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Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound
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About the Cover Artist
My name is Diego Seira. I am a double major: Science, Technology, and Society (STS) and Environmental Policy and Decision Making (EPDM). Some of my favorite activities are camping, climbing, hiking, biking, swimming, pretty much anything outdoors. I love to travel. I took this picture on my first trip to Kenya, visiting my brother while walking in the Ngong Hills Nature Reserve. The reserve was vast and hilly, with no one in sight. The picture is meant to show such tranquility as it’s a place to collect your thoughts and improve yourself. I chose to make it black and white to deepen the stillness through the three subjects’ texture and boldness.

Mission Statement
Founded in 1958, Crosscurrents is a student-run magazine dedicated to promoting the visual and literary art of the University of Puget Sound community. We at Crosscurrents are proud to uplift the creative work that we publish and to sustain a journal that reflects the voices and vision of our student body. Committed to free expression and the honest exchange of ideas, Crosscurrents strives to represent the breadth and originality of the best writing and art produced by Puget Sound students.

We hope that Crosscurrents not only provides a platform for the artistic truths within, but that it also opens a doorway to further opportunities in art and literature. Most of all, we are committed to the principle that the voices of the Puget Sound creative community need to be heard, and we look forward to hearing yours.
Editor’s Note

There is little I can say about this semester and year that has not yet been said. These are trying times, this is an unprecedented situation, a time of isolation, grief, and boredom. I toyed with the idea of writing this statement out using the list of clichés we’ve all grown used to since March (however many months have passed since then). But the concept of a literary and arts magazine relies on the belief that there is always something else to be said, so I will do my best to add a contribution.

We at Crosscurrents have received an excellent collection of thoughtful, topical, humorous, and honest submissions this semester. As editor in chief I have had the honor of working with a small team of passionate creators who made our weekly digital meetings not only manageable, but also rewarding and engaging. Going into this edition I was afraid the fun of working on the magazine would be lost through our remote meeting format, but our members maintained an enthusiasm for the process throughout the semester-- so much so that I genuinely looked forward to our weekly calls. Each of us has learned much during this year, even when those lessons were painful, even if what was learned did not measure up to what was lost. I have been lucky to learn that our community will always have something to say, and will always be eager to share. To my fellow members of Crosscurrents, I thank you for your resilience and positivity. To all submitters and contributors, I thank you for your time and creativity. And to our readers, I hope you find comfort and inspiration in these works.

Adreanna Thompson-Paschetto, Editor-in-Chief
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CCR: How would you describe your art and your style?

I think I try to make my art funny and accessible, but I also hope that it reminds people that there’s shitty and good stuff at the same time, so that’s probably where the humor comes in. In style, I draw a lot. I use a lot of pen. Line is really important to me, and lately how do you make a line different than just a cartoon line. So it just starts with drawing, and then how do I apply it to other things. I’ve been making more 3D stuff but it is always always always filtered through the drawings, cause that’s where I think my confidence comes from.

CCR: What motivates and inspires you as an artist?

Again, I want to make funny stuff cause life is really hard. I mean, even if your life isn’t hard, it’s hard, you know? Most of all I just want to make my ideas; that’s my passion and my hobby. Hopefully, if you’re lucky enough, everyone finds something that they really just love to do. For me, it’s making art, but for other people it’s doing other stuff. But hopefully everyone finds that, because it’s really sad if you don’t have that. That’s why I feel so lucky, because I know already and I’ve only
been around for 30 years. I’m really lucky, that’s how I feel. What motivates me is if I don’t do that then what did I do today?

**CCR: What draws you to tactile and 3D art versus 2D art?**

Materials are really fun, I get a lot of inspiration from that. When I find a new material I want to just try it, and I guess that’s why the dimensional stuff is happening. With the pom pals that are happening right now. I was trying to remember why I started to do that, and I just learned how to make pom-poms. Sometimes when you’re an artist you need a distraction, you need something that you’re not good at to make it ok to fail. That’s how I find other ways of working. I also keep a sketchbook, and I had a teacher in high school that was pretty rigorous about doing that, but she was also like— this is not done. If it’s in your book, ok, that’s awesome, but you need to bring it out of there. More people can see it if it’s out.

**CCR: When did you start creating things and what were your original mediums?**

It’s that boring old story where I’ve been drawing since I was a kid. It’s like, whatever adults are giving you attention for, or telling you you’re good at, obviously you’re gonna keep at it. And I was pretty quiet, so drawing was pretty easy to do and I could do it wherever I was. Everyone told me “hey you’ve got a talent” and so kept doing it and found out I kind of like it.

**CCR: What would you say to people who are aspiring to share their work but aren’t there yet?**

Don’t stop, cause that’s what I did, and I’m not even a “success
story.” I was telling my boyfriend about this the other day, that people who delude themselves are the most successful, because they’re not second-guessing themselves as much. I’m not saying you can turn that off, but if you like doing something you’re gonna keep doing it so just keep doing it. Hack away, even if you’re brain tells you “you suck.” I mean hopefully you take stock of your surroundings and be self-aware, but just remember if you’re being critical to yourself it doesn’t have to be true. Just think you’re the best and then look back and go “wow! I’ve really improved.”

**CCR: What is a project you want to work on but haven’t yet?**

I have a lot of answers for that one! One I kind of did, but I want to do it better, and that’s another piece of advice, but I would say that’s another thing, try things again. But this summer I did a little parade, and it was cool, but I just want to do it again, but bigger. Maybe involve more artists, more floats, more music. Another is I would really like to be a modern dancer and choreograph something, and design the costumes, and make it be funny—I really want to use my body more. And the last one is a puppet show!

**CCR: What do you hope people get out of your art?**

Relief. I hope people feel like they can look at it and it gives them a little smile, or makes them remember that everyone has a shitty time, and that we’re all living here. I hope they look at it and think “right on” you know? We’re all in this together.
Baked Goods
Isaac Sims-Foster

it’s the sweet spot between neck and shoulder.
where tea-green lights meet oncoming traffic,
turn right and keep going for a lifetime.

it’s sugar rushing home to you
with fingers in the cookie jar
because our love is always
stealing away.
if they’re hungry for you, well,
let them eat cake.

it’s me strung out on your freckles like rock candy,
addicted to the little maybes.
no wonder i’m a sucker for your bubblegum soul–
i’m used to relying on the next taste of you.
but life isn’t your mother’s cinnamon rolls.

sometimes things just end, y’know?
Naming my daughter
Sigrun Payne

With roots extending
Into the earth beneath her feet
And branches lifting skyward
Her name
Will be strong -
A willow at the water’s edge.

But
As her feet curve
Around the many limbs,
Gnarled, knotted, knowing,
There will be a
Calling, a
Pushing and a
Pulling,
And those
Impetuous waters, that wild
And impulsive song,
Will converge with the earth
And as she stumbles forward, off-balance
The taunting tide will lap at her toes
Pulsing and humming with
Being.

Then
When she begins to move her feet
Flooded with fear and yearning
Her name
Will become a swift current
Which she will learn to wield
As it draws her out to sea;
It will anchor her
Reminding her of what is known
So that as the song is sung and
Familiar voices drift by
She will trail her fingers in the waves
And marvel
At the rippling water.

Her name,
A warm weight in her veins,
Will keep her from floating away
Like a strand of kelp or
Strip of seaweed
So that she may drift but
Will never be set adrift
Because the words
Are already written in her blood.

Her name
Whispered on a waking wind
Will stir the loose strands
Of her hair
And tickle her ears in teasing,
Curving her lips
Into a smile.
After Rain
Marleen Pan
When the sky began to take the appearance of cotton candy, and the sun turned red, then black, I waited for you at the light post in front of my house. Townhouse, at that point, a double decker study in book spines, in tall tomes of Shakespeare and quiet retrospection. The area brought it out in me, the reflectiveness, the tip of my chin towards the quiet stars in an attempt to feel like a poet. I didn’t want to be a poet, at that point, I’d already decided it with the firm fist of flame. I burned all my notebooks before I moved into that house, into that town. It was just part of the process, a cleansing by fire of all the ambitions I’d decided I was too practical for. But that sky, it made me feel the good kind of small, and it made me wish I’d at least kept the poem I’d written about the boy that reminded me of you. Or perhaps you reminded me of him, since you did come after. A collection of sweetness and insecurity to wrap around myself as though wearing a blanket as a cape to shuffle along to the bathroom in the early hours of the morning, when the radiator felt like an engine and roared like a threat, and I missed someone’s arms around me.

When the sky began to take the appearance of cotton candy, and the sun turned red, then black, I waited for you, truly thinking you would come. You had promised, after all, in that way that you did, with your dimples that hid behind the stubble of a shabby beard. I waited, and the sky bled its creamy yolk down to the horizon, and you didn’t come. I waited, and the moon scattered her stars and spread her deep black blanket. I shivered. The lamppost became more than something to lean on while I waited for you, and the shadows became more than something to follow every footprint that wasn’t yours. The sky no longer looked like cotton candy, more like black licorice, and I couldn’t decide how I felt anymore, if I even wanted you to come at all. The townhouse blinked sleepily, and as the distant bell tower chimed
its impatience, I retreated back into the safety of garage sale lamps.

My downstairs neighbor played an uncertain sonata on his baby grand. It took up half his living room, I’d heard, and he treated it like a child. He wasn’t very good at piano, but something had drawn him to the idea, and once he got an idea, he wouldn’t be unstuck. He had your eyes, but didn’t like to look at me with them. He was tall, but slouchy, and blonde hair hid his face in a theatrical curtain. I heard it from the stairwell, and lingered in unfeeling concrete to try and cling to the feeling of the music holding my hand. No one’s held my hand in a long time. That’s probably why I wanted to see you so badly.

I see pieces of you everywhere, and I can’t decide if I like it or not. Your laugh is in the girl I saw in the coffee shop and instantly fell in love with. She’s beautiful, in a way that feels unattainable. You’re unattainable, but far from beautiful. The boy who asked to replace you is too eager, too near. He loves too hard, and in this he is unlovable. I haven’t let him in the way I welcomed you, and I have decided to replace you in pieces, instead of all at once. I have found home in the mop of curly black hair of the boy down the street, and love in the cotton candy skies and courage in the girl I will never truly touch. When the sky began to lose its blanket, and once again took the appearance of cotton candy, I stopped waiting for you, truly thinking you wouldn’t come.
Collateral Damage
Asha Nahas

You stretch out the casing of your body, hoping to puncture it.
I am absent, watching the light dance through a trellis while
You put out your cigarette, your smoke pours out of my mouth.

I watch your hands as you fix them into a fist, all carbon and
   hydrogen and oxygen
And so much to prove so
You stretch out the casing of your body, hoping to puncture it.

I cannot admit the quiet violence
So I try to strain out the pulp while you are not looking but it seems
   like every time
You put out your cigarette, your smoke pours out of my mouth.

I find your mother in the bed of your teeth
Pink feminine that bleeds your tongue as
You stretch out the casing of your body, hoping to puncture it.

You do not notice the way my body moves around you
You are a heart enlarged, ever growing, my lungs collapse inward
   against your apathy.
You put out your cigarette, your smoke pours from my mouth.

Will you ever understand that the bomb you are setting off under
   your own seat
is a pedigree of antebellum biology, a family history of reasons to run?
You put out your cigarette, your smoke pours out of my mouth.
You stretch out the casing of your body, hoping to puncture it.
Ankle-deep in spent summer grass, I push vibrations into the sky. My mouth is full of belated hatred. The phone speaker catches some of it. The waiting shadows drink in the rest. They loose from their trees and follow me, thickening the darkness beneath my feet that blots out every step.

I am full of hatred and I know why. I buried it three years ago and it grew the way dead things do. From flesh to roots to crown to sprout it repurposed itself.

It doesn’t matter who I loved, why I tried, whether I succeeded. What matters is I would not hate you. Not even the amount you deserved. I shoved the cork into my mouth and made a bottle of this body. Dripping holes between my bones and sweating its way out of me, the poison pools inside my boots, it sinks into the restless grass. Frenzied shadows close their ranks as the sky purples and the lamplight dims—

Headlights bleed down the forgotten road like frightened whites of bloodshot eyes.

In their glare I become the spark of legend. A hollow cryptid traipses the hillside, sputtering spittle and labored breaths. Lodged in its fist is a mud-spattered cell phone: morbid, unconvincing bait. Behind it trails a thrashing shadow, a thousand screaming, soundless mouths.

“Are you still there?” the voice from inside the phone speaker asks.

“I am,” gurgles the creature, “I am. Just thinking.”
we laid beside each other,
in cool grass, beneath a thick trunked tree,
i turned to you
so i could face your cheek,
so i could smell you as i breathed
we were both half-asleep
you smelled of jasmine and mild soap,
like your presence was cleansing almost

now, in a world of covid19, it means
i am always cleaning
washing my hands with warm water and Softsoap
for 20 seconds, maybe more

while I think of your sweet soapy smell,
i clean my hands
and think of yours beside mine

i clean my hands
and I am reminded,
of you and of me,
underneath that tall tree in the park,
our grassy world
far away from the city
Untitled Inktober
Cameron Milton
How will you know
Lenora Yee

How will you know who you are when all the signs that point you in one direction are empty? Will someone stop asking where you are going, and from where you came? Will you know then what to say? How will you stop wondering what people see when you cannot even see yourself? Will you stare in the mirror one day and realize your reflection is reversed? Will you stop feeling too brown to be white and too white to be brown? Will you see yourself in public or in another life and walk past without realizing it? Will your wondering ever stop? Will your mind stop running? Will you think about the first pair of shoes you ever bought and the salesman who explained how only a certain kind of swooping suction sound signifies a perfect fit? Will it feel right? Will you know what it is? Will everything just suddenly slide into place like old gears in a clock just waiting to be oiled and tinkered with? Will something start to tick? Will you stop wondering, then, what it feels like you have the right to call an identity yours? Will you ever feel enough?

Will you ever forget the first time someone was dumbfounded by your “racial ambiguity” at the age of six when you were taking swim lessons one summer?

Will you ever forget your surprise when she asked: Are you half?
Will you remember how you stared confused so she asked again: Are you half?
Will you remember how your small mind couldn’t process what was happening when you responded with: Am I half what?
Will you remember how she kept asking and asking and finally said: You know like half something, like mixed?
Will you recall simply saying: I’m both of my parents together and they aren’t the same, so I am just all of that?
Will you remember thinking: \textit{why do I have to be...just half}? Will you ever forget the sick feeling you felt laughing nervously while adjusting your swim cap? Will you forever remember pushing your feet off the wall, digging your pruney toes into the rough bumps of the pool? Will you always come back to breaststroke reps, and let the water shove away the feeling of otherness that you couldn’t place then, but constantly feel eating inside, eroding your sense of self?

—

Will you ever forget the time at the end of high school when your monoracial classmate aggressively smiled and said: \textit{I really want to have kids that look like you, you know mixed, but I just don’t like white people! Like, I would never want to date one you know?}

Will you ever decide if nervous laughter was the appropriate response or if you were supposed to agree? Will you ever forget how no one seemed to realize what was wrong with such a statement? Will you always remember how everyone else around the table laughed and nodded in agreement like bobbleheads? Will you ever forget the way isolation and discomfort slid over you like warm water? Will you ever realize how quickly you absorbed the hurt because it had become so normal? Will you ever decide if someone wanting your phenotypes but not the reality of one of your parents as the desired outcome in future offspring and partnerships is a good thing? Will you ever name the twisted desire for mixed-race children when you are monoracial purely for aesthetics as racism and essentialism in the form of fetishization? Will it feel weird to be a destination sought after when you can’t even feel whole?

—

Will you remember applying to colleges and being taken aback when your high school college counselor smiled and swirled a plump finger in the air at you and said: \textit{So I see your last name...and I am thinking that maybe, and hopefully, there is a little something else in there?}
Will you remember just standing there thinking...*inside of where*...not sure what to say, do, or think?

Will you remember her insistent smile when she said: *Are you biracial?*

Will you recall never being asked that before or associating yourself with the word ‘biracial’ until that very moment and saying: *Um, well I guess yea...I am?*

Will you remember walking away confused— why would she recommend you to write about your identity for college applications? Will the word ‘biracial’ roll around in your head like a stone in the ocean until it feels a little less wrong? Will you remember how it wasn’t until colleges sent out acceptance letters, and invited you to a *student of color induction breakfast*, that you realized you were a person of color? Will you wonder how long ‘multiracial’ has fallen under that category?

Will you recall asking your sister if it was true, looking at your caramel arm, and her laughing as she said: *I mean yeah obviously, you’re only half white you know?*

Will you remember sitting with that known fact and wonder why it never occurred to you before? Will you imagine feeling *right* claiming such an identity in words for yourself? Will you imagine how difficult it will become to see yourself as a person of color, even much later? Will you know that your journey of individuation and articulation will remain just as tumultuous? Will you wonder if other mixed people also knew they were also persons of color?

—

What *could* you do? Will being at the end of the alphabet, with your father’s last name just three letters, ever stop leaving people dumbfounded? Will someone ever stop asking and will you ever stop saying--*yes that is my name*--when you are never any different? Will you ever forget how your college lab assistant asked you three times for your last name since she was convinced she must have been hearing it wrong since she thought you couldn’t possibly share the
same family name? Will you ever stop being crushed by the memory of someone looking at you with skepticism and judgment while wearing your traditional clothing the very next day? Will you ever stop feeling like you have to have a reason to be who you are? Will you shake the discomfort and alienation you feel whenever you enter into spaces where you feel like that “half” of you is wiped clean from your being?

Will you ever forget the TSA officer who looked at your ID, saw your name and said: *Is that your last name? Ahaha cool*, with a chuckle, eyes sparkling more from kinship than mystification? Will you wonder what he saw in your face? Will you ever stop wondering why you feel the constant need to wonder such a thing?

Will those moments ground you? Will those moments remain in your memory tattooed? Will those familiar faces from different places make you feel like you have people in pockets of spaces, faces in time? Will they be the ones that make you question the very question *are you enough?* Will they make you consider who you could be or if you could be both? Will you ever feel like your selves are blending together yet refuse to be distinguished? Will you ever stop asking yourself if you are *allowed* to be who you are without any exceptions?

Will you remember going to a coffee shop visiting your hometown one summer, and seeing a mixed family? Will you see in your periphery the father stare at you softly and then at his children? Will you see the gears in his head moving, wondering, thinking? Will you see the white mom and think of your own? Will you smile and feel flush? Will you feel excited or maybe afraid? Will you just think about how you never thought of such things when you were as little as those children? Will you think about how they should tell their children they are enough?

Will you feel like telling the parents to hold their children more and tell them: *it is okay for you to be who you are in your entirety?*

Will you start to keep a count of the families and interracial
couples you see going on walks, holding hands, pushing strollers, walking through parks? Will you wonder if they see you as you see them? Will you ask yourself if you ever thought of anything of your family as a child? Will you wonder what your childlike brain saw when you saw families? Will you wish you had continued not to see anything? Will your renewed sense of family and purpose seem to slightly sting since it only exists out of necessity? Will you think about how you never saw your family as anything but normal until you were forced to see it as abnormal? Will you consider how it feels to have an affinity for families like your family? Will you hate that you had to recognize your family as deviant in order to see them as beautiful? Will this ground you? Will this confuse you? Will this hurt you? Will this make you feel warm?

——

Will you remember the clump in your throat and the tears that welled up so quickly, streaming down your face when a woman with deep kind eyes asked: *And how do you identify?*

Will you remember feeling hit in the chest and quivering when you said: *Me?*

Will you remember her nodding when you said: *I’m mixed,* and her warm mahogany hand on your shoulder resting with earnest eyes that seemed to pry open your tightly wound walnut heart when she said: *And that is ok?*

Will you remember the clip-clop sound of wood and linoleum? Will you open the door to the sound of suction, exhale, and feel a rush of cold air? Will you gasp in the cold? Will it feel like you are breathing for the first time in months? Will you feel lighter? Will you feel your eyes burn since the air is too cold? Will you feel heavier? Will you feel a sting in your chest and eyes when you have to cough from the too-cold air? Will you *feel* anything at all? Will you wish you could?

Will you remember how you felt allowed to be who you were in your entirety, yet simultaneously ripped apart since it has taken so long
to understand? Will you remember this momentary yet momentous realization as something you could not *really* hold on to? Will real crying feel like something you have not done since infancy? Will your tears feel insufficient? Will her words—and *that* is *ok*—sink into the overturned stones inside of you and burn into your memory, tattooed? Will you quickly slip back into old habits of erasure since it feels so much easier to not feel angry at your deprived sense of self? Will you begin to latch on to anything and everything else to fill the gap in your chest?

Will you call your parents one day crying and shouting: *I am finally seen for who I am. I am no longer invisible*? Will you know that’s impossible? Will you ever accept the fact that no matter what, a part of you will always feel inadequate? Will you ever stop running helplessly towards something that cannot be reached? Will you ever stop blaming the world for your inability to achieve the “essential” version of all your identities? Will you ever realize that the so called “essential” version of all your identities is a fabrication that does not *really* exist? Will you ever accept who you are without feeling like you aren’t allowed to *be* because you’re convinced that 75% of everyone everywhere doesn’t see you for who you are? Will you realize it’s a lot more complicated than that? Will you ever convince yourself that you couldn’t know the minds of the billions of people in the world? Will you ever stop feeling the double, triple, quadruple consciousness that buzzes around you insistently? Will you ever realize what you think people see in you is not always true? Will you ever stop *needing* others to see you for you, since you should reside in you? Will you ever see all the things you are and more? Will you ever see how incredible you are?

What will it take to change? Will the sinking feeling of no solid identity to hold and to grip and to squeeze subside with the passage of time? Will it always feel like a constant fight? Will it feel like
slipping in a sand trap? Will you accept the fact that you are an anomaly and that you live in a world of all grey in a universe that sees only black and white? Will you decide that that is alright? Will you ever stop chasing what you feel you’ve been wrongfully deprived of? Will you ever feel light? Will you ever feel whole? Will you ever place your thumb in the hole in your heart and realize it still thumps? Will you ever touch your face and pull at your cheeks, and feel who you are in your entirety? Will you ever breathe without suffocating on a false sense of self? Will you someday see the sky and stop wondering why you cannot seem to shine despite the stars in your eyes?

—

Will you sit in a car quietly? Will you be with your father who tells you: well of course you are and smiles?
Will you be able to shake the feeling of crushing inadequacy for just one moment when you exhale and say: Really?
Will he say: Of course, who else would you be?
Shadows on the Wall
Bismi Kado
Villain
Andrew Ellison

What would walk the night in a wind this dour?
Many fell things fly on a fettered gale
Anything could blow in at this hour.

A hairy shadow, jumping at passers who cower
Some transparent sailor, wrapped in a tattered sail
What would walk the night in a wind this dour?

Perhaps jagged fangs finally free to leave their tower
Twin fiery hounds, on some poor fool’s trail
Anything could blow in at this hour.

Maybe the hollowed corpse with guts gone sour
Those shuffling rags, laughing with hands bony and frail
What would walk the night in a wind this dour?

The lonely clown beckoning out of the endless shower
Or just the eternal killer, waiting at the end of every tale
Anything could blow in at this hour.

All those things that men’s minds unwisely scour
Every errant terror, gracing the dark without fail
Anything could blow in at this hour.
“OK boys, looks like we’re done for the day. Time to go home,” Jie-ming calls across the water.

He hops up and down on his boat, the bamboo slapping against the soles of his feet and the water, and he throws in a whistle for good measure. Several meters away, four heads bobbing in the water whip around in his direction before they disappear underwater one by one.

While Jie-ming waits, he closes his eyes and leans against the bamboo pole that he jammed between some rocks on the river bed, humming along to the Andy Lau song softly playing on his radio. Summer isn’t due for another few weeks, but the sun is warm against his skin, burning orange into the back of his eyelids. Right as Andy Lau breaks into the second chorus, water splatters onto Jie-ming’s feet accompanied by the rapid-fire percussion of flapping wings. He opens his eyes and grins at the cormorant now perched on the edge of his boat.

“Liu Qiang! Of course you’re back first.” Jie-ming toes the straw basket in the bird’s direction. “Gonna give you a juicy piece of fish later.”

Liu Qiang hops over to the basket, throat bulging, then tilts his head down and opens his mouth, a stream of fish sliding out. Jie-ming waits until he’s almost done before crouching down and gently squeezing the bird’s throat. One more fish pops out, and Jie-ming pats Liu Qiang on the head and scratches him in the spot where feathers meet beak.

“Thanks buddy. You’re the best,” he chirps before moving on to the other two cormorants who are also depositing the day’s catch in the basket. Jie-ming frowns when he realizes there’s one less bird perched on his boat. He turns away from the basket to look back out
at the still river. The moment he does, the sound of wings frantically flapping breaches the calm, and Jie-ming whips around to catch Liu Fei, the missing cormorant, in the middle of snatching the biggest fish in the basket.

“Liu Fei, come back here—” He lunges for the bird, the boat seesawing from the motion and drenching his T-shirt in river water. The other cormorants titter as Liu Fei ducks out of his reach, but holding the large fish in her beak and the other fish in her throat slows her down enough that Jie-ming can grab her and steer her towards the basket.

“Do you really have to do this every time?” he complains. “You know you can’t win against me, Right?”

He dislodges the last fish from Liu Fei’s throat, and the female cormorant promptly fixes her eyes on him and spreads her wings, water slithering off the feathers and dripping into puddles on the bamboo.

Jie-ming crosses his arms and glares back. “Is this because I said ‘OK boys’ earlier? Were you offended I left you out when I said that? Should I say ‘OK boys and Liu Fei’ next time? Will that make you happier?”

Liu Fei flicks her head away from him and struts over to where the other birds are drying off, a trail of water following her.

Jie-ming sighs, covering the basket of fish with a straw mat and wiping the sweat off his face. “Birds,” he mutters. “Can never please them.”

He removes his bamboo pole from its place in the rocks and turns off the radio, cutting Andy Lau off mid-croon. He pushes off towards shore, the morning breeze gentle and cooling against his burning skin. The sun is out today, which means its rays cut through the fog
that eternally lingers around the mountains and illuminates the lush green foliage that hugs the riverbank. Sunlight glitters off the murky blue-green of the river itself, the glare occasionally hitting Jie-ming’s eyes at just the right angle. After a minute of embarrassingly haphazard rowing and squinting against the brightness, Jie-ming reaches blindly into the other basket behind him. His fingers wrap around well-worn fabric and fraying strings, and he swings the baseball cap onto his head. With the bill of the hat shadowing his face, Jie-ming smoothly navigates the rest of the way back to shore.

When the bottom of his boat skids onto the rocks, he jumps into the water and fishes around in his basket for the small baggie he always brings with him. His cormorants start squawking, hopping closer. Liu Fei is especially insistent, trying to duck her head into the basket with her beak snapping.

“Hey, hey, hey,” Jie-ming clucks his tongue and pushes Liu Fei away from the basket. “We talked about this before. Remember that proverb about patience? One who is burning with impatience can never eat hot porridge. Just wait and you will get what you want. Simple, right?”

Liu Fei fixes him with a disgruntled stare and shakes her entire body, ruffling up her feathers and spraying Jie-ming with water.

“Fine, fine! I don’t know why I bother. You never listen to me anyways.”

Jie-ming pats Liu Fei on the head then pulls the small bag of fish out and walks over to Liu Qiang. He snaps off the rice straw wrapped around the cormorant’s throat, picks out the biggest fish from his stash like promised and tosses it at the bird. Liu Qiang yelps and lunges for the fish, scooping it up in his beak and tossing his head back as he swallows. Jie-ming breaks off the rice straw knots from the other cormorants’ throats and laughs as they fight over the fish he tosses in their direction.
Soon, the bag is empty, and he sits down on his boat, splashing the birds by kicking his feet back and forth in the river. They occasionally swim by and squawk at him, but for the most part, they happily trill as they wiggle through the water. Jie-ming stretches his arms up towards the sky, the muscles lining his shoulders screaming from the early morning work. Then, he leans back until he’s lying flat against his boat, the bamboo’s sun-soaked warmth seeping into his skin. Above his cormorants’ satisfied croons, he can hear the distant noise of the village waking up, faint shouts and the clang of pots and pans already filling the air, and he closes his eyes to let the hum of morning life wash over him.

He couldn’t have been lying there for more than a few minutes when the sharp trill of his name cuts through the bed of reeds that his boat is surrounded by.

“Huang Jie-ming! Are you wasting your time out on that river with those birds again? Come eat breakfast or I’m giving it to your grandfather!”

The groan he emits sinks deep into his bones. He and his mother have hashed out this exact same conversation too many times in his twenty-three years of life to count, so this time he merely sits up and dignifies her with a weak flop of his hand and several bobs of his head. He lets his arm fall back down to his side, and he sighs, taking off his cap to comb his hair back—it’s starting to flop into his face which means he definitely needs a haircut soon if he wants to survive the summer without permanently matted hair—before putting it on backwards. As much as he wants to continue lying on his boat all day, feet submerged in water and cheeks burning from the sun, he also knows that a small group of tourists booked a river cruise for later that morning. Unfortunately, duty (and his mother) always calls.
Jie-ming dunks his hands into the cool water and scrubs them over his face, then stands up to drag his boat further upshore. He ties it to its post and whistles for his cormorants, who hesitate for a few moments on the water before they waddle onshore, shaking droplets off their feathers. Jie-ming coos at them and thanks them for their hard work with brief head scratches. He packs everything up then swings his bamboo pole onto his shoulders and waits for the birds to hop onto either end. When they’ve settled down, he straightens back up and, balancing both baskets and his birds, heads back to the village and his responsibilities.
Song of the Sea
Rachel Visick

i am dreaming again of loss.

your soul, submerged, among
archipelagos of arpeggios; of
scales echoing underwater, where
waves are chords, crashing onto coral
reefs which are the rhythm; and the sound
the sound
the Sound is the familiar heart of
an unknown beast which is the sea;
the music is the same,
so i'm told,
wherever you are, my dear.

but there is no ocean here. and
any notes are faint and dull against
cornfields and grey skies. and a lake
is all the water i have.

i miss your music; memories well-sunk
well up, rushing back on tides of melody—
always when i think you have ebbed, at last,
away.

when waves wash me and it is
a baptism, wild and wordless;
when i am cradled by
the sea, a soft lullaby;
when all i see is a mirror and
all i hear is a song,

even this.
Creature Comforts
Lily Rand
for the romance of it

Yuki Morgan

1.
we walk to the rooftop, where we talk about nothing and I think about throwing myself off—for a second or two, for the romance of it. y’know l’appel du vide is the new sexy. y’know amorous love is a kind of death, another box of shirts dropped off for Goodwill. throw on a flannel, ditch the sweats, swap contacts for wire-rims. I dress you up and drink you in. you last 8 months.

2.
we walk to the rooftop, where we talk in circles and I look down ‘cause I need the reminder. between falling off or for you, I pick you. call me forward, call me at half-past honest—seriously, call me on it. when I’m scared I get lethal. I killed a part of me for the romance of it. Fall Out Boy says it best: “I love everything about you that hurts...” you could at least let me blame you for it.
we walk to the rooftop. sometimes you follow me and sometimes I follow you. it doesn’t matter how we get there, it matters where we go, which is off, always off. I can cut my hair short and crank the radio up but I can’t take back the girl I was, can’t un-death the love. the rooftop suits us but rooftop or not, I’d have fallen sometime, killed for someone. for the romance of it.
Quilt From Mom
Miranda Mireles
Funky Spoon

Bisim Kado
Saving A Song For Sally
Isaac Sims-Foster

saving a song for sally
for what it’s worth
i tried to fake
her angel-humming
when someone ruined
her favorite song.

but i was unprepared
when aunty asked
do you want to sing for grandma?
one cannot rehearse for this.

i shook my head.

i hope she forgives me,
knows some calls come
with no response.
like a bag of sweet summer oranges,
the tune i would have carried
was best enjoyed with her.
besides,
she believed anyone can join the choir,
even siblings who come for the house,
even friends who ask after her things.
A chorus of desire from the living,
the soothing sound of tragedy.
the room was alive
but the audience dead
and i’m not one
to waste a song—

when next i sing,
i sing
just for Grandma,
whose solo was more than a lonely melody.
Selected Works
As an honor to the strength of these works’ craftsmanship and insight, three professors will explore the depth and achievement of each piece in a short essay.

Groundscores
Lily Rand
reviewed by Professor Elise Richman

Waterlogged Soul
Andrew Elison
reviewed by Professor Darcy Irvin

Rivkah’s Arguably Bad Day
Shoshanna Groom
reviewed by Professor John Wesley
Like a Bowerbird, searching for ornaments to decorate its nest, Lily Rand encounters little treasures that catch her eye while out walking. *Groundscores* documents nine abandoned objects with a delicacy and attentiveness that renders them wondrous things. Lily’s marks and translucent washes mirror the specificity of each strange and seemingly glyph-like form. The painting’s gridded format evokes taxonomy granting these lost things a sense of belonging in a personal classification system. "Groundscores" evokes the thing-power described by political theorist Jane Bennett in *Vibrant Matter*, which examines the “curious ability of inanimate things to animate...to produce effects dramatic and subtle.” Like Lily, while out walking Bennett encountered a glove, matted pollen, a dead rat, a bottle cap, and a stick and “...caught a glimpse of an energetic vitality inside each of these things.” Lily similarly glimpses the energetic vitality of toys, tails, broken parts, bits of ceramic, shards, wads, and coils. Through Lily’s eyes these are seen not as worthless objects but as vital things.

Lily’s nine groundscores rest on a knitted surface, a soft, irregular square that acts as a visual plane and safe haven. This coaster-sized swatch of interwoven yarn is also a vital thing rendered with lively squiggles and colored shadows. It, in turn, sits upon a pale wooden plank whose grain undulates, expanding and contracting with a rhythmic energy.

Bowerbirds gather things to attract mates. Things are part of their courtship practices, which honor the power of things to inspire and animate reproduction. Lily sees the lively life of things and cares for them, treasures them, and makes them part of a search for signs and wonders amongst the lost and forgotten. For her, these things have a reciprocal, generative power that inspires a personal iconography and her creative process as she honors their energetic vitality.

Art Review
As an honor to the strength of this work’s craftsmanship and insight, Professor Elise Richman will explore the depth and achievement of the piece.
When I am truly and deeply sad
When austere August’s wasteland
Descends on my September Soul,
I retreat, from dusty roads
Green fields, impersonal mountains,
And quaint country homes
To her glistening concrete streets,
Wharves of fish, and heated buildings
Wafting coffee’s perfume.

She’s still the same
Tall spires welcoming
With thoughts equal of grit and grandeur,
As when I was fourteen,
Her somber serenity distorted double
Through water on glasses
And water on windows.
But while the glasses are gone,
Rain still speckles panes
Of panoptic libraries,
Backdoor strobe-lit haunts
And brisk markets, art museums
Safe havens, and a needle that all but scrapes the sky,
Dripping onto afternoon guitarists,
Lovers, drug-dealers, writers, painters
Businessmen and the homeless
Seeping through their soggy Souls
Into the cracked asphalt
Wherein lies her blue Soul
Which has so waterlogged my own.

And no matter how many times
I return home, with sentiments soaked
And spirits sopping, my skull sloshing water
Onto the linoleum
I’ll always return to her
And her rain, if not in reality,
In the dampest corners of my brain
To the city filled with the water of life
And all those waterlogged souls like mine.
This issue’s selection, “Waterlogged Soul,” opens with the seeming need to escape melancholy—a melancholy tied to both time and place. But rather than seeking solace from “green fields” and “quaint country homes,” the speaker escapes from the “impersonal mountains” of nature to seek out the multitudinous city of Seattle; we only need to read of the “wharves of fish, and heated buildings / Wafting coffee’s perfume” to recognize the Emerald City as the speaker’s emotional home. The poem, therefore, playfully upends that Romantic notion of locating community out among the pastures, mountains, and sheep; if the Romantic poet “dances with the daffodils” in order to transform loneliness into the “bliss of solitude,” this speaker retreats from “August’s wasteland” and the quiet, but perhaps too serene, countryside to the city. The community there, though, is one of shared melancholy, not jocund bliss. This is a retreat not from melancholy, but further into it—from a solitary “wasteland” to one of shared space and place.

That sharing emerges symbolically in the poem through the image of water seeping into the pores and crevices of the city and its inhabitants:

Dripping onto afternoon guitarists,
Lovers, drug-dealers, writers, painters
Businessmen and the homeless
Seeping through their soggy Souls
Into the cracked asphalt
Wherein lies her blue Soul
Which has so waterlogged my own.

In this city with its “needle that all but scrapes the sky,” everyone and everything becomes equally drenched, both the “businessmen and
the homeless.” And this includes the speaker, too, who seeks out this communal deluge; the dry, “dusty roads” of rural spaces have been definitively left behind for the “waterlogged” city. The poem suggests that the return to the city is not about abandoning the melancholy of a “September soul,” but rather the joining of that melancholy with that of others—a sharing that perhaps lessens the individual burden just a little.

The end of the poem, intriguingly, returns us to a Romantic vision of seeking out the solace of community even when alone:

I’ll always return to her
And her rain, if not in reality,
In the dampest corners of my brain
To the city filled with the water of life
And all those waterlogged souls like mine.

Like the speaker in Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,” we see the speaker of “Waterlogged” suggest that the physical experience of community is not always needed in order to find some kind peace; just as Wordsworth’s speaker recalls, via the “inward eye,” his sublime moment with the daffodils, so too the speaker in “Waterlogged” locates a sort of serenity in memory, “the dampest corners of my brain.” The very remembrance of the “city filled with the water of life” becomes enough to connect the speaker back to “souls like mine,” offering a kind of comfort and home.
“Huh.” I stared at the screen, at the two clouds of red dots slowly spreading west and southeast from Europe. “So we’re dead.”

“Yep,” Antonio said from his seat behind me. “No doubt about that.”

“No chance we could--”

“These aren’t some old nuclear bombs. The continental US and most of the population of Canada are gone. Just give it seven, maybe nine minutes.” He turned to white-faced Rivkah, still staring at the console as though frozen. “Rivvy, be a doll, raid the booze cache in my office and the vending machines. I need a drink, and I think it would be sad if you died before having any fun.”

“We’re doomed,” she murmured.

“Yeah, obviously. You know where our stash is. Chop-chop.”

Rivkah moved as though in a trance, the door sliding shut behind her. I plopped down in her seat.

“We’re the only Americans with access to this information. Think we should tell the boss?”

“Nah. There’s nothing they can do, and besides, then they’d tell everyone and our last few moments would be pandemonium. Me, I prefer to die without that headache.”

“That’s understandable.” I played with my chair for a few moments of awkward silence.“What did we do to the Russians that I wasn’t aware of?”

Antonio laughed with everything but joy. “This isn’t the Russians. Guess who.”

“It couldn’t be China; the angle isn’t right.”
“It’s Sweden.”

I paused, genuinely unsure of how to respond. “We’re all going to be killed by a bunch of Swedes. Really.”

“Embarrassing, I know. I just wish I knew what they have against us, Canada, and…” Antonio studied the map “…Thailand and Laos, it looks like?”

Rivkah entered with arms ladened with the bounty of vending machines and booze from our various workplace hiding places. She dumped the candy on the ground, filled her signature half-finished bottle of Irish Cream to the brim with everclear, and shook it without bothering to replace the lid. A moment later she remembered to give the two of us our whiskey.

“Ooh, Reese’s pieces” I muttered, rooting through the candy she’d brought.

“Can I call my boyfriend?” Rivkah asked the two of us.

Antonio sighed and set down his bottle. “We’re supposed to be among the most intelligent people in the country, and you want to call a civilian. To inform him of his and everyone’s impending doom.”

“Well, clearly that standard of measurement is useless if nobody in the country could even tell who our mortal enemies were,” I pointed out.

“Thank you, Rick,” Rivkah said.

“I wasn’t agreeing with you, I just didn’t like him insulting you. That’s a horrible idea. We have a more important task anyway.” I set my whiskey on a small panel connected to a computer screen and flipped its power button to ‘on’. It was an incredibly simple device capable of launching our entire arsenal of post-nuclear weapons. There was a pause. “So. What do we do?”
“Does it matter?” Antonio asked.

“What do you mean? It’s our job!” Rivkah said. “We need to defend our homes.”

“There won’t be anything to defend in about six minutes no matter what we do, hon.” He ripped open two packets of Skittles in one gesture and ate them just as fast.

“I didn’t mean defend as in protect, I meant defend as in, stand up for!” Rivkah protested, red-faced. “They destroy us, we destroy them.”

“That doesn’t help us,” I pointed out.

“So?” she asked. “They’re going to kill everyone. Everyone! Our parents, our pets, Princess, oh lord Princess, my cat, my little cat, I won’t even be there to hold her when it happens...” she began to cry.

Antonio drank for about fifteen seconds straight while he waited for her to finish her thought, but she didn’t say another word.“...that was it? No, sweetie, we aren’t going to destroy Sweden to avenge your cat. That being said, there’s really not much point to that console other than mutually assured destruction.”

“Cut it out with the pet names. And I don’t like the idea of killing a lot of innocent people,” I said.

“The fuck did you accept this job for, then? You are literally one of the guardians of the mass murder machine!” Antonio laughed. “Rivvy’s right about that much—this is part of our job description.” He glanced at her. “I don’t necessarily agree with you either. Our bosses will be dead in six...no, five minutes anyway; fulfilling my duties is my last concern.” He squinted at the map. “Oh hey look, they’re passing over Thailand. I think they’re aimed for Papua New Guinea? Strange.”

“It’s just...mutually assured destruction is a threat. It’s somewhat pointless after the fact,” I said.
“Besides, killing us all aside, I like Sweden. Obliterating them seems uncalled for.”

“Good parental leave policy,” admitted Antonio, crushing the contents of a cardboard box of potato chips. He added a bag of gummy bears, poured some whiskey into the container, and took a drink. Between bits of gelatinous candy he added, “But I don’t think I’m a fan of their newly exposed management of foreign affairs.”

“It’s just pointless,” I muttered through my own drink. “Yeah, they made a mistake, but killing them all seems excessive. And that’s without factoring in the nearby countries. I don’t want to hurt the Dutch.”

“Holland? I mean, yeah, I’d prefer to not hit Holland.”

“No, not Holland, that other country. The Michigan looking one, real peaceful.”

“Are you talking about the Netherlands? That’s synonymous with Holland.”

“No, Holland is in the Netherlands, it’s not the Netherlands.”

“So maybe we can maneuver the weapons to avoid the Netherlands by, like 50 miles? Is that even possible in Europe?”

I shook my head, annoyed, and gestured with a bag of candy corn. “It’s not the Netherlands! The Michigan one with Greenland.”

“Greenland is way away from Sweden.”

“No, it isn’t Greenland, it just has Greenland in it. What’s it called?”

“...Denmark?”

“Yeah!” I nodded. “We don’t want to accidentally hurt Denmark. Danish people aren’t Dutch, they’re Danish.”
“...huh, let’s grab a map.” I looked around, noticed the giant flashing screen showing the bombs approaching our country, and pointed. “Okay, so we have Finland, Norway, Denmark--”

“Isn’t Scandinavia up there somewhere?”

“I think that’s a group of countries.”

“I can’t believe you didn’t know what Denmark was.”

“You’re one to talk, The Netherlands aren’t even near Sweden.”

“I guess there’s a reason we didn’t notice what Sweden was up to,” Antonio mused. I shrugged. “This career doesn’t usually involve Northern Europe.”

“Rivkah?” Antonio called. “Any idea of how we can hit Sweden without hitting their neighbors?”

“Hey, I still don’t think we should hit Sweden,” I muttered.

“She’s all alone,” sniffed Rivkah. For the first time since we’ve last spoken I saw that she was curled up in a corner, crying.

“Who?” I asked.

“Damnit, if she’s still talking about her cat...” muttered Antonio.

“I live away from any major city, she won’t be killed instantly,” whimpered Rivkah. “She’ll be so confused. My boyfriend killed someone in a hit-and-run while I was in the car, so he threatened to have a friend kill Princess if I told anyone. I wanted to call him to say that I’d told, so his friend would kill Princess so she won’t need to suffer. He can’t do it himself since he’s currently doing research far away.”

“...huh” said Antonio. “You can call him, Rivkah.”

“Thank you,” she whispered, pulling her phone from her pocket with trembling hands.
“You know you’re not her supervisor, right?” I asked.

He shrugged. “She’s the one choosing to listen to me.” Antonio stood and began playing with the console. “This is it,” he muttered. “The three of us choose who lives or dies.”

“Except us,” I added, dipping an oreo into my whiskey. “We’re still doomed. Us and Canada and...yep, and Papua New Guinea. What did Papua New Guinea do?”

“Why take out Sweden? What did the Swiss people ever do to us? Why not choose a country more deserving?”

“Aren’t the Swiss people, like, people from Switzerland?” I asked.

“Yeah, I guess so.”

“And who’s more deserving, anyway, than the country trying to literally kill us?”

Antonio shrugged. “Government aside, the Swiss...Swedish? Yeah, Swedish people are pretty cool.”

“No civilian group of people is inherently evil, Antonio.”

“Well who says we need to make this about ethics? We have no repercussions!” Antonio grinned and began playing with the switches, though he hadn’t produced the key needed to fire anything.

“We could send a weapon to each country, play fair like that, or we could destroy, say, Paraguay, or take Hawaii and Alaska out with us. It won’t matter to us!”

I nodded and finished my fourth packet of cookies. “Just completely devastated New Jersey. Won’t matter to us.”

“Ruin the day of some poor Pacific Ocean whale.”

I shook my head, laughing. “Our conversation is moving away from the Swiss, fuck, Swedish people. Do we enact revenge? We have, like,
seventy one seconds left.”

“Naw. Let them keep their alpine mountains and their skiing and their giant gingerbread houses and I’ve never actually been to Sweden but that’s what I imagine,” said Antonio, finishing his gummies-whiskey-potatoes-chip concoction. “They deserve it, fooling us so well.”

“Yeah, sounds good.” I finished my drink; grinned when I saw that Rivkah had grabbed a third bottle. “I can’t believe it. I’m forty, no kids, no spouse, not really any friends given how tough this career is, no real vacation since I live with my parents, just preparing myself for the future...only to be killed by Sweden. I thought I would have done something memorable by the time I died.”

Antonio gestured to the console. “You have a key. Do something memorable.”

“No, I c—” I stopped, stood, tripped over the pile of candy wrappers at my feet, stood back up, inserted my key into the console, and took control of the entire US arsenal. “Hey Rivvy?”

“Yes?” she called from the corner where she was curled with her empty flask and phone.

“Where’s your boyfriend doing research? The hit and run guy.”

“Antarctica, why?”

“I’m about to do something really stupid.”
“Rivkah’s Arguably Bad Day” is a semi-apocalyptic, darkly comic story about a group of U.S. military officials who watch on a command center screen as a cluster of nuclear missiles hurtles towards them (and most of North America). The narrative is focused on their deliberation about how best to retaliate against Sweden, the comically implausible aggressor.

The Incongruity Theory of laughter claims that humor is the result of an encounter with something that confounds our expectations (as a good punchline does). So here, rather than the hysteria or focused anger we might expect, the characters react casually, drinking whiskey, eating gummy bears, and musing on the parental leave policies of Sweden. Moreover, Antonio claims that they are all “among the most intelligent people in the country,” but, for officials charged with geopolitical monitoring, they struggle to identify Denmark (“the Michigan looking one”) or the adjective form of Sweden (“What did the Swiss people ever do to us?”).

In the midst of this chatter, we find that Rivkah alone is grieving, but in this case mainly for her cat, Princess; and we learn that Rivkah’s boyfriend—who is currently stationed in Antarctica—once threatened to kill Princess in order to prevent Rivkah from telling authorities of a hit-and-run he had committed. At the end of the story, and with time running out for the characters, it is implied that the only retaliation to Sweden’s attack will be to send “the entire US arsenal” of nuclear armaments to Antarctica.

There is a strong satirical element here. If Fredric Jameson were to read it, for example, he might suggest that the story is a fable of ‘late capitalism’, in which the reduction of reality to screens or machines
of representation infringes on our ability to respond appropriately to actual world events. It also raises questions about the appropriateness of revenge or retaliation in general (including the ripple effects of such an action). To take but one example, in the absence of a future—if death is final (and transcendent justice a myth)—why bother worrying about the ‘right’ response to anything? Indeed, why not simply eat (gummy bears), drink (whiskey), and be merry?

This is a well-crafted and enjoyable story, certainly, and one aspect of its pleasure is the way it confounds our expectations, using comedic elements to open (rather than foreclose) our thinking on matters of real personal and political significance.