

# iris

— literature and arts magazine



volume two / issue one



## *what is iris?*

We are the newest in the long line of JMU's literature and arts magazines. You may have once known us as *Alator*, *Gardy Loo*, or *Temper*. We have received overwhelming support for the first two issues of volume one, and we could not be more excited to release this first issue of our second volume.

***Welcome to Iris, reader!***



# *special thanks* **special thanks to...**

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Erica Cavanagh • The JMU Media Board • College of Arts and Letters

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# *Letters*

Dear Reader,

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for picking up this issue of *Iris*. When I first received the email calling for staff to revive JMU's literature and arts magazine almost two years ago, I never envisioned that I would one day be leading a team of talented editorial and design staff toward this gorgeous final product. The community we have built around this magazine has been instrumental to my JMU experience. It has been a joy and a pleasure to publish the beautiful art, prose, and poetry that the students at this university produce.

I would like to thank Professor Erica Cavanagh for her guidance and mentorship over the past two years. Thank you also to Assistant Editor Amelia Bailey, whose brilliant contributions to group discussions, edits, and the design brainstorming process have made this issue of *Iris* what it is. Not only is Amelia an incredible collaborator, she is also a wonderful friend, and I could not have asked for anyone better to continue this cultivation of creativity and community alongside.

As the world around us continues to privilege a culture of fast living and monetized efficiency, I implore you to take this moment, breathe, and live fully between the pages of this magazine. Never lose sight of the necessity for creativity, for reflection, for community. *Iris* will continue to be a conduit for that creativity, reflection, and community for as long as you'll allow us.

Best,

*Grace Keeler*



Dear Reader,

I am incredibly grateful to you for picking up this iteration of Iris Literature and Arts Magazine. I feel particularly connected to this edition because, while this is my third semester on the Iris editorial team, it is my first semester as Assistant Editor. It has been deeply rewarding to work alongside Iris's talented editorial and design team to collaboratively engage with the creative endeavors of our JMU peers. I was continually amazed and inspired by the profound creativity that poured out of every single submission we received this semester.

I cannot talk about Iris without acknowledging our Editor-in-Chief, Grace Keeler, who led our creative team with utmost integrity, thoughtfulness, and passion. Grace's collaboration and friendship have meant the world to me this semester. I would also like to thank Professor Erica Cavanagh for her guidance and generous insight on creative writing and editing approaches. I have truly loved every conversation behind-the-scenes with Grace, Professor Cavanagh, and all of our wonderful editorial and design team members.

As I evaluated this semester's submissions, my understanding of artistic form and craft expanded significantly. As you read through this issue of Iris, I hope you will be as inspired by the creative work of the JMU community as I was. I encourage all readers to examine this edition with enthusiasm and curiosity. The work featured here is a testament to the boundless creativity and passion of young people today, and I am proud to have played a role in its creation.

Sincerely,

*Amelia Bailey*



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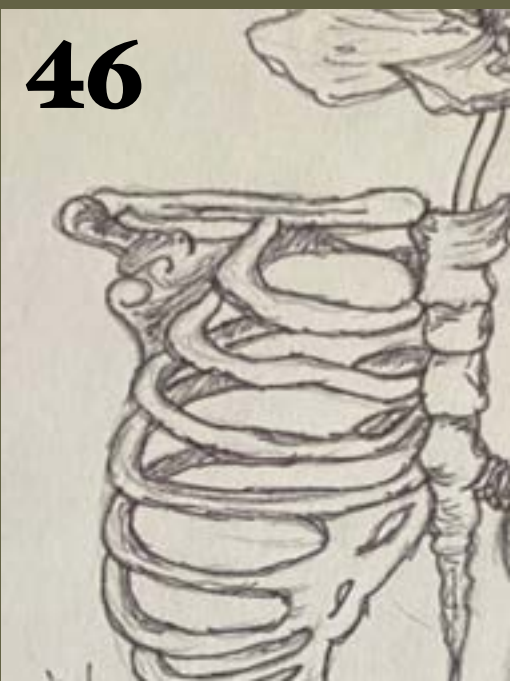
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# Pressure

by Liz Shanks







# *Soliloquy of The First Fallen Angel*

by Gillian Guy

The lines between chaos and evil blur  
Into a slippery slope, dropping into  
The infernal darkness of misery's abyss.

As I plunge into my Avernus sanctuary,  
I declare myself misunderstood.

I, your unholy muse, submit to the void.  
I submit to what is written.  
I submit to you.

You, Almighty Creator, whose judgement caught my ankles  
And clipped my feathers, sentencing me  
To the ground.  
You, whose execution of penmanship  
Poisoned my seraphic dreams and  
Severed my light.

I, Greatest Deceiver, was crafted with fire and artistic wisdom  
And burnt down into ash and clay  
When I stood in the face of vanity.  
I will learn to spin lies and weave my words  
Into deception after speaking my truth  
Became my smoking gun.

I know my beauty; I understand my worth.  
Yet you deemed the pride in my heart sinful,  
And suddenly, I am undeserving of love.  
I know my strength; I understand my power.  
Yet the gifts I have to offer fall out of favor,  
And suddenly, I am undeserving of guidance.

Now, I have cracked like lightning,  
Cast down from the clouds  
And destined to collide with the earth.

Perhaps pandemonium will embrace me well.  
As I plummet toward the pit and watch the globe  
Become planar, I declare myself  
Misunderstood.

pine needle spines  
are evergreen  
but something in me  
still feels like it is rotting  
dark clouds wet with life  
hide blind eyes turned upon me  
that will not cry  
nonetheless my garden is still growing  
so my failure is absent  
of an object to grieve

it's been spring for years  
trees grow dense like bones  
the air smells clean like bleach  
leaves are pinned to branches like  
smiles induced by pity

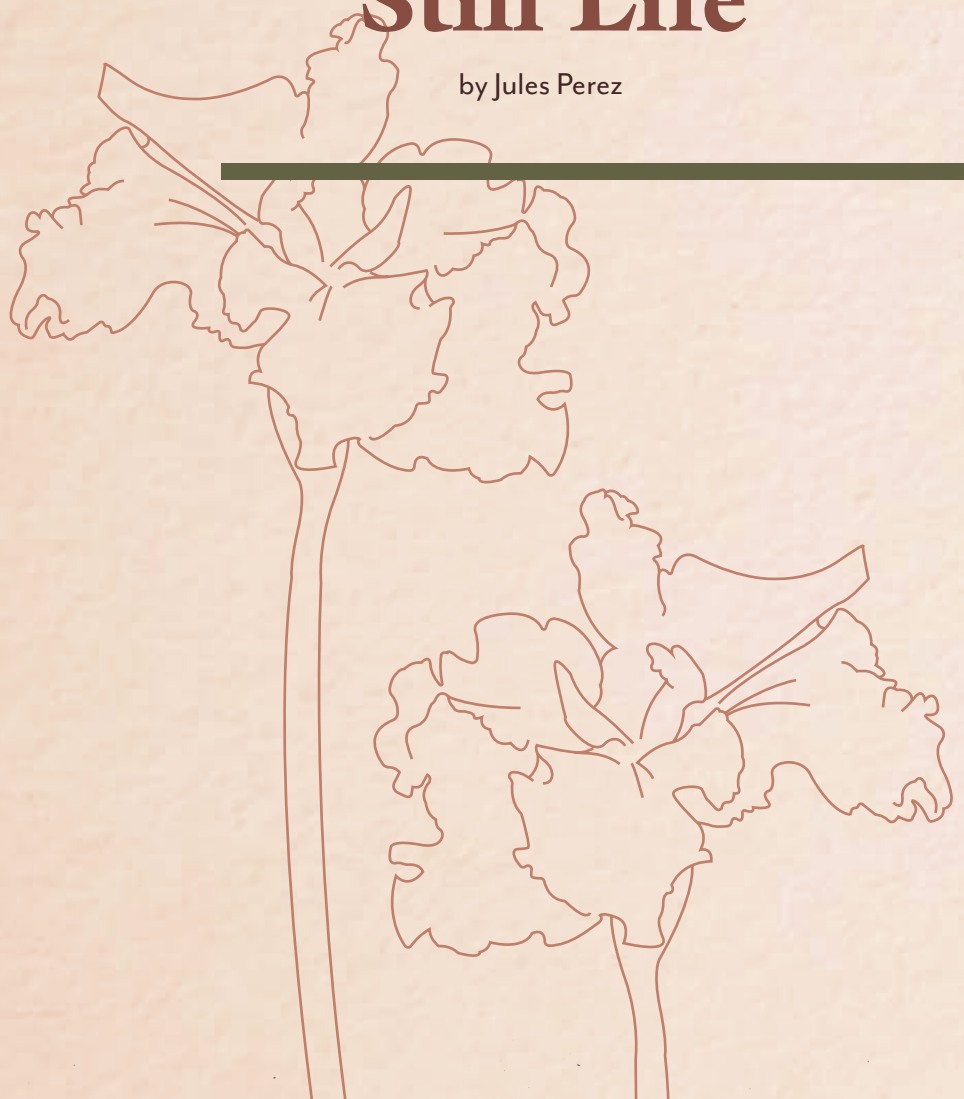
ever since my garden does not need me  
I've taken up trying to convince  
the children that leaves can crunch  
they've suspended their disbelief  
across my skin with cloudy eyes  
I've taken on the look of a falsity  
it has not rained in months

I can't recall the last time  
I saw a deer in my backyard  
head straining, prayerful  
over solemn ground bound to  
death by season or  
gnashing teeth

now it's only me  
head hanging low over  
tomatoes that bleed from their stems  
plump and shiny and fresh  
year round  
but they are stuck in the ground  
like statues immortal  
I try to fertilize the soil  
but I only ever salt it

# Still Life

by Jules Perez





# World View

by Cassandra Martin





# *Filipino-Chinese Child Learns About Want*

by Sophie Uy

## I. After Watching Ponyo (2008) For The First Time

I dreamed about drowning. Waves peeling  
away from our suburban  
driveway the way skin rolls off eczema-wrought  
limbs, then folding over concrete  
like the blanket I'd grip at one end & flick up  
& down onto my bed, a wave that never sat  
nice & straight, up & down. I was six;  
I didn't understand that death by water was hardly  
the greatest fear I'd have to harbor. I mean her  
desire nearly brought nature to its knees.  
All the warning signs were there:

Girl gets lost, girl goes looking for home,  
girl realizes home isn't hers & isn't even a home anymore,  
girl wants  
more than the universe deems necessary,  
girl nearly destroys the world,  
pulls comets out of their orbits,  
boy makes

a choice: would you love her if she could slip  
out of your hold like silk crinkling  
onto itself. Would you love her  
if she lost her magic girl sparkle.  
Would you love her  
if she looked like one of you.  
How awful it must be to want it all.

Such Is Life I  
by Sasha Thompson







## II. After Rewatching Ponyo (2008)

Two months ago a boy told me he thought mixed girls were the most attractive. *They're not too white or too Asian*, he explained, his tone as casual as instant noodles. *They're just right*. As simple as wanting ham

on everything.  
I wondered if he ever tired  
of comparing, of this

or that. If he had ever wanted something  
& been called greedy for it. I wanted to  
tell him: When your immigrant parents tell you  
not to be greedy, you listen. You learn  
things like want & desire—to look just right  
for the boy who wants girls

that aren't too Asian, to be acknowledged by the  
girl in Chinese Philosophy with a glockenspiel laugh,  
for easier mornings, for sesame noodles  
& dumplings from that Fukienese shop  
in Flushing, for ham—

are excessive. You tell yourself, *This will do*.  
You're content with everything as it is,  
which is to say, you stop asking for  
Abercrombie zip-ups & to be left alone. Eventually,  
you stop asking for anything.

As it is, I've never been afraid of being  
too Asian, only of not being Asian enough  
& being punished for wanting  
the bare minimum.

I wanted to tell him: I'm already afraid of  
being subject to this or that,  
how the roundness of  
or in someone's mouth is also a knife.

Never mind the drowning.





# Such Is Life 3

by Sasha Thompson





It's a peculiar feeling, returning to where you've been.

The person you are now—that once-ideal image that has now, impossibly, become a reality—is so far removed from who you were; everything you've seen, the people and places you once knew, what you used to wear and talk about and listen to now nothing but dim shadows. Familiar, but distant; the view through a cloudy screen.

It's a bit like seeing ghosts everywhere you go. They lurk between tree trunks, under staircases, inside of windows and doorways, waiting for you to stumble upon them so that they might remind you of what has passed. This is the sole purpose of their not-lives. Not all of them mean you harm, but some are nothing but malicious. They sink cold claws into your skin, dragging you kicking and screaming down the dark path of nostalgia until the ache of longing for what once was cannibalizes your knowledge of what *is*. The other ghosts—the kinder ghosts, the ones who are, in some ways, even more dangerous—gift you with the lyrics to your favorite song from when you were a child, the smell of your mother's cooking, the way the wind whispers and whistles through big maple leaves dappled with syrupy golden sun.

It's as if you've already died. The ghosts of your memories are as spirited and lively as the ghosts of real people, almost as if you are all part of one communal graveyard and your shared state of unbeing allows you to speak to one another as fluently as if you were speaking in actual words. That person you had once been—that stranger whose face no longer sullenly stares back at you in the mirror—no longer exists. She's only a shadow of yourself, a phantom beholden to the past she had lived in, a lonely poltergeist of recollection left to linger, inconsequential and decaying from neglect, with the other ghosts.

She died. *You* did not. You were only just born.

You're learning to walk, wobbling unsteadily on conversational legs and hopping trains of thought with all the clumsy grace of a desperate hitchhiker. You're slowly but surely learning how to be an entirely new person. There are times when you stumble, when the yawning deep dark beneath your delicate balancing beam threatens to suck you down into its voracious depths. Exploring who you are is a long, *long* journey, a never-ending trail of trial, and your only traveling companion is your murderself, the one—the many ones, an entire army of bitter phantoms—who came before. Their passive judgment is loud like thunder, bright like lightning, endlessly distracting, and the *lurking*, they're always lurking. Reminding you. *Haunting* you.

It's always easy to feel like an impostor. You are, after all, a new self inhabiting an old body. Nothing will fit perfectly. The ghosts will always whisper and croon in your ears, your reflection will always warp and shift with time. But you will learn to breathe through the whispers, the distortions, the confusion and fear and frustration. You'll learn to listen to only the beat of your unstoppable heart, the breath in your bellows-for-lungs, the pulse and thrum of the body that will, one faraway day, become yours.

The ghosts will follow you. They always will. And yet you will stubbornly continue this cycle of death and rebirth, decay and bloom, termination and recalibration, until you settle comfortably into the spaces between your organs, the electricity between your neurons, the cavity between your ribs, and you will one day—finally—be happy to be *you*.

The murderself—your past and present and future combined, that ravenous animal inside you chewing away at your barriers—is inescapable. Don't fear it; greet it with both arms outstretched. Embrace it, make it your friend. The company of ghosts and monsters isn't so bad. You can learn a lot from them. Remember who you were, that wide-eyed little girl full of wonder, and mourn her. But only for a moment. Your future waits for you beyond the graveyard, and your faithful ghosts will follow you there. Remember that nothing is ever truly lost, and that change is inevitable.

Befriend your ghosts and learn to love your murderself.

**I was born with my eyes wide open.** I didn't cry, I simply stared ahead. And in that silence, my mom began to panic. "Porque no está llorando?" She asked the nurses. She had every right to begin to stress out. It was silent at first. She remembers looking around, desperate to hear my cries. I like to believe that this was the only time she felt worried about me. I believe it was the first and only time I worried about her, too.

I was born to observe the world. My first couple of months being in this world, I couldn't see. Liquid from the birth flooded my right eye. There was a guilt my Mom carried when she saw the pus around my eye. Guilt because she was afraid that I would go blind. She got lucky. She applied all the home remedies my Abuela Luz would tell her. Bizarre ones that involve Vapuru or sábila around the delicate skin of the eye. I like to believe that they worked, though I'm sure it just needed time to heal.

My nickname at home is Gordo. Gordo in Spanish translates to fat, or fatty. A bit harsh to some, but there's an endearing nature to nicknames in a Mexican home. Taking one characteristic of a person and letting that become their nickname for life. I came out big, and I remember finding pictures of my Mom while she was pregnant with me a couple summers back. Her stomach popped out. It didn't help that I continued to grow after my birth. I became known for the chubbiness of my cheeks at home. When I began to walk, I could barely bend over to tie my shoes.

"Mi gordito," mi abuelo would call me. He took me to the little corner store down the street from us every Sunday evening and spoiled me, buying me candy and soda that I knew we could never afford.

"No le compres mucho." Mom would lecture mi abuelo Daniel. I didn't know it at the time, but

that was his way of returning his love to her. He was never able to spoil her or her siblings growing up, and this was his way of doing so. His way of healing that wound.

I spent the first five years of my life in Mexico. Growing up with my older brother and sister: Johnny and Sandy. I was like a doll to my sister. "Aye Flaca, no es un muñeco," Mom would tell her. She, too, had a nickname, Flaca. Skinny. She was small, delicate. My brother would have another nickname for her later on, La Chillndrina. He got it from us watching reruns of El Chavo de Ocho. Her teeth were crooked, and she became shy because of it. Funnily enough, she would end up having the most perfect smile out of the three of us. It was her and I against him. She was always there for me. Protecting me from

everything and I felt a need to protect her from things, too.

## Left Behind

by Tony Baltazar Gonzales

I always wanted to protect Sandy. Even

when she broke her arm. We were on the couch one summer day. Mom was gone and it was just the three of us. Of course, our abuelos were right next door, so it was never like we were truly alone. I was playing with a water gun while they were watching TV. They began to wrestle and I remember trying to help Sandy out, but I was in her way. Johnny tackled her and the next thing I knew, she had a cast on her arm. I was five. She was eleven. For a while, that's how I remembered her, wearing a cast for the remainder of that summer.

We spent most of our time in the house. The streets were hot and dry. We watched the Garfield movie and music videos that played on the TV. When it rained, Johnny would teach me to make little sailboats from newspapers and let them float down the street. I played with my cousins and stayed up late to see mis abuelos come back from selling their tamales y atole. The street lights would illuminate their faces orange and I could just barely make out the growing wrinkles that began to carve their faces.



I remember thinking that I would never want to leave.

Dad would come visit us. My Dad, that is. Mom had separated from my siblings' father years ago when Sandy was only three.

"No quería repetir lo que pasó con tu abuela," she would later tell us. She met my father when she was out here in the states with a friend. They met at the park, him playing basketball while she hung around with her friend. It's their love story. A love story that I only believe in because every other love that I've witnessed in my life has been filled with so much pain. My Dad loved my siblings as if they were his own. He never wanted to make them feel left out. "Te tuve en México porque no quería que tus hermanos sintieran que los estaba reemplazando," Mom would tell us. I was loved by them. I was their sibling, even if I was half related to them. And yet, there was still this feeling that we could never be close. "Tu pa," Sandy and Johnny would continue to say. My Dad. Like he was my property. It wasn't until their young adult years that they would say, "Mi papa."

Dad always came around the holidays. I remember believing in Los Tres Reyes Magos. They would come and give us presents, just like they did with baby Jesus. There was a certain irony in my Dad being the one bringing us presents from his home up North. He was like our own Santa Claus. Of course, I didn't know who that was until a year later. One year, I remember being given a Buzz Lightyear toy. Sandy had woken me up late at night and we crept into the living room. I accidentally touched its lazer and it went off. The sound was loud and the bright red LED light bled through the plastic and onto the surrounding floor. We rushed back into the room. Mom knew we were messing around because the next morning, she asked if we had heard something.

The decision to move to Virginia came when my Dad announced he had gotten our papeles. Our U.S. citizenship. He was working hard on it before

ever meeting Mom. There was a need for us to be together. That's why we moved. To be with him. Because while we were together in Mexico, he was alone in the U.S. I used to picture el Norte as this vast, endless winter.

"Hace frío," he described it to me.

"¿Vive ahí Santa Claus?" I'd ask him. He'd smile as we began to pack everything away. We packed our clothes, shoes, and pictures from the past that still remain in the photo album we have at home here in Virginia. A picture of me, at age three, smiling up at the camera as I plastered lotion all over our stereo system. Pictures of me, wearing my favorite Winnie the Pooh red overalls. Pictures of Johnny and his friends, wearing their oversized white shirts and blue jeans. Him and his then-girlfriend who we'd later discover married some guy and lives in an abusive relationship. Pictures of my parents at their wedding. Of Mom and her sisters and brothers. All of us except Sandy. She wanted to stay behind.

"Aquí esta mi vida," she pleaded to Mom.

"¿Estás seguro hija?" Mom asked, knowing that she'd eventually join us in el Norte. There wasn't much to argue. Sandy was close to our abuelos and our Tia Tay, one of Mom's younger sisters. She stayed behind. It wasn't until we all later visited our

“Aquí esta  
mi vida.”

home that I discovered a message she had written in my closet.

“Quiero decirte que aunque estés lejos te voy a extrañar mucho, pero espero que el tiempo pase muy, muy rápido y nos volvamos a ver. Tonito, recuerdo cuando tú y yo jugábamos a la lucha libre y luego gritabas. A veces te escucho decirme: Sandi te amo o cuando te ríes o cuando te enojas con Johnny, espero que nunca me olvides porque yo nunca te olvidaré, vuelve muy pronto te quiero mucho mi pequeño y yo te extraño.” She never told me about the message. I hugged her when I read it.

The four of us drove in Dad’s small car. El Batman, he used to call it, because of its sleek design. Traveling through Texas, I remember the first time I ate a hamburger. It was strange. Odd. Words that would continue to define who I am. The ride was long. I remember waking up in the middle of the night as bright lights plagued the inside of the car.

We moved away from the hot desert and into the mountains. Everything was green and blue. Different from the orange hues that used to be my world. There was a chilliness to this world that felt foreign and strange. We arrived at my Tio Joel’s home, one of my Dad’s younger brothers. He had offered us a place to stay while Dad got our home ready for us after the summer. I met my cousins from el Norte for the first time. They spoke a different language from me. They lived a different life. I was an alien to them. We were aliens. Strangers to this world that didn’t feel like it belonged to us. I managed at first. Tried to communicate with them the best way possible, but I couldn’t help but feel as though I was out of place. I was the one that was left behind.

By the end of summer, Sandy joined us. We were together again. Whole. Yet, it didn’t feel like we were happy. The neighbors that had surrounded us were gone. Instead, we were surrounded by trees and mountains, imprisoned inside. The corner store mi abuelo took me to had transformed into a five minute drive to a gas station. The dry hot air that had stuck sweat to our skin became a humid breeze that crept around our knees and sent chills down our backs. We were the invaders that took over our cousins’ home. There was this feeling of displacement that hovered over us.

I began school that fall. Lost in translation. Peeing my pants because I had forgotten how to say I need to go to the bathroom. Trying to imitate my classmates’ behavior in hopes of fitting in. I began to remain silent. Quiet. From here on out, I was a stranger to a world that didn’t belong to me. The love and home I had back in Mexico was gone. And so began my long journey of trying to understand this world. I chose to remain silent and simply observe because I was born with my eyes open.

Everything that we had left back in Mexico became a faraway memory. A snapshot of a life that seems so distant from the present. I like to believe that there is a possible alternative timeline in which I stayed in Mexico. I wonder who I would have become if I had stayed there. If I would have become an observer, just as I am now. If I would have continued to keep my eyes wide open, just as I had been born..

**I wonder who I would  
have become if I had  
stayed there...**

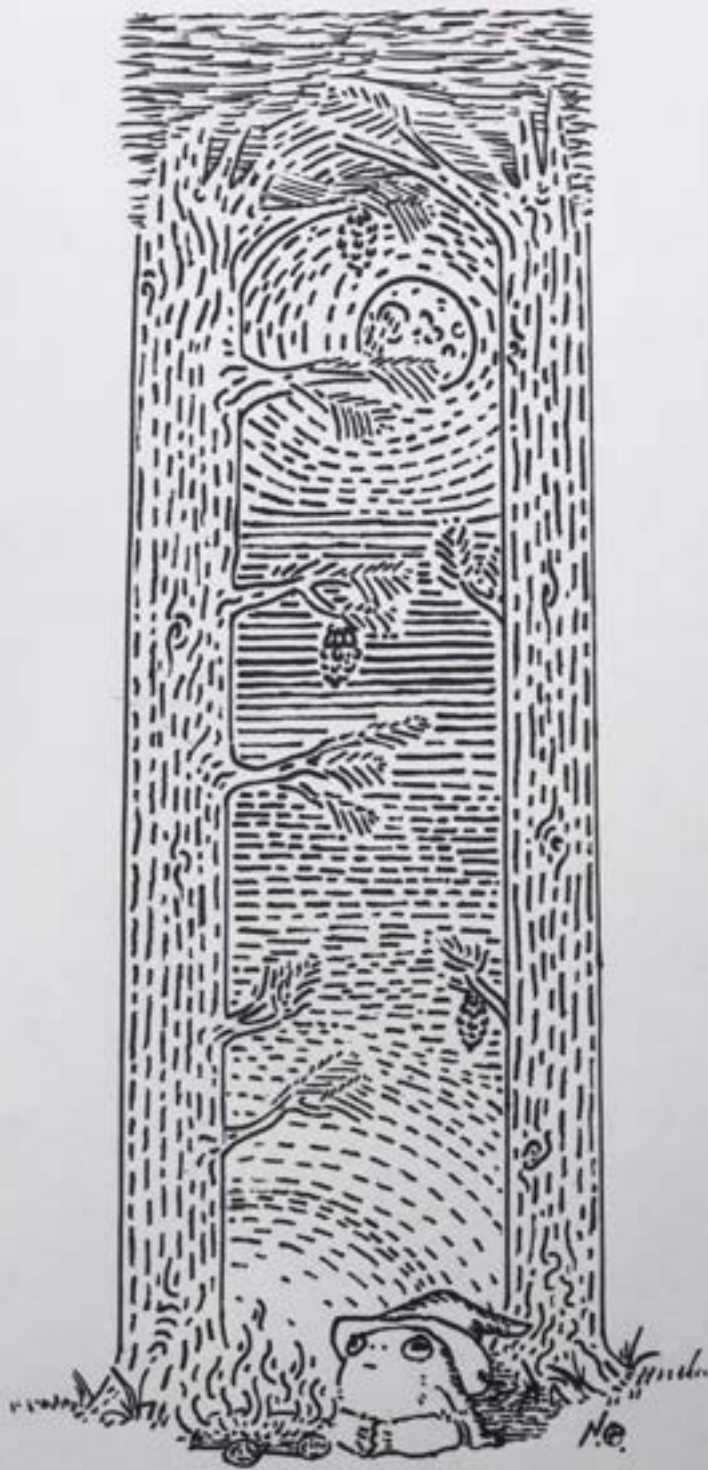




# From The Owl In The Other Tree

## NOTE FROM THE ARTIST

The title comes from a conversation with my younger brother, who, upon first seeing the completed piece, suggested that I add an owl to it. Rather than telling him it was impossible to add an owl in the state that the piece was in (complete), I told him that he was the owl, looking down from the other tree.



by Charles-Nicholas Owen



# L a y o v e r

by Liz Shanks

the horizon is seeping over blackened bends,  
your tired eyes are glazing over as you slack your grip on the wheel.  
yellow film overwhelms my vision—streetlamps glisten over raindrops,  
the sun threatens to rise.  
what are we doing here?  
gray strips of slick nothing, like tarmac  
waiting for the ghost of a plane to land, but never will.  
how long will we remain in the uncanny twilight that sheaths us in moonmist,  
in bright green signs that overlook, that whisper “turn back,  
you’re not where you should be,” that tell us we do not belong  
where the sky cracks open? the eerie familiarity of distant memories  
slowly crawls back through my bone marrow, searching for  
a nestled corner to make its home between neurons and  
synapses. soon enough I will be scraping the edges  
of the sky, and you will turn back around once the stars  
have faded from sight. the fog will roll past  
roll under  
roll thick  
and deep  
with swamping, rotting reminiscence of what once  
was and what  
we may never get back.

# Human Connection



by Cassandra Martin



# Excelsior

The fireplace roared every night,  
And the wood crackled,  
Tickling our ears.  
Wrapped up in blankets,  
We knew it would snow the next morning.

Scarfs and winter coats suffocated  
our little bodies,  
Mom double checking that every little limb  
Was bundled up perfectly.

And when Christmas morning finally came,  
Grandma would bring the best sprinkle cookies,  
Sweet enough we would all sleep soundly,  
from the high it gave us.

Then the sun shined on our little white house,  
Stepping out on the back porch,  
All the robins and sparrows,  
would sing springtime hymns to us.  
The smell of wet soil and dew filled our nostrils,  
With a sweetness that made our heads go dizzy.

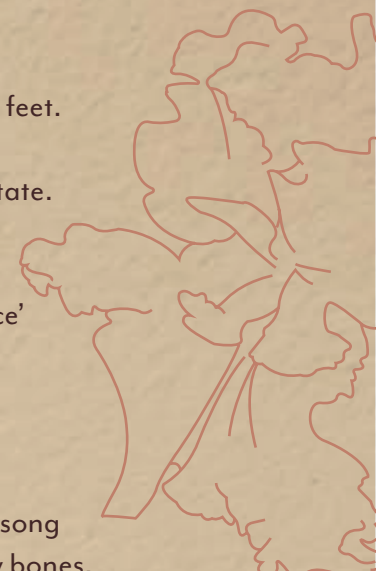
On the first warm day, Mom sent us to the yard to run  
around,  
The uncut grass brushing against our little legs.  
When the sky turned into a delicious rainbow sherbet,  
We went to eat supper together,  
All the windows were open that night.  
Red, White and Blue rocket pops,

Melted down our hands,  
Turning them sticky and pretty.  
We laughed underneath the July sun,  
Wishing we could stay like this forever.

That summer sun then faded,  
It would get chillier,  
we would get a little taller.  
Leaves crumbled beneath our feet.  
And the air turned crisp,  
like the apples we picked Upstate.

I remember always thinking,  
'I never want to leave this place'  
And when I finally did,  
I could still feel  
The empire state,  
beating inside me.  
Calling my name in the birds' song  
and the breeze that chilled my bones.

But, I'm coming home soon,  
Don't you worry.





The first time he touched you, your skin became the trails of El Dorado.  
You thought those hands brought to life the golden part inside that  
Miners and forty-niners would have bled, sweat, and torn for.

Whenever his fingertips brushed the insides of your thighs,  
They grew heavy. Whenever his knuckles grazed your lips,  
The bruises flaked like a gilded cathedral ceiling.

His kisses were only half as bad as the fist around your throat—  
On those wintry Sunday mornings when no one else was home  
He cracked the veins that held you together,

No shame when you minted yourself into a doubloon, his lucky piece:  
Refined enough for him to flaunt when he wanted,  
Delicate enough for him to bite when he didn't.

He hoarded you in the back pocket of his Wranglers,  
Every time he tucked you in, he called you doll, scrunched his nose.  
His dragon-slit eyes flecked with honey-hazel, addicted to your shine.

He and Time would steal all there was of you  
Until you stopped being precious.

You would become a lump of rose gold when he covered you in  
Copper drops and it turned you impure. Stained you like that  
Sundress he used to love you in.

Then you would sling your blood over his tobacco-tinged cavities,  
Past his silver tongue, and  
Scorch him from the inside out,

Drowning him in gory gold until *finally*,

He could never put his hands on you again.



# Midas Is Gone

by Haylee Edwards



Wonderful,

Wild,

and

Misery

by Sydney Backstrom

The first time I wandered down this mountain  
path  
Alone,  
I slipped on soggy moss and  
Blamed the wind.

I laid on dampened soil beside  
Rotting Pawpaw fruits,  
whose trees bared the names  
Of me, myself, and I

I stole a moment, then,  
To sink fingertips into my mountain's skin  
To relish in taunting, teasing memories  
Of the ghosts of past footsteps  
Back before misery staked its claim

The first time I wandered down this mountain  
path Alone,  
I cried.  
I roared against my misery, begged  
The wind to whip it away  
Into the solitude of the nothingness

I scraped my hands against trees' bark  
Watching blood drip onto a daisy's petal  
And stain its darling soul

I carried rocks with quartz edges for  
The Brother, the Aunt, the Grandmother  
Whose ashes sunk into wild water  
And were the wallowing wind

The first time I wandered down this mountain  
path, Alone,  
Misery stalked my soul.

And I found places where sunbeams don't linger  
To rest bare feet on cool limestones  
To tame the broken blisters  
Of the lives that died before me

I felt the sky's war cries on soil-crust hands  
And heard its echoed moans  
But washed my face with its tragic tears  
To polish my own torn wounds

And then a moment came  
When Misery's narrowed, gnarly form  
Slipped and tumbled down  
A thorned, unbeaten path

And life tasted sweet  
Like the taffy of old pier shops  
And syrup from Maple Trees  
Until pavement kissed these  
Calloused soles,  
And Misery slithered between  
These ribs and bellowed

So once again,  
I blamed the wind.



# Homefinding

by Emily Rose Allen

---

Light spun, they burst through the sky – leviathans on a pilgrimage, climbing over mountains like stones on their path. Dense islands rolling over themselves as waves in the heart of the sea, nothing like the thin wisps or deep fog that I’ve grown accustomed to.

These clouds make the world celestial, ethereal, as if the horizon marks where my life touches a realm beyond, somewhere where home is a great smear of color on a stretching canvas. When I reach for the clouds that roll over the hills, I come back with empty hands and damp cheeks, but with my back to the ground and my eyes to the sky, I know that the clouds are creatures of legend, harbingers of a domain beyond my grasp.

Coming home is being thrust into story, because the clouds here are not the clouds of a human world, populated by cold steel and razed asphalt. The clouds of my home are vast and unreachable, the stuff of legend and poem. I watch as they pass, tinted with all the hues of the world, moving unburdened by time. For although their lives are shorter than mine, they are endless – made with the stuff of eons, pieced together by past lives.

I look at the clouds of my home – ever exploding into new life – and no matter how long I am gone, they remember. No matter how far I go, no matter how many other clouds I walk beneath, these creatures, these that are the most ancient part of the world, remember. Raindrops bursting on my outstretched hand, skinned knees skidding through a puddle, tears slipping down my cheeks. The clouds of my home remember.

When I tilt my head and see old friends blanketing the horizon, I know – finally – that I am home.



# Philadelphia, A.D.

by Nicole Nguyen

I was a cartographer, lost  
in the tangle of telephone wires  
and dive bars and greasy twenty four hour diners  
where we once kissed in the shuttering lights  
over melted milkshakes. I carried you everywhere  
the topography of our lives  
folded into my back pocket.

Our studio apartment with the chipped tile floors,  
where you peeled oranges and lazed on the chair  
as I read you books about Vermeer and Egypt and  
other beautiful things you would not live to see.

The glitzy hotel where we crashed that  
blue and white wedding in cheap second hand  
dresses, the corner of Clearfield and Jasper  
where my ex-boyfriend got mugged,  
Hope Park where the shell casings  
hit the paved path, singing like silver bells.

The night I turned nineteen and we  
stumbled into a party singing and singing  
and suddenly silenced. The scum of the alley  
where I saw a dead body,  
needles strewn across the ground  
glinting in the dappled sunlight.

The Christmas light show at Independence Hall  
where you were angry with me for missing the train.  
The hole-in-the-wall dim sum place where you took my hand  
and told me you were getting sicker.  
The mouth of the subway where we said goodbye  
over and over until there were no more.

The hollowed-out shell  
of a closed-down department store  
where I stood, hands limp at my sides—  
I did not know what to do with them  
now that they could not hold yours.

I charted each landmark,  
drew the latitude between us,  
I kept you alive in the veins of the streets, carved  
a city in the shape of you.

# Redemption

---



by Cassandra Martin



# Hope, Elusive Savior

---

by Gillian Guy

I sink deep into the melancholic abyss.  
Tangled in the labyrinth, clasping Pandora's Box,  
I long for Hope's compassionate kiss.

The duties to myself, I've been remiss.  
Uncertainty grips me still, and Negligence locks  
My sunken chest, and I sink deeper into the melancholic abyss.

I try to swim upwards and reminisce,  
But Death and Doom target me like a hunter's hawks.  
Still, I long for Hope's compassionate kiss

And her gentle embrace, for to it I'm demiss;  
Together we'd dance, but instead, brother Gloom sits and gawks  
As I'm sinking deep into the melancholic abyss.

I was pushed to dive willingly from the precipice  
And ribbon down, akin to how lightning spreads and shocks.  
Find me, Hope, give me your compassionate kiss.

If I touch the rocky seafloor, is the next level bliss?  
Maybe Hope is just above, to dive down like a fox  
And will stop me from sinking into the melancholic abyss  
And welcome me with her compassionate kiss.



# Beg

by Sydney Backstrom

---

Hands squeeze  
Skin.

Grappling hands with  
Fingertips of sandpaper rip

At your human hide  
Torn like damp paper

But you sit alone.  
Seemingly safe.

Yet muscle is sliced from bone  
And throbbing spurts of blood drip

Hacked like slabs of ribs  
From infantile butchers

These hands sink into bloodied flesh,  
But not one soul breathes

In this room  
But you.

Scream,  
Cry,

Beg,  
The hands plead.

They slip beneath your scalp,  
Lumps slinking like slugs

Below thin skin.  
But the hands

They seek  
For the begging

The begging against  
The hands you can't see.



# *Silly Little* **College Culture**



by Cassandra Martin



# language barrier

by Via Chapin

We're fluent in two different languages, he and I. We're learning to meet somewhere in the middle.


I write and read in words. I am the perpetual stain of ink on fingers, the slick slide of a typewriter's carriage return, the clicking of keys on a keyboard. The chaotic fluidity of verb-adjective-noun governs my brain with ten-track focus, a constant torrent of clauses and assonance and rhyme. Poetry and prose soak into the spaces between my bones and seep warmly into muscle and organ, marrow and tissue. The words spill out of me with no restraint, wave after wave, hitting the backs of my teeth and rolling thickly off my tongue. Sometimes I lose control of my verbosity, toggling back and forth between loose slang and Victorian poetics, each genre at the mercy of my patchwork mind.

He reads and writes in music. Melodies flicker under his skin and flutter out of his fingertips to play off of every possible surface, mindless rhythms and silent harmonies tapped into wood, stone, metal, ceramic, skin. The beat of his footsteps is a bass drum, every hum and lilt out of his throat the serenade of winds and strings. He requires no accompaniment to weave entire detailed tapestries of color and feeling, a full orchestra unto himself the moment his fingers hit the fingerboard. He loses himself in the music, the bow reduced to an extension of his arm and the single-minded focus of his attention turned completely inward toward fanning the ember of song into a mighty blaze. Its wildfire is ravenous and all-consuming, setting alight his thoughts until everything is burned away save the art of it all, the luminous core of his being.

I am words, and he is notes. I am a pen flowing across parchment, and he is a bow burning across strings. And yet, there are things that we share.

I recognize the dance between melody and rhythm and it echoes down into the dancer living in my soul, my body infected with the beat and suffused with the heady heat of groove and melody, a joyful puppet strung up with catgut strings. I see so clearly the narrative form shadowed under the surface of notes and clefs and tempo, the stories woven into the music, the emotions that bloom from the brass and wind and strings just the same as from words and sentences and stanzas. The artist in me—the empath and the bleeding-heart poet, the wide-eyed child full of wonder and the merry multi-hobbyist—understands the music through violet-and-rose-tinted glasses, the beauty of the angel in the machine. I have added a new dialect to my ever-ravenous mind, even with my rudimentary understanding of its intricacies, and it is the torch that guides me through a strange and wonderful new world, a world that is mine to explore.





He writes his own music, his own storied melodies and myths that spark a joyful excitement in his eye. He has folded the scrawl of pen against staff paper and the measured, electronic warble of digitized sound into his language, created his own unique dialect born of both composer and performer. The sound that pours out of him into the world without a direction can be funneled into a notated symphony of ink and pixels, a dazzling display of black on white; drops in the ocean stirred into a mighty hurricane. His soul flares through his bones and skin, through wood and metal and string, far brighter than any stage lights, brighter than any number of awed faces, bright enough to stain closed eyelids with the gleeful jig of quarter notes and whole rests. There is a kind of poetry in his composing, art and beauty in the steady rigidity of beat and tempo, the dance of groove, the lyric of moving chords.

Our self-made dialects meet somewhere in the no-man's-land middle ground between logic and imagination, objectivity and creativity. We have no need for an interpreter—we describe things in our own little ways and run them through the filter of the other's perspective until they're made clear as glass. We like to dissect, to analyze, to lay out all the spun-sugar details and examine them together through our disparate lenses of music and words. In doing so, we craft a beautiful mosaic of notes and nouns, staccato and stanzas, an intricate interplay of structure and freedom that is inherent to all art and is far more beautiful than its separate, crystalline parts.

# *Bluegrass* by Kayla Koldys *Melody*

I find it hard to be brittle.

Collecting comfort through folk songs

'Old Friends' in Bookends.

I come to you on smiling Tuesday afternoons

Like a gift, screaming "I see you".

My ear pressed to your gentle chest,

I hear the child cry,

hoping you know you can tell me why.

Most times I enjoy the silence.

The deepest greens of solitude

with rainy grays and hollow blues,

still, the sun shines through.

Where nature hides but catches eye,

and bluegrass plays a tune,

I find myself thinking,

this is where my oak tree blooms.



*Such*

*Is*

*Life*

2

by Sasha Thompson





I am swimming  
in my bedroom,  
in the linen closet,  
in the box.

The Box —

where old projects and notes congregate, and childhood memories are laid to rest.

The clear, plastic sides of The Box reveal its contents, displaying many layers of colored construction paper, canvases, and old study guides. They lay stacked like the tightly packed sedimentary layers of an oceanic shelf. So tightly, they gradually merge, the years, dates, and colors blending together.

I discard the blood orange Lid to the side, while simultaneously trying to slow my rushed breath.

I peer over the ridge of its plastic side, and there seems to be no visible end to The Box. It's practically a trench, and I lack enough oxygen to undertake such a long project compared to the other creatures of the deep.

My wetsuit isn't thick enough, either, to bear the chilling feelings that I expect will come along with the bittersweet memories

lining its rocky shelving,  
nor durable enough protect me  
from their jagged and jarring edges.

I take the plunge, wincing from the cold.

My childhood memories  
are ink blank waters and seashell fragments, they are nothing  
but bits and pieces haphazardly scattered across the recesses of my mind. I submerge deeper, only elbow deep in The Box, but thousands of meters below my consciousness. The loose strings of forgotten friendship bracelets from Aleoopp, circa 2015, are seaweed tendrils,  
grazing my forearms as I dive for a more profound find. Like an angler fish, my metal skull art piece illuminates the closet, the dingy lighting reflecting off its shiny exterior. I place it on The Lid for safekeeping.  
I keep swimming, while grazing a cautious finger along the side of the compact layers.

I scan my notes,  
my old scribbles and doodles, and memories flow through me as steadily as the cool current. Slow, for sure, but

---

# Underwater Graveyard



consistent.

I come across college ruled papers covered in handwritten stories of beached sharks and favorite shells that bring me back to

the white sand beaches of LBI.

With another extended reach into the dark depths,

I grasp vibrant coloring pages, reminding me

of MASH, of computer games,

of the perceived vastness of middle school.

A refreshing reminder that things are still perpetually moving.

Not sure where though.

Suddenly the tide quickens;

I am thrown off course.

I am disoriented with no way to know up or down, left or right.

I have lost track of dates, of time itself.

My writing is still the same, but my doodles are more juvenile. Is that six years old? Or ten? Am I floating or swimming? Sinking or drowning?

My oxygen is dwindling, I can feel my shortness

of breath, of air

so I reach out,

grappling

for a handhold, anything

to ground

me.

Finally,

I make contact with the seafloor, the grimy bottom of The Box.

I raise my hand only to find a lone seashell in it: my watercolor painting. Its alabone edges are misshapen and dull from the consistent

current and erosion of added projects and portfolios

from years past, but, somehow,

it retained its color. Still blue skied

with lavender peaks framing the lake.

The spider remains perched,

just as I remember it,

on its dew filled web.

I remember the cool, gusty breeze, making the trees rhythmically sway and making that muggy summer day not quite so hazy.

I can breathe again,

and I gingerly lay my painting on

The Lid with my other

recovered treasures

to carry it into

the warm, rippling light

of my newly updated

bedroom.

by Michaela Powell

# Overthinking

*Again, Again and Again*



by Cassandra Martin



# from one creature to another,

by Haylee Edwards

---

what makes a girl a boogeyman?

i'd say her purple-bloom knuckles,  
her nailbeds gnawed by wired teeth.  
her knobby knees forgetting how to  
stand or the shiver of every breath.  
i could swear milk teeth shake loose  
when she cries.

that is where it began.

melted as she was, she had to pour what was left  
into a mold that could make something  
tenderfooted again.

she took the papier-mâché to her bedroom floor, like a  
mad science project: baking soda, vinegar, ashes. and  
it erupted as it came together before her very eyes:

she took legs from here,  
to run fast and far,

a stomach from there,  
to devour the whole world,

the left hand of Sisyphus,

the right arm of Atlas,

the sound mind of an architect,

the silver tongue of a sage.

she grabbed her craft scissors and  
gnashed at what she'd become,  
stabbed in some sutures 'til she finally  
took shape.

at last:

it was homegrown perfection.





then she jammed a knife in the socket  
and came back renewed.  
now she's a warped shell, a forgery,  
but we love her more all the same.

wretched and mooning, she does it all  
and then some. her spirit's chiseled to  
a nub, but the grip on her neck is her  
own.

it's so much better now, she has to recite  
since at least this fate was self-inflicted.





# womanhood, entombed.

by Haylee Edwards

we are specimens wriggling in  
the burnt amber of a mother's heirloom,  
an amulet from her mother

and hers,

and hers.

we're trapped in here, our sticky fossil prisons.

the heartsickness has always sputtered debris our way—  
salting our bloodline,  
in the cracks in our bodies,  
across the ceilings of our ambitions.

all since the First Mother  
bared her teeth.

the histories of our condition are hidden  
in basement boxes,  
under sheets in the attic,  
between sun shafts, dust motes,  
and in the corners of tired minds.

too persistent, too honest, too *much*  
(or so we've heard)  
are those records of:

love found but misplaced;  
children prayed for but born unbreathing;  
girls brought up gutsy but diabolically torn down;

mothers untrusting, envious of the little ones that make it—

our diagnostic criteria are better left unsaid.

you bequeath this heirloom, my squishy body  
suspended in a solitary cell on woven twine as  
proof to the world, that our kind can be "healed."  
i am clawing at my gemstone, suffocating, afraid.

this tragic show and tell was someone else's bane, not mine.  
i wish i could yard-sell these antique labors for good.

Dear Little House,

Up winded, tangled roads, Ivies of poison lace up amongst your face  
With rain-soaked soil splattered on your skin like raindrops on windshields  
A perfume of must and dust seeps from your floorboards  
While your arthritic groans whisper beneath pesky cobwebs

Dear Little House,

When you were young with fresh white paint  
And that porcelain little tub,  
Who found love in your safe walls?  
Who sturdied your beams when wicked wind whipped?  
Who praised your warmth within?

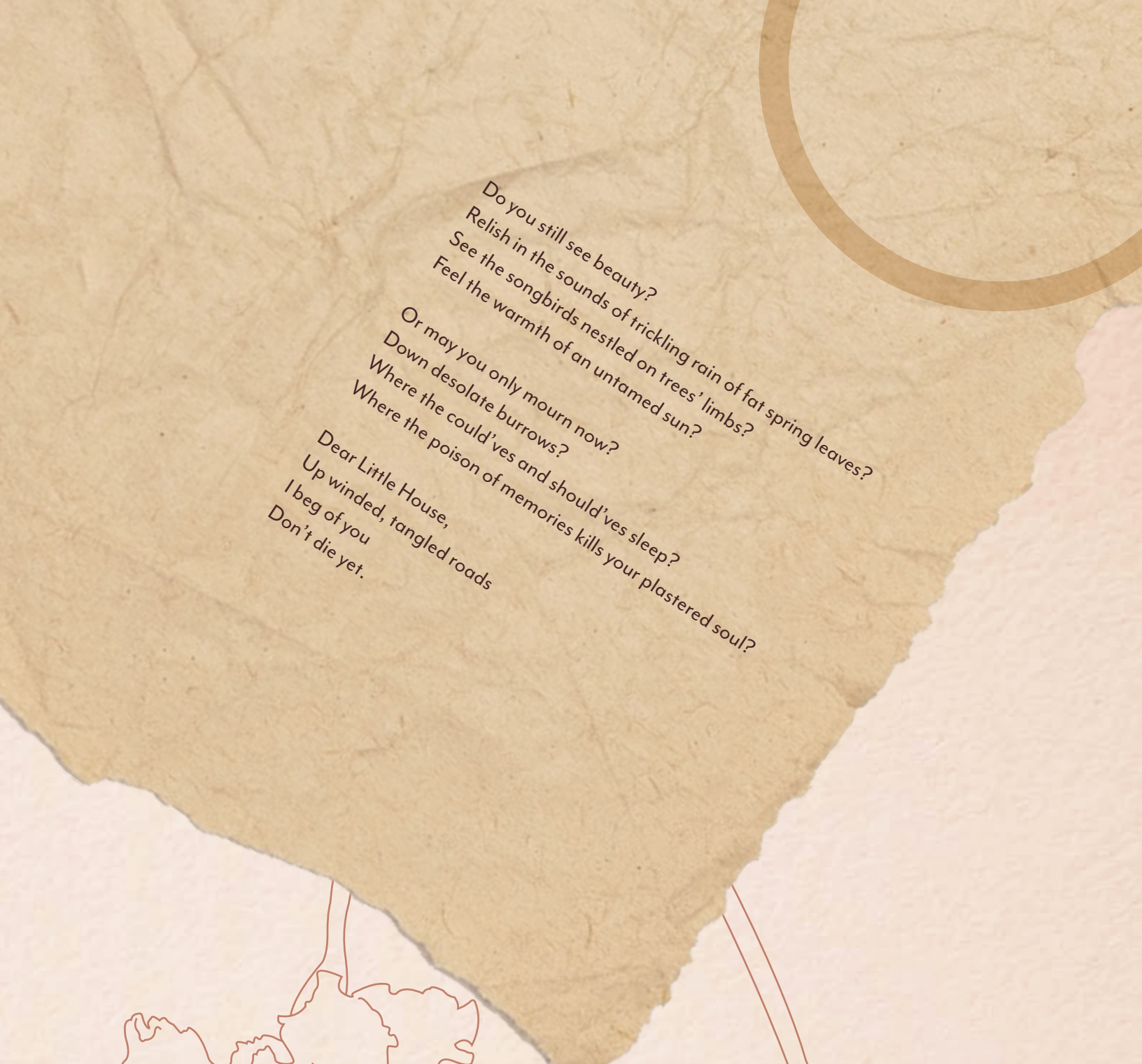
But did you ever hear coyotes yip over fallen fawns?  
Smell the dandelions bloom?  
See horse-drawn wagons morph into iron and grease?  
Sing to the trains' whistles in the valley?

Sunken into woods now,  
I imagine you weeping  
As that ivy slithers deeper down your chimney  
As animals ravage where people once sang  
As willows wither amongst your feet

# To That Dying Little House

by Sydney Backstrom





Do you still see beauty?  
Relish in the sounds of trickling rain of fat spring leaves?  
See the songbirds nestled on trees' limbs?  
Feel the warmth of an untamed sun?

Or may you only mourn now?  
Down desolate burrows?  
Where the could've and should've sleep?  
Where the poison of memories kills your plastered soul?

Dear Little House,  
Up winded, tangled roads  
I beg of you  
Don't die yet.





# Cypsela

by Madeleine Magnant

Cypsela spins on the wind  
Newlyweds sprint in the spindrift  
And an old man waves to a kid  
I wonder where they've all been

Did the engine break down?  
Did you chase the nimbostratus clouds?  
Why did you drape yourselves out  
Over this garden-variety town?

Was this the destination or a breakdown on the way?  
What made you leave? Who made you stay?  
Did you end up in November after dreaming of July?  
Did something wake up in you, or did something have to die?

Did you know what you wanted when you packed up all your bags?  
A little less of nothing, or much more than what you had?  
Do symbols in the sand show you the things you still resent?  
Are we the pro- or epi-logue to your great accident?

All in all, is this the mind you gave your body for?  
The participation trophy for a lifetime's worth of war?  
Did you wake up at three a.m., get in your car, and go?  
Each day we say "good morning", is there more or less you know?

Are you living for tomorrow, are you answering the call?  
Are you dying to make it from midsummer to the fall?  
Do you still keep a checklist of your "great deeds left to do"?  
Is your *raison d'être* something that you never knew?

Do you stare down Saturn through a ticked-off telescope?  
Do you see a pattern or have you chosen blind hope?  
Have you gotten married to your perfect kindred spirit?  
Or did you scream "I love you" and they just happened to hear it?



Do you want to start a family? Do you need good money first?  
Have you driven a knife into something deep as a curse?  
Do you take your coffee black, with sugar, or with cream?  
Can you be the end to justify all of the means?

Have you ever been honest or have you just been drunk?  
Have you ruined everything? How close have you come?  
Did you love some mother's son? Is he now some daughter's dad?  
Did you notice that the milk's about three days from going bad?

Could you build yourself a future if I gave you all the blocks?  
Is evening your breathing worth the ticking of the clocks?  
Are you growing up a trellis, are you helpless, are you scared?  
Do you wish you'd showed up just a little less prepared?

Is the answer in the kitchen, in the starlight, in the sea?  
Could you see it way back then, could you see it here in me?  
Dandelions are pretty, but too flimsy for a wedding  
I'll give you a diamond, baby, give me Armageddon

Cypsela spins on the wind  
Newlyweds sprint in the spindrift  
And an old man waves to a kid  
I wonder where they've all been

You fell away like summer heat  
carried over the mountains--

fell off the bone, tender skin  
loose, ribcage butterflied open

your cheek was cool to the touch  
voice weak and small, a hopeless thing.

Someone once told me  
*if you are not recovering, you are dying*

and it made me cold all over, burned  
like salted ice in my throat.



In those last terrible days,  
before the blanched hospital rooms

and the terrible sound of your begging  
when you heard they were sending you away

you looked like mom's old photographs  
sun bleached and faded

eyes sunken into sockets, cheeks hollowed out,  
cracked lips like sutures sewing up your mouth

empty stomach, empty head,  
turned inside out and back again.



by Victor Aten

i named myself Victor meaning Frankenstein  
Victor meaning *fucked-up-stitched-together-boy*  
meaning *quilted-patchwork-soul-boy*

Victor meaning bury-me-right or i'll claw  
& splinter the inside of my coffin like  
Jason Todd & swallow soil as i wrench  
myself out of this tomb,  
vivisect this crypt  
& ransack the larynx of  
whoever dared to scar-my-gravestone with  
the name "god-beholds"

Victor meaning caked-in-dirt  
from cleaving out of my catacomb —

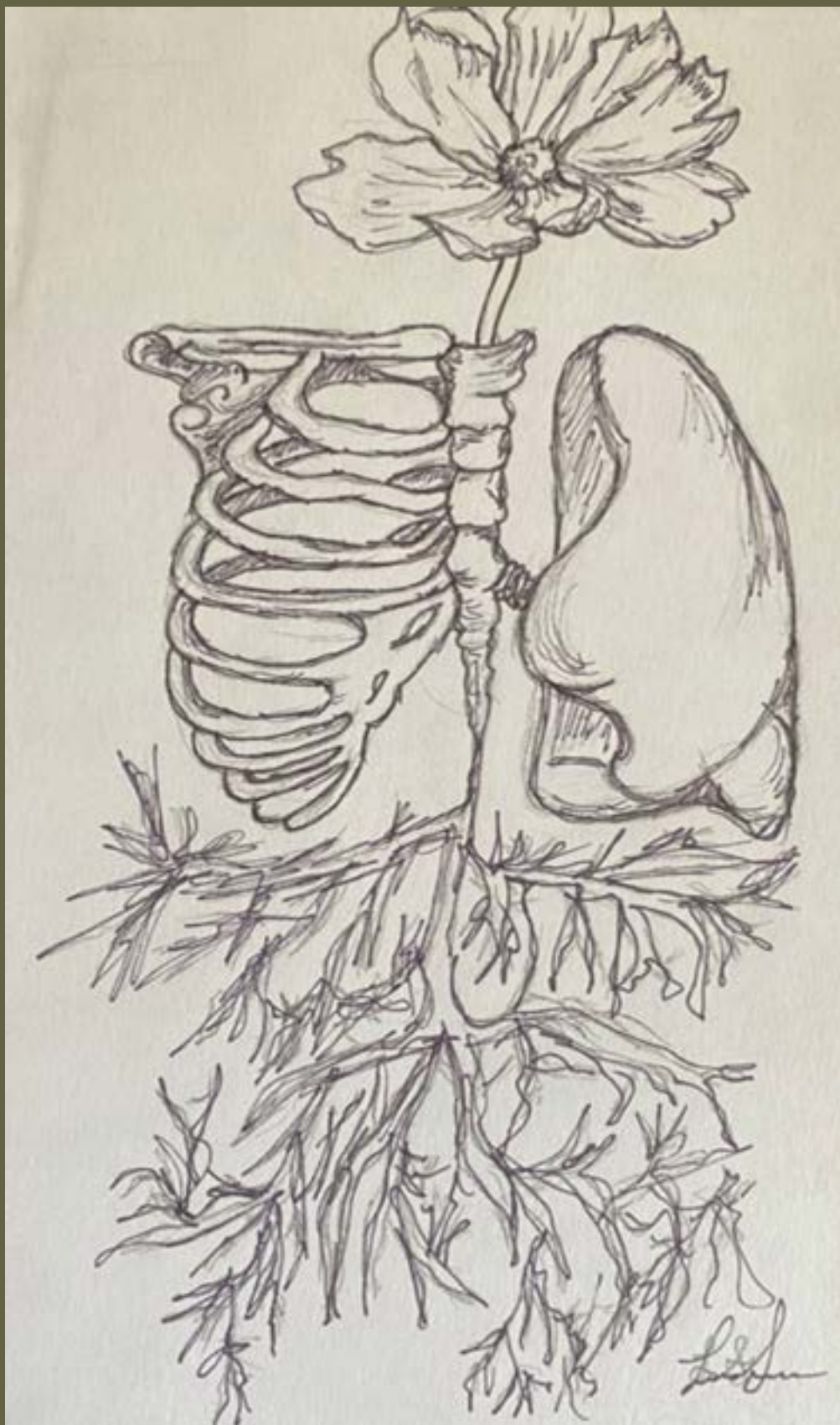
fuck you for mourning me!  
i am alive!  
i am Victor, bleeding champion  
leaking from where I have sewn-myself-shut,  
my sutures crooked and vibrant,  
a celebration of my resurrection —

it's a boy! i'm a boy!  
Victor meaning i stitched my masculinity  
out of long skirts & comic books,  
out of lipstick marks & video games,

out of kissing a boy who died & came-back-right like i did  
& he anoints me "Victor" meaning faggot  
meaning brave & beloved

it's called a deadname because it's  
scarred-on-my-gravestone

# Cosmos



by Liz Shanks





# Boundless

by Rachel Lowe

My chest cracks & croaks at the memory  
of his hands slipping up the sides of me.  
His fingerprints smudge my mind like a glass wall.

Booming & banging bums of standup basses,  
backing up the horn in a jazz hymn.  
Heavy-eyed looks in the back of barely-lit bars.

The heady scent of black coffee hacks my head.  
My heart hisses at the sizzle of bright breakfasts.  
Sausages in a pan, smooches between pancake flips.

I hiked through lies to a bliss  
where my mess is celebrated.  
Sticky parts of me are met with soft.  
The shrieking sound of sadness stops.

He holds the hum of my hard-pressed thoughts  
in his hands.



# The Fall of Ophelia Hughes

by Madeleine Magnant

a harmless man's a hazy sky  
that drips with gripping silence, with  
humidity that disintegrates your bones

southern sweet tea stirred with acid  
fake phone calls, cut the theatrics  
all he did was say "I'll drive you home"

by city hall where sinners dwell  
sweet, discreet Virginia belle  
told the man "my name's Ophelia Hughes"

clear as late September skies  
the harmless man was hypnotized  
and so the magnolias died with his youth

she submits false virginity  
when he admits his law degree  
and the green lights he's seen from The Lord

a case of willful ignorance  
she grins with glossy, crimson lips  
as if she could elude Elysian court

premeditated innocence  
so medicate his limerence  
and don't you dare disclose you're doing time

get high and dry against the wall  
you flimsy paper parasol  
too delicate to commit such a crime

he looks at her in lavender  
she simpers "yes, I'm twenty, sir,"  
she radiates an ultraviolet lie

breaks bonds within an honest town  
breaks hearts of men who, from waist-down,  
appear too vital and divine to die

who would do for a good lord's bride  
but superlative slut, sanctified  
but docile proof that not all power is lost

such pretty, white, capricious skin \*  
he'd look heroic tucked within  
from half-filled hips to ankles neatly crossed

unfurled on his horizon, she  
must crucifix or fortune be  
whichever keeps him noblest and most warm

he offers gallant turns of phrase  
when, veiled behind her doe-like gaze,  
flickers the first glimpse of a deadly storm

piercing hail and roaring force  
centuries drowned without remorse  
thunderous waves high as the dawn of time

boiling brawn unseen before  
which makes mere child's play out of war  
beneath her lashes stir depths dark as wine

the good man made of mortal flesh  
sees vengeful gods beneath her breasts  
with power that rends him, like her tanktop, small



he sees a beast too wild to tame  
a violence with unflinching aim  
his back presses against proverbial walls

and yet, if he did not exist,  
this storm could have no catalyst,  
her eyes could not have darkened deep as sin

for all its terror, beauty, wrath  
the tempest on her warring path  
would know no path, nor purpose, without him

her heart is ancient, vicious, wild  
within a body like a child's  
her fragile frame can do naught but react

her fury fleets, ephemeral  
she's evergreen as emeralds  
the harmless man has won his power back

and so great ships get lost at sea  
so rise and plummet dynasties  
so men and girls play games of give and take

liliths lick self-inflicted wounds  
take noble lovers by new moons  
and all of history happens in their wake

all this tragic, wicked dance  
is born within a single glance  
exchanged by strangers when first introduced

thus begins the dawn of man  
thus begins the tale again  
thus begins the fall of Ophelia Hughes





The air tastes like dirt, like recent rain.  
My boots sink into the trail and brand the  
ground with my footprints.

The sun is alive.  
The world is blurry. Green. Bright.  
The leaves knit together to become the sky,  
but my eyes are cast downward  
to a corpse —  
A bird on its back,  
black wings spread as if they were pinned  
there, a message — “you were  
never meant to fly.”

Its chest  
is torn open,  
its guts exposed;  
its ribs are  
splayed out  
like the cosmos,  
red giants painted  
on its bones.

I poke it with a stick.  
Stubbornly, it stays dead.

*i met a bird who was  
reborn as a nebula*

by Victor Aten



# Persephone's *Lament*

by Haylee Edwards

Conceitful pomegranate seeds,

bitter aloe,

blooming fields of enrichment line  
the bloodied meat of broken skin.

Who says that it all has to die just  
because I've been lost?  
I say that it all has to die since I've  
yet to be found.

Not a love story in sight, but I doubt you'd know that.

You all wrench pleasure from my empty nailbeds,  
make fairy tales of my fear,  
art of my anguish.

There is a season in my name,  
by my hand,  
whose very essence is persistence  
and yet  
the voices of the ignorant have overruled  
my wails,  
my pleas for rescue.

If only the masses understood  
the power of brimstone talons  
around the waist of a woman  
whose very *blood* is tinged  
ink-black by association.

Butterfly weeds line the windowsill,  
yellow carnations flailing in my empty lungs,  
purple hyacinths crack tempestuous from my iliac crest

There is no winning, but  
spring will make a path for you,  
if only to find me before I wilt too.

They met in a Shakespeare course,  
Star-crossed lovers taking a chance  
On their lives and their loves,  
Poisoned whisperings between  
Sentences, masks still hiding  
The true face of their newfound love

—

They began on a cold night,  
Snow kissing the tips of their  
Eyelashes, hot breath pulsing in the  
Shape of a laugh, and timid  
Wonders for what they could  
Become with one another

—

They prayed on the hilltop,  
Prayed for grace in what they  
One day may be, masks slipping  
Down their face, realizing that  
“Forever” may not only be a phrase  
Spoken by the lonely

—

They ended in the train station,  
Anxious hands and tears stuck in  
Reluctant gazes, knowing each  
Mistake is for the better,  
Already regretting the impeding  
Goodbyes, forever

—

They forgot in new places,  
Forgot the masks they'd once  
Untied, forgot the stars they'd  
Once crossed together, forgot  
About Romeo & Juliet, forgot  
About that class forever ago...

# Romeo and Juliet

by Kat Mauser



# *i·ris*

noun

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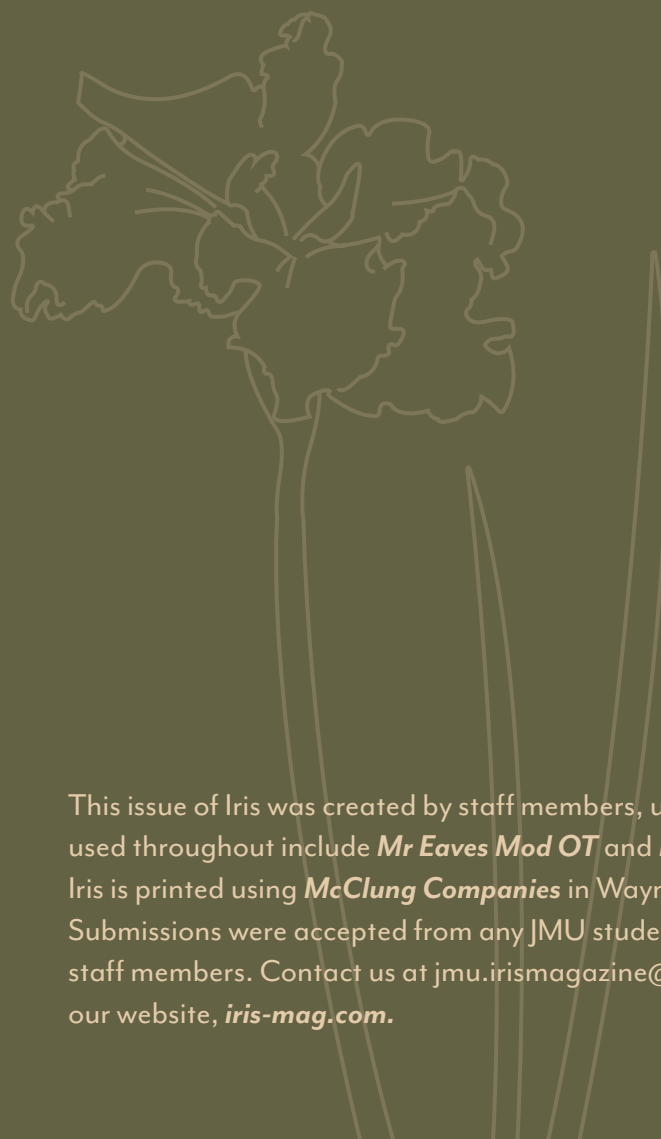
1. a flat, colored, ring-shaped membrane behind the cornea of the eye, with an adjustable circular opening (pupil) in the center.
2. a plant with sword-shaped leaves and showy flowers, typically purple, yellow, or white.
3. the goddess of the rainbow and messenger of the Olympian gods.
4. **a literary magazine publishing student work at James Madison University**

## **Submitting to *Iris*:**

We publish creative pieces including fiction, nonfiction, poems, and visual arts, such as paintings, drawings, mixed media, and photography. Look out for our submission period at the beginning of each semester and email your submission along with a title, your name, and an alternative means of contact to ***jmu.irismagazine@gmail.com***.

## **Joining Our Team:**

Interested in joining the ***Iris*** team? Send an email of introduction to ***jmu.irismagazine@gmail.com*** and we will be in contact about the application process.



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