killing us was in the spinal cord, apparently. We learned this after seeing our classmates die in these ways. We learned this too late, for we died in these ways. We learned the many ways to kill a spinal cord: we exploded, we burned, we saw the world somersault for half a second before falling out of existence as our heads were severed from our necks. Why is everything upside-down? Wait, I’m still here, I’m still… But anyway, we all died.

We first turned on a rainy day with plump, clear puddles that later turned red. We remembered nothing of our time as zombies, existing primally in the present and consumed with everlasting famine. We remembered bits and pieces, pieces of flesh and bits of bone that delighted our tongues and calmed our bodies with brief moments of satisfaction. We remembered the first person we killed, right out the classroom door and into the neck of an unsuspecting freshman—I almost got his lanyard stuck between my teeth. Or halfway down the hallway and our fingernails digging into a professor’s back—He was a hard-ass, anyway. Or at the bottom of the stairs in pursuit of a boy whose arms we were dying to rip off—I’ve never wanted anything more in my entire life. Or we could only stand amongst the chaos of humans now aware of danger, and...
something primal buried deep in our brains left us paralyzed with desire—I’m so overcome, I should be shaking. Why aren’t I shaking?

We remembered someone specific that we killed: a friend, a lover, a former lover, an acquaintance, a girl we vaguely recognized—I think I worked with her on a presentation for that one philosophy class—a professor we loved, a professor we hated, the Dean of Students, the President of the University, someone with the best blood we had ever smelled in our short lives as these changed creatures, and—oh god, was that me? Did I do that? What am I doing what’s going on why has this happened to me holy fucking shit help me get out of this rotted corpse monster this isn’t me—but we were always okay in the end because our minds were full with hunger and there wasn’t room for anything else when we were nearly crying with joy as we sunk our teeth into bodies.

Our minds whirled with a dizziness most of us associated with drunkenness, less of us with fainting, and others with panging cramps brought on by menstruation. We knew we were dizzy with a hunger that burned up all it was given and roared with endless dissatisfaction. It also occurred to us that our roaring, burning hunger was in fact burning us up from the inside out, that it was killing us. We realized this early on, figuring we were infected and these were the (absolutely wonderful, absolutely horrible) symptoms. We became Faustian, likening our cannibalistic consumption to a practice not permitted by the Heavens that would result in our hellish downfall. If I were still taking British Lit, I’d be able to write a pretty decent paper. We became Gavroche in Les Misérables, a boy made of dirt and revolution, who sang, “Everyone’s equal when they’re dead!” Then why do some folks get monuments and others get an unmarked hole in the ground? We became Shakespearean, finding ourselves in Denmark of old where Hamlet wondered to be or not to be. That wonder led to another question none of us could answer: to be or not to be what?

We realized we were dying later, when we stumbled over a crack in the sidewalk and saw that we had lost our toe, broken off like Venus de Milo’s stony arms. I saw her in the Louvre when I studied abroad in Paris, and I wondered if anyone would ever find her arms again. We ran fingers through our hair and pulled out stringy strands. Disgusting. We curled into the fetal position as the hunger ripped through us. This must be what dying feels like. We never realized we were dying and if we were not shot in the spinal cord or blown to bits then it came like a grandmother pulling a needle through a thread, bit by bit until it was pulled tight and tied off and by then the life was squeezed out of us.

So we were dying. Then why not suck every last bit of meaning of our lives while we could like juice through a straw—getting right to the last drop—or was it more like wading in a black ocean and grasping for ground with our toes, searching for coast but only seeing water everywhere and forever? I need a lifetime to understand it all. So what’s the point of that? Better to find something, one thing, and hold on to it until we lost our grasp on it—a friend, a book, a faith—although, of course, we would lose these things too. I swear to God I put my Bible somewhere. No point in fighting it, but we tried anyway. We searched for cures in scattered biology and anatomy textbooks, science and non-science majors alike. I haven’t even taken Bio since freshman year of high school. We evaded those who came to campus to eradicate us and keep our menace from spreading outside of the school; we tried, but we didn’t evade them for long, so no point to that either. If we tried to keep living we just got closer to dying; the faster we sped down that unfinished bridge, the sooner we drove off of it. But at least I got to drive. Right?
We lost everything. We lost our friends and we gave up. We lost our fingers and we gave up—*I just wanted to keep my pinky, that was all I wanted*. We cried, and when we found we had lost the ability, we waited for the end to rush up to us. We hated the others. We hated ourselves. We wanted everyone to die. We wanted to die. *But God, if they all die, let me die too. Don’t leave me alone like this.*

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**ARMADILLOS IN THEIR BURROWS**

**CLARISSE NAKAHAMA**

Hard shelled armadillos made homes in your lymph nodes and wandered their way through the crawl spaces of your body. They rolled and multiplied their way through your veins until they found your perfect liver and your untouched brain.

When the doctors scanned your body and saw armadillo burrows backlit against your bones, I grasped your elbow and pressed my face to your scratchy floral printed hospital gown. And your arm wrapped around my waist and your breath puffed against the horizon of my hairline.

And everyone in the room said that the armadillos that didn’t die by chemotherapy could be cut out by doctors’ scalpels. But no one talked about the armadillos that snuck past your defenses, curled up in the warmth of you, and refused to move.
UN AVERTISSEMENT DE L’ÉQUIPE DE SENTIER
EMILY SMALDONE

Nous sommes maçons de la terre, c’est notre métier : les sentiers sous vos pieds sont nos ateliers. Là, où la terre cède sous nos outils en fer, trouvez un passage vers le sommet dans l’air.

Là, l’homme, grâce à nous, peut jouer l’invité, mais la montagne n’est riche en hospitalité.

(La montagne parle)
La neige tombe ! Et homme, que feras-tu maintenant ?
La glace brise ! Bienvenu à un tombeau gelant.
La chanson sirène de mes pentes t’a tenté à les essayer sans attendre l’été.

Pour les sentiers de l’homme, nous sommes bien responsables, mais pour son orgueil, il lui-même est coupable.
Sometimes when you’re drunk, you laugh like this:

That stilting sense of exaggeration is always there. You can’t help it. The rhythm slips away from you like it slips away from me.

I wrote a song based on your laugh. I got rid of the accidentals and extended the phrase to resolve on the tonic. Though now I think I should have left it as it was.

Of course, we don’t laugh according to some predetermined notion of melody. Laughter in this sense is aleatoric. There’s an element of accident. It tends toward disorder.

But even with its aberrations, there’s something natural about your laugh.

I would play it on the guitar, but you’d probably laugh. And the song would slip away from me like the vibrations of a string tending toward equilibrium.
FRIDAY’S DEPRESSIVE EPISODE
DENISE PARRY

On Friday morning I didn’t go to class, usually I email an explanation but I don’t lie and I’m sorry, I was afraid my sadness would be too loud. I was too empty to talk about religion today anyway might be worse. My faith has no knees and my sadness is all elbows. Sometimes I stop eating to get closer to God, I eat too much to get closer to feeling something again. It’s not a contradiction, not knowing what I want. I know I don’t want to keep moving towards April. The fourth year of drowning in mermaid tear stained loss. I don’t want my heart to keep gnawing through stomach lining over unfortunate unpacking. My splintering chest spread on the circulation desk. Cycling between have a baby and ride your bike into traffic. Wondering if I exist or if I want to when I don’t know if I ever have.

On Friday afternoon I didn’t go to work. Five hours drifting between the void of sleep and the void at the heart of the abyss of humanity that grows in my bedroom walls. Frightened Rabbit wailing Well I can dip my head in the river, cleanse my soul, oh. I’ll still have the stomach of a sinner, face like an unholy ghost. One crack in the wall colored orange. A version of myself reads books in bed, highlights passages that make me feel, dissecting my own heart to see if it is beating. Trying to remember what being a person felt like. Before the ocean inside my lungs. What had made a mark?

On Friday night I got out of bed. Orchestra music filtered my emptiness through a sieve. I could survive on granola bars, white rice and sriracha again, a calling for a third season of fillet line therapy. I don’t like the version of myself I’ve constructed since the last. Need to collapse, rebuild again. Abby, ask me what I’m living for. She lives for the bible, her church and unity. There are grooves in the floorboards where her knees have interlocked with faith. Floors of my future life have been preparing for inevitable collision. Nearly two years since she asked me how did you grow your heart? I lived to put more love into the universe. Maybe. I had some kind of faith in that moment. I can’t feel any love for myself in this state. Abby is married now, she won’t be in Alaska when I go back but I need to be more than I am at the Friday night party where I wrote poetry in fridge magnets, danced in a way that felt like lying, and drank raspberry cider that tasted like Emergen-C, but didn’t taste like being alive.
Sometimes when I wash my hands in the bathroom, I don’t turn the lights on so I don’t have to keep my head down the whole time. Lately my boredom’s been rising and my dining dollars have been stagnant. When was it that I stopped looking forward to the weekend? It’s funny how I’ve been saying “it’s funny” more and more, because nothing’s funny anymore. My showers are slowly getting longer. I used to hate the smell of roses while walking through rose colored days, now I just hate the smell of roses. Self-delusion actually worked, once. I guess I still need to hold something tight to fall asleep at night. I’ve never actually liked wearing scarves. Maybe we can go back to a time when our endings weren’t so ambiguous.
Remember, your fingernails grow long so you can paint them shiny blood red
and see your face in them
like ten mirrors you keep with you at all times;
you don’t have to grow them
to open up the seams on someone’s back
and watch speechlessly as the rushing blood paints them red
if you don’t want to.

Remember, your hands are there to play a harp that only you can hear,
not to hold the burning mercury problems
of someone who doesn’t care
to hear the song that you’re playing.

Remember, you alone have made the effort to replace your veins with gold chains
so when something tugs on your heart strings,
instead of snapping open,
you can hoist a chandelier into the cavity of your chest,
a huge crystal in the middle
pouring righteous light into a dark room
until it is full.

Remember, you have worked to build yourself into a china cabinet
with strong wood sides like a boat
and pink plates within that have not been broken.

Remember, you have adorned yourself so much in your own indulgent love
that now your tongue drips with bronze,
a clear bell glittering and ringing triumphantly into the cold air;
others can try and taste if they dare.

Remember, you are impervious to rust.
SOME THOUGHTS NOW THAT IT’S OVER
TALENA GRAHAM

September 22.
• You didn’t say that you broke up with her. Instead, you looked at me, lifted your hands in the air and said: “I’m free.”
• The maple leaves were a brilliant orange and covered the trees, had not yet begun to fall. The sunlight cast dappled shadows on the sidewalk and the branches waved slightly with the wind.
• I thought about a story I read once about Anne Boleyn. On the day she was executed, it was rumored that Henry VIII and Jane Seymour wore yellow and danced together.
• You grabbed my hand as we walked and your thumb rubbed soothing circles against my skin. It was the only point of calm running through my system.
• I avoided talking about what you said and instead told you about my English class. Pointed symbolism and “The Dead” by James Joyce. How sometimes everything can change, when nothing changes.
• We ended up at the playground of an abandoned school. We climbed onto the island, laid down side by side. One hand gripped the holes in the plastic flooring and the other hand gripped yours. My left ankle intertwined with your right foot.
• I read off the vandalized writing, scratched in Sharpie onto the top of the roof.
• Your head turned to look at me as I spoke and I fell silent as I turned to look back at you. There was a magnetism when your voice pierced the air: “Do you want to go back?” I nodded.
• We pulled away from each other for a moment and in the low light of your room, I whispered, “I don’t know what I’m doing.”
• You laughed and leaned in.

Two weeks later.
• You write descriptions of people in your phone, next to their name. For example, you had one of my roommates listed as “Alix NO DRUGS smart nice.”
• Liz used to be “Liz Moore (Girlfriend).”
• I became “Rose Hallstein (Sweet).” She became “Liz Moore ().”
• If I thought we had a chance, which I didn’t really, because I even knew before we started our quasi-relationship I knew you too well. Knew how you felt about her too well. Knew that if it was going to happen, you needed to get over her, not stop thinking about her.
• You needed time and space. I didn’t give you either.
• And you left those parentheses.
GIVE UP ALL HOPE FOR A BETTER PAST
AIDAN REGAN

Cascades of syllables discording in the coffee shop
and solitude your fault, your own accord.
These days have passed as ellipses...

Leave them behind you lest you close your own frontier.