Wetlands Magazine, Issue 15

Gender and Queer Studies Program, University of Puget Sound

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wetlands magazine

spring 2019

issue 15
These last several of years have brought with them many fears and anxieties about the state of politics, and what the future holds—particularly for marginalized groups. Xenophobic policies, withdrawal from climate agreements, refusal to recognize transgender people, and the sky-rocketing prices of college education—in addition to racist, anti-queer, sexist, and classist rhetoric (both within and outside of the Trump administration) all characterize our contemporary political moment. For many, this political moment does not hold hope or prosperity but fear and anxiety. And these fears and anxieties are entirely valid and justified.

It is also important to remember, however, that these problems are not new or unique to the Trump Era, but have been features of the U.S. for as long as it has existed. As such, these fights do not end with a new executive but are part of continuous struggles to unlearn and reimagine more liberatory worlds—both for ourselves and our communities. It’s easy to feel overwhelmed and exhausted by the number of challenges that face us now, and in the future. Yet, as long as there have been systems of power that are constantly capturing resistance, there are also paths of escape and refuge along the way. There is revolution in our forms of creating, in how we build community, and in how we care for each other.

The magazine you are holding has pieces from students and alumni alike, featuring poetry, prose, and art that explore questions of identity, lived experience, and embodiment. There is power in these pieces, their honesty, and their willingness to explore difficult questions. This issue of Wetlands features pieces that about sexual assault and harassment, colonialism and erasure, anti-queerness, anti-Semitism, and gender dysphoria. Each piece is meant to spark dialogue, critical conversation, and reflection both among readers and within the broader campus community.

I am so grateful to be a part of a magazine that takes seriously questions of embodiment, power, and identity—finding power in creating, despite the overwhelming impulse to retreat and into feelings of withdrawal. Thank you to those who submitted, to Rachael and Sarah for your endless work, to the Wetlands staff who makes this magazine possible, to Professor Priti Joshi for her support, to Media Board for their guidance, and to you, for reading.

With love,
Hannah Ritner
Wetlands Magazine provides an inclusive, accessible, critical and safe form for students to amplify marginalized voices and facilitate mutual education through the celebration of intersectional art, poetry, literature, performance, and advocacy on the University of Puget Sound campus.
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CW: themes of violence
Look how effortlessly the grass sways in the breeze
its soft movements
subject to the whims of the wind

Look how rays of sun dance on the water
the gentle ebb and flow of the tide
lapping rocks on shore

How gently, how naturally,
they receive the touch of nature
how they move and change form

And look how I move

in this body of mine
In every infinitely calculated motion
my voice, gait, stance, space
crossed legs I will soon correct
afraid to move, afraid of moving wrong
in this body I am trying to inhabit

My gaze returns to the water
as we listen to the rustle of the grass

Take my hand and move with me
dance with me
at least here,
on this cliffside,
we will make our bodies home
I never thought of my artwork as a reflection of my identity, since it never seemed to be a conscious choice. Ever since I started drawing and painting, I was interested in the female form. Looking back, it's almost ridiculous that I never realized why I was so fascinated. I now know it's because I'm very gay! I used to look at my art from a rational perspective, assuming I was drawn to the female form out of aesthetic pleasure. In hindsight, that's probably due to societal heteronormativity. It's not as if I was raised in a homophobic environment—I'm lucky enough to have come from a loving and accepting family—but I still felt an intrinsic need to be “normal.” I think trying to convince myself that I was straight was a fairly hard task, considering half of my artwork was of naked women. Art was the outlier in my deluded sense of self and I think that was what helped me come to terms with my sexuality and be comfortable and accepting of it.
who is she!

Quin Severo
“So,” Jessica says, “who do you like, Val?”

Valerie Entimes shuffles the glass bottles resting on her knees and thinks before she answers. The air is hot and stifling, thick with the stench of cheap scented candles. On her desk, a cluster of her favorite yellow roses bobs and weaves, heads too heavy for their stems. The dim light hurts her eyes, and bright polish stiffens and dries on her freshly painted nails. Dark purple slowly hardening into a flaky shell. She resists the urge to pick at the loose polish and leans forward with a sly smile. She’s thought about her answer for days now, considered every boy and thought about who would be the least annoying to have a crush on. She’s got a good one, she knows; even better, no one else in her little group likes him, even though they all agree he’s nice, so he’s safe from any drama.

“Zeke,” she announces with aplomb, and sits back with a satisfied little grin. Jessica shoots upright, and Nina gasps, pausing momentarily from the knotted bows she’d been looping in Carla’s hair for a dare.

“Zeke!” Jessica says. “Oh, I knew you were making eyes at him.” Her own eyes are wide and bright. She reaches over to smack Val’s shoulder. “What the hell! You never said!”

Val gives her a wide smile, giggling at the accusation. “It was a secret!” The other girls go around, congratulating and commenting. Val beams throughout it all, cheeks hot, smile soft and pleased with the attention.

“You’d look cute together,” Nina adds, with a thoughtful hum, and Val flaps a hand and lounges in her chair. “Oh, stop!”

But just like that, the comment has set off a wave of endorsements. “You really would be cute,” Heather says, and Val shrugs it off. “Adorable,” Carla says, laughing. “I think he’s been looking at you, too,” Gina says. Before Val can react, Jessica leans forward, takes her hand, and says, “Oh, has he really? Damn, girl, ask him out!” Val waves it off. “Are you kidding? I couldn’t—” “Ask him out! You should!” “I’m eighty percent sure he likes you back!”

“You think so?” Val says, and her smile isn’t as bright anymore. The glow has faded and the nerves have arrived. She wrings her hands. “No, wait—”

Jessica squeezes her hand. “I’ll help,” she announces with a smile befitting a

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**Artist Statement:**
This is a story about discovering, or perhaps just coming to terms with, being asexual and/or aromantic.
shark.

Val feels something in her chest falter. The rose glow is gone and the warmth has gone cold. Even the bright roses on her desk have lost their color. Val forces a smile. This is good. She likes Zeke, he is nice, and her parents will have nothing to complain about. What is the point of owning a flower shop, her dad liked to say, if he couldn't help that special someone buy her the right flowers? This is good.

“Okay,” Val says, and smiles, and when they smile back she remembers to like it. She twists the ring on her middle finger, black iron cold against her skin. The purple polish, still drying, tugs insistently at her fingertips. “So, uh… What do I do?”

The first thing they do is pick a day and time, and the next thing they do is choose an outfit. Something cool, something pretty, cute but not too noticeably different. Nina promises to do her makeup—she has a steady hand with eyeliner—and Jessica cleans up Val’s messy nails, replacing the purple with a pretty pale pink. Two days come and go, and then Val walks up to Zeke at the end of their final class, just as planned, and asks him.

“So,” Zeke says, “You… like me?”

“I mean,” Val says, and tucks a strand of hair behind her ear. She feels strangely feverish, hot and cold all at once. “Yes.

So, um… would you like, then, to go…?”

His eyes are wide. “A date?”

“Y-yes?”

Zeke looks down at her and beams, bright and joyful. “Oh, wow,” he says. There is red in his cheeks and a warmth in his smile that makes something in Val go tight and uncertain. “Of course! How about Saturday?” Zeke asks.

“Wonderful,” Val says. “That’d be wonderful.” The words are sticky and forced. She rubs the smooth polish on her nails and watches the pink fleck off. Her hands are sweaty. She thinks she might be ill. Even his agreement isn't enough; his smile makes her feel small. She peeks to the side and sees Jessica hovering over by the desks. Her smile is bright, her thumbs-up enthusiastic. Val smiles back, but something in her has gone strangely cold. Saturday is three days away. It seems too close. She almost wishes it would take forever. She isn’t ready, she thinks. She still needs more time. Nothing is fitting quite right. Val doesn’t say this, though.

She goes home and rifles through her closet and this time she picks out the outfit all on her own. She looks in the mirror and then down at the flowers on her desk. Yellow roses sitting bright and wilted in a brightly-colored vase, their soft color blinded by the sheer white light. Val goes to bed and tries her best to sleep. The air is hot, her blankets stifling. A heavy knot lumps in
her throat. Behind her eyes she keeps seeing Zeke’s smile, the way he looked her up and down, and the light in his eyes, bright and unfamiliar. She doesn’t understand, and she doesn’t sleep well.

The days go on, but something has changed. Love is different, Jessica likes to say, so that must be it. Love. Everything slow and caught as if in molasses, her mother’s delighted smile at the news and her father’s roaring laugh and the way it curdles in her chest. “It’s about time,” her mother says, and Val tries to smile with her.

She gets gifts; the very next day, Zeke hands her a large bundle of giant red roses and a letter that is more a poem. Over the top and sweet like sugar. Jessica calls him an “old-school romantic.” Her other friends roar with laughter over the silly poems and ooze delight at the gifts. “Keep him forever,” Nina advises when Val shows her the letter. “He’s sweet.”

The roses are bright and red as cherries, and they’re too big for Val’s usual vase. She throws out the wilting yellow roses, puts the vase back in her cupboard, and finds a bigger one that can fit the flowers—this vase is bland and colorless, clear as crystal and just as empty. The red of the flowers cuts at her eyes. The scent of cheap candles and roses is so thick she can barely breathe. She hides the letters in her bottom drawer, shoved all the way to the back.

On Saturday Zeke takes her their first real date. Zeke’s a newly licensed driver, and there is something very impressive about the car pulling up with him at the wheel. “Mature,” Val’s mother says, and her father nods in approval. They like Zeke, even though they’ve never met him. The day Val told them she had a date they smiled so wide it looked like it hurt.

They hand her off with smiles and waves, and Val climbs in the car with stiff shoulders and a stiffer back. She’s wearing a pretty party dress, something nice but not too nice, as Jessica likes to say. Zeke looks her up and down before grinning. Her skin is crawling, but Zeke is a nice boy with a nice smile and so Val tries her best to smile back.

They go to a movie and then to a newly opened pastry shop, and Zeke is exactly as Val’s friends say he is: sweet—sugary sweet—kind, and honest. “What a catch,” Jessica would say. He holds open the door and pulls out Val’s chair with a nervous smile. When Val asks him not to, he nods and steps away. He’s nice. He is so very nice. Val picks at her cake and feels a lump rise in her throat. She can’t breathe right. She feels something hot and painful behind the eyes. She can’t finish her food.

On the drive back, Zeke pulls into a nearby park. He turns to look at her, and Val doesn’t know what he wants until he reaches out and cups her face, coming in close. Zeke leans in to kiss her, and all Val can think is that he is too
close. His hand on her hand, his body near hers. She can’t stand it. There is something bright in his eyes that she can’t reflect. Something in his smile that she cannot mimic. She thinks of red roses and colorless vases and scented candles, of her mother’s relieved smile when Val told her about Zeke, as if to say, “at last.” She thinks of sleepovers and that question, always that question: Who do you like? They asked it over and over and over, until finally Val grew tired of being the only one who never had an answer. Never a name. No boys, no girls. No one.

Zeke goes in to kiss her, and Val pulls back. She watches Zeke’s face closely when he opens his eyes and looks back at her, confused. He’s a nice boy. It is why she picked him. She had lined up all the boys in her head in neat little rows and wondered who would be the best to like. That’s just what love is, Jessica might say, but then—maybe Val just isn’t built for this kind of love.

“I can’t do this,” Val says, staring at Zeke.

She sits up straight and turns to open the car door, fumbling with the handle. Zeke is still. Val sees him reach for her and slips out of the car before he can catch her arm. She feels strangely calm, now, saying this. She is no longer shaking. She does not feel ill. She finally feels right, and maybe a little sorry, too, because Zeke really is a nice boy.

“Sorry,” Val says. She looks up at him from the road, car door in her hand.

“Sorry. I just can’t do this. Thanks for the ride.”

Val doesn’t wait for an answer. She closes the door hard before Zeke can respond and hurries away down the road. She walks all the way home, only stopping by their flower shop to take a handful of blooms from their shadowy vase.

When she reenters the apartment proper, she bypasses her parents and ignores the show they still have on the TV, some old romantic comedy that Val has never understood. She slips into her bedroom, and the first thing she does is grab those twelve red roses from the colorless vase and throw them all in the trash. The letters and love poems follow. She empties out the stained water, puts the clear vase away, and digs through her cupboard to find the usual vase, stripes of purple and green like a flag. Val fills it from the tap and settles the new flowers in their perch.

Then she sits on the bed and starts to wash the pink off her nails. With a bottle of purple polish, a color she knows is right, Val devotes herself to the task of making these nails hers once more. In the small vase on her desk, the yellow roses bloom bright and true.
untitled
Ally Abraham
soft transition
Anonymous
Artist Statement:
This is a two-page piece reflecting on transition of the body, mind, and seasons.
14th of Adar 5779—March 20th, 2019. I’m sitting at home baking hamantaschen—triangle-shaped cookies filled with jam or jelly. It’s Purim and I’m feeling guilty. Guilt, at least as our greatest comedians tell us, is a fundamental part of the Jewish experience. Every year we sit in shul refusing to eat, just to remind ourselves of everything we did wrong the past year. On Passover we make ourselves sit through the longest dinner ever to remember how bad we used to have it. But not on Purim. Purim is the one day in the Hebrew calendar where we can celebrate without remembering, when we can eat sweets without having to dip anything is the tears of our ancestors and get so drunk we can’t tell the difference between Good and Evil.

So why am I feeling guilty? Purim is one of the weirder Jewish holidays. It commemorates the time a Jewish woman named Esther won a beauty pageant to become Queen of Persia and subsequently saved the Jews of Persia from the evil machinations of the King’s advisor, Haman. The Rabbis of antiquity took great care to make every observance have a vital and specific meaning, but Purim feels like the afterparty. It’s celebrated with rowdy costume carnivals, slapstick spiels retelling the Purim story, and a lot of booze. The Romans actually banned Purim parties in 408 C.E. because they were too wild. And that line about drinking so much you can’t tell the difference between Good and Evil—that is a real commandment from Jewish religious law. If you were to visit Crown Heights or Tel Aviv on Purim, you might think you were walking through Mardi Gras, or, more to the point, Pride.

The Megillah is by no means a feminist text. It begins, for one, with the king of Persia (one of the good guys) killing his previous queen because she won’t strip for his friends. Nonetheless, it features a female protagonist who is largely depicted as strong, intelligent, and to varying degrees, autonomous. In the end, it’s Esther who gets the credit for saving the Jewish people, not the King, not her uncle Mordechai, and not even the male-gendered G-d. Esther has been an important character for Jewish women for centuries, but Jewish feminists in the 60s and 70s transformed her into an icon of Jewish Feminism.

Following in their footsteps, queer Jews in the 70s and 80s embraced the festival of Purim itself as symbol of
queer Jewishness. The holiday’s campy costumes and joyous atmosphere fit well into a type of queer culture that was developing at the time. More importantly though, it was a celebration of a relationship that would have been condemned by Rabbis and even today can lead to ostracism in some parts of the Jewish community; the Megillah never chastises Esther for her relationship with a gentile. It’s not hard to see why LGBTQIA+ Jews would see themselves in the story.

I go to a synagogue in San Francisco founded by these queer Jews in 1977 as a place where both their queerness and Jewishness could be fully embraced. In recent years, my shul has deemphasized its queerness, attracting many straight people, including my parents. But there’s no question who this shul is for on Purim.

All day, I’ve been contemplating going to services with my sister, who’s helping with child care. Unlike most people, I usually like going to services. What’s making me pause today is the party afterwards. This year my shul’s annual Purim rager is called “Gender Schmear,” and it’s complete with a free shot of slivovitz for all and a drag queen named “Lady SinAGaga.”

I’m hesitant to go to this party not just because I’m an introvert, though that is part of it. As I sit at my kitchen table folding cookie dough, I realize going to this party would feel like a lie. A lie? A lie to who? I’m gay. I’m out. I’ve been out for five years and I’ve known I’m gay for ten. Still, typing those two words feels strange. Saying them out loud sounds stranger. In retrospect I don’t think I even said the words when I came out to my mom. Why do these words feel so foreign to me? Why did it take me five years to come out? It’s not because I wasn’t sure or because I didn’t feel safe. A memory crosses my mind, something I said once as a joke; “I’m gay, but I’m not that gay.”

What does that even mean? I realize how ridiculous it is but I also know exactly the image I have in mind: flamboyant, ostentatious, talks with a lisp. We all know the archetype. It’s only just now that I am realizing how much my mind recoils from the image—how much I define myself as not being “that gay.” I think about times I’ve prejudged, avoided, or fought with people who fit this image too well. I think about how many queer female and non-binary friends I have, and how few gay male friends I have. I think about how I choose my wardrobe specifically to be plain and blend in, and how I’m afraid to go into gay bars or even queer spaces on campus.

Part of me feels like an imposter. Like I will walk in to one of those spaces and everyone’s head will turn to give me that look that lets me know I don’t belong. But part of me feels superior.
Superior because I'm not defined by the gayness—as if anyone else is, or as if that that would be a bad thing. Where did this prejudice come from?. My parents always let me and my sibling know that being gay is okay. I’ve always had queer friends, queer teachers, queer rabbis. Why do I have so much internalized homophobia?

I think back to walking down Castro street as a kid with my parents. Watching the “antics” of the crossdressers, a word my mother only stopped using a few years ago, and my parents’ reactions subtly communicating to me that we were glimpsing a world of some other. I think about my grandmother telling me in the Brooklyn accent she kept 70 years after moving to Long Island suburbia, “it’s okay if you’re gay, just don’t come out until I’m dead,” and about my mom’s joke that I should come out at my grandmother’s Shiva a few months ago. Finally, I remember my mom telling she was worried now that I couldn’t marry a nice Jewish girl who could take care of me. The message was implicit; it’s okay if you’re gay as long as you act straight, as long as your partner plays the domestic role, as long as you’re not ostentatious about it. As long as you’re not “that gay”.

There is something else that’s bothering me though. The rabbis tell us that after Pharaoh’s army perished in the Red Sea, Moses admonished the Hebrews for rejoicing in the death of God’s children.

No such mercy is found in the Book of Esther. The story concludes with Haman’s execution at the hands of King, and the issuing of a royal decree allowing the Jews of Persia to dispense with their enemies as they see fit. Just before the Happily Ever After, we are given a list of the people killed by the Jews in each Persian city.

On Purim 1994, Baruch Goldstein, an American-born Israeli settler, opened fire on Palestinian worshipers at the Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, killing 29 people and wounding 125 more. The Ibrahimi
Mosque/Cave of the Patriarchs is the traditional burial place of the prophets Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Leah, and Jacob, revered in both Islam and Judaism. The complex’s presence makes Hebron the most contentious city, after Jerusalem, in the West Bank.

After Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, an agreement was made allowing Jews and Muslims to pray at the site on different days of the year. However, in 1994, Purim coincided with Ramadan, meaning Jews and Muslims would be praying at the site simultaneously. The night before Goldstein massacred 29 innocent people, he attended a reading of the Megillah at the site of Abraham’s tomb in the complex. Reportedly, he spoke of the need to handle Palestinians the same way the Jews of Persia dealt with their enemies. Goldstein was a member of Kach, a far-right Israeli political party led by American Rabbi Meir Kahane. Kach was subsequently banned in Israel but a new generation of Kahanists have joined a new coalition of other right-wing forces. Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu, facing his toughest re-election campaign in years, has actively invited them to join his coalition.

So here I am sitting in my kitchen, lazily pouring jam into dough triangles, feeling like a liar. Purim is a night of queer Jewish pride, and I am proud to be a queer Jew, but it’s more complicated than that. Every holiday in the Jewish calendar is about remembering; remembering our ancestors, remembering that we suffered. On Purim, we forget. Purim is the night to just be queer Jews. No apologies. It’s something we deserve. It’s something I deserve. Yet I can’t do it. I can’t pretend to celebrate this raucous holiday without acknowledging the violence it has provoked. As proud as I am to be Jewish I can’t help but feel uncomfortable displaying pride as long as a Jewish State is occupying Palestine. I can’t celebrate my queerness unequivocally so long as I have so much fucked up internalized homophobia. To do so would feel like a lie to myself and to my community.

Part of me feels guilty for thinking all of this but another part of me believes it would be wrong not to. Gershom Scholem, the founder of academic Jewish Studies, once wrote “[Jewish history is full of] a fundamental uncertainty of orientation in this world.” I feel like this is as true for Jews as it is for queer people. We’re both people who have lived at the margins of society, who have been alienated from mass culture. Even when we are invited in, we never feel fully comfortable. Never quite sure how long the acceptance will last. It’s fucked up and we deserve a respite but it’s also what made us who we are.
I take my hamentashen out of the oven. None are quite the perfect triangle I wanted but I’m okay with that for now. One day I hope to have hamentashen with precise 60-degree angles. One day I hope to have worked through the prejudice that keeps me from embracing my queer identity. I hope to have figured out how to embrace my Jewish identity without giving up on Palestinian solidarity. One day I hope to be able to go to the Purim party and have a good time. For now though, I’m happy to be uncertain of my orientation in the world. It’s weird and difficult and even painful at times, but I think it’s what I need right now.
Artist Statement:
This self portrait is important to me because it blends femininity and masculinity in a way that I’m comfortable with. It’s always scary trying to draw/paint myself because I often feel like it’s a battle between an uncomfortable reality and the romantic idealization of the way my gender is perceived.
magnolia sweet, nearly miasmic
hangs over the old carriage house
prize 4H goats
gruff
held in reverence of the mud around us
perhaps we are inferior motor oil
butches, cowhide & chickenshit.
unrequited love with all
but the land and calloused flesh
are you into life? i sure am & yet
i wonder when you say you’re “not into
politics”
city queers make me
pick my cuticles
if we keep our similarities secret are we
different? are we unified or more likely,
have our spaces
encouraged
hiding the greatest gift
vulnerability as a means of
division,
exclusion and isolation?
wading through nettles in cow pastures
community is strongest
nothing to theorize away, only practice.
Over several months, we first-years realized that the 100-person lecture hall did one thing right: the professor’s metallic hijab shone as divine prophecy in the morning sun. Today, my years of improper hearing grabbed my shirt collar and dragged me through the fog of misunderstanding; my disability was finally an ability, sort of. I managed to eke out her spiel about how crucial the course’s content was for us as spiritual caregivers in today’s interreligious societies. But just as her lecture got into a groove, we came to a screeching halt to understand the context of our classmates.

Some introductions sounded for the tenth time in the past weeks, a few were heard for the first time. I tried to change up my story a little this time; I attempted to abridge the story of my military chaplaincy, recalled that I’d been involved in scouting to provide a wholesome example to youth, and explained that I jump at volunteer opportunities with other indigenous people because I did not have that type of support while growing up.

I concluded my introduction and sat back, giving space for the next person. I heard “pronouns?” from several directions, ceasing all momentum. It occurred to me that I was not entirely sure how to answer the question. I thought about how the Army classified me, how I had broken my body to pass a fitness test at the toughest scale available. I thought about preparing my Army Service Uniform, thanking the breast pockets that helped me align the smattering of accoutrements.

Then my mind turned to when I would take the uniform off for the day; my gym clothes were fit, femme, and made me feel like a force to be reckoned with. I would not classify this style or the way I strut down the street as “male.”

Maybe another language held the key to how I described myself; I was nowhere near fluent in Japanese, despite my best efforts over the past fifteen years. I recalled every class paper and every conversation. But not a pronoun to be found.

**Artist Statement:**
Identity and pronoun usage are a few ways that have not shifted as I’ve grown and lived more within a Western context. This piece is a recent attempt to engage the various issues I have with classmates and colleagues as my indigenous self becomes more apparent.
I began to panic. What were my pronouns? How did I honestly describe myself? I needed to go back to a time before everything ran afoul, before English muddled my life.

I went back to our dilapidated mobile home, when we did have a home. I listened to my mother describe everything, learning how to connect with the world. I wasn’t sitting at a dinner table just yet; it was still a wáglotapi. I played in the yard with our šúŋka that our neighbor kept calling a “dog,” much to my bewilderment at the time. Who am I? slammed against the echo chamber of my mind until it hit me all at once like a brick to the brain. I used “hé.” My mom used hé. My dad, if he knew the People’s language, would use hé.

Our šúŋka used hé on the rare occasion that communicating with humans was absolutely necessary.

I looked about at the faces staring back at me, seeking clarity. I opened my mouth but nothing came out. “Pronouns?”

I thought extra hard about how to translate what I have always known but just now understood. Forcing my mouth into different shapes, I squeezed my diaphragm. “Pronouns are acceptable.”

untitled
Quin Severo
what was love?
Sarah Johnson

Love with you was smoke breaks,
With only five minutes to spare,
We always made time for each other.

Love was our comfortable friendship,
Our first kiss out back of a Lorde concert,
Chain-smoking and talking with strangers.

Love was joking around in hotel rooms,
Smoking on the balcony, people-watching,
Sipping on cheap wine and talking about art.

Love was our friendship,
Our adventures in girl bars,
Dancing and enjoying our moments together.

Love with you was different,
It was passionate, it was cinematic,
And it was free.

Love was the cigarettes you offered me,
The food you made me,
The socks you gave me.

Love was the eight flights of winding stairs
I climbed
Every time I wanted to see you.

Love was when you watched me leave,
Maneuvering the tunnels of the metro,
or at my gate in the airport,
Waving to me as I left from your sight.

Love was the lessons that I learned,
The freedom that I felt,
The happiness that I had.

Love was about you,
But it was also
About me.

Artist Statement:
A poetic examination of my experience as a queer individual and the relationships that I had while studying abroad in Paris, France during the Fall of 2017.
golden gate
Mushawn Knowles

so
who holds the key
to the golden gate
dying to get in
i can’t breathe
gasping for air
drowning
in a golden lake
my safety net
my fortress
my unforgiving fate
lungs halfway empty
or halfway full
the tool of perception
can also be
the weapon of fools
striving against
what seems predestined
can’t fathom a truce
a never-ending war
with an unconquerable truth

Artist Statement:
Born in the beautiful city of Tacoma, Mushawn Knowles is a queer musician, poet and spoken word artist. In the process of crafting their own unorthodox style over the years with many influences, artistic expression has become a haven and an outlet for their lived experience and imaginations.
roots, pt. 1
anonymous

you wrap me in your grasp
an embrace
too tight too close
I can’t breathe
you steal the air from my lungs to keep me there
so
I can never leave you
never run
never soar
I will always need you
to hold me to rock me to keep me down
always down
desperately seeking a taste
anything that would make me free
you lift your hand
cover my eyes and hold me tighter
you won’t let me go
never ever will you let me fly

roots, pt. 2
anonymous

you are the one that haunts me
I run and I run
there is no trace of you when I sit and rest
I look down
and see you there
Inside me with me all around
you never leave me be
with you there is no peace
I am lost and faltering
you touch me where it hurts the most
you shatter everything I am even from a million miles away
you tear me to shreds with just one glance
I cannot heal I cannot rise
you are the force that birthed me that holds me and hurts me
always
learning to be again
Sarah Buchlaw
untitled
Ally Abraham
There is a voice that calls to me freedom
Don’t fall back into the dark you crawled from
Stay
You bled for this you dreamed of this in the days your tears were the only warmth you had to call your own
And now
The light is soft and steady on your tired soul
Stay
You are safe here you are free here
Never go back
If you do
You may never, ever return
From that forsaken place you used to call
Home
Sometimes I find comfort 
in your arms, 
others, your words enrage me— 
   (It depends on the day, I guess)

But on the days you think you know what happened, 
speak as though you were in that room that night 
and tell me you ‘get it’ 
   (I know you’re only trying to help) 
   (At least I hope so)

‘me too’

Gritting my teeth, 
I dig fingernails into fleshy palms, 
four crescent moons

You don’t get it, 
because no one does 
   (Not him) 
   (Not even me)
Anonymous
untitled
Lia Chin-Purcell
At Wetlands, we seek to make our magazine accessible to all people. In line with this, we ask that everyone practice self-care when engaging with difficult themes. In asking that, we would like to provide a few 24/7 resources, should they become relevant and necessary:

- National Suicide Prevention: 1 (800) 273-8255
- Trevor Project: 1 (866) 488-7386
- Rape Crisis: 1 (800) 656-HOPE (4673)
- Eating Disorders: 1 (800) 931-2237
- Trans Lifeline: 1 (877) 565-8860

Additionally, some on-campus resources include:
- peerallies@pugetsound.edu
- chws@pugetsound.edu
- pugetsound.edu/report