Crosscurrents: Spring 2018

Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound

Follow this and additional works at: https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/crosscurrentsgallery

Part of the Fiction Commons, Fine Arts Commons, and the Poetry Commons
Crosscurrents Volume 59, Issue 2
Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound
https://www.instagram.com/crosscurrents_ups
https://facebook.com/CrosscurrentsMag
Contact us: ccr@pugetsound.edu

All rights reserved by authors and artists

Crosscurrents would like to thank Chandler O’Leary, 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.

Printed and bound in Lakewood, WA at PRINT NW on FSC Certified 100% post-consumer recycled paper.
editor’s note

I’ve looked through ten years worth of Crosscurrents, trying to figure out what to say in this note. With that, I can tell you a few things: each semester, the students who participate in Crosscurrents do an astounding job cultivating a collection of the top literary and art submissions; we’ve had the privilege to interview some amazing Pacific Northwest authors and artists; and our design has shifted over the years, from type-writer text to a serif font. We experimented, from spoken word CDs to digital magnetic poetry to back to our roots. Each edition, each experience, completely unique, but nestled together. The student experience is stagnant, but shifting.

I wanted a lot out of my last semester in Crosscurrents. But Crosscurrents is not about a single person’s vision, a single goal. It is a byproduct of meaningful conversation by our editorial staff, each person who submits, and the thought put in by our guest contributor. With that, I want to thank our editorial staff, for the time and energy they put into submission review; everyone who submitted, for the passion they put into creating their work; and to Chandler O’Leary for her amazing printwork. I feel so lucky to have spent my college career contributing to this beautiful publication. Enjoy.

Talena Graham, Editor-in-Chief
Contents

i  editor’s note

iv  guest contributor /// chandler o’leary

1  Saint Marie de la Mer /// Kiri Bolles
2  Des Vaches d’Abcoude /// Sarah Johnson
3  homes /// Katharine Threat
4  Ivan Denisovich /// Rowan McDaniel
5  The Children of Dublin 8 /// Kate Rogan
6  The Smallest Crack /// Sophia Lautt
8  Emmy /// Kelsie de la Ossa
9  Grandmommy /// Allie Lawrence
10  Untitled /// Hadley Reine
11  Observance /// Sadie Wagnell
12  Out-of-State /// Zoe Peritz
14  Angler Fish Furs /// Sophia Munic
15  Divest /// Daniel Lloyd
16  Potentialism /// Alona Stroup
17  November 3, 1885 /// Colin MacRae

selected works
22  Grocery Quartet /// Micah Ackerman Hirsch
   professor review by Professor Suzanne Warren
24  Love Yourself /// Emily Katz
   professor review by Professor Jonathan Steele
26  [Insert Name Here] /// Linnea Stoll
   professor review by Professor Regina Duthely
29  10:37 /// Sam Kaplan
30  swallow /// Kylie Gurewitz
32  Sustained Pose /// Megan Breiter
33  Molasses /// Emily Harman
34  Fingers and Fractures /// Emery Bradlina
35  cliché /// Sam Kaplan
36  Snap /// Siena Brown
38  Breathe /// Brittney Covington
39  after laughter /// Morgan Dilling
40  Sunday, Spring 20– /// Claire Helmberger
41  Sing! /// Yuki Morgan
42  Library Betrothal /// Pouami Wielga
43  Lost in the City /// Colin MacRae
43  Old Turquoise /// Emma Brammer
45  The Glory of Winning /// Angela Cookston
47  about the cover artist /// Kiri Bolles
CCR: Who or what has influenced you the most?
Travel is by far my biggest influence. I’ve lived in a lot of places, and traveled to many, many more—and most of my ideas revolve around a sense of place. Travel has introduced me to the work of other artists, and a whole world of ideas and themes—and much of my work is now centered on drawing parallels between them and creating a larger narrative. Whenever I am feeling stuck or my ideas feel stale, it’s travel that gets the wheels turning again.

CCR: What motivated you to begin pursuing a career in art?
I’ve been drawing ever since I was old enough to hold a pencil; there was never a time when I didn’t want to be an artist. I majored in illustration at RISD, then worked for five years as a graphic designer while I did my own work on the side. In 2008 I moved to Tacoma—since I had to quit my job anyway to move cross-country, I took that as the opportunity to go full-time with my work. Working as an independent artist (at least for me) requires a lot of multi-tasking and doing many different types of work. You hear a lot of metaphors about that, like wearing all the hats, or putting a lot of eggs into a lot of different baskets. The one I like to use is the idea of being the admiral of a rag-tag little fleet of ships, each representing a different part of what I do. Whenever I add a new ship to the fleet (like for instance, when I started doing public art a few years ago), I find I have to put most of my energy into steering that new ship for awhile—but once it’s on its way I can let it go on autopilot for a bit. My “gallery shows” ship, for example, is on almost full autopilot: enough people invite me to shows now that I don’t really have to actively apply for them anymore. My “letterpress printer” and “teacher” ships are in drydock, and I’m currently piloting the “author” ship through some rough seas. Obviously the metaphor is a cheesy one, but it’s pretty apt.

CCR: What encouraged you to start Anagram Press?
After I graduated from art school, I moved to Minneapolis to work as a graphic designer at a firm. My boss was on the board of the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and he encouraged me to check out the classes and artist programs there. I got into letterpress printing, and it’s a tradition that anyone who prints their own work makes up a press name as an umbrella moniker for what they’re doing. That press name became official when I incorporated as a legal business; at the time it encompassed all my freelance and fine art work, but now that I work for myself full-time, it’s simply one branch or “brand” of what I do. The name Anagram Press is a nod to the history of letterpress printing.

CCR: What was your thought process when constructing your book, Dead Feminists?
The Dead Feminists, which is a collaboration with Tacoma artist
Jessica Spring, did not begin as a book—it started (and is still going) as a letterpress broadside series in 2008. So we’re approaching ten years of collaborating together and combining the words of historical women with current political and social issues. Our publisher, Sasquatch Books, approached us about the possibility of turning our series into a book, and until she brought it up, the thought had not occurred to us. It took more than two years from that initial email to holding the finished book in our hands—the first six months of which was just figuring out what kind of book it would be. There was a lot of back-and-forth with the publisher, and a lot of balancing of what we envisioned with what they thought would sell. We had originally thought our book would be more about the artistic and printing process, but in the end it became more of a historical/biographical book—and that worked out for the best. But it really felt more like evolution than anything else, with changes and ideas coming about very gradually, with a lot of trial and error.

CCR: Do you start a design knowing exactly what you want the final product to look like? How does that process occur?

Yes and no. Sometimes I’ll have a very clear idea in my head, and the finished product gets pretty close. Other times I have absolutely no idea what I’m after, and I just experiment until I hit upon imagery and concepts that I like. Most frustrating (and most often) is when I have a clear picture in my head, and then I am absolutely incapable of matching it in real life. That happens to me all the time, and in those cases, the finished product is equally likely to be a delightful surprise or a bitter disappointment. It’s easy to get caught up in that, and let the fear of mistakes paralyze me from ever starting. So all I can do is do my best to trust my own instincts, and see what comes out of it. I also remind myself that if I’m not happy with a finished piece, I can always try again. Another constant refrain for me is “done is better than perfect.” For me it’s infinitely better to create something, even if it isn’t what I envisioned, and put it out there in the world, than to labor forever on something that’ll never be finished, and that nobody ever sees. I think this is at the heart of what it means to be a working artist. It’s hard to call yourself an artist if nobody has ever seen your work, and you’re afraid to put something out there because you’re forever chasing perfection. This is where deadlines come in handy, at least for me. I’m very respectful of deadlines, even if it means the finished work doesn’t at all match what’s in my head.
CCR: What advice do you have for someone interested in becoming a professional artist?

I think the two biggest skills you can develop are drawing and discipline. Even if you don’t end up working as an artist who draws (a painter, an illustrator, etc.), drawing teaches you to be observant—to notice the world around you, and to put what you see down on paper in some way. If you can learn to be observant, you’ll never lack for ideas. Drawing also helps you understand what you see, as it forces you to really look and study whatever you’re drawing—like exercising a muscle, developing a drawing practice makes you stronger as a designer, observer and storyteller.

Discipline is a tougher “muscle” to develop. People talk about artists finding “inspiration” and “creativity,” but the reality of working as an artist is that sometimes you have to come up with ideas and make art when you don’t feel like it, or when you’re tired or sad or sick. This is where discipline and habits really come in handy. If you can get in the habit of showing up every day, rain or shine, distractions or no distractions, and making something—it might be a drawing, or a photograph, or a rough idea, even—you’ll develop the discipline you’ll need to be a professional artist. You’ll also make an incredible amount of work this way! Just by showing up every day and making something,
good or bad, you’ll quickly accumulate an ever-growing portfolio of art. The more work you create, the more people will be able to find you and follow along with you—and the more work you create, the more work you’ll want to create. That’s the beauty of it. By exercising that “muscle,” ideas will start flowing more easily, and you’ll find your own unique voice that way.

CCR: What drew you to Tacoma, and what is your favorite part about living here?
I had wanted to move to the Northwest for several years; the region combines the best elements of some of my favorite places: the sea, the mountains, and the North. When my husband and I decided to move out here in 2008, we were open to just about anywhere in western Washington, but he happened to get a job in Tacoma. We decided to give it a try, and moved here sight-unseen. We fell in love with it, and have put down permanent roots here. My favorite part of living here, other than our amazing (and amazingly supportive) arts community, is being close to water again—and more specifically, having access to the islands, which are some of my favorite places on earth.

CCR: What do you think is the most artistically inspiring place in Tacoma?
You just can’t beat Point Defiance Park. It’s still my go-to place for a long walk, a dose of the woods, or a splash of color whenever I need it. I also love Tacoma’s many hillsides, and the incredible views they offer in pretty much every direction. That means that there’s an inspiring view to be had almost wherever you are in town—I just love that.

Find more of Chandler’s work at chandleroleary.com
DES VACHES D’ABCOUDE
Sarah Johnson

HOMES
Katharine Threat

which

one
blurry, nearly forgotten, loud
green couch up forty floors
trips without pictures

two
brick, brick everywhere
brown floor brown dirt red fence white fence
pigtails in your hands
wild strawberries too small to eat, red
pink walls and pink shoes
green grass and white fake sand
a gray soft cat purring

three
a dining room, eggplant shades
in a white white house
with green grass and black shutters
and black dogs and blue
rooms, the color of the sky but
better, a butter colored yellow kitchen
overlooking tire swing trees
that whispered warm welcomes
in soft white wind at morning
They were rough boys, tumble boys – side eyed, freckle faced, tough boys.

They were catcalling, fire starting, out-of-my-way bike riding,

“Whatcha gonna do about it? Fight?” boys.

They were expert fence climbing, smoke bumming, five-finger-discount pop robbing poor boys.

Maybe if they weren’t nobody-cares-where-I-go-at-night boys, they might have had time to be young boys.
THE SMALLEST CRACK
Sophia Lautt

Deeply moored
beneath a carpet of clay,
some gravel, decaying humus,
and a warren of refuse--
a limestone cave swells
in a small cavity of dripping bedrock.

This place is quiet and drowsy.
Soft floor is warm to the skin.
My father left his skull down here
because he thought
it was a good enough place,
a warm enough place, to survive.

I too, find myself reassured
by the thickness of the air
that fills my head and coats my blood.
Like the soft and steady deposition
of wet calcium.

But many sunken layers above
the sun dogs your steps,
exposes your wrinkles,
and bleaches your eyes.
I cannot blame my father for his choice,
for I may yet choose the same.

But I would like
I would like,
to see the stars someday--
awash across a windy desert.
And a cactus flower in bloom.
Memory fades herself faster than fall leaves change color. She decays your thoughts like the rope on the swing that can no longer hold any weight. She scrambles your mind into a puzzle before shredding the most important pieces. A scene lights up on the screen behind your eyes. Three little boys hoot as they race by on bikes, “Mom, watch me, watch me!” they holler, but Memory has scratched away their eyes, distorted their laughter, blurred their smiles. A man shows you a fuzzy video of you and him, golden bands unite ring fingers as lips collide. Memory destroys the VHS tapes of your mind. The man asks for a hug as he takes your hand, but you recoil like a tape trying to rewind. Food stares at you. Mouth forgets to chew. Memory scratches herself like a record she skips, skips, and abandons ship. Lungs neglect breath, speech slurs heart draws a blank.
I learned that a group of starlings 
is called a murmuration, 
and I thought about the starlings in my yard 
in the early morning, 
and about the cupboard full of ghosts, 
drawer after drawer of overstuffed skins 
with silent mouths and loud eyes— 
They know how to keep a secret. 
And I thought about how 
I’ve spilled my secrets to all the wrong ghosts—those blurred faces in the dark shadows 
of bright rooms stinking of beer and youth. 
With my hands over my eyes 
in that endless night of my own making, 
I was so sure that they would not return, 
but they came screaming through their wide eyes—murmuring like the starlings, 
a tumultuous translucent cloud 
that breaks over my head 
and settles in my gut; 
and I thought about how 
I never notice the birds until they have fled.
college is hard because
when you want to get a Poetry Magazine subscription
you aren’t sure where to send it because you’ll be back home in three months
at a different address
in a different state
and when you come back to college your address won’t be the same anyway
so you wonder if you should have it sent to your house and then have your mom save the three issues you’ll miss so you can read them over summer
but what about when you go back to school?
will you be able to change the address on the shipping to your new one or will you have to start a whole new subscription and cancel the old one
so you think about it and you think about it and you think
but you can’t figure out the best option so you just don’t get the subscription.
you didn’t really want it anyway

the same goes for reordering antidepressants
you don’t know where you’ll be when you need a refill
the bottles will last you for three months but what about the nights you forget to take them or don’t want to or just can’t that’s more than three months and you’ll probably be back at school by then

so you panic and don’t reorder them.
you didn’t really need them anyway

and when you want to be happy
you aren’t sure where to find it because your heart is in two different places
plus in the library and the dining hall and at the beach back home and on a plane somewhere in between

and happiness doesn’t get through security it’s taken with sharp objects and more than three ounces of water you can’t take it with you because the happiness laws are not the same in all states so you don’t hold onto it.

OUT-OF-STATE
Zoe Peritz
Can you keep a secret? I’ve been getting rid of my trash lately. It’s a tedious process if you want to do it right. Since you’re so trustworthy I’ll tell you how. First, separate the trash based on the receptacles that you will be using. Make sure that each pile of trash isn’t full of all the same items, but that there is a general coherence to the items. That is, try to make it look like somebody entirely different than yourself has lived their life consuming these products. If you are trying to throw away tins of cat food, make sure that you find a receptacle that belongs to somebody who owns a cat. If you throw away Coke cans don’t do it in the trash of a diabetic. Try to learn what types of people eat the same kind of foods that you eat and throw your food waste in their bin. A pink-stained styrofoam meat tray would be entirely out of place at a vegetarian’s house. Find a selection of bins in your neighborhood. Later on, expand your circle to encompass whole counties until your nights are spent driving around disposing of individual articles of refuse.

If you do this, eventually your life will be spread out among countless others until it’s thin enough to see through and, with any luck, disappear.
The men were for the most part silent. They gathered in lines of four, just too wide for the sidewalks. They walked in the middle of the street. The owner of the grocery store on C Street stood by Mayor Weisbach. Officer Wilson was flanked by William Christie, a carpenter, Charles Joles, a schoolteacher, and Renwick Taylor, lawyer. Some men wore coats. Some wore hats. Almost all men wore holsters.

MOB DRIVING CHINAMEN OUT OF TOWN. WILL YOU NOT PROTECT US.

Opening the door, she saw what seemed like a thousand grim men with pistols, rifles, shotguns, and clubs gathered around the shack. She slammed the door shut and shrieked when the man who’d knocked pushed the door back with a kick of his steel-toed boot. She tripped over her dress and fell backwards onto the dirt floor. Her husband rushed to her. A shotgun stock swept through the air and he crumpled beside her. The man with the shotgun spat, glancing at the stock. No blood. He wiped it on his trouser leg anyways. A younger man who’d bought medicine for his mother’s cold from their market stall last winter walked in, knelt down, and grabbed her by the ankles. Her legs flailed and she kicked, reminding him of roping calves on his uncle’s farm in Puyallup. She was dragged from her home on her back like livestock towards a bloody stump, yelling her husband’s name in Mandarin like an incantation, a spell that would make these men disappear or take her far, far away.

A LARGE BODY OF MEN ASSEMBLED TODAY AND MOVED ALL THE CHINAMEN OUTSIDE OF THE CITY.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED. I REGRET TO HEAR OF ANY VIOLENCE IN YOUR COUNTY. CAN YOU PRESERVE CHINESE
FROM ASSAULT WITH THE FORCE AT YOUR COMMAND? IF NOT I WILL SO INFORM THE GOVERNMENT AT WASHINGTON. ANSWER IMMEDIATELY.

MOST OF CHINAMEN HAVE BEEN REMOVED BEYOND CITY LIMITS. NO PROPERTY DESTROYED. THOSE REMAINING WILL BE REMOVED TOMORROW. NOBODY INJURED BODILY. NO GOVERNMENT FORCE COULD REACH HERE IN TIME TO PREVENT REMOVAL TOMORROW.

LEND EVERY POWER OF LAW TO SECURE CHINESE FROM ASSAULT AND REPORT RESULT TO ME.

Men, women, and children slumped under the weight of their old lives gathered in burlap sacks and slung over their shoulders. The elderly and sick wept from their seats on the wagons that trundled south down the road towards Lake View. Rain cold as a gun barrel matted hats and the hair of those without shelter, slithering down their necks and soaking the blankets they shivered under. Muddy rivulets danced between their feet. Behind them, men with clubs prodded the stragglers as armed men on horseback guided the miserable flanks of the refugee herd down the soaked road.

PEOPLE DRIVING CHINAMEN FROM TACOMA. WHY SHERIFF NO PROTECT? ANSWER. GOON GAU.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED. I HAVE TELEGRAPHED FACTS TO THE GOVERNMENT AT WASHINGTON.

Charles Joles fired at the locked door knob. Wood splintered as half the door became a ragged hole. He grinned and pulled the door open. Renwick Taylor followed Joles into the home. It reeked of fish, rice, sorrow, and gun-smoke. The floor was dirt. The room was dimly lit by two lanterns that hung from the ceiling. Light also peeked in between the cracked door at the wall opposite. In the center of the room were two cable spools turned sideways to form a table, on which laid pieces of a clay bowl, shattered by Jole’s gunshot. Broth dripped from the spool table’s edge. A sound to their left made them both turn. Huddled in the corner was an old man with a long, hoary moustache whose spindly ends hung to his chin. A large, ancient pistol quivered in his hands. Its muzzle stared at Taylor. A child’s voice behind the back door made Taylor turn. As the old man rose and raised the gun higher, Jole stepped forward and swept the gun away. The pistol hammer came down on Jole’s thumb.

I AM NOTIFIED THAT AT THREE P.M. TOMORROW A MOB WILL REMOVE ME AND DESTROY MY GOODS. I WANT PROTECTION. CAN I HAVE IT?

Goon Gau’s home crackled under the hungry flames. Paper lanterns quivered and vanished into smoke before the advancing wall of fire. The thin posts of a cradle glowed like the ribs of an orange skeleton, sagged under its own weight, and crumbled moments before the entire house frame itself collapsed. But the flames were hungry for more. They hop-scotched across claustrophobic alleys and licked their way up staircases into web-filled corners, bursting from windows with a gasp to crawl over the shanty-town brick by brick as they ate, and ate, and ate.
selected works

GROCERY QUARTET
Micah Ackerman Hirsch

LOVE YOURSELF
Emily Katz

[INSERT NAME HERE]
Linnea Stoll

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.
GROCERY QUARTET
Micah Ackerman Hirsch

Pomegranate:

One time I woke up to a text that you had sent in the middle of the night, and you told me
how it was daytime where you were, and how you had cried in the hallway beneath an arch,
and I wrote you a poem that remembered how far it is from the port by the shores of Ashdod
to your mother’s house in Bangalore

Cardamom:

There will always be a part of me that remembers the cabinets in that ramshackle house on Hearst,
and how you held my hand while we listened to the tv in the other room,
and how we stood by the little stove with the pilot lights and counted the years until we could have one of our own

Rosewater:

Too expensive, was your last word on the subject
Ai, metuka sheli!
Has there ever been a price so dear that men in love wouldn’t pay?

Candles:

The saddest thing in the whole world is when one of the candles has all but burned out and the other candle just stops

POETRY REVIEW
Professor Suzanne Warren

“Grocery Quartet” takes the form of a shopping list. “Pomegranate,” “Cardamom,” “Rosewater,” “Candles” read the headings of the poem’s four brief sections. The links between stanza and heading are deliciously oblique; “Pomegranate” speaks of a text, a poem, and a house, but nary a pomegranate is in sight. In “Cardamom,” the speaker and the poem’s addressee watch TV and huddle by a stove. Sussing out the connections between verse and grocery items is part of the pleasurable work of reading “Grocery Quartet.” The reader sifts through seemingly offhand memories—a “text…sent in the middle of the night,” “cabinets in [a] ramshackle house”; slowly, they piece together a story ranging from Israel to India to points in between.

Gradually, too, the poem’s real subject comes into focus: time, memory, and loss. The speaker and their beloved live between continents, caught between time zones and rarely in the same place. The speaker receives a text in the middle of the night: it is daytime where the beloved is. Much of the poem is recounted as memory.

The speaker remembers the distance between the Israeli port city of Ashdod and “your mother’s house in Bangalore” and recalls a “ramshackle house on Hearst” where the lovers are briefly together.

But living in the present moment eludes the pair. Briefly together in the “ramshackle house,” the couple dreams of the future, “count[ing] the years until we could have [a stove] of our own.”

In the end, the lovers part. The taste of pomegranate and cardamom, the scent of rosewater, the light of a candle—these, we come to understand, are meant to summon the beloved, “Metuka sheli.” What began as a grocery list ends as elegy. “The saddest thing in the whole world/is when one of the candles has all but burned out and the other candle just stops.” The beloved is gone, but the speaker carries on, scrap of grocery list—or poem—in hand.
Depictions of vaginas have been part of art since art began. 35,000 years ago, people were creating artistic representations—sculptures and drawings—expressing the roots of what it means to be human, prominently featuring female genitalia. Any attempt to interpret the creation of these works—or the intentions of these artists—invariably reveals more about the cultural perspective of the interpreter than the creative impetus of the prehistoric artist. Patriarchy and systemic sexism has invariably meant that the interpreters have been male academics—the writers of history. This has been a constant barrier, influencing our understanding of these objects and depictions, consistently assuming male authorship and viewership. Assigning meanings such as fertility and sexuality, or primitive goddess-worship, clearly dumbs down and oversimplifies the experience and expression of artists across time.

With “Love Yourself” Emily Katz presents an intimately crafted, meticulously woven, unequivocally vaginal space. Katz’ use of deeply dyed red cloth, depicting flesh as stitched and sutured together, soaked in color, hung from a metal frame carries a visceral, corporal fragility. At first approach, I see violence. By expanding and broadening the scale of the work, offering a viewer a space to enter, Katz creates an experience for engagement with a powerful and vulnerable environment, sharply distinct from approaching a piece at object scale. As I look again, I see delicacy, yet also power. Empowerment.

The title, “Love Yourself,” suggests to me that this work is staking a claim, articulating exposure and requesting unanimity. As I consider the statement I am reading into, I realize it is not directed at me: MFA toting, art critiquing, Professor Male Gaze. Katz addresses a viewership of women, exalting a poised recognition of mutual womanhood. It’s not a claim for autonomy, it the empowered assumption of it. My position cannot be to analyze this exchange, it must be instead to pay careful attention and listen with deep respect.
She doesn't turn towards them like she should. She stands behind the counter at the downtown deli, hands bunched tight like wads of rope, eyes locked on something behind their heads. She pulls her hair into a thin bun to keep it out of the cheeses, wraps her apron three times around her waist to keep it from swallowing her whole. The damn apron has a mind of its own, she thinks. If she didn't keep it in check, it would consume the whole deli. She kills it with a safety pin. She wears a pair of white nurses shoes, sterilized with penicillin and two sizes too big. She's got these giant glasses– they magnify her eyes like moons. She has shoulders sharp as airplane wings; works after hours until her feet are rubbed raw like she's been running, though she stands petrified in place.

Sometimes, they come in to admire the shape of her. They stroke their fingers along the rim of her tip jar; they offer her prizes and pieces of fruit and compliments dripping with honey which she doesn't seem to hear. They give her their wallets. They take the tongues out of their mouths and hang them flapping in the air so that she can understand them better. She watches them warp through the glass of the deli counter; pilots her own lifeboat along the draft of cold air that runs from the air conditioner. She fights them with her eyes.

Objectification and Anger in Linnea Stoll’s “[Insert Name Here]”

Linnea Stoll’s “[Insert Name Here]” is a concise meditation on the struggle for the self in everyday spaces where people often go unseen. The unnamed protagonist struggles against the anger and frustration that threatens to consume her and “the whole deli.” Her work apron is the thing that confines her to the space. It is the thing that erases her identity in its attempt to “swallow her whole.” She is forced to kill the apron to retain even the tiniest piece of herself. The reader is drawn into the inner workings of the protagonist’s mind; a person who only exists as an object for the patrons of the deli. This creates a tightly wound, complex journey through the experiences of a human turned object turned human. Stoll’s story, though brief, is a complicated narrative that is precise and moving. The ambiguity Stoll uses throughout the story complicates the reader’s relationship to the narrative and the protagonist. You are never completely sure if the character is an actual person or some inanimate object in the deli. However, this seems to be the point. The reader is asked to confront what it means to live and be in a space where your existence is rendered insignificant and you are dehumanized. What does it mean to be hypervisible yet invisible and unnamed simultaneously? This is the experience of many women in society; constantly objectified and forced to quell the anger and resentment that they carry through their days. As the story closes the protagonist fights back the only way she can, which is to say, not at all. The reader is left to carry the emotional burden of the protagonist’s inability to resist her objectification in any forceful way.
and so the day begins,
lately i’ve been trying harder to notice things, like

how his skin seems to glow in sunlit rooms
and the beauty of clementines
before they are picked from the tree
and the times when
cold water on the tongue
is more than enough.

how the reddish sky
covered in washboard clouds
is to the eyes
what kisses are
to the neck.

i am doing laps in the deep end of doubt
as to whether or not there is any meaning
in these thoughts that do not cure disease
or release the oppressed

but they get me through
the day
so i will share them with you.

please, softly,
put these words
in your mouth,
chew and swallow
so that you can sleep
soundly tonight.
Tell me of the poems inside you too rough for paper and how you scrawled them into tree bark, carved our initials into its skin, spread sugar cane molasses over the stinging.

Teach me about heartbeats - how autumn stripped you of pigment, plucked my fingerprints from your flesh until you came to me, bare, and laughed so hard the maples lost their leaves.

Later, I harvest the letters left over on your splintered lips and I think about winter, how sap boils into syrup, how you are the only one who could make eating my words taste so sweet.
for which there is little left to be said:
being in love, the sea and sky, rain, hands, sex—
even as I list them, my mind freezes over
like Hell when I fall out of love:
awash in the storm, our hands match
the ardent verge of sea and sky.
When I snap Bryce’s favorite record, I accidentally slice my hand open on one of the jagged pieces. The gash stretches across my left hand from the base of my ring finger to my thumb. It is thin, but deep, and when it heals, it will leave a scar like a spider web. I was so lost in the photograph that I didn’t even notice the record under my boot until it cracked, but now I can’t forget it.

“Can you bring up a paper towel or something?” I shout down the attic stairs. I press my thumb as hard as I can to the cut, hoping the pressure will stop the bleeding, or at the very least relieve some of the pain. Instead it just starts bleeding harder, a thin ruby stream trickling down my wrist like paint. There’s a rustle and a bang downstairs and I swear Lena’s taking her time just to make me miserable. I stomp on the wooden floor and a cloud of dust coats my pant leg. The stairs sigh and suddenly Lena’s here too. Her black eyebrows are furrowed into a dark v, like some child’s crude depiction of a bird.

“Jesus, Mikey,” she says and hands the roll of paper towels out to me. It hangs there for a second before I take it. For some reason, I thought she was going to help me wrap it, but she’s not even looking at me. She’s just staring at the blood-soaked pile that used to be Nirvana’s Nevermind. As I grab the roll I see the ring on her finger, somehow shining despite the low light of the attic, and I wish I’d never come.

The box she sits on is labeled “Bryce—Music” in faded red sharpie, the c and e blending together like they always did when he tried to sign an autograph. Twisting her ring in little circles, Lena asks, “Did you find anything you wanted before you started breaking things?” She’s looking at me with those eyes, as sharp and golden as a cat’s, and I hand her the photo.

Mike’s Garage, ’92, the back says, again in those smeared red letters. On the other side it’s the two of us. His plaid flannel is drooping off his shoulder and my boxers are peeking out above my jeans, a deliberate attempt to look as careless as our grunge idols. Bryce’s arm is draped around my neck, but his green eyes never leave the camera. I’m looking at that little freckle on his upper jawbone, always hidden by the greasy blond hair he tucks behind his ear. The sharpie ink has bled through to the other side of the photo, pooling into a big red mark in the middle of my shirt.

There are other things in the picture too, things I can’t see as well. My second-hand bass, slung over my shoulders, which is just out of frame. The invisible fingerprints Bryce doesn’t realize he’s leaving on my neck, and the slow breaths I take to keep the blood from rushing to my face.

“Look at that,” Lena smiles. Her fingers graze the photo so lightly, like he might disappear if she presses on the film too hard. “I took this, remember?”

And suddenly Lena’s there too. She’s in Bryce’s unwavering focus, in the whisper of a dimple crinkling his cheek. That hidden freckle isn’t a secret Bryce and I share, because Lena’s seen it too. The room feels like it’s filling up with water and suddenly I can’t breathe.

“You always make everything about yourself,” I say. Or maybe I scream. I can’t hear anything but the rush of waves flowing through my ears. There’s a ringing sound whirling around me and Lena’s breaths are jagged. She takes a step toward me and yelps.

She’s stepped on a piece of the record. A red mark blossoms at the toe of her sock as she curses and sits back down on the box. I hand the paper towels back to her, keeping one to scoop the broken pieces into the plastic trash bag in the corner. I let her squeeze my hand as she applies pressure to her foot. Her nails dig crescent moons into my skin and her ring bites my knuckles, but I only open my mouth to apologize.

The sky is violet through the attic window when I leave. I take home a tear-streaked face, an open wound and a bloody photograph. Lena’s left with about the same.
in the end, i am breathless.
the flowers you planted in my lungs
have bloomed, and i can’t catch
my breath. and then,
being with you is like pulling teeth;
i spit them out into your palm.
i’d rather remove them on my own
and bleed to death than
let you touch me again.

words crawl up my throat like
coughing up blood. they taste
like bile on my tongue, but
they’re sweeter than you ever were.
i wheeze around a decaying bouquet,
heaving up petals and stems.
your flowers have wilted, and i am left
to pluck their remains from my body,
alone.

i am more than what you did.
Pancake steam curls through the air with wallpaper memories, yellow peeling through crooked angles of house side-windows and pale curtains rustling in the heating vent breeze.

I am melted into a moment that never ends, mote in the broken light.

Time passes in chickadees, clouds folding into sun patches reflected on hardwoods, a post-hibernation lawnmower on freshly hatched grass yet I change only in the shades of blind-stripes on walls and faint music like someone else’s laughter in a different room that reaches across years forward and back my life in an instant bathed in morning and daffodil pollen and a muted sense that it will all be over but won’t ever end.
LIBRARY BETROTHAL
Poulami Wielga

To my parents

Nine o’clock
he skips through the channels.
Feet atop a stool, enclosed in socks.
Stringed instruments carving canals
the comfort of the classical station.

He is at home
not because of the books lining shelves
or the dulcet weaving of musical tones.
It is her presence that opens his valves.
He sinks deeper into the graying loveseat.

Her nature holds him.
The turning of a page like sand
between thumb and finger, a paper film.
The glint of her golden band
three decades of snug contentment.

He and she, just being.
Words hung about the room
tying ribbons of conversations, everlasting.
Books percolating, a versed perfume.
Nights stretch into days and on into years.

LOST IN THE CITY
Colin MacRae

bricks slabs fences slats
concrete ribcage suffocates
sliver of faint blue sky an afterthought
or swath the skyline forgot to patch over

taxi infection street bum hustle
subway at rush-hour the Black Hole
of Calcutta – was that one more ghost or
just a drifting takeout bag?

a flashbang of cameras in Washington Square
and pigeon armadas assault bun-crums
amidst the chaos a membrane of vocal carnage
IsaidNoit’sYou totaled On.5thStExcuse

air thick as the shawl of the babushka
who scrawls an ink map on your sweaty palm
cups change and hobble off leaving you
always more lost than before leaving
every stray dog or littered scrap your guide

close your eyes and caress the asphalt’s braille
await night for the winking lamp’s Morse code
unravel these signs like a crumpled receipt
of tallied past lives, their sum, and your signature

newsstand deli briefcase gum stain
bus stop neon urchins graffiti

just breathe screeches the East Harlem sax
and Broadway curbs sing eidolons while
wept dreams flee from project windows into
gutters sewers Hudson Atlantic
I.
he is the calf, wrangled in a pathetic battle,
with wrists and ankles carefully tied, lying in dirt.
this stubborn weakness of his red rage;
a dance of fury between winner and weak.
my lethargic triumph, him resisting loss.

II.
in victory only to comfort my beaten opponent,
as we crawl back into the boxing ring,
under the bottom rope, pitiful retraction
of past hits and misses, his submission,
and me, champion with riches of shame.

III.
now our closed doors rattle in deadbolt hinges, wails
of silence screaming, a sorry sound without apology.
we cry in unison, fight in unison, my love and i,
the permanent sting of weak words,
i have won the argument.
ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST
Kiri Bolles

I am a 21 year old artist from rural, Southern Oregon, currently getting my BA in painting and French language. For a long time I have seen art as not just the creation of something aesthetically pleasing, but as an opportunity for meaningful, visual activism. I create most of my work with that in mind, however I also have a great passion for traditional, plein air oil painting (plein air translates to “open air” and refers to paintings done outside while actively observing a subject).

In 2017 I spent 6 months living in Dijon, France, and this dome painting was a sight I saw every day. It is the exterior of the Musee de La Vie Bourguignonne, which was across the street from my host family’s apartment. I did several plein air oil paintings during my time in France, and this is perhaps the most meaningful to me as it depicts the area I called home for half a year. The painting’s title is “Rue Ranfer de Bretenieres.”