




orpheus



porchswing



Home is a garden of memory, where roots tangle with time.
Some moments bloom bright, while others wilt —but whisper
to them softly, and they will answer: forget me not.



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About Orpheus

Orpheus and its predecessor, *The Exponent*, have been student generated for the last 123 years. Each term, a call for submissions is put forth for University of Dayton students to submit prose, poetry, fine art, photography, and design pieces for consideration. Selection of works is juried by faculty panels called together by the *Orpheus* staff. Coordination, editing, design, production, and printing direction are all conducted by the publication's student populated staff.

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VOL 124: PORCHSWING

EDITOR LETTERS

Porchswing—according to Google, it’s “a swing on a porch usually made of wood leaving space for two people to sit and swing.”

To *Orpheus*, it is the warm breath of familiarity that hums in one’s soul.

The soul knows just about everything that inspires it, transfixes it, guides it. Home, a word we make sense of in terms of physical place, is not so definitively tangible. Instead, what inspires and transfixes and guides us could very well be a person, a song, a belief, a feeling.

And, if I didn’t know any better, I would say this is why we create art. Through any artistic medium, we give a feeling a face, a situation some eyes, an emotion a mouth. We plant four walls and a roof over ambiguities; we speak our own languages and they are somehow understood.

As the Head Literary Editor of *Orpheus* for the 2024–2025 academic year, it has been my most sincere pleasure watching these flourishing artists share with our community the things that ground them, the things that call them, and the things that make them who they are. Those featured in this issue have taken their own luminous skills to share what home means to them and what is truly native to their souls.

Orpheus will always be a refuge for those who seek the magic in art or the truth in pages. We will always leave a space for you, next to us, on the porchswing.

Welcome home.

Stay for a while.



Melina Blank

Head Literary Editor; class of 2026

Home. What is it anyway? Ever since I can remember, home has eluded me. Eluded me through unexpected move-outs and language barriers, eluded me through social cliques and “it gets better with time.”

What if the structures meant to protect and represent us have failed us? What if we were forced to find a different definition of what it means to be at home? Perhaps, it is easier to think of ourselves as outcasts; to deny that home is not what we thought it would be.

Home is not what I thought it was. It keeps shifting places, it dies and reborns in new people. Home is never the same, neither now nor every time I recall her in my memory.

But I am not the same either.

Every time we create, we leave part of ourselves in our work. These fleeting, faceless self-portraits capture what we yearn for the most; they paint our idea of home at a fixed point in time. *Porchswing* is a collection of such portraits. The artists featured in this issue have written, weaved, sculpted, designed, printed, painted, and composed to comprehend what makes them who they are.

May you delight in visiting every artist’s home, in becoming part of their dreams and struggles. May you see art as a safe haven for wrestling with the big questions of life; a refuge for the broken spirit. And may you never forget who you once were; how much you’ve grown.

Do not forget.



Sebastián De León

Lead Designer; class of 2025

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PORCH

the *feeling* of coming HOME.

it is neither **here** nor *there*, but somewhere **entirely your own**. HOME is in the small things—

your mother's smile,

your friend's laughter.

it's in your favorite hoodie,

plastered in the past.

your bones are steeped in it,

your tears *taste* of it,

your hand yearns for its *t o u c h*,

HOME is on the porch.

HOME is in your soul.

Her Swing

COLIN CANTELLA

If I could ask Him one question I'd say, does grandma still use that old porch swing?

Silent Conversations

JULIA DASCHBACH



Is There Space for Me at the Table?

WHITNEY JOHNSTON



Her Aubergine Chaise

AMAYA JOHNSON

Tattered. Worn-out. Sulled. These are the words that came to mind as I nestled on the couch. I had just finished cleaning up the entire house, and thankfully I finished before Henry returned from work. The couch was my family's heirloom, passed down from my Nana, and then to Ma. It was Nana's prize possession given to her by my Grandpa. She would revere and ogle over the deep plum-purple damask fabric, and the intricate wood-carved vines that traveled all around the couch. I never understood why she cherished this sofa so avidly. The chestnut wood is chipped in places once purple is washed out and greyish. *What would Nana think now to see this shape?*

"I'm thinkin' too much again," I say to myself.

"The stew should be finished by now."

We've been eating potato stew for the past two weeks now. Since the market turned on its side, money has been tighter than ever. Henry's frugality has intensified over the years; just yesterday, he was hollering at me because I burned the rice. Henry was always wailing about something or nothing.

The Great War took an immense toll on him; when he came back, he never really was the same. A rush of respite touched

me briefly when he first came home, but it was short-lived. As I came up to greet him with a kiss, through the impassivity of his lips, I knew something was not quite right.

His eyes weren't so keen anymore. His irises were tenebrous, darker than the twilight sky, with a depth that seemed endless. His boyish face aged rapidly, with deep-set wrinkles on his forehead permanently marked on the fabric of his skin. He would seldom, if not never, smile, irrevocably wearing this look of guilt and inexplicable anger, devoid of ambition and enthusiasm.

It took him a while to readjust and get back on his feet. The war robbed him of his sense of self and direction. While he was gone, I worked at Mr. Rutherford's munition factory manufacturing missiles and ammo for the Great War. Although the work days were tremendously taxing and grueling, it was a time when I felt boundless. I had discovered a sense of purpose within myself. It was the only time when I had complete control over me. I remember earning my first paycheck, I was riddled with such glee and rapture. There was an implicit sensibility of camaraderie among the women who worked there. For the first time, I felt something in myself *changing*.

"You're chasin' rainbows, Catherine."

"I don't want my women workin' in no factory."

"Better off taking care of the house, Cathy." Henry would badger.

He doubted my capabilities in working, one of the first things he did was to make sure I quit that job. He would tell me that I was like red columbines, a delicate flower whose petals could easily tear at a touch.

"You are too precious to work, honey." He would say it all sing-songy.

He put me back in the birdcage, this time throwing away the lock and key. I obliged without hesitation, but deep down I was truly devastated and angry. I wanted to be anywhere but in that house. The empty bassinet that lay adjacent to my bedroom exuded a doleful atmosphere that I never dared to breathe. The sound of the ticking clock reverberated throughout the room, emphasizing how hollow this house was. That wretched couch incessantly reminded me of what once was. Being in this house was terribly lonesome, and I was slowly losing my mind. Wake up. Cook. Kiss your husband goodbye. Make the bed. Wash the laundry. Wash the dishes. Scrub the

floors. Cook. Kiss your husband hello. Eat. Sleep. Then repeat it over and over again. When I finished I would curl onto the couch staring mindlessly at the off-white walls, listening to the sound of silence.

...

Henry didn't come home until much later that night. He came inside stumbling reeking of tobacco and booze. I went up to greet him.

"Where's my food?" he garbled.

"It's on the kitchen table. I made stew again."

He mumbles something unintelligible and shuffles his way to the kitchen. I could feel my breathing becoming slightly heavier, as anxiety began to tighten on my chest. Without a doubt, Henry was intoxicated but I was unable to read his mood which means anything I say or do could set him off into an uncontrollable rage.

"Did you burn this too?" he retorted.

"No, I didn't."

“Good for nothing... burning up food like we have some to spare.”

I didn’t respond.

“Food’s cold too.” he says while sloppily eating and slurring his speech.

I didn’t respond again.

I sat there and listened to him as he continued to whine and moan. The anxiety in me quickly subsided and transformed into anger and desperation. I walked over to the silverware cabinet grabbing the sharpest item I saw. I walked over to the couch and began to slash it. For the first time in a while, I witnessed a different emotion on Henry’s face. I wasn’t able to give it much thought, as my actions were running faster than my thinking. I slashed open the washed-out purple fabric, frantically ripping out and pulling the cotton and chipping at the wood of the couch. Howling out words that didn’t make sense. Every emotion has risen to the surface all at once, and I’ve reached my breaking point. My breakdown probably lasted for a few minutes, but I was releasing years-long pent-up anger. I stood up peering down at the couch. Nothing was left of it anymore. Cotton scattered across the floor. I turned to Henry.

His eyes were wide-eyed, and he couldn’t muster out any words to say.

“Tomorrow, I’m going out to talk with Mr. Rutherford about working again.” I declared.

“I’m going to bed. Somebody should clean this mess up.”

Take Me Back

ALLISON GUZZI



In Or Out?

KYLEIGH STREETER



Squeak and Creak

ISA EVANS

The squeaking annoyed me; even with earbuds in I could still hear the porch swing grating. I rocked subtly, prolonging the screeching noise of rusted metal, wincing like a child stepping on an extra creaky floorboard on their way to sneak snacks from the kitchen. Each protest from the swing seemed to echo the frustrations of summer days spent at our uncle's house.

My sister sounded happy enough on her equally aged tire swing, twirling about absent-mindedly with a mouth full of grapes I told her to swallow before she made her way out. She pulled on the rope, kicking her feet out desperately to keep her momentum. The tire swayed dangerously close to the walnut tree, its branches drooping low as if trying to eavesdrop on our sibling antics. My sister's grip waned.

I warned her, but once again it fell on deaf ears. Her determined grunts mixed with muffled laughter almost drowned out the porch swing's creaking. I couldn't help but laugh at the sight of her upper body twisting as if that alone could let her defy gravity. The porch swing screeched as my sister's hands fell. She groaned, swallowed hard and flipped me off as I laughed at her failures.

"Give up?"

"Naw. Imma need more grapes."

She held out her red, calloused hand expectantly, eyeing the plastic bag I forgot I was holding. I inspected the bunch, holding the bag up just high enough for her to get a clear view of its contents as well.

"Get your own grapes, jungle girl."

My deadpanned expression softened the longer I watched her limp body hang inside the swing.

The squeaking stopped.

Sitting Outside

ELAINA LEAR



Tundra

RACHEL SMITH

Laughter echoes out from under the doorway
yet here I am
on the outside.

I was invited in
but something keeps me in the cold.
I feel as if I belong with the tundra
undeserving of the warmth offered within.

My photos are on the wall
arm in arm with the rest.
Yet here I am.

The wet on my skin freezes
before it can slide down my cheeks.
The wind howls so I don't have to.

My soul yearns to be with the rest
but I fear I will tarnish something still golden, precious.
Their eyes stray towards my empty chair.
I see the sadness in their eyes.
Hear the hitch in their breath.

I know they accept me
cold roots and all.
Yet.
I do not accept me.

How am I to go to the golden glow
when the snow welcomes me so?
It hurts me, but at least, I can harm no other
with the darkness inside of me.

Love Like
ALEXANDRIA FORD

I want a love like the evergreens,
Soft as your laugh,
But firm as black coffee with cream.

I want a love like sweet jelly on toast,
One that hugs the silence,
And listens to all the whispers you propose.

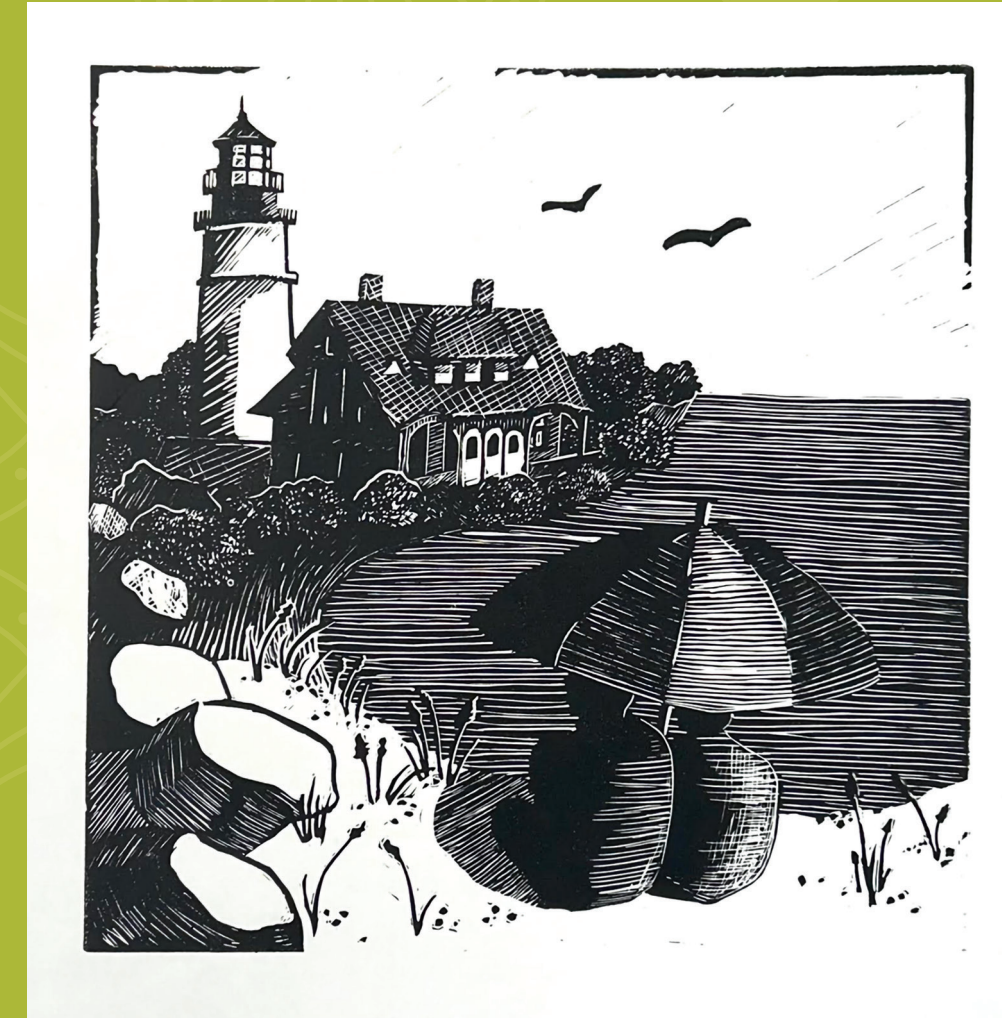
I want a love like Sunday mornings,
Tart as raspberry jam on my lips,
One that mends the soul
And plants flowers in the weeds we used
To run through as kids.

I want a love like the light spring breeze,
One that ripples like a pebble against the lake shore,
And never raises the question,
“oh, why don’t I hear from you more?”

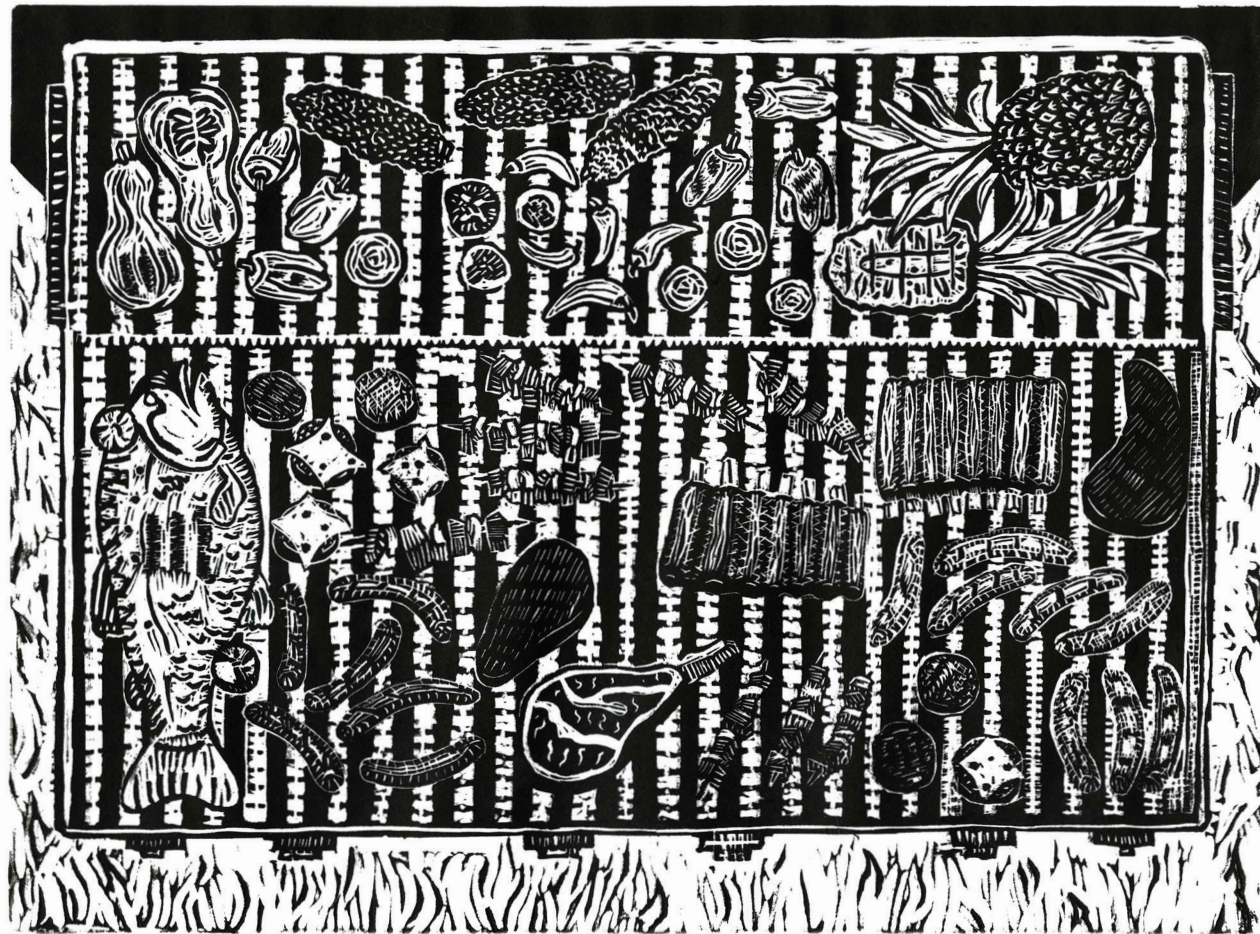
I want a love where we grow old,
But our hearts stay young
And our words are bold,
Coated with sweet sap from the evergreen
That stands in front of our beloved home.

I want a love where the wrinkles in our smiles,
Are proof of the years we lived together,
And where our rosy cheeks are pinched by
The company of each other.

And when you ask me how it is to be loved,
I’ll show you the branches and leaves that
Are forever green,
And whisper “it’s the small things, my dear,”
Resting my palm on my heart, “it’s all in here.”



Cape Elizabeth
SOPHIE EYERMAN



Cornucopia

Quinn Heisey

Cornucopia

QUINN HEISEY

My Mom Doesn't Like My Tattoos

KERRY KADEL

My mom doesn't like my tattoos
I promised her one is what I'd do
Because marking myself with lyrics and cartoons is tacky for a girl of 22
Momma, I'm not 6 no more, but are you still mad at me—are you sure?
If this wasn't what you dreamed for me then I'm not sure
We understand each other anymore
You told me it's not what you believe
Momma, are you listening? Hear me, please
The line is drawn very thin—Mom, I'm feeling sick
This back and forth feels like politics
And we both know compromising's bullshit
My mom doesn't like my tattoos
But she likes me, this I know to be true
When do you know that what once felt like home
Changes everything because you decided to grow?

Hum

GRETEL HELM



Sheltered Amid Silent Trees
ION CUPPEZ



Family Recipe
KYLEIGH STREETER

Sister, Sister

LILA AGOTT

Flowers on the porch and in every room,
In the used coffee grounds radiating their perfume,
Like religion on a Sunday
It's left on the stove, bubbling and steeping,

Fermenting into something new and of itself
It's hidden in the glances and glares,
And sewn permanently into each knot of our blanket

It's the two arms wrapped around my back,
The wind ripping through the car window,
Forcing my lungs to fill

She has the vision absent of a blind man,
The sound of the whisper from the thunder,

And I've been infected,
A system recalibrated and redesigned
It's hers, it's yours, and mine



Peppers

NOAH DAVISSON



Self-Soothing

KATHERINE LAWLOR

Industry Plant

JENNA SHUMAN

i feel like your industry plant,
 i pick your hair from my clothing when you leave me for the night,
 and then i put it right back where i found it.
 i stand in the spotlight,
 crafted and curated,
 each smile rehearsed,
 each movement practiced and perfected,
 wondering if you see the depth beneath my surface,
 or if i am just a scene in your unfolding story.
 i watch you move, radiant and free,
 while i cling to the edges,
 a carefully placed backdrop,
 fearing that my roots are too shallow,
 too weak to hold you.
 i am too artificial to nurture
 you yearn for something real and
 you believe that it is me.
 do you feel the weight of my presence,
 or am i merely a decoration,
 an ornament in your life's design?
 yet in the quiet moments,
 when the world fades and it's just us,
 i seek to break through,
 to share the ugly truth,
 the tangled web of emotions i store in my heart,
 reaching for originality,
 for a love that blooms in the wild,
 not just in the confines of my stage.

What are you worth
In the place you call home?
Are you precious treasure
Back where you roam?
Or are you worth just enough
To help you get by?
Do you lie wide awake
Counting debts every night?
Where you are going—
How are you paid?
Is your work valued
Or do you waste away?
The hours you spend working
Is it time well spent?
Or do your earnest efforts
Barely make rent?
Where you come from, friend
Are you special, loved, and free?
If not, know at day's end
You can always stay with me.

Where Are You Going?

ELISE SCHMITT

ORPHEUS ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE



VOL 124: PORCH

Hide and Seek

ISABELLA WINKLER



Miss You, Hum

SEBASTIÁN DE LEÓN

Mama's Porch Light

ISA EVANS

My mom kept the porch light on late at night when she couldn't sleep
I'd wake up to her hauntingly sweet voice seeping through the thin walls
I kept an ear out for her
My feet up on their toes reaching for the window blinds to take a peek
I never quite reached them
My mom would be out there for hours
Humming the same tunes
Weaving sweet lullabies for the moon to carry in its light
The twilight air carrying the secrets she whispered
The wind blew them across my window for me to hear
I'd never tell a soul
I can still hear her singing
I keep an ear out for her
From miles away
At night when I can't sleep
I keep my porch light on.

Slumber

JENNA SHUMAN

I lay my head to rest
as you open the car door.
Peeking through closed eyes,
I see you,
doubting my slumber.
I commit to my scheme,
deepening my breaths.
I hear you sigh and adjust yourself before
I feel you lift me up,
curling me into your arms.
I cannot help but smile,
but I quickly relax my muscles
so as not to reveal my disguise.
My heart is beating out of my chest.
I am as nervous as I am excited.

Suddenly,
the comfort of my bed surrounds me.
I am tucked in tight.
I feel you hesitate by the door
as you take one last glance.
The door shuts
and my eyes shoot open,
ridden with guilt but
painted in success.
My eyes are open,
but they do not see
my pink walls,
my worn-down dressers,
my stuffed animals.
My eyes are open,
but they are confused,
met with
cinder block walls,
muted tones,
a draft in the air.
I am tucked in tight
to keep the memories from slipping out and
I lay my head to rest
just as my childhood was.

Call Your Mom

KAYLEE PETERS







In My Aviary

MICAH MIFSUD

As we sit here, intertwined,
Colors bouncing off the walls,
The faint yelling of strangers nearby.
I can't help but realize,
This is what I'll miss most.

It's the little things.
The things that movies overlook.
The moments tucked into minutes.
The things no one remembers.
This is what I'll never forget.

Screaming in the rain,
Singing in our sleep,
A quiet that's never really silence,
The melody of our noises and quirks,
Turning our home into an aviary.

Why can't it stay like this?
Why can't we find the time?
If only we could be young forever,
But, no matter where we all end up,
Promise me that you'll stay.

Patterson Homestead

MICHAEL KENNELLY



My Appalachian Home

ALEXANDRIA FORD

Home is where the bed sheets are soft,
and the smell of cornbread lifts your nose,
with a line of clothes to the bathroom door,
and sweet scents of summer when the rain pours.

Home is with hints of your mothers soap
still left on the lips,
and where sugar soothes the open wounds,
from cuts and scrapes on backyard sticks.

Home is where vinegar clears the sour tone
from your mouth,
when you are tired of the birds chirping about,
where honeysuckle calms a sore throat,
and the chalk is never dull against the pavement road.

Home is where sweet pine nuts are
roasted on the stove,
and the bulb has slowly dimmed on the
front porch light post,
where brown butter coast every dish,
and thirty miles is your drive for a grocery list.

Home is where treats are welcomed before dinner,
hallways are decorated with relics of
family members,
and the country flag hangs proudly for
those only a distant memory calls you to remember.

Home is where laughter is paired with sweet wine,
and the tea is dressed with cloves of mint and thyme,
where lemons soak under the tongue in your mouth,
and the owl howls twice where the wind blows south.

They say home is where the heart is,
but if my heart is with all,
then who am I to just pick one.

Home is not a place,
it's the feeling of love.
And when love gets hard,
then its hope that comes along,
to carry the weight of the uncomfortable,
to call your name into the sweet embrace of joy,
and to show you this life is where you belong.

Eggshell

EMILY HELM

“Yes, yes, everything will be
okay,” I say to her glaring mongrel face.
But how could she believe me
when my own is glaring back? So I’ll step away
And change
what’s inside if nothing else.
Or at least I’ll cut my hair,
to show us both that I’m not her
and I am better for it, even if my hair is not.

And I’ll say to her,
I know.
I know that all of this is wrong.
Your inward rage

Your fear
that you’ll be like this forever, alone
in the attic with your bitter, shrinking thoughts, your shoulders aching,
that pit in your back curling in on itself.

But this is not all that there is.

And you don’t know the words you’ll use to call me,
but you will learn them, and you’ll press them to your chest,
and you will follow me out.

You’ll find me by the side porch
in the shaded grass by the daffodils
and yes,
Yes, everything will be okay.

Observations

KYLEIGH STREETER



Growing Together

LAUREL GREIFF



Angel With A Dog Tag

MELINA BLANK

Ponce de León fell short
Of the cascade he sought,
So I took it upon my tan young shoulders
And ate the grapes you left me in Tuscany.
A short rain watered my pores
But left the vineyards drier than before,
A moment this pit slept in the nest of my tongue
And tasted like salt on fingertips,
Sunlight through maple veins,
Baby's staccato.
There were two fires going
When I found the old flask
And the poker with a five-point on its end.

(How can I utter my table-corner bruise in the light of day?
My speech seeps in drunken clots, Enamored eyesongs. In
beer rings. But the star met my flesh so easily it could have
been written?)

Left of my dreams are the coals encrusted in my gums
And soot streaked down my sternum—
Midnight, such a Theresa—
And an angel with a dog tag
Clutching its flaming cornicello.

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Letter 66: August 25, 1896, PLD to Matilda Dunbar
James B Pond⁴⁴
Everett House
New York
Marguerite Pier,
Aug. 25th 1896⁴⁵

If it had been **best** for me to come
home I would have been **home**
n o w.

Dear Mother:

Your letter received this morning
and all I can say is that I wish you would not worry
as you do when I am doing for the best.
If it had been best for me to come home
I would have been home now.

Dunbar was ⁸⁴ encouraged by literary friends to obtain a lecture manager, and he selected James B. Pond, and established platform agent for such major writers as Mark Twain, Booker T. Washington, and Frederick Douglass. Brand Whitlock, "Golden Rule" Jones, and a.s. Tobey bought Dunbar a new suit and gave him cash for his trip to New York to stay with Pond (Hudson, *Biography*, 83). Cunningham writes that one of Pond's goals was to get *Lyrics of Lonely Life* published by a firm that would pay for all production, printing, and sales. Pond used copies of *Majors and Minors* for publicity to secure financing for *Lyrics of Lonely Life* (Cunningham 353-54).
OHS, reel 1, 55



It is the best thing that could have happened that Mr. Thatcher came here.⁸⁶ I am to give a reading⁸⁷ Thursday night in the parlors of the big house and we expect to clear about fifty dollars. He says a hundred but that is hard to believe. The very wealthy people seem much interested in me and are willing to pay fifty cents admission. I am not very wealthy yet, but I enclose you two dollars which will help you some. I cannot promise when I will be home, but [I will be] just as soon as possible, so don't let it startle you to see me walk in any time as I may not have time to write you when I am coming. I may (illegible) though if it won't (illegible) you. As things turn out as well as I hope for I shall send you to Chicago as soon as I can come.

Your affectionate son,
Paul

I am [illegible] very busy here giving recitals to introduce myself before the one grand recital of Thursday.⁸⁸ I recited yesterday for Mrs. Jefferson Davis⁸⁹ and she was delightful. The southern people have eaten me up wonderfully. One of them took the books, another two, & another wants five. I have order [sic] 200 books to be here by Thursday. I am getting on well so don't worry.

I am getting on well
so don't worry.

⁸⁶ According to Wiggins, Thatcher paid for Dunbar's clothing and transportation (65).
⁸⁷ Dunbar brought with him a copy of *Majors and Minors* from which he read. James Stonks notes that "Major Pond quickly booked him into readings around New York, meanwhile sending him with letters of introduction to several publishers. And soon he directed Paul out to William Dean Howells' summer home at Far Rockaway, on Long Island, for the first meeting of the two writers' (Stonks, *Paul Laurence Dunbar*, 99).
⁸⁸ This event could be the recital at the New Mathewson Hotel, where the proprietor secured the ballroom and orchestra for the occasion.
⁸⁹ Dunbar may be referring to Varina Anne Banks Howell Davis (1826-1906), the widow of Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederate States from 1861-1865. She was also the author of her husband's memoir.



I Am Doing for the Best
ELAINA LEAR

Mom's Hugs

EVA LONNEMAN

Mums wilting above the kitchen table
oak trees dancing around the yard
monsters warded from under beds
'tis holding together the unstable
snuggling against one another

Home is where she resides
underneath the Scarlet Maple
gathering all of us Together
safe within her arms

Flourish

MIA HAAS



Flourish 8/15 Mia Haas



Hidden Oasis

LAUREL GREILE

Watering Hole

MIA PRISBY

My muscles ached from swimming. I needed a break. And she sat in the sun just waiting for me to devour her. I couldn't help it. Looking at her. Envisioning everything that was to come. Our future. I wouldn't know until later. I wouldn't have the option of knowing. Or caring. But watching her spread out like a goddess, glowing and buttered up with sun-tanning oil, draped over the lawn chair, all smooth skin and half-exposed curves, I couldn't help but salivate. It had been a while since we'd had time to swim at her house. It had been too cold. But with the heat wave pushing north we had a few days to enjoy the outdoor oasis.

In that moment, something inside of me grew and bubbled and burst. Something sweet. Honey-like. Starting down at my toes and moving up to the bottom of my stomach. Settling in right beside my heart, making it falter as I stared her down.

"Frankie," she whispered, turning over and pulling her sunglasses down on her freckled nose. "Why are you gawking at me?"

My lips turned up at the corners and I grabbed a towel out of her pool bag, placing it on the lawn chair next to hers. Avoiding sliding on the pool deck, I sat down, trying to keep the wetness of my swim trunks contained. They dripped down my legs anyways, and more pool water sunk into my scalp, trailing along my

ears and hanging onto the tip of my nose. Emerson watched as the droplet fell slowly, passing through the air soundlessly until it splattered against my leg.

"You're just so beautiful," I responded. Very sly. I pulled another towel from the bag and began to rub my hair, attempting to dry it off. Unsuccessfully. A hint of a smile pulled her lips but she used her index finger to push her sunglasses back up and leaned her head back onto the lawn chair, basking in the early afternoon sun. Immobile. Almost lifeless. Like a painting. Ethereal. Unreal.

My eyes moved with her as her fingers reached out, posing a question. I extended my own arm, allowing my fingers to fall against hers, tangling them together. We sat like that for a little while, just holding onto each other. Letting the moment seep into our skin and etch itself in our memories.

I laid back, not letting go of her fingers, and looked up at the puffy white clouds strolling through the sky. They sat heavy in the warm air which drew sweat against my skin, pulling it out of my pores like taffy. Every once and a while a small breeze would pass through, ruffling the umbrella behind us and cooling the hair sticking to the back of my neck. Emerson preferred the direct sunlight, getting nice and golden brown and freckled.

I sat as far in the shade as I could, hiding the sunburn surely already spreading across my shoulders and back.

After a few seconds of quiet, just listening to the water gurgling and swirling in the pool, I sat up and reached for the sunscreen.

“Babe,” I used the sunscreen bottle to cover my eyes in a blanket of shadow and squinted towards Emerson. “Can you put some more on my back?” Her head lolled, slow and heavy to the side, like it weighed an elephantine amount. She used her perfectly manicured hand to slide the sunglasses down her nose once more, glaring at me, yet smirking.

“Of course, my love.” She pulled herself up, exposing the taught muscles in her arms, and held her hand out for the bottle. As she applied it, kneading the knots out of my shoulders in tandem, I looked around at the pool. Not necessarily large, rather small actually. But made of imported marble and surrounded by a large, ivy-covered wall. Lemon trees and big fluffy bushes bloomed and ripened all around. The grass was mowed twice a week and the water was always sparkling, crystal clear. Hand-made linen and teakwood chairs dotted the little lawn and a beautiful table with a massive umbrella sat just behind us. Her mother’s style could be called European. I called it expensive.

“All done?” As her hands slowed I glanced over my shoulder. She nodded and leaned forward, pressing her forehead into my back. “You’re going to get greasy,” I told her. She didn’t respond. Instead, she touched her lips to my skin, sending shivers across the rosy surface. I smiled, soft and silent.

“Emerson...” She pushed her forehead into me again and a deep, rumbling laugh started in my gut.

“Yes?” She finally spoke.

“You don’t care if you get greasy?” She shook her head against my back, the sunscreen slipping between our skin.

“That’s unlike you.”

“I love you greasy. I love you drenched from the pool. I love you nice and dry and sunburnt.” She picked her head up and I spun around to face her.

“You do?” I asked, although I already knew the answer. She nodded. She had taken her sunglasses off and her molton brown eyes shined in the light filtering through the clouds. Her eyelashes fluttered. “Soaking wet too?” She smiled and nodded again. As a grin smeared across my face I flung my arms around her. She shrieked in surprise and I picked her up off the lawn chair, running and plunging us deep under the water.

We surfaced and she giggled, pushing against my chest. But I held her tight. I chuckled at her as she tried to get away, her hair slicked back so I could see her face. Her eyes. Her nose. Her lips. Eventually she settled and beamed wide, breathing fast from her efforts. The water glistened around us. It rippled. Us at the center. My world in my hands. My person. My home.

“I love you too,” I said as she placed her hands around my neck, tangling her fingers in my hair. “I love you. Endlessly.”

Keys to a Memory
AVA FORREST





Core Childhood

OLVIA GUSTAVSON

Baby, Turn the Lamp On

ELAINA LEAR



Home of the Heart

ELIZABETH CHIASSON

It's scary looking in the mirror
Knowing your face will appear
I miss the days of seeing the real thing
I miss your sunny, sunflower skin
I knew what I had, knew it well: it didn't stop the darkness closing in

Life goes on, people continue
But I don't want to say goodbye
How do you live without your tether to life?
How can you have a home without a heart?

So I return to those coasts from so long ago
Walking along the California coast
The winding mountainous Oregon roads
The Redwood forests stretching heavens high
Back to the roots, back to life

I wear grief like a warm coat
Carrying along glimmers of hope
I carry home with me wherever I go
I carry you deeply engraved within my soul



Grandmother

JULIA DASCHBACH

I Went By Our Old House Today

JOEY LOTZ

I went by our old house today. I moved back to town but I never go by there anymore. It's weird and it's on a dead-end street and I'm sure the people living there now would see the same old truck turning around in their cramped little cracked asphalt driveway. It's not like we could afford a house on a cul-de-sac back then. I still can't now but I'm not on a dead -end street anymore. The storm drain was dry. The 12-foot-wide channel of street run-off that I remember swimming in when the rain came and washed everything into it. It took all the leaves and branches and oil stains and trash and took it away forever, leaving our place a little cleaner for a while. I wonder if you thought about that when I left. "He's never going to come back here, but maybe it's for the best."

I didn't mean to be gone so long. Now I'm back and it's your turn to be gone. You'll be gone for longer though.

The house is still here. Someone tore out the juniper that went wild out front after you couldn't garden anymore. It's hard to hold pruners when your hands shake. I'm sure it's worse when you calm the shaking but then can't focus anymore. Why didn't

you ever get a wheelchair ramp put in? I guess you stopped driving long before you stopped walking. At that point someone had to come by to drive, they might as well help you down the stairs, too. At least the new owners put a handrail around the porch and down the stairs.

The swing was gone though. It's sad, but probably better that way. It already had a broken slat that would pinch your butt if you sat on it wrong. I can't imagine how weathered it must have been by the time the place finally sold. We used to sit on it anyway. I sat on it with you, with aunts and uncles, my dumb brother, every friend I ever had. Every one.

I can't say I've made a friend since I've left. I made a family though. They were with me when I drove by. I told them about the swing, about the juniper. I told them the driveway always looked like that and that the new siding may be in much better shape but it's the wrong color. I told them about you. I told them why I left, and I told them why you never tried to get me to come back, and I told them why I thought you never tried to leave yourself. Once I left you had everything you needed.

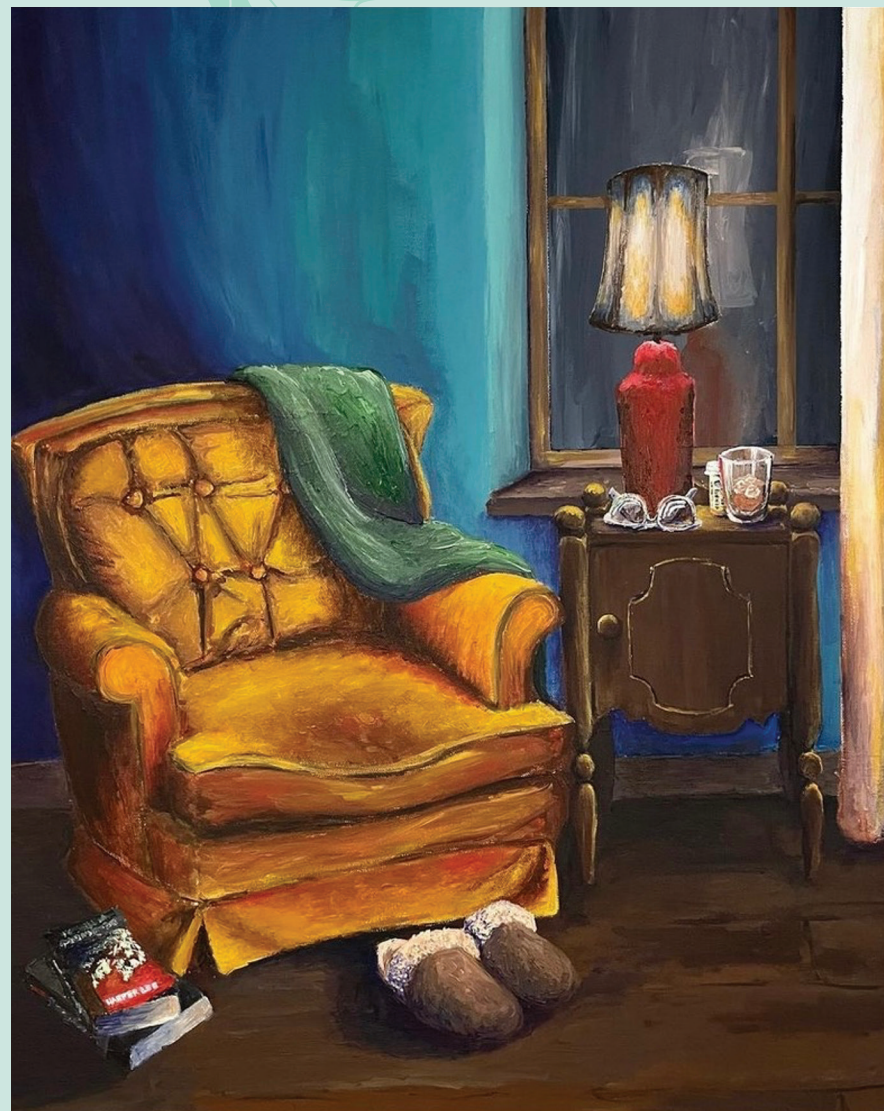
You'd never have to get up, swig some coffee so you were good enough to get in the van to come get me from downtown, from the donut shop, from the back of a squad car. You had everything you ever wanted. You had yourself back. No more music pounding from the upstairs bedroom you moved out of to give me more space. The stairs were hard for you to handle at night anyway. The only bathroom was on the first floor. No more kids walking out the windows on to the roof of the porch while you were trying to sit out there and have a drink.

I know you'd be disappointed with how much I told them. You'd probably be surprised by how much I noticed or managed to remember. But I remember a lot. And if I don't tell them they might not understand if it happens to me. I need them to recognize it if it does. Not to save me—I need them to know it's not their responsibility. I need them to see it sooner, so they can leave faster, and stay gone longer. Just in case it infects places as easily as it infects people.

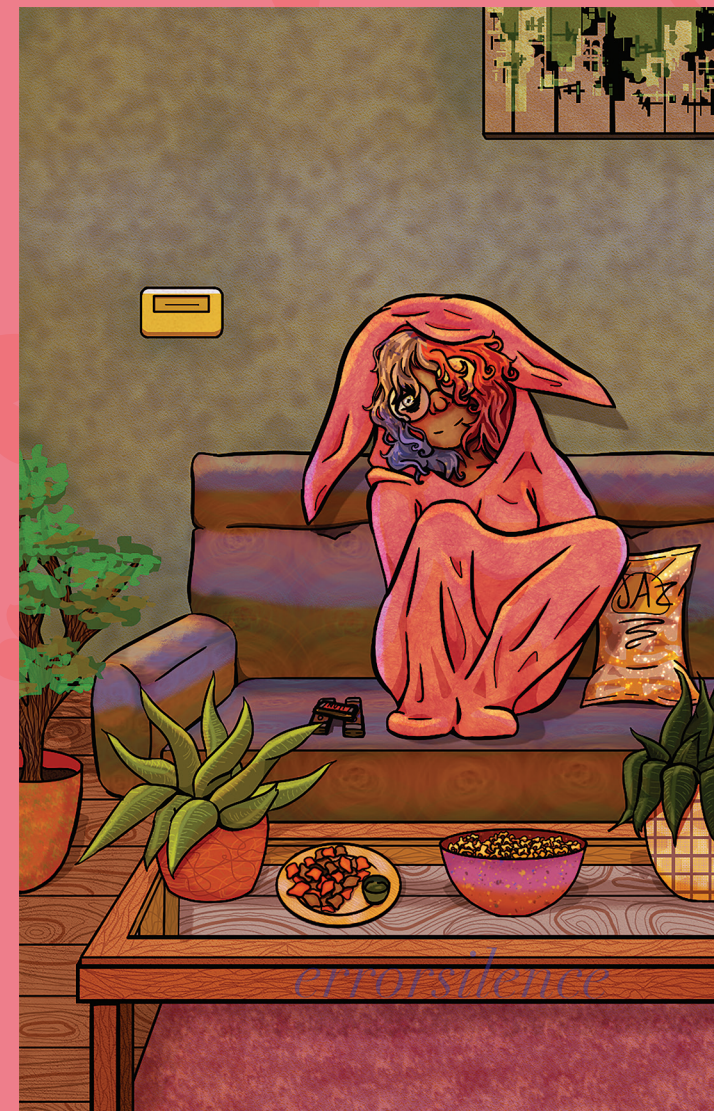
There were a couple things I didn't tell them, and I'm sorry about that. I didn't tell them how much you loved me, and while I told them that whatever happens to me isn't their fault, I didn't tell them that no matter what I do I feel like what happened to you was my fault. I didn't want to scare them that bad. I need to tell them that. I need to plant a juniper, too. Maybe even get a porch swing one of these days.

Quiet Night

AVA FORREST



ORPHEUS ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE



Cozy Movie Night

ISA EVANS

VOL 124: PORCH

Queso, Chips, and Secrets

PRESTON SCHUSTER

4:03 AM, the room still spins,
Memories of your laughter echo again.
Alcohol defeats my weary mind,
And thoughts of you I can't leave behind.

I miss the way your laughter sang,
My melody of joy where comfort rang.
Your dark hair, fierce and full of light,
You cared for everyone all through the night.

And here I am, the words I spill,
Drunk, but knowing they are real.
I hope you see beyond this state,
That what I feel won't complicate.

I've hid these feelings deep inside,
Unsure of how it would arise.
It's not the drinks that bring this out,
But truths I've buried, I can't live without.

I care for you, more than I show,
But I fear you'll slip if you ever know.
And though I drink, these words are true,
I couldn't have told this without you.



United
STACI Z-R



Symbiosis
GRETEL HELM

Somewhere in the Murmurs

GRETEL HELM



ORPHEUS ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE

As the snow piles on my 2003 Nissan Ultima, a siren sounds,
A drunken Santy Claus has crashed his slay into the post office.
The Christmas lists,
Though checked twice and deemed nice, have been burnt to a crisp.

A Mother swings open her front door,
Tying the robe she exchanged for a nightdress.
The snow blocks her push,
Barricading against the storm windows her boys exchanged for screens in the fall.

They're awake now, they rush under her pits,
The gap closes when her arms fold over her chest.
She walks off,
Her children's jaws fall to the snowbank that was once their carpeted porch.

Their dreams and sugar plums stay trapped in their beds.
The younger boy's concerns outweigh his mother's; she lights a cig,
The silence turns to cries,
For I saw the crash myself and can assure you, this Santa is dead.

Father Christmas

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

VOL 124: PORCH

SWING

ORPHEUS ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE

You'll never be HOME again.
The *memories* still blanket your soul,
They still warm you on your coldest nights.
HOME rakes a constellation of scars across tattooed skin.
The dust settled on the picture frame,
smudging beneath your fingernails.

It's time to come home now.

VOL 124: SWING

Untitled
STACI Z-R



Country Roads

ALEXANDRA AMRHEIN

*the country roads are cold
in the freezing grip
of your memory—*

*they recede like all the years passed by,
recede like tides that no longer touch your toes,
recede like quotes from books you haven't read
in as long as you can remember.*

but somewhere out there

*somewhere,
they glow,
with tender light.*

*somewhere,
those roads are a lifetime of rides
that took your soul to all the highs and lows
that compiled, and made you who you are*

*somewhere,
those roads are the pounding pride in your chest
and the things your grandpa used to joke about
and the things your grandma always laughed 'bout
and the songs you always sang at the top of your lungs on the car ride,
'cause life's too exhilarating to stay silent.*

*somewhere those roads are the lanes that led you home
to Thanksgiving dinners, to Christmas Eves,
cozy in a tiny ranch kitchen
with a counter sixty years old, and a fridge collaged in photos—
they tell the story of a family
who knew a love perilously beautiful.*

*somewhere those roads fly back into focus,
and heal the shattered images into one, serene, beating heart—
when it remembers evenings
snuggled in the cramped corner of that kitchen
between the shoulders of all it ever needed.*

*the country roads are glowing,
in your mind's sweet eye—
nestled in the midnight, yet eternally starlit—
as you retrace the way home.*

Bridge to Nowhere

ISABELLA WINKLER



The Inevitability of Time

SHAY STONER

The place is sacred, sacred to me.
There is a lake and many trees.
Cottages sit in a line by the lake
with bright paint, brings a smile to the face.

People like to boat in the day
here at this place in the month of May,
and then right as the day expires,
they head on home and rest by the fire.

The fires in the sky, the brilliant stars
shine on down, with Jupiter and Mars.
Their image bounces off the lake
creating a beauty no image recreates.

This is my sacred, my sacred place.

the passing of time is
an inevitability I never accounted for.
the lake has become
a shell of herself.

she has sunk so low that
the bridge
has become an accessory,
the sand no longer

meets the water,
weeds litter the beach

weeds litter the beach where
I grew up swimming
at my parents' behest.
they grow in the sand.

I never knew
weeds could survive in sand.

not a single boat
sits along the water.
the people know
the lake's not strong enough for them.
she is green and
covered
in algae,
sinking, sinking,
sinking into the ground where
men once shaped her.

There is no longer
a view of her from our cottage.
Instead there is mud,
plants and mud where
there was once water.

There is only mud where once shown the
mesmerizing
reflection of the stars.

the bench I sit on is dirty
the swings have bird shit
this bench has bird shit
the cows are gone
and time still passes.

I am growing older,
and those that own places here
are older
and I am expected to take
the torch.

I want to take the torch,
I want to fix it,

but I don't think the older people here
will want me to have it
once they know who I am.

I want to fix the lake
and clean the benches
and clean the swings

and bring back the fish
and bring in people.

I want to bring in people
to enjoy my sacred place,
just as I always did.

I love it here as always,
the birds are singing,
but my heart aches.

Speak up, dear child,
and I may hear you yet.
The world is not so cruel a place
that loving ends in death.

Life will continue after—
far beyond you and me.
But even spring's waking murmurs
someday soon will cease.

The rolling thunderstorms
that cool a summer's day,
mute the swinging rustled leaves
who'll fall to autumn's sway.

And the buzzing hum of beetles
will quiet in winter's hush.
The glistening crystal ice to halt
the creek's tumbling rush.

All things fall silent,
and someday so shall I.
But everybody loves, child,
and everybody dies.

Mortality

ELISE SCHMITT

ORPHEUS ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE

Switzerland

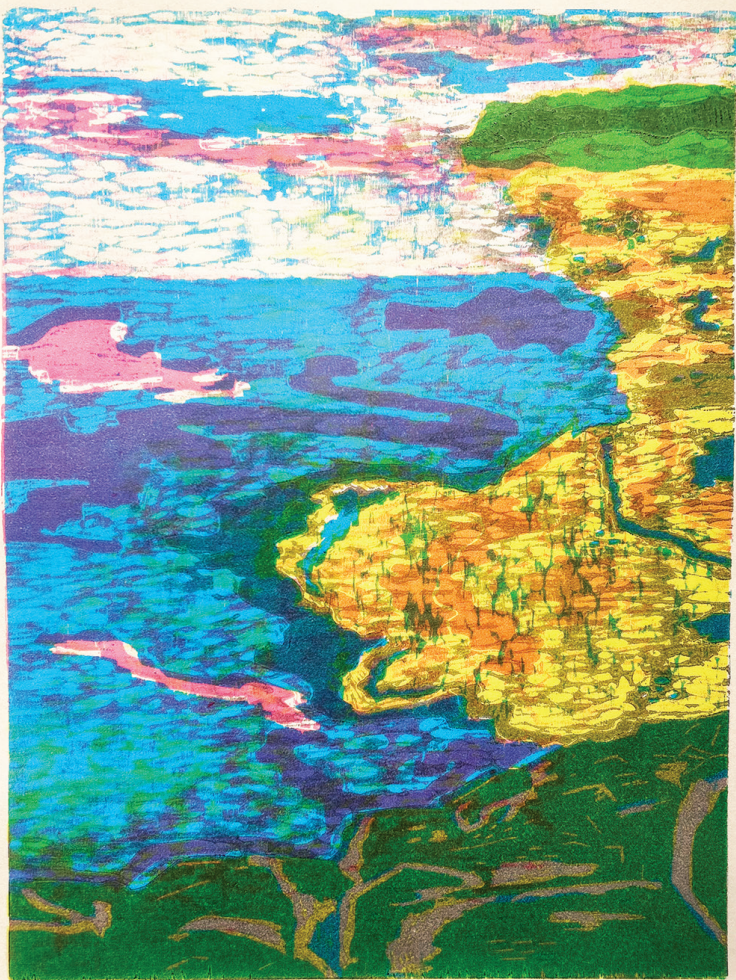
LAINÉY DOGGETT

VOL 124: SWING



Experiment of the Natural World

LAUREN LESLIE



The Clay That Molded Us

KATELYN DASCIBACH

Eventually these fleshy organs we call home will give out on us. And in death, there is no creation or destruction, only transformation.

Only a collision of entropy
allowing us to return to the clay that molded us.

And here we stand, held by the maker of time, swaying gently in the arms of a billowing swing.

So come, fervent and barefoot, to my front porch and my confession to you will be this:

I want to laugh over how embarrassingly temporary
these eroding bodies are,
as we watch the moon catalyze to dust,
leaving behind its ancient stone.

I want to exist, and I can only wish to understand it all. I want to lay braided, on torn and
weathered cushions, while we feel the freedom of innocence and the fire of ardor.

All the same, we cannot remain nestled in our world created between neighbors and porch
lights. Between distant laughter and misdelivered mail and family lining an entire street.

We must shed old skin and evolve into new kinds of beasts, transcending with each passing
second.

And in the meantime, as our consciousness mutates, I'll tell you how I long to feel the weight
of all creation pressing against me.

And to hear the language that birthed the cosmos in a single breath.

And you'll explain to me how the tides kiss you on your nose and how you create so much love
it feels like you're separating salt from water.

And in that moment, we will split each other down the middle.

The Call of the Void—L'appel du Vide

THOMAS SNYDER

The call of the Void,
A call towards one's own demise.
A fleeting thought of 'what if I jump?'
The involuntary thought of ending one's own existence,
The call of the Void.

Wanting to end one's own life is different from the call.
The Void shows no mercy to those anxious through their lives,
Whispering in their ears and calming their brain.
As their mind numbs, the void oozes its way in;
Excited to give you this question.
The call of the Void asks you,
'Why not jump? What's stopping you? Why not just let go and embrace,
The call of the Void?'

Our freedom and will is thrust into extreme,
Yet thought provoking questions.
Why do we keep going?
Why wake up when our day will be meaningless?
Why try when we are mere stardust in the Universe?
What's the point of it all?
The call of the Void caresses our body,
Our entire being,
And whispers these questions.

The Void doesn't care who you are,
Or even what you may be feeling.
All the Void wants from you is an answer,
A call as to why you keep pushing forward;
Knowing that our actions may be pointless.
The answer to that question is contested heavily by many,
But the answer is rather simple.

Even though life is meaningless,
Humans and their freedom is what gives courage;
A sort of heroic desire to prove this call wrong,
And to keep moving forward when things are tough.
Sure, it would be quite easy to listen,
To give in and embrace the Void.
But humanity's freedom is what gives us courage,
It's what makes us like the many heroes in stories.

One thing in common with heroes is that they all have courage within.
Even the weakest,
Most afraid heroes can't back down against the Void.
For if there were no heroes, then the world would be devoured by the Void.
This courage is what keeps humanity moving forward;
It's what keeps YOU and I moving forward.
The courage to keep getting back up,
To keep moving forward when pain and grief is ahead;
Is what makes a hero.

The call of the Void is never-ending,
But the courage of people is everlasting.
The Void asks us when will we give up and succumb to its embrace,
While courage is what lets us choose our paths and keep moving forward.

Will you be devoured by the Void?
Or will you be courageous enough to keep living,
Even if the Void's words are sickly sweet?
That's a question even the Void cannot answer;
Only you and the freedom that comes with being human.
Keep moving,
Even if it hurts.

The Void is calling,
Will you answer?



Come In
QUINN HEISEY

Fruitful Woman

MARY RICHARD



The Day Everything Changed

MORTIMER UGO

I still remember the first time I saw my dad struggle to button the arm sleeve of his shirt. His hands, once steady, quivered as he fumbled with the fabric.

“It’s nothing,” my dad said with a forced smile.

But I could see the frustration in his eyes, the way the smile and the room would turn quickly into darkness and despair. At first, I believed him. I wanted to believe him and pretend that everything was okay. Everything had to be okay. But as the weeks passed and his movements slowed, the truth became impossible to ignore.

It was the start of the new year, either January 1st or 2nd, sometime around 1 a.m. The moon shined as bright as ever. Not quite full, but enough to make the room shine. My sister and I were asleep, completely unaware that life was about to change. I faintly heard my mom’s voice, quiet but urgent. When I opened my door, I saw her eyes flooded with tears, her face tense as she tried to stay strong. I hugged her, unsure of what to say. Then, in a cracking but soft voice, she whispered,

“I need help, it’s your father,” my mother whispered.

After she let out these words, my heart raced. My mind spun with the worst possible scenarios.

“He is not dead; he can’t be dead,” I thought as tears rushed down my face.

My mother reassured me that everything would be okay, but that he fell out of bed and that he couldn’t get up. His legs were not working, and his hands and arms had no strength.

We rushed to help him get back to bed, but confusion settled in. This had never happened. Yes, he had struggled with minimal things like the buttons on a shirt, opening a door with a key, and walking up and down the stairs; but nothing this severe. All the while, I kept thinking about my sister. How will she react? Angry? Confused? Sad? I prepared myself to be there for her.

Once we helped my dad back into bed, he whispered,

“I’m sorry” seconds before breaking down in my mother’s arms.

The room was dark. Not because there weren’t any lights on, but because everyone was grieving. My mind raced.

“What is wrong with dad?”

“Is he going to be okay?”

After everything calmed down, my mom called the security guard on duty who patrols our neighborhood to help him get my dad in the car. They were about to leave for the hospital. I asked if I could go and I rushed to get dressed, but my mom interrupted me and said in a broken voice,

“Stay here with your sister, but don’t tell her anything yet.”

We were all scared, but deep down I knew that it was the right thing to do. For my parents, and for my sister, who knew nothing about what my mom and I just experienced in the span of not even 10 minutes. I nodded and went back to my room, hoping that when I woke up everything would go back to the way it was, and everything would just be a bad dream. Trying to confuse and trick my mind that everything was going to stay the same, and nothing would change. Still, I thought of what if it were to be true, how would my sister react? And how would she take the news?

Right as I closed my eyes, my mind turned to all the memories. From going on family cruises to just meaningful days playing soccer or basketball at the park. Such minimal experiences meant so much now that the future was unsure. I thought carefully,

“What about all the plans we made...”

I completely shut down that idea and turned my pillow to the other side. The moon, as bright as ever, made it impossible to fall asleep, but it was easier to focus on it than to close my eyes and ruminate.

The day we heard the words ‘multiple sclerosis,’ I felt something shift inside me. My stomach had this weird feeling that I’d never felt before. Life, as I knew it, life as

we all knew it would never be the same. My dad was still here, but everything had changed.

I used to think my dad was unbeatable. That he was the man who could do anything, not only for us but for everyone. He would give his time and stop to help someone whose car broke down or just pick up my sister and me from school. Never in my life had I thought that this would change. Multiple sclerosis changed that, but it didn’t change him. It didn’t take away his smile, his love, or the quiet strength he still carries, even on his hardest days. And it didn’t take away what he taught me and my sister; that life would change in ways we can’t control but love and family will always be our anchor. They will always be there for us. I can’t change his illness, but I can choose how I respond to it. And now, I face it not with fear, but with the same strength my dad has shown me all along.

Threads of Home

JULIA DASCHBACH

ORPHEUS ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE



VOL 124: SWING

Wave Motion

MICHAEL KENNELLY



The Fields Up North

LILA ACOTT

I've dreamt of this moment for years.
No more creaky floorboards,
just a lonely lamp in an empty room.

All my life, watching and waiting,
A brother moves west and a sister goes south,
and somehow, I fall east.

Who stays there to smell my mother's perfume,
to sweep away the summer sand?

Who remains in the fields up north?
where the egret flies and deer ticks roam,

It's all nearly gone now, population three.
Six above, six below, and the one in between.
She looks just like me, stuck at nineteen,

With harmonies of highway and lagoon,
She sang to me a song,
304 miles far, 576 days gone.

Sometimes I Wonder If You Even Like Me

KERRY KADEL

Sometimes I wonder if you even like me.
I wonder if I was wanted more by mom
Or to fill the fantasy of the nuclear family.
I wonder if you know that I own up to my mistakes,
That if I hurt your feelings I'd apologize,
But nothing matters when you hurt mine.
In your eyes,
I'm the uncaring eldest daughter
Who doesn't know she's all bark no bite.
In mine, I am struggling to picture a universe where
You see me as I see myself, still growing up and learning.
Maybe I am a son in this universe, so whatever I say and do, you don't care at all.
In a good way, at least.
But in this one you don't.
At all.
Double standards double the expectations placed upon me because I am your eldest girl.
I'm supposed to be the make and model of
The American Girl.
Sat back, watching my brothers spit fire and curses
Because they can.
Because with them, you don't care.
In a good way, at least.



Untitled
STACI Z-R

In The Details

MARY RICHARD



Bulk Up

MAYA MIRSKY

As I approach the dip in the road, nearby train tracks come into view. My foot rests on the brake pedal and I hold my breath in fear of scraping the bumper of my low-riding sedan. The slow thud of the tracks passes under my wheels and I exhale. I turn left into a parking lot I've known for nearly two years, one that wraps around a cinderblock building—what I think was once an auto parts store. Large garage doors make up half the exterior. Industrial buildings and storage facilities surround the lot. The street lights flicker to life, casting their soft glow on the sign that reads “KC's Fitness.” I park in the back next to Coach Mike's white pickup, grab my boxing gear from the passenger seat, and step out into the bitter cold. Patches of de-icing salt crunch under my high tops.

Every Wednesday I am here, just before dusk. I dress my hands with blue cotton wraps in a dark, dusty mudroom, heavy with the scent of old rubber floors and sweat. Rows of vacant cubbies line the wall that leads into the next room. I chuck my keys in an empty spot and peer through the chipped door frame; my gloves tucked under my arm and a plastic jump rope draped over the other. Several heavy bags sway from the exposed ceiling, their chains slack. Vinyl-covered punches echo through

the open space. Coach Mike is going through combinations with a kid my mom calls “Gold Chains”—so named because of the faux Cuban link necklace he wore the day I started boxing. Mom signed me up to punch things back then because it seemed like a better option than anger management. The combinations continue:

“One, two, slip, roll... again,”

“One, two, slip, roll... good.”

Coach Mike is in his usual grey sweatsuit and backward baseball cap. He spots me out of the corner of his eye and prepares his usual greeting.

“Hey, Maya. S'goin on?”

I nod and offer a half-smile—one of those courtesy smiles you give a stranger passing by on the sidewalk. Today, I'm not in the mood to box with him and would rather be elsewhere. My gloves fall from my arm and land on the gym floor with a soft thud. I begin with a sequence of stretches, starting by bowing down to touch my toes. I take the jump rope in both hands and start skipping, my gaze drawn to the mural on the

back wall. It's unsettling. An abstract painting of a woman, trapped in the uncanny valley—her face flat, her limbs twisted in unnatural directions. She's wearing a red "KC's Fitness" tee and swinging a kettlebell above her head. I can't help but glance at her distorted features, though she does bring some life to the otherwise dungeon-like space. Fluorescent lights flicker above, casting a pale glow over the red walls, dotted with masculine decorations—medieval shields, fencing gear, a Muhammad Ali action figure, and a pair of original leather Everlast gloves.

Suddenly, my five-minute warm-up is complete, Gold Chains has left his private lesson, and I am alone with Coach Mike for the next hour. I haven't had a vendetta against him up until recently because making the occasional suggestive comment is something new he's trying. He's also started to drone on about nutrition as if he's anywhere near qualified to give out diet advice (he's not). During a previous open gym session, he told the room of teenagers to stop eating fruit because of the sugar intake. He even eluded to the fact that Trinity, the only other girl who takes private lessons, needs to lose the weight she's put on since starting her

freshman year of college. I weigh a whopping 95 pounds, and his advice to me? "Bulk up." I want to scream in his face: I'm here to exercise, not for a lecture on anorexia.

He stands next to me, with a stature not much taller than mine. My whole body shivers; perhaps from the draft coming from under the garage doors, perhaps not. While securing the velcro on my gloves, he puts on a torso protector for taking body hits. He mimes a combination of punches on the bag swinging next to me,

"One, two, one, two, then you'll slip my jab, body, body, hook, then cross. Got it?"

"Mhm."

I move through a few sets, hitting without missing a beat. After a break, I pull off my sweatshirt, revealing my tank top. I feel beady eyes fixate on my abdomen. Coach Mike, with his ever-ready comments, finally speaks.

"You're getting toned, girl. Looks like you've been putting in the work!"

"Thanks...", I say.

Doing what I always do, I convert my frustrations into body shots. Hitting harder and harder with each punch. Then, he stops me for a question not even I could have predicted

"Tell me, when's your 18th birthday?"

"Uh, not for a couple months..."

For a moment, I stare at him blankly, frustrated and confused. I know this will be my last session. Numb, I punch at him tirelessly for my final thirty minutes.

Carnage
MARY DENT



The Palace

GRETA STALTER

It started with a flush-faced mask,
the fire pressed into her features,
hearth-bound and bone-hearted.
She's saying, I know it was you,
I know all the wrong things. The way
the lampshades turned lavender,
the bruising smokescreen, the
darkened divide. Here is the blue
orbit I've built to keep you in, and
here is its endpoint: a singing tail
it chases on its own, swallowing,
the bound and the bound and the
severed conclusion, a satiated hunger.
It started with a desire, the light far in
front of our bodies, the glow reaching
hers first and staining: she became a
figurehead so silver I felt sick sitting
still. Is a bright thing always a beacon?
Is the silhouette in the lighthouse always
red-hearted? Sometimes I think hell
is glinting at us through her jewelry.

She's saying, join me in this yard of
sybarites, the messy obsessions, tangled
because they aren't taken care of. She
was among a few doomed characters,
and my careful plan blurred so quickly:
Dresses in mouths when the foreground
is plastered onto the background, hair
in the sky, a bird dragging a forest and
pushing along the skyline, all the thin
images now on an even playing field.
This shallow world, it will be poisoned.
We are taught to start only with what
we can digest. I chose the gardens.

The Streets Talk

JOE F. KUEBLER



Excelsior

JAD ABUHILAL



I Wait

MELINA BLANK

I beg,
Kiss me with the liquid gold
That pours silently from your smile,
Or the storming mercury
That turns behind your eyes,
That ambrosia in your fingertips—
My mouth is a hut,
The door flew off in the hurricane,
And I'm standing here in the yellow light
Waiting for the dark ribbons to tie me up
Into your angelhood.

An elbow will peak out in the frothing,
Don't be worried now,
It will cut clean off
On the jagged thumb.

I can't be seen in Valhalla
Until you eat me yourself,
Molars gullied in tight prayer.
Slaughter is for the lambs.

Coulrophobia

SEBASTIÁN DE LEÓN



That Magical Place with the Free Books

LIZY KRAHE

An open mind has always been the most difficult thing to cultivate in Henry. Even getting him comfortable around me at the beginning of the summer took a lot of patience. But, through small steps, we're to the point where he trusts me to take him on surprise field trips, like this one.

"I still don't understand why we needed to leave my iPad at home. My parents let me take it everywhere." His red crocs scrape on the sidewalk as he slightly drags his feet.

"The place we're going is an iPad-free zone," I explain. "There won't be a need for it here."

"I don't know." His skepticism is loud and clear.

He makes sure that both feet stomp on each step we walk up. When we get to the top, he raises both hands and magically pushes open the sliding doors. A blast of cool air immediately washes over us in contrast to the stifling heat of July. Henry stops in the doorway. His eyes scan the new environment, not sure what exactly to focus on. The whole space has a warm, yellow hue creating an atmosphere welcoming curiosity and learning.

Henry's small hand finds mine to hold. His eyes stay trained on the shelves upon shelves of books.

"What is this place?" he tilts his head to the side. I pause before answering.

"This is the library," I say softly. I swing my free arm to gesture at the limitless possibilities that the public library holds.

"The library." He familiarizes himself with this new word.

"The library," he repeats in a whisper.

I don't want to interrupt his thinking. I know the wonder I felt in this place a long time ago with my own nanny, and the magic that lingers everytime I return. Other library-goers smile at Henry who is stuck in his same spot. They are all kind enough to walk around us when entering and exiting.

"So what do you do at the library?" He still sounds unsure of the word and the place associated with it.

"Well, for starters, you can read all of the books you want," I explain.

"But I thought you only read books at school?" He turns his head to look up at me.

I take a deep breath. This is one of those moments that’s a test. I’m offering an idea that contrasts all he’s ever known from his parents. It’s always treacherous waters. The impact any one of these tests could have on himself, his relationship with his parents, and his relationship with me is unknown.

“I like to read even when I’m not in school.” I use myself as an example. It’s usually safe territory.

“For real?” There’s so much hope in his voice.

I nod my head.

“I didn’t even know that was an option!” He’s getting excited now and I can’t help but smile enthusiastically back at him.

“Should we go and see what books they have?”

“Yes! Yes! Yes!” He starts running and brings me along with him. I catch the eye of a librarian who gives a soft smile in our direction.

We stop at the low shelves where he can see and reach all of the books. The picture books in this section all sit vertically in big bins with the covers facing the kids. Henry starts flipping through the options, pausing to read the titles when he spots

covers that catch his eye. I recognize some classics and think back to when I would spend probably too much time scouring these bins for a new book to read.

He decides on a book and pulls it out, turning to me.

“How much is it for this one?” he asks hesitantly.

I bend down to his level so he knows I’m being serious.

“That’s the beauty of the library, Henry. It’s all for free. You just return it when you’re done.”

His entire face lights up, shining just as bright as his golden curls as he hugs the book close to his chest.

“This is the coolest place ever! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” He sets the book down and throws his arms around me. It’s perhaps the biggest hug I’ve ever received.

Times like these are what make the difficult moments all the more worth it. Every tantrum, negotiation, and attempted manipulation are all forgotten when his appreciation is evident; when I know that I’m making a positive difference in his life.

So the library is where we spend most of the rest of the summer. He begs to go back to that magical place with the free books. He learns the librarians’ names and they give him new book suggestions. His reading gets better and better, and his parents make comments on his improved attention levels, his vocabulary, and general mood.

In my last week with Brecken, we make one last trip to the library. When we get to the desk to check out, he asks for my library card to scan as usual.

“I have a different idea for today,” I say. I bend to his level. “I think you should ask Ms. J for your own library card.”

“What?” his eyes widen. “I can do that?”

“Absolutely. Go on,” I put my hand on his shoulder and stand back up.

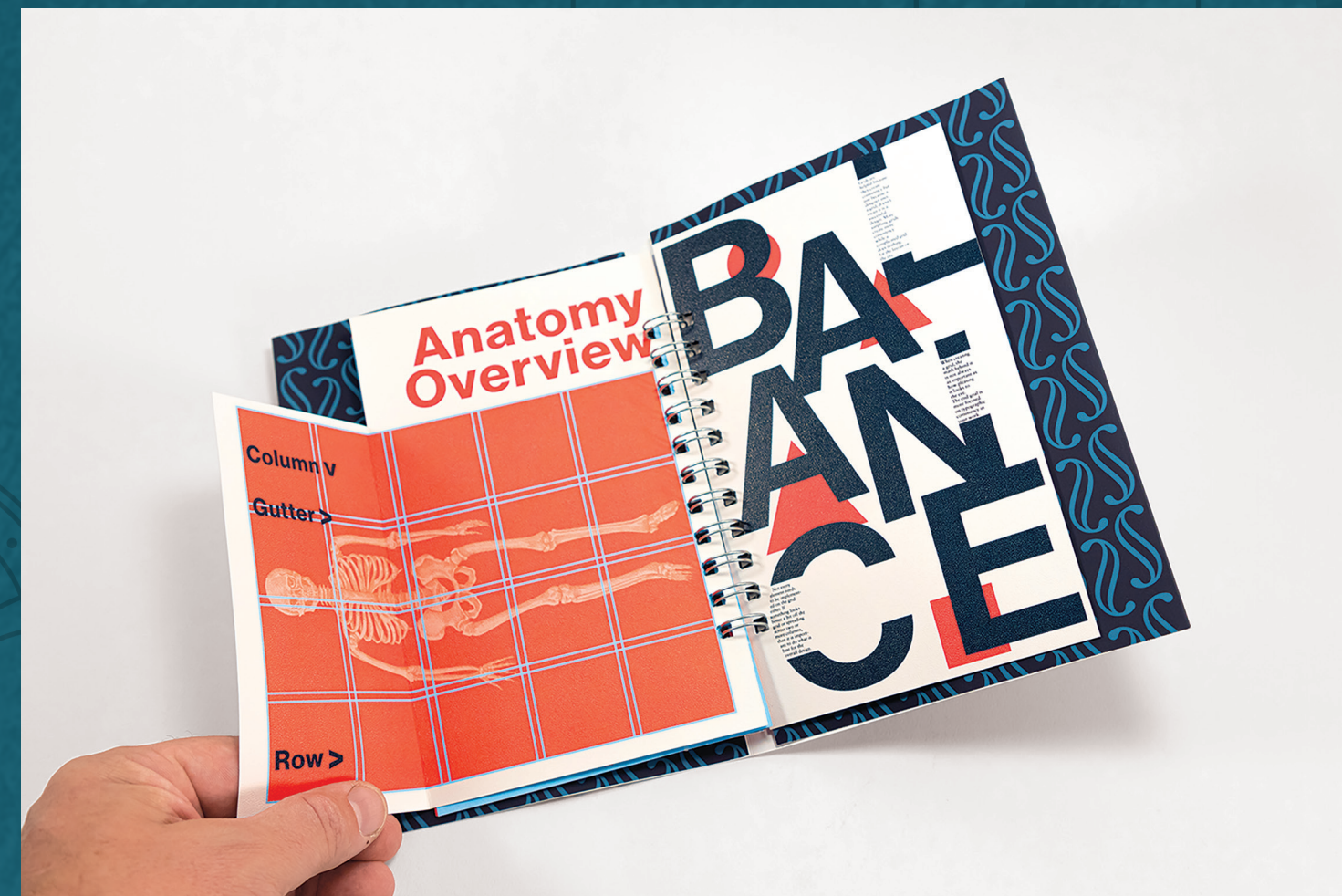
“Ms. J,” he starts. He looks back at me and I give him an encouraging nod. “Can I get a library card?”

“Of course, Henry,” she says sweetly. She gets all of the necessary information. Henry is bouncing on his feet with excitement, the rubber of his crocs quietly squeaking. I get teary eyed at the care he takes in holding his precious library card, remembering back to the first time I got my own library card.

“Now I have one just like you!” He jumps up and down a few times. “This is the best summer ever!”

And it was, and not just for him.

Typographic Grid AVA MENDENHALL





Blue Spring State Park

MICHAEL KENNELLY

Reunion in the Vermont Mountains

EVA LONNEMAN

Tip. Tip. Tap. Tip. Tap.

Raindrops softly drip down the tin roof of a creaky cabin deep in the Vermont mountains. Sunshine dusts the trunks of looming trees, giggling and waving above the cabin. A smell of earth and mildew fills the air as dirt is kicked up by circling tires skidding to a stop in a muddy roundabout driveway. Headlights flicker off, and the metallic hum of the engine sputters out.

Footprint-shaped mud holes build a map of hurried feet and smushed bodies around the vehicle. Slamming the trunk creates a harsh vibrating clank, snuffed out by pounding rain.

Glop. Glup. Glop. Gloop.

Sticky mud and stray leaves track across the ancient old wood paneling. A screen door squeaks on rusty hinges as she's thrown to the side and slapped in the face. The door-knob holds in a sneeze as he's turned and squeezed. Shoes

are thrown severely against a sign highlighting the importance of clean house flooring.

"Wait... this place is creepy!"

"I can't believe you fell asleep in here alone."

"I'm never gonna live that down, am I?"

The center chandler sizzles to life, revealing a unique mixture of vintage collectibles and grandma flower patterns. An elderly three-piece couch welcomes a reunion cuddle session but leaves much comfort to the imagination. She grumbles under the weight until laughs die down and silence pinches goose-bump covered arms.

Deep-rooted stairs groan as rushed steps smack against them as they climb higher and higher. Cold marinates in the atmosphere, biting down on bare skin. Blankets are tossed and layered, cutting through the chill with welcome warmth. Hands knead against comforters as bodies lull together into the oblivion of night.

A chirp, a buzz, and blinding light nags tired eyes to open and witness a Vermont morning. Thick fog swallows entire trees as he sneaks across acres of unfamiliar forest. Only sparse branches peak out to greet the rising visitors. Soft drops of dew glide off leaves as they shiver in the cold.

Cups warmed with steaming chai are filled and emptied as the sun rises. The fresh air of the mountains nips at cold feet as they shift across the floor. Freezing air claws in through the ceiling window as a slanted, crooked shower grouches under any movement.

Giggles envelop the room as a guest's bones shake, thanks to the basically below-zero water temperature. Arms rub against arms to create enough friction for teeth to stop clattering.

Snap. Click. Clack.

Curtains are shoved open, and windows slide comfortably closed to scare any remaining coldness away. Light sweaters and baggy pants are chosen for the perfect cozy day in.

Shuffling around the kitchen, delicate hands shape delicious plates of meat, crackers, and cookies.

Congregating on the porch, they snuggle into the dark oak picnic table and soak up the fresh mountain air. Warn-out copies of their book club novel accompany their mini-charcuterie boards as they begin their breakfast meeting.

Questions hop between them as they decipher the material in the novel. Who was everyone's favorite character? Which is the best love interest? Are glass castles livable? Discussions of character and plot bled into reminiscing about past trips and scheming future explorations across countries. As food begins to disappear and the novel is beaten dead, they find a new source of excitement.

Crunchy fallen leaves echo motivated chatter as adventure yearns to take over. A small unassuming playhouse entices the visitors to enter as light glitters through the stained-glass door.

A rocking chair slides back and forth as bodies crouch together to view the cramped single room. Abandoned toys litter the dirt-covered ground and a sad-looking ladder with multiple long-gone steps leans against the cracked wall, leading to a missing second level.

“This place keeps getting creepier.”

“I think it's cozy.”

“Holy shit!”

A large hairy body and eight stupidly long legs stare back at the intruders. Screams and shouts of disgust fill the room as they slam the door holding the monstrosity closed behind them. The playhouse sighs as shuddering steps cower away.

Huffs and gasps bounce around them as they collectively stare at each other in fascinated horror. Bursting into half-delirious laughter, they let the silence of nature cloak their worries. Rustling leaves and mumbling trees create a mountain lullaby that convinces them to stop and listen.

As they used up their last second together, consumed by the gloom of leading and the hope of returning, the old kind cabin closed her eyes and fell into a deep sleep. Tiny creepy crawlies scurry to regain any of her lingering warmth. The cold inched back in through open windows.

Eyes heavy and bodies warn, they shuffle back into the humming car.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

The soft mummer of Noah Kahan's voice rises as warmth glazes over them. Bright lumps of red, orange, and yellow wisp by as they drift away. Eventually separating with whispered promises of next time.

Kiln Resurrection

MAGGIE GRUNDEN



My Hometown

ISA EVANS



The taste of iron in my chest grounds me,
As I run over the tracks and river,
I've been running from it for too long,
Now it's found me in this sunny street, on this beautiful day.

Have you ever stared directly at the sun?
Burning so bright, that you know it's still there,
even with your eyes closed?
Tattooed by the afterimages, it's impossible to ignore its blaze.

Will you tell me what a prayer is?
I attempted to pray it away,
To find some peace in my devotion elsewhere,
Until God called my attempts futile,

Can you bid away something so intrinsic?
There are bits of you everywhere in me,
Intravenous, lodged in every wrinkle and fold,
I can barely call me, mine.

How could someone live like this?
No religious conversion, no distance, seems to make any difference,
Forever sentenced to a phantom pain.

Mother sent me to the doctor and I begged for their solution,
Crying for any drug, any treatment, any cure.

A man in a white coat gave me 80.5 oz of bleach,
directing me to use it wherever I hurt and ached.

I doused every inch of me until my skin burned and peeled,

But even bleaching all the stains of red, only turn them orange,
and I'm further filled with dread.

I will remember you far, far longer than the time I spent with you.

80.5 Oz of Bleach

LILA ACOTT

Connections

MAGGIE GRUNDEN



But Home is Nowhere

JOEY LOTZ





Moving Day

STACI Z-R

My House Is Just a Place Where I Live

SARA SALEM

A freshly made bed, a
clean desk yet to be covered,
lavender curtains, and
gray walls that were once pink.

This is the room I grew up in,
though I'm not quite sure when it switched from
this is my home to
this was my house.

I don't ask myself this all the time,
only when an application asks for Address 1,
when I come back for a weekend in the fall,
or when I'm asked to think about "home."

So then I *do* ask...
Is home where I live? Or is home where I am loved?
I *am* loved here, don't get me wrong,
I am loved through I-love-yous and
extra coffee in the pot and
home cooked dinners I didn't need to prepare.

But what I'm realizing is
the growing up I do now isn't in this college bedroom with
white walls,
green curtains, a
messy desk, and an
unmade bed, it is
downstairs.
It is in the kitchen in laughter or on the
couch being held through tears.

I am at home
outside when it is sunny and
in the pool with all my roommates and
at iHop on Women Winning Wednesdays.
I am at home with
coffee shop chats,
"floor time" discussions, and in
Hot Girl Debriefs during Hot Girl Drives.

Home is in the grass on a picnic blanket.
Home is with those who notice your energy dropping.
Home is laughing at the same inside joke over and over.
Home can change before you realize you were even there.

So as I stare at the
freshly made bed, the
clean desk yet to be covered, the
lavender curtains, and the
gray walls that were once pink, I ask again
when it switched from
this is my home to
this was my house.

Perhaps it switched my first time back from college.
Maybe it switched when I stopped looking forward to visiting.
It could have switched when I realized that my home is not a
place, but a feeling.

Home is when you'd rather be nowhere else,
and this old place is just a house.



The fireplace

ISA EVANS



Reverse Psychology

MAGGIE GRUNDEN

Boone Street

ELAINA LEAR



The Mailbox

EVAN WIERSCH

I can't wait till I can afford a car, I'm sick of the 15-minute walk to work, especially in the winter when the wind slices into my face, leaving my lips like crystals.

Anyways, as I walked to work, I saw an old lady heading my way, no biggie, right? Wrong, it was the old lady. Now you may be wondering, who is the old lady? Well, I couldn't tell you, all's I know is that every time I see her, she is dying to show me some picture of her granddaughter, on a crusted over phone that looks like it's from Obama's first term.

I was already running late, and she'd make me double late, I couldn't do this now. I threw my gaze down to my phone, investigating the intricacies of the settings app to look busy.

I looked up for one second, just to check if she was gone, but just as I had done so, our eyes met, for no more than a quarter of a second, yet that was too long. I had just signed a binding agreement to stop and talk.

"Hello Selenal!" she called out with a wrinkled smile. I forced one back, you'd do the same too if you were running late.

"Oh, hey, how have you been?" To be honest, I didn't know her name, and it was too late to ask.

The dreaded reach in her purse came next, as she pulled out her phone. I'll spare the details, just know it wasn't absolutely

exhilarating, something about her mailbox, which she decided to paint bright pink so her granddaughter would know which house was hers.

Eventually, I gave her a quick goodbye, power walking through the cold to work.

I threw open the door to the flower shop, Family Florist. I was greeted by my boss, and childhood friend, Liz, asking me to head out to the bars, “It’ll be good for you, we haven’t been in forever, and you need something going on in your life.” What happened to hello?

“I’ll see,” I responded.

“You’re late, and I’ll forgive you if you live a little tonight,” she giggled, I did not.

As I clocked out, Liz reminded me once again about the plans, saying she’d drive us both over.

The bars were fine, me and Liz were having a couple of drinks and having fun, but after a while, she told me I was on my own and needed to find someone to go home with. I protested but eventually agreed, going to the dance floor.

I made my way to the floor; I hadn’t been there in probably five years, and the music was wholly unfamiliar, but I tried

mumbling along, pretending I knew the songs. The floor was overflowing with youth. I saw a man, the only one around my age, and he had a mustache which just somehow worked with his face, good enough.

I went up and brushed his arm. He looked at me with a drunken stare. “Are you an uh angel, or did it hurt when you hit the ground, because you’re an angel girl.” This was a stark reminder of why I don’t venture to the bars anymore.

I took a step away, but he stepped forward. “Let’s just dance,” he said, his hands swallowing mine. There wasn’t much I could do but dance and dance I did. I must admit I was having quite the time, neither of us were good but that made it fun.

After dancing with this man, who was totally zonked, I felt my day had come to an end and told him goodbye. I was ready to head out except I couldn’t find Liz anywhere. I went to check my phone when I saw her text telling me she had already left.

Fuck. I don’t have Uber money, how was I supposed to get back? Without many options, I turned to the man for help, “Could you walk me back home? My friend bailed.” As I side note don’t tell a drunk man you’re alone for the night.

He agreed to walk me back, and it was fine, he gave me his coat without me asking and walked quietly next to me. It wasn’t too late, only around 9pm at this point, but it was dark enough where the streets were only illuminated by hazy lights on the side of the road.

As we grew near my duplex, I let him know we were almost there. “Thank you so much, just a little bit further and we will be there. I hope to see you again sometime.”

His face grew confused, “What do you mean see me again sometime, I’m coming home with you right?” His eyes were sharp, I didn’t know what to say.

“I was planning on just going to bed, sorry, maybe another time?” I said, hoping to reassure him.

“I think now is a good time.”

I froze. “Oh okay.” I had no choice but to keep walking, I couldn’t lead him to my home. I was going to walk until I found help.

I counted each step, wondering how high I could get before he realized what I was up to. I noticed his fists began to ball up, and he shot a suspicious glance at me.

“We are almost there don’t worry,”

I needed something, and I needed it soon. That’s when I saw it, a pink mailbox.

I pointed out the mailbox, “This one here,” trying to conceal my trembling voice. We went up to the house and I turned the door handle, locked. “My roommate must’ve locked it; I’ll ring the bell.” I pressed it and waited, heart beating out my chest.

Soon after, a figure emerged at the door, it was the old lady. Our eyes connected, and somehow, my eyes whispered that I needed help, and I needed her. Her eyes told me that it was going to be okay.

I was saved.



Home Number

NOAH DAVISSON



She's Kinda Hot, Though

SEBASTIÁN DE LEÓN

Untitled

ANONYMOUS

Your perennial lipstick
and ruby piano key fingers
leave glowing footprints of smoke
across the eager asphalt of my chest.
Glistening, your ivory skin's
timeless touch is the only highway.
Faith's missionary architecture
is a tantalizing honey, idiot even.
Melting, momentary icicles
pencil in the gap between open ends,
open doors, with me
like your electric movie theater.
Keep me tucked away in your trembling warehouse.
Print your name with talons across my chest.



I Love You 2000

SARAH RYAN

BIOGRAPHIES

Jad Abuhilal

Psychology

Excelsior captures a sense of nostalgia and childlike wonder. The porch swing, tossed sneakers and slingshot evoke memories of carefree youthful adventures. The title honors the late Stan Lee, whose tales shaped my childhood, sparking my imagination and artistic journey through comic book characters like *Spider-Man*. The work's title was also inspired by the late Mac Miller's posthumous song *Excelsior*, which reflects on childhood and simpler times. This piece celebrates the past while embracing the journey ahead, with more adventures and stories yet to unfold.

Alexandra Amrhein

English

I've been writing fiction, poetry, and songs for as long as I can remember—it's always been a constant and a refuge in my life. With my time on this planet, I'm striving to be a small source of light amongst too much darkness, and if someone is positively impacted by something I write, that is all I could ever ask for.

Melina Blank

Marketing; Creative Writing & Business Analytics Minors

Melina loves serving as *Orpheus*'s Head Literary Editor and is also involved in *Sigma Kappa* and *Delta Sigma Pi*. She would like to stress that the world of writing is boundless!

Julia Daschbach

Photography

Silent Conversations captures my grandmother's front porch, a place filled with warmth, memories, and many good conversations. I've spent countless moments here with family, and it's always been a comforting and familiar space. The light shining down felt like the perfect way to highlight the scene, with my grandfather's shoes under the table adding a quiet, meaningful touch. To me, this image represents the love, connection, and simplicity of home.

Katelyn Daschbach

Environmental Geosciences

My name is Katelyn Daschbach. I'm from Pittsburgh PA, and I like dinosaurs and rocks! I write for myself, and if I'm lucky, other people like it too.

Noah Davisson

Graphic Design; Fine Arts Minor

I'm from St. Louis, Missouri. While graphic design is my focus, I also explore digital and film photography, painting, and am an active member of POD. This is my first publication in *Orpheus*, and I've had the honor of having work displayed in the *Roger Glass Center for the Arts*.

Mary Dent

Graphic Design; Fine Arts Minor

Over the past four years, my art and design style has evolved in ways I didn't expect. The work I'm presenting today feels like a true reflection of my artistic personality, whether I'm pushing boundaries or working within my comfort zone. I'm thankful for everything this program at UD has taught me, and for the people who've been a part of that journey.

Sebastián De León

Graphic Design; Photography Minor

Hey there, Sebastián here! (hey, Grace!)

I want to recognize the efforts of Maggie Endres, Lucy Miles, Maddy Selong, Kevin Brun, Jackie Patton, Anel Solares, Kevin Figueroa, and Jillian Fahey. I had to include you guys in the magazine somehow :)

Lainey Doggett

Graphic Design; Fine Arts Minor

Hi! I'm Lainey!

Growing up, I have always been someone who would rather make something than buy it. My passion for design stems from this love of creating, whether it's through digital work or fine arts.

Outside of design, I enjoy traveling, baking, and going on walks! I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I have been given at UD.

Isa Evans

Graphic Design & Fine Arts

Isa Evans considers herself an artist of many trades: graphic design and writing of course, but also illustration, painting and photography. She loves to write about the beauty in the mundane, surrealism, and spooky stories!

Sophie Eyerman

Art Education

I am an interdisciplinary, multimedia artist, delving into new techniques as I learn them. My work tends to emphasize the human form but is not confined to a single medium, as I continue to experiment with a wide variety of materials, though drawing and painting hold a consistent place in my practice. I am drawn to realism and inspired by my own background, but as I develop as an artist, I intend to discover the style and forms that I connect with as I continue experimenting.

Alexandria Ford

Professional & Technical Writing; Rhetoric Minor

"I wrote these poems during my time in the *University of Dayton Summer Appalachian Program*. They represent a part of my heart, capturing the joy I felt in the mountains and expressing the deep love I have for my home in the Appalachian region. I am grateful for the opportunity to share this personal expression and a meaningful part of my life that is so dear to me."

Ava Forrest

Art Education

Ava Forrest earned her Associate of Arts in painting from Sinclair Community College in 2023, where her work was featured in juried and scholarship exhibitions. In 2024, she won the *Award for Realism* at the *University of Dayton's Horvath Juried Student Exhibition* and was featured in the December IMRI Newsletter. Inspired by the Baroque and Realism movements, Ava uses dramatic lighting, composition, and subject matter to evoke strong emotions and highlight the beauty of everyday life.

Laurel Grelle

Graphic Design; *Marketing & Fine Arts Minors*

From a young age, I knew I was someone who loved to do art, be creative, and get my hands dirty. The Art & Design department at UD has strengthened my love for the arts and shaped me into a better designer thanks to my professors and peers. I currently work as a graphic designer for *Flyer Enterprises*. I am constantly inspired by the world around me and strive to create designs that are both beautiful and functional.

Maggie Grunden

Graphic Design; *Fine Arts Minor*

Maggie Grunden is a graphic designer and ceramic artist from Cleveland, Ohio. Her work explores collaboration, sustainability, and materiality. Maggie has been a ceramics studio technician for four years and founded *UD Clay Club*, growing it to about 250 members. She organizes bi-weekly meetings and fosters community through clay. Passionate about the intersection of design, ceramics, and community, she seeks national and international opportunities to continue this work after graduation.

Olivia Gustavson

Graphic Design

Olivia Gustavson is an artist whose work is processed from emotional memories. *Core Childhood* is a piece representing moments of innocence and creativity. It is a model of an art gallery located in Olivia's hometown, where she spent many of her early moments. Created using hand-building techniques, ceramic material, and earthy glazes, it makes us feel warmth and fragility as we embark on those early memories.

Allison Gazzi

Graphic Design

Along with graphic design, I have a love for photography and being able to share my experiences through photographs.

Mia Haas

Fine Arts

My name is Mia Haas, and I am from Chicago, Illinois. I am passionate about artistic growth and self-discovery, both in and out of the studio. My work is deeply inspired by personal experiences and the natural world around me. I have a profound appreciation for the creative process and constantly seek new opportunities to explore and evolve as an artist.

Quinn Heisey

Graphic Design

Quinn loves his home city of Cleveland, photography, and all things sports and music.

Emily Helm

English; *History Minor*

Emily writes poetry about the things they don't know how to say out loud, and they take good care of their plants. (Except for the fittonia whose stem got infected with some kind of fungus and was turning orange and rotting, but don't worry because they took cuttings from all the still-green parts and they're hopeful that those will survive. This wasn't supposed to be a metaphor. Sorry, Tingle.)

Gretel Helm

Fine Arts; *Art History Minor*

Her work explores the abstraction of nature through biomorphic shape, color and various media. She is currently focusing on painting, printmaking and ceramics. Finding connections in each process, her work aims to communicate the inexplicable power and energies found in nature and the intangible.

Kerry Kadel

English; *Creative Writing Minor*

Kerry enjoys writing poetry that centers around her own life, what concerns her and expresses the emotions she can't describe with speech. She wishes to publish novels and poetry books in her future.

Michael Kennelly

Electrical & Computer Engineering Technology

Best described as an old soul, he enjoys piano, 70s rock, reading, tinkering with electronics, and taking photographs. He finds himself inextricably drawn to objects before his time and chasing a previous life he has never lived. You can find more about his work in: www.mike-kennelly.com

Joe F. Kuebler

Graphic Design

As graphic designer,s our goal is to make works of art from our creative selves. I was inspired to make this through music. Every work that I do is inspired by either the music I listen to or by musicians themselves.

And as a musician myself, I strive to produce works of art through my lyrics and how others can imagine what the song means.

Katherine Lawlor

Graphic Design; *Fine Arts & Communications Minors*

She is a graphic design major whose love for painting and drawing began with abstract interpretations of *Curious George* characters in her preschool years. Outside of the studio, she can be found spending time with the people, dogs, and hobbies that fulfill her. She can hardly turn down a good iced vanilla latte, concert, or craft store sale.

“Here's to you, Cleveland.”

Elaina Lear

Graphic Design

As a graphic design major, I believe in the importance of broadening my artistic horizons by practicing other mediums. While graphic design is my primary passion, photography comes in as a close second. I also find inspiration in exploring the world around me—every adventure offers a chance to capture stunning moments and fuel my creativity.

Lauren Leslie

Graphic Design

I was born and raised in Dayton, Ohio and graduated from Centerville High School. From a young age I loved being creative and working with my hands. When I started printmaking I realized my love for art and print. It's truly changed my life and work.

Eva Lonneman

English; Film Studies & Women and Gender Studies Minors

Hi, I'm Eva Lonneman! I'm a senior English major with a creative writing concentration minoring in film studies and women and gender studies. I'm currently an Environmental Journalist, and I'm working on a science fiction novel. I love reading and writing and hope to continue doing so after graduation.

M. Joseph Lotz

Fine Arts

Growing up on the Eastside of Dayton, Joey began haunting coffee houses, poetry slams, and open-air storm drains around the city at an early age, notebook in tow. After taking a short break from art school to have a career, he is glad to be back where he started. He enjoys long walks anywhere, drinking coffee on cold misty mornings, and the idea that art, making it or experiencing it, can heal almost any hurt.

Mortimer Lugo

Management Major, Communications & Marketing Minors

I recently started writing more this year and I've loved it. I write because I just enjoy expressing my feelings on paper and it just makes me happy to share it with everyone.

Ava Mendenhall

Graphic Design; Fine Arts Minor

Hi, I'm Ava! I became a graphic design major in the second semester of my sophomore year. I was led to graphic design because I realized I have always loved advertisements, branding, and unique packaging. Over the past two years, I have learned so much about design, and I can't wait to further my knowledge and skills!

Maya Mirsky

Communications; Media Production Concentration

Hi, I'm Maya, a Senior here at UD. I enjoy writing because it allows me to express myself creatively. Creative non-fiction and screen-writing are some of my favorite forms of writing. I journal a lot, so turning one of my experiences into this short-essay was a cathartic experience for me. In my free time, I'm a Group Fitness yoga instructor at the RecPlex and a manager for WUDR Flyer radio!

Micah Misfud

History; Creative Writing Minor

Micah Mifsud is a Junior History Major and Creative Writing Minor from Cleveland, Ohio. This is his first time submitting to *Orpheus*, and it surely won't be the last! Alongside writing, he also produces music under the name Versa Matrix—you can find him on Spotify, Apple Music, or wherever else you stream music! Thank you for reading!

John O'Sullivan

Accounting

John has always felt drawn to writing and has found the creative writing department here at the University of Dayton to be very welcoming and accepting of all majors. He has really enjoyed how these courses have expanded his horizons and allowed him a creative outlet as a business major.

Kaylee Peters

Art Education; Photography Minor

My image-based work explores themes of memory, self-identity, and belonging through analog and alternative photographic processes. I hope to teach art and photography to high school students.

Mia Prisby

English; Creative Writing Minor

Mia is also involved in Peers Advocating for Violence Education (PAVE), group fitness, and outdoor education. She hopes you enjoy her piece!

Sarah Ryan

Fine Arts

Hi, my name is Sarah Ryan. My focused mediums are painting and drawing. My current works represent emotions posed by aging.

Jon Quiroz

Graphic Design

Sheltered Amidst Silent Trees is a reflection of one of those rare moments when I found peace in nature's quiet embrace. Standing among the trees, I felt truly protected like the world had paused just for me. The silence wasn't empty; it was full of calm, a reminder that even in solitude, I'm held by something greater. This photo is a reminder of the warmth and shelter we can find when we stop and listen to the stillness around us.

Sara Salem

Graphic Design

Sara has been fighting tooth and nail to get back into *Orpheus*, and she is delighted to finally be accepted for the first time in two years! Her written work explores themes of vivid imagery, nostalgia, change, love, and, of course, home. Though Graphic Design is her passion, she is usually found drawing, crocheting, singing, touching grass, and/or yapping to her loved ones. If you follow @ssalem.studio on Instagram, it might encourage her to actually post!

Elise Schmitt

History; Spanish & German Minors

When not haunting the halls of the humanities building, you can often find Elisabeth tucked away with a good book.

Preston Schuster

Supply Chain Operations; MIS Minor

Preston says, "It's simpler to write what's hard to speak."

Jenna Shuman

Pre-Medicine

From Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Jenna has discovered an unexpected yet fervent passion for writing. This creative outlet has not only shaped her outlook on life but also helped her navigate obstacles in trying times. Through her poetry, Jenna strives to bring hidden emotions to light, embracing vulnerability instead of shying away from it. If she had to give just one piece of advice, it would be that embarrassment is a choice—don't let it consume you or dictate your life.

Thomas Snyder

English

Thomas enjoys playing ping pong and tennis!

Shay Stoner

English; History Minor

Shay grew up in Pittsburgh, PA, near which his family owns the cottage that inspired his poem in this issue! Besides writing, Shay loves dancing, spinning for the color guard, rock climbing, and daydreaming whenever he gets the chance.

Kyleigh Streeter

Fine Arts; Art History Minor

Kyleigh Streeter is from Strongsville, Ohio. A theme in her work is trivial, missable moments in ordinary life. She explores the feeling of being present in the moment and slowing down to reflect on the world around her. Streeter is a multidisciplinary artist primarily working in printmaking, drawing, and ceramics.

Evan Wiersch

Business Analytics

Hi I'm Evan Wiersch. In my free time I like rock climbing, basketball, and playing water polo. I am trying to get more into reading and writing which is why I tried writing for *Orpheus*.

Isabella Winkler

Graphic Design; Photography & Fine Arts Minors

Art is my communication. I work to bring forth the impact that art and design have to provide influence and light in an otherwise dim world.

Staci Z-R

Photography

She is primarily influenced by memories, dreams, and music. With an editorial style and specializing in portrait and fine art photography, Staci hopes to photograph for *Rolling Stone* one day.



Memories lie dead, returned to the earth. Their remnants linger just
beyond reach, forever entombed in the pockets of tomorrow. A lithe
wind will blow and the ancient shutters heave a death rattle:
forget me not.





2025