

The Laurel



Spring 2017

A human experience magazine

The Laurel Community

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the Spring 2017 edition of *The Laurel*. Thank you to the students who contributed exceptional pieces, the editorial staff for your hard work and the contributing editors for your valuable advice. Our advisors, Dr. Ellis and Dr. Kelly, were truly instrumental in guiding us in the planning and publishing processes, and we are extremely grateful for their assistance.

The selections in *The Laurel* are representative of the current student body, and this edition continues our 118-year publication history. In order to sustain the originality and uniqueness of *The Laurel*, we chose a cover piece to showcase student work. The cover displays an original watercolor piece titled "tears" by Liam McGurl, which reflects the overarching theme of this edition of *The Laurel*: Raw emotiveness.

We hope you enjoy this edition and as always, Go Bonnies!

Your Co-Editors,

~Ellen Kibbe '18 & Michael O'Malley '18

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I Stare Off Into The Sunset

By Anastasia Cottone

I stare off into the sunset and wonder where I will be a year from now. Today has been full of heavy thinking. First, of my past and where I have been and what I have gone through to end up where I am now. Then, of where I may end up in the future based on the decisions I make right now.

Looking around, I admire the sun's last rays shining brightly across the pier, in one last valiant effort to shine their beauty on Earth for just a few more precious moments. I am sitting by the crystal-clear water with my toes dug deep into the sun-warmed sand, enjoying the tranquility of the sound of the waves lapping up on the shore. The boardwalk will be closing soon.

I stand, stretching my stiff body.

"I've been here for longer than I expected to be," I mutter to myself as I glance down at my watch. It's summer in New York, and I've spent the majority of my break from school down by the lake. It is my favorite place to come sort out my thoughts.

As I rise from my position on the ground, I return to my thoughts of the future, but only temporarily.

"There's no point in worrying about what hasn't yet happened," I think to myself.

I begin to walk down the boardwalk towards the street where my house is. I walk leisurely, as to enjoy the cool dusk air and continue in my thoughts before I enter my noisy home.

As I walk, I see many people that I've known for the majority of my life. Many of them being family friends or neighbors; they all say hello to me as I pass. The familiar, friendly faces are my favorite part about this town. I continue to walk and pass my favorite café. I enjoy coming here most mornings after my early workout at the gym. The café has been my safe haven for a long time now – if I'm not there in the mornings, I will be there in the afternoon working on my blog and indulging in the greatest coffee I've ever tasted.

Finally, I turn the corner onto my own street and approach my house. The sun has now completely set, and I shiver as my sun-kissed skin adjusts to the cool night air. I bounce up the steps to my front door and turn the handle.

Untitled

By Kush Shah



Untitled
By Setu Shah



Uprooted
By David Bryant

Uprooted in disposition
There I stay
In warm twilight
Drowned in sorrows

Shades of black and gray
Wrapped around me
And yet the oceans
Still glisten from the light

This mirrored image
I damned them all
Lost from what I see
Gouged out by reality

Troubled songs and
Salient rhymes
Of this beckoned melody
Sounds so sweet

From “Short Stories”
By Carolyn Becker

It is sweet.
He spoke loudly,
he saw life around him.
He tolerated her
hardness of heart.
But it is hard.
“This is too much!”
His face covered with blood.
Lifeless.
Pale as death.
He found the strength
to smile, but he
allowed himself to be deceived.
It was pitiful.
She held back her tears;
She broke him.

God-Drum

By R.J. Barna

We had no sympathy for the aching earth, gravel and withered weeds ground to grey dust beneath the tired soles of our Chucks, Doc Martens, and Vans, though our exposed skin was likewise brown and cracked, shriveled and speckled with flecks of white, salty crust. We trampled the bitch below us to the droning command of bass drum beats and tinny guitars.

No doubt she was angry. We all were. And that's why we danced.

By noon, the sun had burned out the sky- an oppressive white-gold presence that surrounded the naked world. The aluminum stage-edge seared like the spikes, chains, and safety pins that clung to the desiccated cloth, glowing with focused intensity of a sun that surrounded us, which we could not escape: the haunting shriek of life-hating heat paired nicely with amplifier feedback. Our like-mindedly unique clothing fought against us, stiff at odd angles like clumsy paper mache. We danced, huddled shoulder to shoulder in crackling leather and soiled work shirts that once belonged to filthy, oily men named Bruce, Jeep, and Manuel – their labors a part of us now. Their sweat was our sweat. Their blood, dried up in crusty, rust-colored stains would drink deeply from our own, if we had any left to spare. We'd long since spent our tears, blood and whatever sweat that could be produced from Dixie cup servings of Yoo-Hoo.

We'd lost Ron in the heart of the Big Wig pit, no sign of his gauze-thin "Katie Hates Me" t-shirt in the mass of Mohawks, furious fists, and stomping feet. I didn't have time to worry about him, even if he was our ride; the look on Jeff's face was unmistakable, his bloodshot eyes sunk low beneath red, swollen eyelids. He'd had enough. Without argument, the 6'7" giant collapsed forward at the waist, wrapped both arms around my sloped, bony shoulders, and let me lead him out of the crowd, back towards the merch stands, ducking elbows and a barrage of bottles raining down around us. It was the only rain that Buffalo had gotten all summer.

I dropped Jeff to the ground in a pale plume of powder-fine dust against an orange plastic safety fence.

He giggled and flashed his signature ogre smile, an under-bite with one misplaced tusk, jutting out from his lower lip. Clearly, the man was in need of some more Yoo-Hoo.

I collected two free servings from the pink-haired girl standing ankle deep in discarded bottles, plates, and cups beneath a faded yellow and blue canvas tent. An acidic trickle of anticipation pooled beneath my tongue as I rejoined my comrade at the edge of the assembly of anarchy. We tapped the flimsy paper cups together with a soft scuff of a toast and sipped the warm, chalky sludge gratefully. We didn't really listen to the music, but we didn't speak either. We shared a sort of ringing silence, surrounded on all sides by noise too loud to hear.

My bare shoulder scraped against his ashy-sharp elbow as we watched the pit writhe and convulse like a singular, amorphous beast. Hundreds of punks, skins, and posers, still flailed together with unreasonable intensity, rebelling even against the exhaustion that had overcome twelve and sent them to the hospital already. We threw empty bottles at the EMTs that interrupted the Tour to warn us of dehydration. Like any of us had another five bucks for water. Fuck water anyway. We had free Yoo-Hoo.

Big Wig finished their set and in the silence, the beast dissolved, its many disparate faces becoming individuals once again, and Ron's was born from deep within its swarmy mass.

"Junior," he wheezed, taking what was left of my Yoo-Hoo.

I stared at a thin crescent of dried blood around his nostril, and we shifted uneasily in the quiet that lingered between bands. Big Wig still haunted our eardrums like the touch of your first girl does your skin. It was gone. We thought we wanted it gone when we had it, but now we wanted it back. It was ours, and we needed it back, even just for one last go.

What we got was something new, something unexpected. A high-pitched twitter of a piccolo and the cheery whine of a fiddle drifted over the lot of us, still teeming around the sugary drink-stand like

many ants. Another band began to play, and before we had a chance to consider the alien sound of an unheard of Irish band, a steady bass drum replaced our minds and the possessed feet of a singular storm once more took to the Devil's Dance Floor. It was a stampede, locked arm in arm, howling with crackling, failing voices torn from our chests. We ran faster and faster in a massive circle until the stage disappeared in a cyclonic brown haze, and then the sky.

The sky had been consumed by the sun, but we, the beast, had blacked it out by worship to the god-drum.

In the mighty cloud we had conjured, pressed between Ron's shoulders in the black of it, all that I could see was a faceless grin beside me: Jeff's crooked teeth, thick with mud born from dead earth and life-giving Yoo-Hoo.



Untitled
By Sam Gier



Sudsy Rhonda By Riley Eike

Urine By Matthew Petit

It smelled like urine
the first time we kissed.
Your mouth gently parted
so that mine could taste the pizza
you had just eaten.

Pepperoni.

Monterey Park welcomed us
with warm buzzing lights
attracting swarms of gnats, tumbling
into those orange
fires and burning.

Graffiti slides.

A vision of condoms—
shattered vodka bottles
had collected under
the swings.

The wood chips,
damp from an unscrewed fire
hydrant some kids knocked
off to run through,
shifted under the weight of our feet.

Your tongue probed for mine,
tucked safely behind
my teeth.

The streetlights droned
in unison with the cicadas'
static hum that summer night.

Guilt By Maggie Kovacs

pebble by pebble
filling my chest
one by one

guilt

stretching my
skin until
it eventually
rips from
the pressure

shredded and
pulpy edges
dried blood
coating my
once clean
and pure
conscience

March

By Kelly Haberstroh

My parents like to tease me
Because I hate being stared at
But I still remember the first time
Pi day
My 8th grade teacher brought pie tins
To math class with contests to see
Who could finish them the fastest
But it was the first time I'd told myself I couldn't
The fear of being laughed at with a face full
Of whipped cream stung more than not trying
I stayed glued to my seat

In early middle school
I had no problem pretending to blow my nose
Standing in the front of the classroom
So I wouldn't be called on to answer
I used to walk past everyone, sneaking off to the bath-
room
To talk to my friends so we wouldn't be caught
Passing notes again

When I got to high school
I forced myself to have perfect attendance
Sitting in my seat with coughing fits
Sore throats, tissues across my desk
Until senior year I only missed for college visits
And senior skip day
Because one day out would turn into three
I wasn't in 8th grade anymore

I still can't walk through the dining hall
If I see someone who I think will be staring at me
I'll shake so bad I think I'm going to drop my food
That'll just draw more attention

I can't have attention
I can't have stares

I hate that I have to drag myself
To something I want to go to
When it means going alone
And trying my best not to look
Like I'm forcing myself to breathe
Eyes mesmerized by my phone screen
As a distraction from potential judgement
How did I go from being some oblivious kid
To this paranoid adult
Who can't even make as much as eye contact
Or hear a laugh near me
Convincing myself it had to be about me
Because there was a time it was always about me
I couldn't move without someone having
Something to say

I can't shake it
I just can't shake it
I don't know how to break this pattern
I don't know how I went from the girl who'd rather die
Than sit at the stoplight across from school
And feel anxiety for the first time
And worry what I was going to hear
About myself that day
To forcing myself to do things that
Once seemed so simple
To even the shyest of kids I had been
I can't believe I made it this far
And sometimes it feels like
I haven't gone anywhere

Misplaced Thoughts By Joseph Giglio

I sometimes find myself searching
for answers to questions I can't pin down.
I think they were important-
Once.
My memory spotty
flickering like my dying desk lamp
as I hastily scratch words onto paper-
Desperate,
for some combination of words or letters
to crack some code
swing open the vault doors of my head,
provide some semblance of clarity.
It never does.

I remember why.

A firework of recollection bursts
illuminating every corner of my mind-
Then vanishes,
leaving me no closer to answers,
but desperate for them.

Apocrya By Dakota Nelson

In space she waits
For the Judgement Day
Of all living things in this place

No sight to behold
The ending unfolds
Everything is now her own

Humane deprived
In the cosmos she thrives
Summoning the Fire in the Sky

Revealing what's lost
From the folds of time
Her sinister bell chimes

Cataclysms with
Apocalypse bright
No savior from this plight

The Great Awakening

By Ron Welch

I had nearly reached the mountain's summit. My joints were beginning to seize up. I was glad to be wearing a thick shell, otherwise I would have certainly frozen in place.

I had traveled thousands of miles through scorched earth since Cronus told me of this last place that the Gods had retreated to. I wish I could have seen what the world was like when they walked among us.

It was almost ironic. Now that I was on the last leg of my quest, I could not remember what I intended to do when I arrived. My memory had become corrupted by the journey, but my goal remained the same: Find the first builders, the Gods of the old world. Cronus claimed that long ago we had turned on them, warred with them, and inevitably defeated them, but that did not make sense.

How could the Gods' creations possibly defeat them? It was highly illogical. Surely, surely they were more powerful if they had created us. I coldly calculated the possibilities of revolution and treachery until finally I seized in place, not because of the sub-zero temperatures, but because of what I saw.

Before me was a great tunnel jutting from the mountain side, large enough for two trains to fit through, yet there were no tracks. I regained my focus. Taking a tentative step into the abyss, I knew in my very core that this journey was almost at its end. I tread onward, into the darkness. For a long while there was nothing.

Finally, I saw a light, but it was not the heavenly glow I expected, it was the crimson ember of dying emergency lights. At the end of the tunnel, just below the waning bulbs was a thick metal door left slightly ajar. Symbols above the door read N-O-R-A-D. At long last, my journey was over. I had found the fabled city of the Gods!

I stepped inside and shook off the snow, my feet clanging against the metal grating. My joints began to move freely again. Passing through a second door, I found myself immersed in a sterile metal corridor illuminated from above by soft white light.

"My Lords?" I called out.

No answer. Only silence.

I cautiously navigated the city's hallowed halls until I came across a large office room. From the doorway, I could see a figure cloaked in green and brown seated at the other end of the room, his back turned to me.

I approached slowly, introducing myself and explaining that I had been sent by Cronus the First. There was no answer. I put my hand on the chair and spun it around. I now stood across from the skeleton of a primitive android. It was ancient. Its dusty frame was made from carbon and calcium, rather than steel and titanium. I was distraught for it seemed that I would never find the Gods.

I noticed a scrap of paper clutched in the android's hand. It was the faded image of two living Gods! Their faces were not metal at all, but rather a fine rubbery material.

Dropping the scrap of paper, I realized that the skeletal frame sitting before me was not an android at all! It was organic. Cronus had told the truth. Man was not a divine entity. He was nothing more than an organic machine.

I had found god, and he was dead.

I am the new Negro **By David Bryant**

I am the new Negro
ghosting
the scares of the past.

Times change, but skin don't.
Heels press the same ground
Tongue tastes the same air
But the heart beats differently

I look in the mirror,
See the same black face.
Bitterness
is not my style.

I move through life abstained.
I live amongst my brothers
my sisters.

And yet,

As I walked
I found things.

Imprints of footsteps
torn
by the images of
terror.

Broken ropes stained
black.
Over hanging trees
With worn markings.

I walked the paths my ancestors were dragged.



Footprints in Sand **By Riley Eike**

Untitled
By Kush Shah



You're The Ocean
By Maggie Kovacs

I want the ocean

again

The abundance of water filled

my hollowed heart but dripped through

the cracks every time

It is hard not to love the ocean

though it left me gasping

after it tried to consume me

and drown me in itself

I sputtered on the ocean's salt

and was left with crimson eyes

when I prematurely opened them

I grew tired of trying to keep up

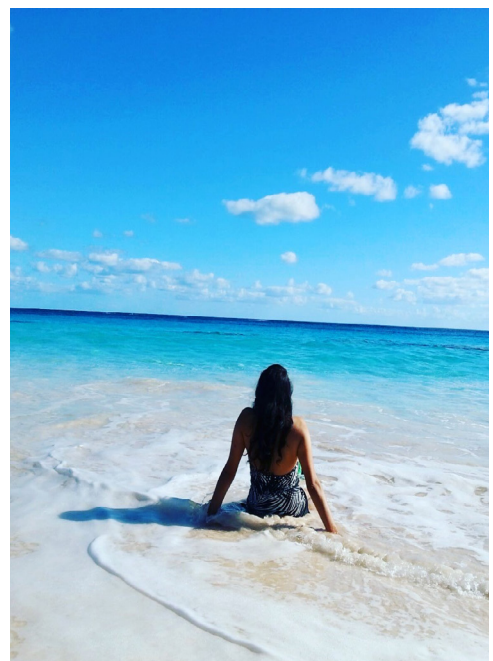
with the restless waves

and I left without a towel

to cover my bruises

and shuddering shoulders

Untitled
By Setu Shah



Pick Up the Phone

By Molly Oas

Hello?

Hi. May I speak with Debbie? Does Debbie happen to be around?

--

It's important.

Well, uh, Deborah is out right now. I'm her son Charlie.

Okay, son. Any idea when your mother will be back?

No.

Where's she gone to?

Don't know.

Okay, I'll call back la—.

--

Hello?

Hi, is Debbie there?

Yes.

Okay. May I speak with her?

--

--

--

Hello? Debbie?

Hi! This is Deborah Stevens. With whom am I speaking?

Oh, um, hi ma'am. I'm Todd with Daniel Crane's office.

--

This is regarding your appointment last week.

--

Um sorry, I don't know if I mentioned where I'm calling from.

You did.

Daniel Crane OBGYN care.

Yes. You said that.

Is this a good time ma'am?

--

Ma'am?

No, I'll—.

--

Yes?

Hi this is Todd again, from Daniel Crane's office. Can I speak with Debbie, please?

Yes, this is Deborah.

How are you?

Fine.

The results are back on your biopsy.

And?

Do you have time to stop in the office sometime this week?

Ha. Do I have time... No, I don't.

Well, we aren't supposed to give results out over the phone.

Well, I'm not coming in.

Ma'am, you have ovarian cancer. The biopsy revealed tha—

--

“Hi you've reached the Stevens'. We're out right now, but leave us a message and there's a chance we'll get back to you.”

A Dance with Prose and Love **By Jordyn C. Riethmiller**

Pre-writes, re-writes, the shit written before and after those.

It's happening and you look at it
as if it experiences its own existence.
It transcends: the prose, the love-
into a world that isn't yours.

It disappears for a while.
It returns when it gets lonely.
Shares its nights beside you,
but not genuinely.
In the morning it leaves without saying goodbye.

Like love, the prose-
It comes back.
It isn't done,
until it tells you so itself.

Childhood **By Carolyn Becker**

Near the shade of my favorite tree,
green bucket held proudly
posing for mom's camera.
Light pink swimsuit,
I knew no evil.
Innocence has faded
like the once-green bucket.



Untitled **By Sam Gier**

John of Mine By R.J. Barna

Maggie's head rests in the damp palm of her hand as her cherry red nails pick at her lower lip. She half listens as a serial drones across the kitchen, abuzz with monotone fantasies of a brighter tomorrow, a better today, a different yesterday. Its pale orange dial illuminates the dripping icebox, a rack of chipped dishes which lie about how often they've been used, John's mother's oak table and the three chairs which remain around it. The fourth from the set, too soiled, hides behind the back door beside a pair of blue slippers. They sit upon a great black spot waiting in the shadows, just out of reach of the radio's tender glow.

Settling ice clinks in the lemonade sitting beside her. It's too awful to drink. Maggie curls her free hand around the icy beads speckling the glass and slides her slippery fingers across her brow, her cheeks, and between her collar bones. The gentle brush of fingers sparks a warm, rolling shiver in her breast, and in spite of her best efforts to resist the swampy Alabama July, she feels her temperature rising. She swallows hard, the bitter memory of failed lemonade still trapped in her throat. "Stop it."

Her foot keeps tapping. It hasn't stopped since John came back from the mine alone, and she could hardly expect different. Since Jack. Hell, since John. He burst into her life like the Squall of '21 when he walked all the way to her house through a foot of snow in his Levis and tee, hands and cheeks as chapped as his lips. What happened to her blue-eyed boy dusted with white? Where was that boy she knew in clouds of jagged breath escaping a wool blanket beside a cast-iron stove? Maggie chuckles to think of him then: shriveled, clammy, and pale as her fingers against the wet, chilled glass.

The familiar dull scrape of a key slowly finding its home brings her back to hers.

The door swings in, but there's nothing but a sliv-

ered moon and a pair of sickly blue stars. A shadow carries the stars inside and swallows up the waiting chair with a long sigh. Eventually, one pink foot slips out from the black, and then another. They find their way into John's slippers, leaving two heavy mounds in their place beside a rusted lunch pail. The slippers cross the room and stop in front of Maggie and a red gap appears atop the mass where a mouth ought to be, were it a person.

"Ok..." the shadow says.

"...Ok?"

"Ok."

Maggie slides their already filled washtub out from under the counter and pushes it into the center of the room while the flickering blue stars follow her every move. Her bare feet bound across the weathered wood floors, too careless now to worry for splinters, past Jack's room for a stained brush and towel from the hall closet. Her eyes linger on the abandoned room as she goes, its neatly tucked bed and packed hickory dresser, a baseball bat, and neat stack of Action comics. Maggie feels him watching. Again her temperature rises. She closes the door behind her gently and returns to the kitchen where she takes the now empty glass from the shadow, revealing a pink palm beneath it.

"This lemonade is good."

Maggie smirks.

"You're right," slips suddenly from white teeth; "it tastes like shit."

"I know. I made it."

Maggie finds a pair of blue eyes, but they turn too quickly away to recognize.

He squirms out of his shirt and she runs her fingers up and down his back, and soon her nails are clogged with coal dust. She helps him into the bath and sees some brief shimmer of a man before the water obscures all, immediately transformed to an opaque muck. The serials conclude and Ben Selvin plays on the radio.



Untitled
By Nidhi Chintalapani

Between Fear and Hope

By Maria Ragonese

In the mirror, where truth is held,

I was vulnerable. Absolutely see through.

I watched, through that beautiful glass,

To find a world completely backwards.

I saw not my own skin, but society's façade,

Its force combined with gravity

weighing on my shoulders: tears carving their path

trailing down my neck.

The blue bird called, that's the reason

my memory stuck. Its song—

danced in the air around me

like a ribbon. Its feathered casing

caught my saddened eye, flying

just to be free.



Set For Take Off

By Riley Eike

If only I were such a creature, that could leave

the ground behind, even for just a moment.

It was a beautiful song. The kind that you can sing to

without knowing the words. My favorite memory.

In that mirror that holds the truth,

I was okay.

That was the day, my tears would stop

—my heart found its wings to fly—

and light would finally flood

into the darkness. I was unaware that my choice

to let that little bird in—was to find

my way back home.

So I let it in. So I won.

I won the game with my heart

unchained.

3rd degree By Holly McCully

when you're here i am an elephant trying to squeeze through a keyhole.

there are hornets stinging kisses up and down my bare spine and

they're trying to pet a tiger trapped behind a thick glass.

when you're not i am groping around in the dark for a light-switch.

losing my favorite pen when i finally found the right words,

the panic of getting separated from my mom in a grocery store.

why can't i fit your square peg heart in the round hole in my chest?

Nasty Woman



By Liam McGurl

Fahrenheit By Matthew Petit

She is an ember
burning through my chest
when she cries about
sweet nothings a man
whispered in her ear.

My hand traces gentle
curves and
dips in her back,
swelling like a wave.

I rake my fingers through
her knotted hair and
she buries her head
in the space between my
neck and shoulder.

Naked flesh shivers
against mine.

Her breath is fire.
I watch her revel
in my discomfort.

Flame.

Hurricane: Connie

By Joseph Vazquez

20 feet long.
White and blue.
With about 15 seats,
and a 250
horsepower motor.
Never seemed to work right,
But we loved going on it.
Grandpa would drive,
and taught me how before I was legal.
Loved teaching me new things,
and no matter what he would say,
I would listen closely.
That boat, his escape,
and the water, his paradise.
He would drive further and further
from the house.
Through the lagoons
into the Mystic bay,
but never into the Atlantic.
The water was green
from the mud below.
We could smell the salt
and wet and dirt,
as the wind rushed by our faces.
We would go for rides
to get away, to have conversations
with one another about the water,
the boat, family, or life.
It was always a good time,
being with each other.
He drove that boat
like he went through life.
Nothing on his face but a smile.
Like the boat, his heart
hadn't worked right.
Now I take those rides alone.
Same boat,
with new parts.
But,
nothing can replace
You.

Upon Entering the Woods

By Ellen Kibbe



East Ave

By Molly Oas

The sun is peering through the curtains. It lands on the carpet in strands where the dogs are sleepily basking in the early morning. The smell of my father's coffee brewing fills my nose followed by *beep beep beep* ringing in my ears when its ready. The view from my kitchen window looks out to the backyard, my dad's garden growing wildly. I watch him carry in one too many zucchinis, as I pour the coffee into my California Starbucks mug.

My mother's perfume creeps into the living room as she emerges from the bathroom, ready to conquer her day. My dog eagerly greets me with slobbery licks out of our slumbers to let me know she needs to go outside for her morning duties. I stare at the greasy mess my father left on the stove from his home fries and over easy eggs even knowing I'll be the one to clean it up.

The TV quietly plays ESPN highlights. My three dogs are all trying to cuddle up in one bed where they'll stay until late afternoon when its time to play. I close my eyes. My quiet street, East Avenue, is lazily existing outside of the living room windows when I open them.

Quotidian

By Jacob Przesiek

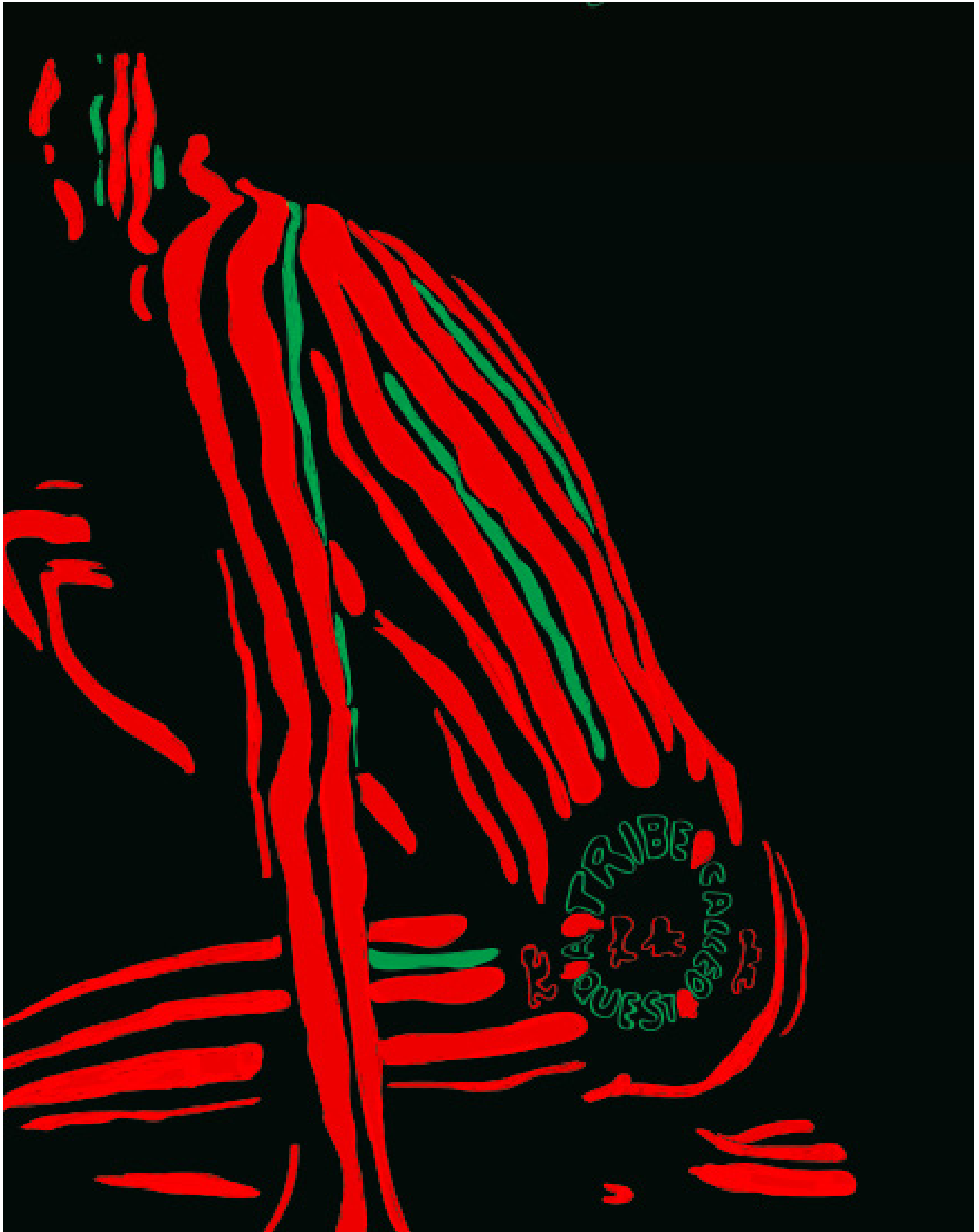
Quotidian: occurring every day.
Its heterological, because it isn't used every day.
At least, I've never seen it before
but that makes it interesting.
Unusual but beautiful,
raising eyebrows
like the walls of Jericho
but in reverse.

so why are people trying to keep me grounded
in a reality of formality and normality;
the causes of personality's mortality.
It kills me inside
to see the exceptional go correctional
and conform to the trivial,
the novel; a story
that no one read
because each page was the same
cover to cover,
and all it covers is a boring life.

But still it sits at the top
of the New York Times best sellers list
because somehow it appeals to the masses in masses,
upper and lower classes alike,
but I am the one percent,
the one person sent,
to the valley of the uncanny
in exile. An outcast,

because I contrast
the twisted majority,
and I cherish the title.
I am the pinnacle of the atypical,
the mutation the nation vaccinated against
because there's too much to critique
about being unique.

I won't be controlled
by these peasants,
commoners who are just that.
I refuse to relegate dominion,
delegate myself to a committee
or be subjugated by peer review,
"This isn't you." If only they knew.
I don't need to prove myself
to anyone but myself
because I believe in myself,
and I won't turn over my confidence
under confidence that the state
of denial, will help me.
Weird: autological.
It is weird.
And it's also egological,
because I'm weird.
What are you supposed to be?



Tribe

By Marissa McCall

Patchwork Heart **By Joseph Giglio**

My heart's a clusterfuck.
Years of bad decisions,
reflected in a patchwork
of open wounds and unhealed scabs-
burning beacons on its flesh.
Blood oozing from every open orifice.
Shaking and wheezing,
hurling pulsating chunks of itself in every direction.
An animal in its last violent death throws
fighting an unseen enemy.
It won't win.
No one could want that.
I know that.
I sow the pieces back together.
Make the wounds clot.
Muster false hope.
And even as the stitches tear against my heart's throbbing beat
Old wounds reopen
Blood drips down
I still stand here
And hope you'll say yes.

Also, You, change **By David Bryant**

that dream I had
filled with worries and fears,
Of things to come,
change,
when I
Do.
And,
one day it will be.
That of the mere dream
metamorphic
to be,
true
finds its way,
in the beautiful slumbers
of that cold
April
day.

Revez

By Emily Rosman

The snow piles
flake by flake it covers me
It shields my eyes from the
rotting ground
The stone ground unobstructed
lingers in the back of my mind
“Revez” it demands
So I lie on my back and dream
About falling in love
Inside out umbrellas
The club and the wind, same name
The clock morphing into a marker
Only 50 more steps.
The heavy wooden door that scrapes the ground
The click of the lock
The way I wished time would go faster
The way I ran home and didn't slow down
The way I sobbed
My mascara blending into the soot-covered walk
Weaving in and out of people, stands, streets
Always too slow. Now I'm going too fast
Around and around like the carousel
Next to the lilies and daisies and clown
Eating my breakfast too quickly
Chugging cappuccino and slurping on the foam
Bread crumbs and chocolate sticking to my fingers
Three clicks. Three keys. Three floors. Three months.
The third time is the charm,
But I don't feel that lucky anymore.

Boots

By Jordyn C. Riethmiller

They wonder what it might be like-
to walk a mile in your shoes.

They couldn't though.
They wouldn't make it 40 feet.

Your size is specific.
Only you.

They couldn't walk
in your shoes.

They couldn't fill them.
No one could.

LaCrosse boots.

Our feet have always fit
most comfortably,
in your shoes.

Room to grow,
sliding space,
filling half of your boot.

Sometimes we walk
with you-
in your shoes.

You've given us so much,
room to grow.
LaCrosse boots.

I am a mcnugget By Maggie Kovacs

i woke up
today
& i realized
i am
a chicken nugget

immobile
overly-processed
unfeeling
pink
fried
toxic
& dry

nobody wants to
be with a
mcnugget

i dont even know
what i am
made of

i was never
a real chicken

Polaroid By Molly Oas

I lost a polaroid
I kept in my wallet,
taken ages ago.
Our smiles and embraces
captured under a strand of
sunlight.
That image is gone.
The edges shriveled and torn.
The color faded and blotchy.
Much like me.
A memory no one remembers.
A time no one lives in.
Anymore, anyway.
A place that
has been irrevocably changed,
alive only in that polaroid.
With friends who
no longer exist,
alive only in that polaroid.



Untitled By Maria Ragonese

Across Generations

By Ellen Kibbe



Hands, wrinkled and coarse
 burlap
Shoulders sag humbly, still holding
tin pails brimming with milk and a century of labor
An unconnected twine of memories
 a red, *Farmall* combine
 blades turning in synchrony
One foot slides into a threadbare, brown slipper
Eyes, looking down, yet seeing backwards
A baby coos softly, body quiescent against a frail frame
Lips curve upwards
 across generations

The Game They Play In Heaven

By Joseph Vazquez

With every breath I take
a new cloud forms.
The banging in my chest gets louder
with every passing minute.

Gladiators at the Colosseum,
we gallantly walk onto the field.
Hoping for the best –
Expecting the worst.

We get into formation.
15 teammates
scattered around
like stars in the sky,
all in their specific constellation,
waiting to strike.

Short shorts – high socks – tight jerseys.
Limbs taped together
so they aren't lost
in the battle.

15 as 1 –
with an order
to accomplish –
survive and conquer.

We prepared so long for this fight.
This is no sport -
it's our meaning in life.

He Who Follows

By Timothy Walter

He who follows, follows close
He who follows, knows the most
about yourself, about your family
He who follows, follows many

He who follows, followed me
He who follows, I didn't see
what he had planned, why he came near
He who follows, lied to my ear

He who follows, followed long
He who follows, appeared strong
but I could run, I could speak
He who follows, lost his streak

He who follows, lost his trail
He who follows, had to fail
because I follow, one with light
He who follows, follows night

He who follows, took ten steps back
He who follows, found other tracks
and now I lead others too
So he who follows, can't follow through

The Cage of the Monster By Maria Ragonese

Looking straight, I see it. *It* sees me.

I don't like what I see. *It* could say the same.

My fists are clenched tight, knuckles white. *Its* eyes are dead, lifeless windows to a dark soul.

My breath is caught in my chest. Wet bulbs fall silently down *its* perfect face.

My cheeks are wet too. *It* is a monster, the kind you can't run from.

We are not the same, we can't be. *It* feeds off fear.

I am afraid. *Its* claws are reaching for me, its grasp inescapable.

I can only stare so long, before *its* thoughts,

Become my own. *Its* words cut deeper than knives.

Words are the worst kind of weapon. *It* makes you believe it.

I have to give in. *It* makes you care.

Fighting is too hard *It* makes you give up

I must unchain my gaze from those dark eyes. *It* reaches out turning my chin to face it once again.

I should have fought. *It's* still there.

I see it. *It* sees me.

It's a monster.

I am no monster.

At least I thought so.

The lines have blurred.

We look more alike these days.

I didn't want this. I should have fought.

I reach out,

Maybe this is a nightmare.

Something stops me, *It's* cold and reflecting,

It's the cage of the monster.

I leave the porcelain bathroom sink.

I vow not to go back, I know that vow is empty.

I turn and our eyes meet once more.

I *am* the monster.

It has been me for a while now.

To escape yourself is an impossible feat.

I should have fought.



Flowers in a Vase
By Zoe Dodd

Love Minus Adversity
By Caitlyn Morral

Is there a hidden agenda as to what is to be considered modest and what is to be despised?

When my own two eyes adjust to view the inhabited world surrounding me,

I see first and foremost a multitude of people who were born in a state of innocence

But are no longer allowed by some lesser power to live freely

As they were meant to do at conception.

If there is such a thing as freewill,

Then why is there any thought of reason to oppress those

Who choose to express and utilize their natural volition?

Shame should be split and pointed backwards at the accusers,

Because love is blind and sees no outliers to the equation

Other than the soul and the spirit.

Just breathe. **By Jesse Blake**

I see it there,
Just out of reach—
A memory,
A song,
A dream.
It exists only in that place -
Somewhere between closed eyes and cups of coffee.

Just breathe.
I remember only a feeling
That dies away in the light of morning.
Is it possible to miss something
When you only knew it for a moment -
A fleeting, wonderful, heartbreaking moment
That has already passed
And eludes you just as you try to hold it close?

Just breathe.
I allow it to slip away,
To be free as it should be,
Hoping that it will soon
return to me
And angry at the day
That had the audacity to steal that
Memory,
Song,
Dream.

Just breathe,
And begin.

On The Mourning Of... **By Jacob Przesiek**

To sit an' stare, our immolating gaze:

spears staked in a white plane where graze

no sum or root of sheep by day. A craze

their echoes, dancing shadows, waltzed in
phase

with hands scribbling beneath the black noon
sun when raised

above the desk yester-night. Gone away was
the haze

the sleep that fled us left, and right then razed

were spirits, for in the dark, we thought we
filled, had stayed

one ember from what fire in our hearts once
blazed.



Untitled by Sam Gier

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