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Kayla Belser

June

I pray in front of plants named after my ancestors.
I hear my grandmothers voice
before I dare leave the house without a winter coat,
change a baby's diaper without fresh powder, or
mend and mold yeast rolls without patience.
In the mirror I am memories;
My mother cries at my reflection.

Allison Wendling
Staying with You is Self-Mockery

I don't know why I think of you so compassionately /
your grip around my neck made me feel like fruit too ripe to pick /
your trembling fist could not unroot me from the spot where I was /
bracing against the doorframe /
but the stem cracked, a brow bone was bruised /
and like a peach when it is dropped, I am sweeter where the impact shows /
softer where you've made your mark /
I mourn when my finger straightens out again /
panic when evidence of your grip fade /
and oh - you stand waiting for coffee with me /
and you know what it means when the skin on my face crumples /
the edges between you and I are dulled /
and no one picks the lint off my sweater like you do.

Mercede Maschinot
Broken Silence

We shared seat confinement.
I averted my eyes and muted our confrontation,
beside the emergency exit window.

Then, you staggered into the aisle.
You were red in the face, hands trembling,
breathing heavily without air.

You stumbled off at your stop,
the back of your head in retreat
to a cul-de-sac of finality.

The bad taste in my mouth said
"I deserve this," because to me
the blood pounding in your ears is

deafening.

Breanna Tanksley

A Trip to the End of the World

"Shhhhh." Sara tried to hush her ringing alarm clock, to no avail. She rolled over to silence the tone and squinted from the dorm room light that had been left on. She slid out of bed, still jean-clad from the day, and onto her feet. As she made her way to the sink, she stumbled over her suitcase and sighed.

The clock on the wall said that it was a quarter till three in the morning. Sara splashed cold water in her face. It made her ebony skin glisten and reminded her of how her mother would burnish her forehead and cheeks with oil before sending her off to school as a child. The glossy coating, her mother would explain on winter mornings, was to protect from the bitter cold and wind. *It might be cold when I get there*, Sara thought. She made her way to the closet, limbs heavy, and took out her yellow jacket. She started buttoning—*but, what if it's too hot?*—and then unbuttoning. Sara stood beside her suitcase, yellow jacket glowing against her complexion and misbuttoned all the way down. *This is what you wanted*, she reminded herself, *this is what you wanted.*

This was what Sarah wanted, at least at one point. Nearly a year ago, Sara had purchased her ticket to the annual viewing of the End of the World. She had spent a whole other year prior to that just saving for the ticket. When she was nineteen, a few of Sara's friends, coworkers from her school's campus bookstore had come up with the spring break plan. It seemed exciting then, when the End of the World had just opened, and it was more than the tourist attraction that it had seemed to become. Back then, the world seemed to buzz with excitement over it. The rich were the first to view it. The poor had no hope of ever visiting, and middle-class families began to make vacation plans. No cameras or recordings were allowed, which made the place all the more alluring. That old concept of the astonishing and peculiar End of the World no longer existed in Sara's mind, though, and those bookstore friends were a distant memory now.

Sara stooped to retie her shoelaces, tighter this time. Her heart skipped a beat at the sound of her kneecaps popping, and she released a breath. There was a buzzing vibration in her side pocket, signaling her to gather her things and leave. Sara looked over the room again before turning out the light. It was tidy.

#

"Thank you again for the ride to the airport," Sarah said.

"No problem," Izzy said behind the wheel. She worked at Sara's new job, a small cafe in their college town. She took a long sip of coffee. "Wish I could come with you. I'm excited for ya. This is gonna be like a big existential thing, I think." Sara shrugged, but the light in the car was too dim to see. Izzy

tapped Sara on the arm for a response.

"Wake up, sleepyhead. This is going to be one of the most exciting things you'll do in your life. Maybe you'll find yourself!" Sara straightened up in the seat, determined to look alert, just to prove that she was listening.

"Maybe," she muttered bitterly in the dark. Immediately she hoped that Izzy had not heard. "I hope so!" Sara tried again in a brighter tone.

Sara had slept through the entirety of the eleven-hour flight thanks to the melatonin supplements that she had taken. On the train ride, though, she remained alert. She watched the greens and blues and yellows of the lush, midday countryside passing behind her, and tried to let it ease her mind. She was not sure why she was full of dread when the plan was to wake up refreshed and calm. *This is what you wanted,* she continued to remind herself. She unbuttoned her yellow jacket. The air on the train was thick and hot.

Sara looked down at her watch. She was already two minutes behind schedule and counting. She did not know why the train ride was taking so long. Her own, and the terminal's calculations, said that she ought to be in a cab by now on her way to board a ferry that would take her to the End of the World. This frustrated her. Sara's eyes moved from the second hand of her watch to her fingertips. The nails were bitten down and unsightly. She turned back to the window, repulsed.

As she gazed out of the window, Sara thought of the time leading up to her trip. It felt like much more than a couple years ago now that the president had come on the television screen and announced that the planet Earth was, indeed, flat and it did have an end. She remembered the outrage over how that truth had been suppressed; the riots in the inner city, and the marches around the capital. She remembered how quickly it had subsided once people began to understand why this obvious fact had been hidden from them. It had been for their own good. The older generation had felt foolish, and many of the generation before that, continued to believe that the Earth was round. It was true that the masses had been deceived. After all was said and done, though, no harm, no foul.

#

Though Sara feared that she would never arrive at her destination, she did. As she boarded the boat, she noticed the jagged island in the distance. It was a dark, silhouetted object jutting out from the water. Peculiar in form and even more peculiar in function, as the ferry neared the shore, the passengers noticed that the island was smoking. "Look at that," Sara mouthed to herself. At any volume, her words would not have been heard over the chatter of the vessel. *A volcano,* she thought, and she felt her heart jump in speed. It thumped. As they neared the shore, however, Sara noticed that the smoking object was no natural formation at all. Rather, it was a gargantuan metal elevator carved into the side of a mountain. Its function was to transport the passengers to where the viewing would be held. As the boat came closer, Sara

watched as the machine screeched and opened its gaping mouth. It wretched and out poured the last of the previous tour group.

The End of the World was an island shrouded in fog, cut through with bright and colorful lights. Some of them blinked, some of them strobed, and others danced. *It'll be like the county fair.* Sara tried to deceive herself for comfort. She had not expected the End of the World to feel so unfriendly. As the ferry approached the island, Sara began to feel ill. *I don't know what's wrong with me. I can't breathe.* She wanted to attribute her discomfort to her position on the crowded boat. *That's why I'm sweating. Everyone is. I just need some water. I can't breathe. I just need some air.*

The ferry arrived with the tour group onto the rocky Earth. The ride had been crowded, and all of the passengers were touching shoulders, if not more. Upon arrival, the shore flooded with anxious bodies of all shapes and sizes, tripping over one another and tripping over the rocks. Sara heard a child shrieking in the distance. She looked around for the source of the sound. Wherever it was coming from, the body was far too fast and much too small to be found in the rushing flood. *We're like a school of fish caught in a current*, Sara thought. *Only*, she thought again, *we're the current too,* and in the chaos she could feel each grain of sand that was collecting in her shoes.

I need to find some water, Sara thought to herself. There were little shops scattered around the island, painted with bright pastels and bearing neon signs on their faces. Surely, there were vendors selling bottled water behind the blinking lights, but what Sara really sought was a quiet place. She tried to weave through the crowd and lasted for a couple seconds before the bumping began. To the birds above, she must have looked like a yellow fish bobbing against the current. Upstream, she swam against bodies, beaten against them like rocks and shards. Sara kept her head down with her hands over her ears and fought. She fought for a long time until finally, she no longer felt the force against her body. When she lifted her head, there was no one around. Her footprints seemed to go on forever in the sand behind her. She looked out to the sea in front of her. It seemed to go on forever. The tides let themselves be pulled to and fro, and with control relinquished to the moon, they did not seem to fret over this pulling. The water was dark and contrasted with the hazy gray sky above. *All of the exhaust from the elevator*, Sara thought. The monstrous machine was nowhere in sight. It must have been tucked away behind a mountain with the rest of the world.

Here, the sand was white and sparkling. Sara rested her clammy hands on her knees. *This must be the last untouched piece of the Earth around.* Then, she noticed herself. She rolled up her sleeves to reveal arms covered in purple bruises from pushing against the crowd. Her abdomen was the same. Sore laughter bubbled over in her aching body: In her yellow jacket, Sara looked like a bruised banana. She laughed until she vomited onto the flat sand. Relief. And then shame. She covered the spot with her bright jacket. It glowed

against the cool landscape. With her knees no longer wobbling, Sara straightened up and walked back in the direction of her footprints.

By the time that Sara made it back, the elevator was closed, and the tour group was being herded off of the gray island and back onto the ferry. Sara did not check her watch to see if they were on schedule, or how many minutes of downtime she would have before she had to check into the hotel.

Julia Manning
Sandman

Sleepless nights describe my china dolls.
No matter how many times I brush their hair,
those small eyes
could not close, but stare.

Because their eyes are filled--
a gunk of mucus and moisture.
They would not sit still
or have proper posture.

Suck up
a child's tears from a dream.
Sweet rosy cheeks
and violet puffy lips.

To be a charming antique
only to resemble a hopeful dream.

Bianca Calipo
History of Hands

The Mute reveals his mind through twins,
conjoined to him like the currents,
palms sway as the ocean's voice,
fingers compose with words,
silent and
deep

"Pay attention,"
The Mute speaks

and points
don't give yourself,
inland is dangerous

Finless people, they need him they need him,
they really, really need him
dependence is an invisible net,
slowly suffocating his
mind grows colder in the
depths fingers digging
through freckled flippers
sore spine
writhing
skin

They steal from him

Does he really have
A voice?
Knowledge to provide is
fished without mercy

What matters is what they
think, feel, say
the worlds above can't hear
below the water's skin
to evolve
they need it

Enter a room with no door
gut the walls, scale off the roof
like a fish, those eyes are alien
there's no soul

On land they think
legs rise
above
all

Continuing to take and take and take
fearing any plunge into the deep
don't worry, just sew on
replacements
another time

leave less and

less of

him

every

day

The star can't hear, it lives upstairs
with an infinity of siblings far away
providing life,
and taking it,

Threats of
evaporation.

With the history of his hands,
Feeling afraid, the Mute fled

far

far

away
His twin hands wondered if
their past, present, or future
even mean anything

Mary Catherine Thomas
Flight Risk

Sometimes

I just want to
run away

but then
I remember
I already
ran away

and this is where I landed

Onyinye Miriam Uwolloh

Ezinulo Fureduri

Introduction

Little is known about Frederick Douglass's lineage beyond the names of his maternal Grandparents. Douglass published his second biography titled My Bondage and My Freedom; in the Yale University Edition, a footnote on page 43 gives further information. It reveals that "Harriet Bailey [was] the second of twelve children born to Betsy and Isaac Bailey, in whose cabin Frederick was born…[He] was one of six children born to Harriet…Isaac Bailey was a free black man…[and] Douglass was part of the fifth generation of the Bailey family to be born in America." This then begged the question—What about the generations of Douglass' ancestors that were born outside America, most likely in Africa?

This short story creates a fictional framework for Douglass' ancestral tree by imagining that his foremother was from the fictional Muojeke lineage of South East Nigeria. The setting is the fictional village of Adazi, and through the ability of the village shaman to see across oceans, the Muojeke clan has kept themselves updated on the lives of their descendants. As the British had yet to establish any colonies in the Nigeria of the mid-eighteenth century, they would have had no knowledge of the English language. Therefore, this inspired the Igbo-pronounced versions of the known characters' names. This is a story told from the perspective of the shaman.

(Glossary on Page 20)

#

I hear multiple footsteps approaching the shrine. As the cockerel has yet to crow his greetings this *Afo* morning, I know that it is the Muojeke *Ezinulo* approaching. I rise from my crouch by the doorway and peer down *Amadiaoha*'s hill. Through the early morning mist, I see that leading the way is Obidike Muojeke, and with him are his three wives Ijeoma, Chinyere and Ngozi. As the ceremony that is about to be performed is not one for *nwatakiri*, at first, I am surprised to see young Chibuzo at the back of the party. I surmise that her first blood must have occurred since the last sacrifice and note that this time she is the one leading the pure white ram on its rope. Her mother, Chinyere, is bearing the alligator pepper and cowries, while Ijeoma holds the required 5 man-heights of white cloth. Ngozi, the youngest wife, balances a clay pot of palm oil on her head as per my instructions. Finally, Obidike reaches the top of the hill and as usual, in his hands is a basket of kolanuts that have never touched the ground.

"*Otutu oma, onu Amadiaoha*," the whole family choruses

As per the ritual, I respond by placing my hands on each of their heads before speaking.

"*Ezinulo* Muojeke, declare to *Amadioha* why you have sought his

presence today!"

"We have come to seek that which was lost," is the reply.

I gesture for the family to kneel and return into the shrine to retrieve *The Eye of Amadioha*.

The Muojeke *Ezinulo* comes to this hill every ten years to perform the scrying ritual. Everyone in the village of Adazi knows this as it pertains to their royal family. As the current dibia, it is my duty to carry on the ceremony as my forefathers did. I pick up *The Eye of Amadioha* and its white ribbon is stark against the day's mist; the calabash that sits at the foot of *Amadioha*'s statue has already been prepped for today by my boy, Buchi. It holds water from the stream thrice run over Amadioha himself.

The *Ezinulo* members kneel as I emerge from the hut and Obidike alone remains standing as befits his status as *Igwe*. I gesture for him to invoke the history of this gathering and he begins:

A pale people in search of land set out to conquer all
To make themselves feel bigger, they tried to make others small:
"They lack knowledge, and so we should use them for menial tasks"
Not knowing that the villagers had thus begun to ask:
"Who are these pales, and what is their intent for our land?
Adazi will never fall into their hands"
But sadly, in *Adazi*, with its boundary of stone
There existed a traitor which to the villagers was unknown
For by the river, on an *Eke* market day
Anuri, our daughter, was stolen away
Little Ogechi watched from the reeds
And ran to inform their mother in speed
The invaders heard the noise and were forced to flee
And abandoned the plan to steal not one but three
With their weapons of clubs, spears, and machetes
So, did the brave men chase after *ndi Onye oshi*
In defeat they returned, for to their great sorrow
A big canoe had sailed with Anuri down the river *Iro*
The town crier ran 'round announcing the search had failed
The men beat their breasts and the women wailed
Many moons and rains have passed since then
But the Muojeke never forget their kin
Our daughters keep passing on their people's will
In spite of the *Oyinbo* causing their blood to spill

With this final line Obidike reaches into his basket, selects a kolanut and hands it to me.

"He who brings kolanut brings life!" I exclaim as I invoke the age-old blessing over the favored nut.

"Eeeeee," responds the *Ezinulo*, as is proper.

I break the kolanut and it reveals 7 lobes—a rare number indeed, as it represents good fortune. There have been six generations lost since Anuri, and the stories have been passed down from my father and his father and so on. Even now in the Muojeke burial plot, these lost kin were added to the list of ancestors as their deaths had been revealed to us *dibia*. Anuri had given her children the names of Chibike, Nnenna and Emeka; Nnenna could only name one child as all the others were taken from her as soon as they were born. She called him Ifeanyi, and the *Ezinulo* had shed tears at this revelation.

By this time Nnenna had born six children under the duress of four different masters, and had forgotten the Igbo tongue. This left the *Ezinulo* at the time with no way to understand what the *Oyinbo* were saying. Furthermore, all of her children bore names that were difficult to pronounce except for Ifeanyi, who was her seventh child. It had shocked the *Ezinulo* when Ifeanyi had a child with an *onye ocha* and this son marked hope for the clan as he was the first of their lost kin to be *furi*. They eventually learned that his name in the *onye ocha's* land was *Azik Beeli*, however the *Ezinulo* fondly referred to him as Nnamabia in commemoration of his being his father's carbon copy.

Nnamabia was the first to also have some sort of marriage ceremony, although the Ezinulo females wagged their tongues at the lack of tradition involved. Nevertheless, they were delighted with *Bechi Beeli's* love for him and their children. Their daughter was called *Harieh* and once again they mourned at the *onye ocha* forcing themselves on her. Ezekwem, Obidike's father and the current head of the clan at the time, had wished to stop communing with *Amadioha* at that point. However, my father Chikeluba, gave them good news when *Harieh's* sixth child, *Fureduri*, was born. He spoke of his arrival being a good omen for the Muojeke clan and how he would break their chains of sorrow. After that day, my father began training me to take over as *dibia* when he died.

Enough seasons passed that Obidike took his first wife and second wife. Then in the *Harmattan* prior to my father's death, the *Ezinulo* came to scry and saw how bruised *Fureduri* had become under his owners' tyranny. By this time Obidike had become the head of the household and had been coming for the ritual since Ezekwem was too old to climb the hill. He had pleaded with my father to allow them to intervene on *Fureduri's* behalf. They were lucky Fureduri had encountered a fellow Igbo man in America who gave him an *akpu* root, albeit a less potent one. Nevertheless, by promising to bring back a white chicken, my father Chikeluba allowed *Fureduri* to receive

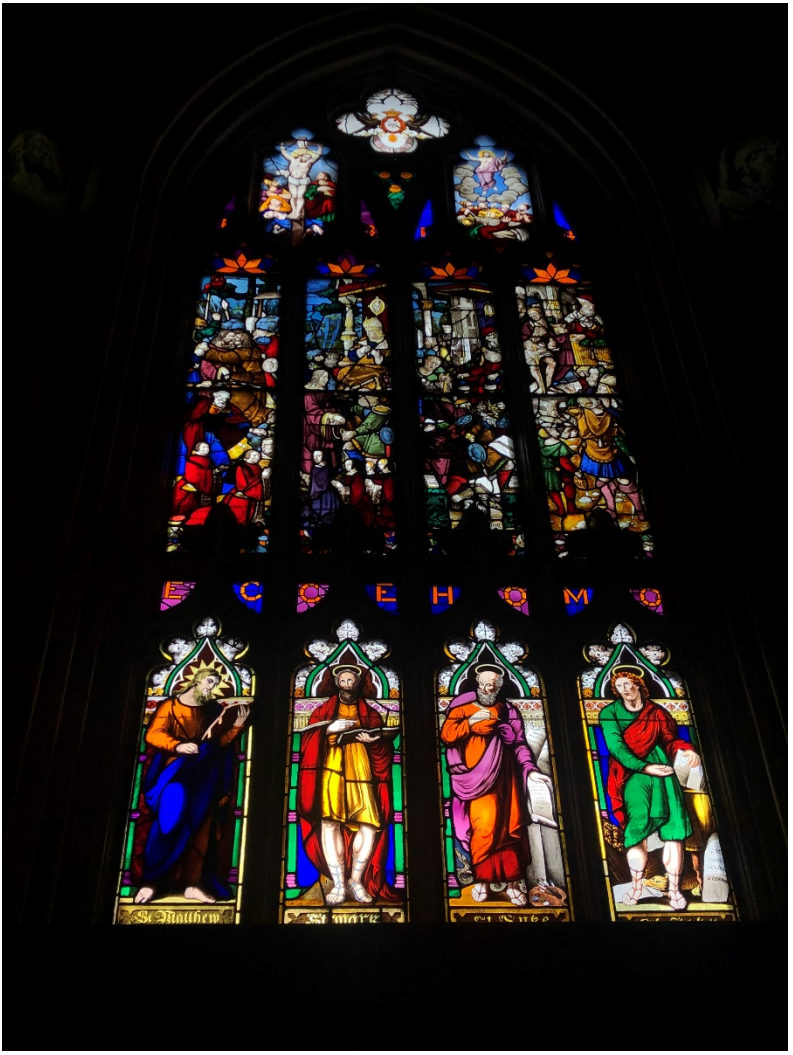
Amadioha's blessing in his fight. After all, it would not do for a Muojeke son to lose at wrestling. It has been ten harmattans since then, and once more the Ezinulo are back. As my preparation of the kolanuts ends, I turn my musings back to the ceremony at hand.

I am startled back into concentrating on the *Ẹzinulo* by Chibuzo's hand impatiently reaching for a kolanut lobe. Her mother turns and appropriately cautions her with her eyes as I begin handing a lobe to each member of the *Ẹzinulo* sans Chibuzo. Since a seven-lobed kolanut has never been broken in the history of their coming to *Amadioha*, I can see the hope that dawns on the *Ẹzinulo* despite the bitterness of the kolanut causing them to grimace. Amidst sounds of crunching, my son, Buchi, makes multiple trips in order to move all the offerings into the shrine. By the time he is finished, the five offered lobes are all eaten, and the remaining two are placed at Amadioha's base. Silence reigns as the mist begins to clear amidst the first rays of dawn.

Buchi hands me the calabash and as silently as he came, retreats into the shrine. At this point the *Ẹzinulo* are still waiting with bated breath. I begin to chant, occasionally dipping the ribbon of *The Eye* into the calabash. The crescendo of my adulations draws near, and I see images begin to form in the still waters. As is the custom, Obidike leans forward since only males are allowed to peer at mysteries revealed by *Amadioha*. He gasps, since for the first time *Fureduri* is seen by the sea without the presence of an owner hanging over him. Many men are around him and canoes of different sizes frame the image. Stunned, Obidike meets my eyes and I nod in affirmation of the thought written on his face. The Muojeke patriarch turns to his household and declares "*Fureduri* is furi."

Glossary (in order of appearance)

Afo - The third of the four Igbo market days
Muojeke - The family's last name
Amadioha - The Igbo god of thunder and lightning; the most popular deity
Nwatakiri - A young child
Otutu oma - Good morning
Onu Amadioha - Voice of Amadioha
Ezinulo - Family
Dibia - Native doctor/Shaman
Igwe - King
Eke - The first of the four Igbo market days
Ndi onye oshi - Thieves
Oyinbo - Foreigners
Onye ocha - White people
Azik Beeli - Isaac Bailey; FD's grandfather
Nnamabia - Igbo name which means "my father has come"
Bechi Beeli - Betsy Bailey; FD's grandmother
Harieh Beeli - Harriet Bailey; FD's mother
Fureduri - The one and only Frederick Douglass
Harmattan - The dry season

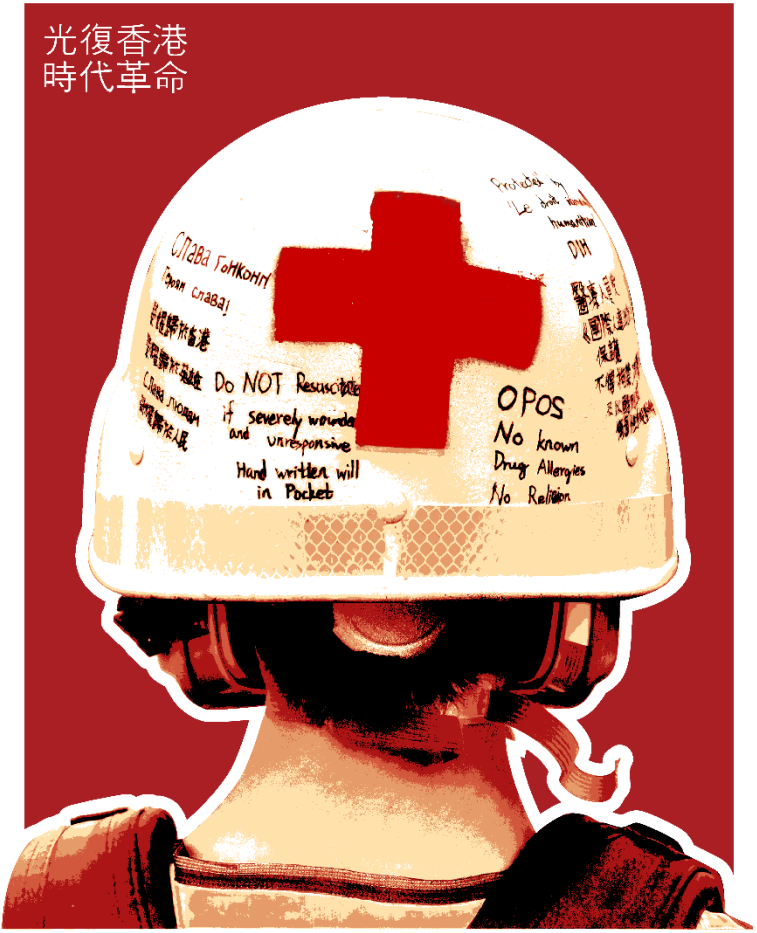


Sara Sutthoff: *Dublin Castle Stained Glass*
Photography

Brittany Haney: ***Bird Perch***
Photography

Caitlin Kemme: ***A New Beginning***
Photography

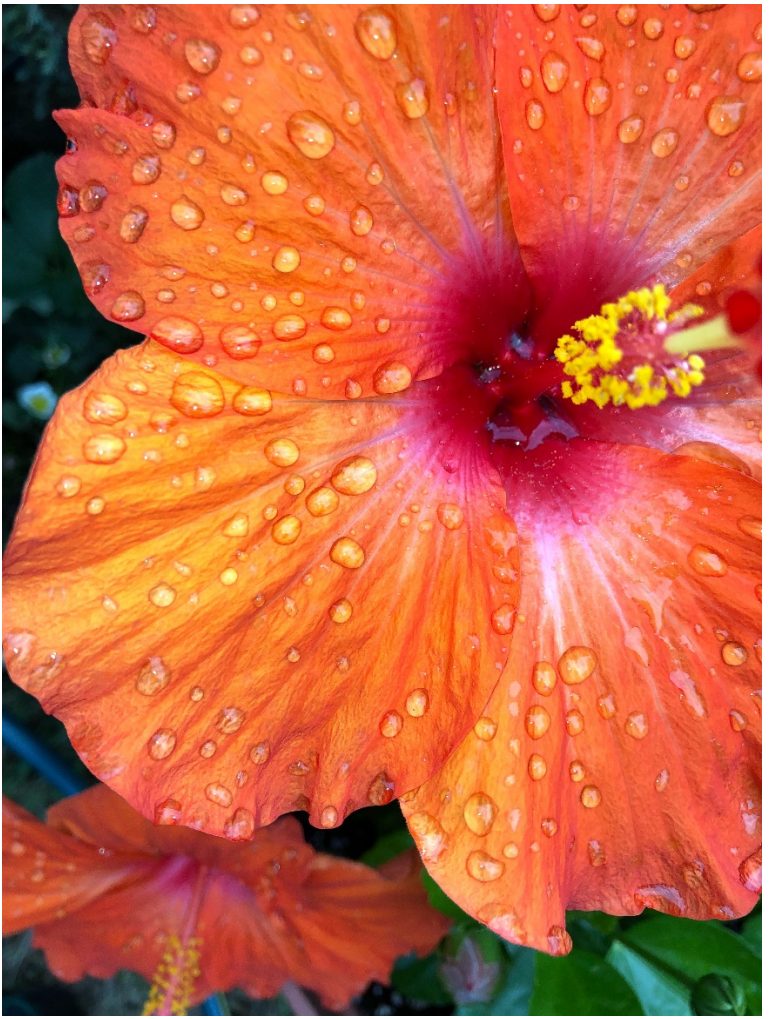
Thanh-Mai Tran: ***Self Portrait***
Digital Photoshop



Thanh-Mai Tran: ***Hong Kong***
Digital Photoshop

Cora Angel: ***OTR Sneakers***
Photography

Adil Akhtar: *Child Digging Through Trash*
Photography



Gabriella Delaney: ***Hibiscus Shower***
Photography

Jason Houston: ***A Peak into Norse Nation***
Photography

Maria DeWald: ***Fate***
Photography

Maria DeWald: ***Phases***
Photography

Bianca Calipo: ***Selkie Split by Past and Future***
Charcoal on drawing paper. 55” x 90”

Mikaylah Porter
on the inside

there is a decomposing composition.
a kaleidoscope of contorted waves surrounds me,
where cotton candy melts into oil,
and the jewel of my birth
becomes a clouded memory

twisted...

jubilant crimson blush,
and how the sunrise breathes me in,
makes my smile aureate.
with the verdurous cloth on my stomach,
and the azure ribbon tied around my wrist.
oh, how it matches my crown!

a crown of poisoned thorns,
slashing my veins, blackening my skin,
battered, bruised, and bleeding,
with glistening toxicity,
I become ashen rot.
it flows from the wound in my chest

while I decay.
it's terrifying to leap into the dark,
but art must still be made.

Cameron Wells
Spinning Wheel

A potter sits down to shape
The slipshod clump of gray earth mud.
Spinning wheel
Adding water to increase plasticity
Applying pressure to the clump
The water weakens and loosens
The pressure shapes the form.
Spinning wheel
The form sometimes takes its own shape
So it must be crumpled and remade.
Spinning wheel
The reforming process allows for impurities
To be removed and discarded
The potter knows what stays,
And what goes.
Spinning wheel
Transfiguring the insignificant lump
Into a fine crafted vessel
That the potter will use
Day after day.

Kayla Belser
Playground

We hid away in the yellow tube.

Through foggy circle windows
we watched the wicked sisters dance.
Leaves tumbled down, we knew they would not find us.
A brief pause from their torment.
No pulling of my wool ponytails,
or mocking Marilyn for wearing the same shoes each day.
I wondered when our thirty minutes of hiding would be over when
Marilyn pressed her lips against mine.
She turned away, before I could ask why.

We stepped out of the yellow tube
Clouds covered the concrete in shadows.
We stood neatly in our lines but,
even then, I knew I would be hiding for much
longer.

Camden Mecklem
The Nature of Things

We The marina glowed silver before the sun came up. The light from the starry sky drained the color from the tire-trampled dirt on the access road. You could have looked down and thought you were on the moon, boot tracks and all. That was how it looked in the old days, Henry remembered, when he would ride down in his dad's Cadillac with his friend Theo in the back and the aluminum boat clattering behind. As the car would turn onto that dirt road it would bump so viciously that Henry and Theo would cup their hands over their mouths and pretend they were astronauts. *Commander Theo, now in orbit—over*, his friend would say, and he'd respond: *Vision's clear here from the buggy. Henry out.* Of course they would always pace their show for the moment the car stopped, and Henry would step out first, announcing as his shoe hit the dirt that he'd taken One Small Step for Man.

There used to be a small concession shop here, but now only the metal frame remained. Henry would have forgotten the shop, but a sudden craving reminded him of how those childhood trips always started with ice cream cones. The novelty of the ice cream so early in the morning had never worn off on them. He and Theo would stand by the boat, still on its trailer, as they savored each lick and Henry's dad paced around anxiously. *By the time you're done the sun'll be up and there won't be fish to catch*, he would say, but then he would pass the time chatting with one of the other middle-aged men nearby, the fly fishers and bass fishers and sightseers.

But today, all these years later, the crowd was gone and Henry stood alone. He didn't care so much about the time. Summer kept the sunrise early and the temperature comfortable. He drove the truck toward the ramp and carefully aligned the boat so he could get out and roll it into the water. There would be no need to move the truck out of the way, he figured. The boat slid into the murky brown lake with a *sploosh*. Henry tied it to the pier and strode back to his truck, keeping his mind set in the old days, imagining his father and Theo standing nearby. The tackle box had become discolored with age, a dull plastic beige like old computers. It didn't rattle like it used to. The sound it made was more like shifting sand.

As Henry hoisted the nearly empty tackle box into the boat, he heard a low hum from over the hills on the other side of the lake. He sighed and tried to tune out the machines. He thought they would have covered the lake

area by now, but they must have been behind schedule. A thin green cloud rose from the horizon. Routine work, whatever they were doing. The machines had appeared every day for the past few weeks. He kept his gaze on the boat engine. In moments it sputtered to life and carried him out into open water. He lowered himself to his knees and looked through the bottom of the boat for leaks but found nothing. The cloud dispersed into fog.

The marina drifted out of view. He doubted that he was far away, but the fog—whose verdant tint he tried to ignore—obscured anything farther than a few hundred yards. All he saw from this new distance were the ripples left by the boat, spreading farther apart until they disappeared. On either side of him were silhouettes of land; willows and cattails and bulrushes appeared as ghosts in the fog while dead trees rose up from the coastline with bare branches jutting out like dark bolts of lightning. He wondered if those trees had been alive when his father, Theo, and he came this way so many years ago—if the willows had memory, if they could recognize him as that curious child who would hold the sandwich basket and loudly ask when they'd get to the island. For a moment Henry felt guilty for such an unrealistic thought—one that went against the nature of things—but the events of the past year would once have been considered against the nature of things, too.

Voices shouted far away. The humming had stopped, and Henry thought the people working the machines might be packing up. He scanned the coastline, which was now becoming clearer as the fog dissipated, for signs of people. There used to be a heron here who Theo had named Billy, partly to assuage the fear invoked by the demonic bellow of such a tall, human-size bird. Theo could shout *Here's Billy!* and they could laugh about it. They'd recognize Billy by his crooked wing, injured for as long as the children could remember. Maybe a hunter was responsible for the injury, or someone taken by surprise who thought the Mothman stood over them. Henry didn't know the lifespan of herons. The fear in the back of his mind that Billy might appear and make him jump—that simple childhood fear—gave him the same type of nostalgia as grainy old news footage where the anchors talked about subprime mortgages and read the names of the soldiers dead in the war. The names and the concepts would roll past his juvenile ears back then, and he would hear only the soothing calm of the voices on the television. Everything was simpler then, or at least it had seemed simpler.

A single shout came from the direction of the machines, followed by a long, low-pitched *beeeeeeep*. Silence returned. By now the fog had entirely

disappeared, and Henry could see across the water to the marina where his truck sat waiting like a faithful dog for his return. In the other direction he saw the island where his father, Theo, and he would always take their lunch break—a small round clump of dirt jutting out from the water, surrounded by algae and reeds. It looked just as barren as it had always been, at least from this distance.

Henry steered the boat nearer to the shoreline, closer to the sound of the machines and the people whose silence had become starker than their noises had been. The front of the boat broke through algae and thick yellow foam, leaving a path behind. Curious fish floated to the surface and held their mouths open to the air before scurrying back to the depths. Obscured in reeds and algae, the solid ground hid itself, and Henry couldn't find a spot to land. He wanted to walk over the hill and get a good look at the machines and the people before they left. It was only on that boat that he'd realized he hadn't spoken to anyone since Theo died. He'd lost count of the days.

The boat had a tiny radio receiver clipped onto the hull. He switched it on, his boat stationary in the shallow coastal water. Beyond the *scrrrchhht* of the dead channels he found nothing. He fiddled with the dial some more, and one frequency made a whirring noise like an old dial-up modem: interference from distant machines. There was a station number he'd heard a few months ago, the emergency crisis network of some sort, but he forgot it by now. Henry was never big on writing things down.

As he turned the dial slowly, stopping every five kilohertz, the radio continued its lifeless *scrrrchhht*, so Henry didn't hear the man approaching from the shore. The large figure ambled up through the reeds, testing each step for solid ground. By the time he found the shoreline he was just a few feet from Henry, and only then did the bulk of the crinkled, white, full-body suit and the hiss of his breathing mask catch Henry's attention.

"Mister," called the stranger. The word filtered through his mask until it sounded machine-like, artificial. His breathing continued like a whirring fan inside a computer. It was one of the new masks, the special ones that curved slightly downward like toucan beaks and filtered airborne particles down to a fraction of a nanogram. Henry recalled hearing about them shortly before the internet cut out, and how they didn't even allow sound to escape. No, they used an audio system to record the sound from inside the mask and reconstruct it outside, like a broadcast.

Henry didn't respond. He tried to pinpoint the eyes in the mask, to

make eye contact, but the plastic was too thick to see inside.

"You know, mister, you're not supposed to be out here," said the stranger. His voice sounded younger than Henry expected, more tenuous.

"I know," Henry said. He wanted to say more but couldn't bring himself to. The sound of his own voice seemed so strange now.

"I'm supposed to report you," the masked man said. "But I guess there's no one to report you to."

"Sounds fine to me," said Henry.

They sat in silence for a while. Henry's radio continued *scrrrrchhht*-ing, the only noise other than the frogs and distant birds.

"The emergency channel's been down for a while," said the stranger.

"I'm just here to do what I need to do, anyway," said Henry.

"Well, they're about to light this place up. But I suppose whatever you're up to is too important."

Henry couldn't tell what the man meant, or how much he knew, and could only manage to nod his head and say, "Yes, important."

"You seem awfully healthy for someone without a suit," said the stranger.

"The doctor a few months ago said I have a gene," said Henry. "My brain proteins don't fold as easily. Something or other. I never understood the science of it all."

The stranger's suit crinkled as he cocked his head. "Lucky guy."

Henry wondered what facial expression was hidden behind the mask.

"One last thing, mister," the stranger continued. "I found this on the way out here. Take it with you." He tossed Henry a small stone, which landed in the boat with a clank. Before Henry could pick it up, the stranger turned and disappeared into the trees. Henry searched around his feet until he found it hiding in the crevice where the seat cushion met the aluminum hull.

Grasping the rock in his hand, still unsure of why the man had tossed it, Henry turned the boat engine to full speed and set off straight for the island. The stone was smooth in his palm. He turned it over. There was a shape, a well-defined cast of a long tail—ribbed, horizontal lines sticking out like a stony ladder.

A piercing crack came from over the hill, followed by the rumbling of a vehicle's engine. The engine faded, diminishing to silence in seconds. Henry looked back down at the fossil—tentacle, he assumed. What did the stranger mean by this? He suppressed an impulse to toss the stone overboard.

Somehow the man in the mask knew about his plan; he was sure of it. For all he was doing for Theo, it didn't seem unreasonable to hold onto the stone and carry it to the island.

In open water now, the boat carried along with ease. The island sat no more than a mile or two away, but the expanse of the lake suddenly felt like an empty void. He could look down and see the water racing by below him, but when he looked up at the island it didn't seem any closer. He continued like that for a while, looking down below and then back up to see how far he had left to travel.

The radio, still powered on, suddenly burst into noise. Henry hadn't touched it—it was tuned into the same channel as before, but a staticky voice came through the airwaves.

"Hello." It sounded robotic and pre-recorded. "Hello," it said again, after a pause.

"Hello?" Henry said, though he knew it was only a radio station somewhere far away.

It spoke again. "Nine." A long pause. "Nine." The same programmatic pause between each number. "Nine. Seven. Zero. Zero. Zero. Zero." The cadence of the voice stayed the same for each repetition.

Henry could only guess what it meant. The International Space Station was supposed to be relaying important worldwide broadcasts. Maybe it was flying above, but in the daylight he couldn't tell. The astronauts must be alive, he realized, watching from above with no way to help and no way to return home. And farther out, as far as he could imagine, the two *Voyager* probes hurled through space, their signals long lost but their exhausted metal hulls trudging forward to distant stars. He imagined another world finding the disks that said hello in fifty-five languages and played the sounds of birds and whales. They might be confused when they came to Earth and found the birds and the whales, but not the humans who created the disks. The golden records were fossils too, frozen in time like the stone tentacle in his palm and the plaques on the moon.

The boat hit the edge of the island with a *thud*. Henry jerked up from his daydream and shut off the engine. He picked up the tackle box and fumbled under his seat, grasping for the shovel. After a moment of panic he found it securely tied in place, and he ripped it out with his free hand. He disembarked and walked to the center of the island, no more than a few feet from the edge, and began digging.

The hole grew quickly. He lost track of time and only stopped when he noticed the plume of smoke coming from the mainland, in the direction of the machines. It wasn't large yet, just a brush fire. He kept digging until his hands developed blisters and the hole looked large enough to bury three people down to the water line. It was deeper than he needed—he'd lost track of time.

Wiping the sweat off his forehead, Henry remembered the day his father died. The sun had shone bright through the window that morning and the roses and lilies in the hospital room were in full bloom. A year ago, pneumonia seemed like such a painful way to go. But today his father rested in an old cemetery next to a century-old vine-covered church, undisturbed by the events of the past few months. Now, the people who had lowered the casket into the grave had all died with vertigo, convulsions, their brains practically melting inside their skulls—all dead, except for Henry. His immunity to the disease had become a burden, more than anything, dooming him to live in a quiet empty world.

He climbed out of the hole and picked up the box. He carefully hauled it to the bottom and covered it with a light layer of soil.

Scrrrrchhht came the radio, once more. A voice came on, different from the first.

"Attention to disinfection specialists within range of this recording: your area has been identified as irrevocably contaminated with the APEIRON-1 prion pathogen. Incineration of the affected area will begin imminently. All CDC personnel within range of this broadcast must take immediate action for personal preservation."

Henry smiled as he filled in the rest of the pit. Now multiple plumes of smoke rose from the trees in the distance. He hadn't buried the fossil—he'd forgotten the stranger's request and left the rock on the boat. Henry retrieved it from its spot on the seat and carried it back onto the island.

Flames appeared on the horizon. The smoke blocked any view of the shore. Henry looked out at the boundless expanse of water, the smoke-hazed sky turning orange and red, and was overcome with assurance that he had buried Theo's ashes deep enough to withstand whatever calamities might come in the future. He'd done what he had set out to do, so he lay down on the spongy dark earth and stared at the sky, clenching the fossil in his hand. The only feeling left in his mind was exhaustion. He wondered what the prions looked like; whether they floated through the air like birds or squirmed

across the ground. Maybe the disinfectant fog had killed them off, if they were alive in the first place. The flames stopped spreading at the shoreline, teasing the steamy blue water with reflections of spectral inferno, rendering Henry's island the only unburnt land in sight.

The wretched bellowing of an animal came from among the trees on the shoreline and moved out of earshot. Distant flocks of birds fluttered away in dark clouds. The lake was quieter than he had ever heard it before. The radio was silent and would never speak again. As he drifted off to sleep, he wondered what the world would look like when he woke up.

Alexandria Roy
Our Mountains

At Dawn
those cragged hills
were illuminated
by a river of light
and were caught
holding up new beginnings

At Day
they disappeared
along with the rest of the
forest and her
leaves and
living critters

At Dusk
it was the only horizon
blue, purple, pink
like the sky,
but heavier
much more

At Dead of Night
the sediment stood
tall and dark,
a barrier
separating Us
from the Rest.

Breanna Tanksley
I've Been Trying to Write an Honest Poem

but I don't want you to see how ugly I am,
how ugly I've been,
how I'm ugly on the inside,
daffodils for myelin.

When I was young,
I would use stale bread to feed ducks for countless hours
until something distracted me from the mallard:
his muddy habitat that made a mirror.

You look at your reflection too long,
and you'll fall in the lake.
A flower sprouts in the place
that your knees dug into the grass as you gazed.

When they pulled my body out it was stained from dirty water.

They found flowers in my lungs in the x-ray machine,
and reported to me: it's what's on the inside that counts.
what's in my bloodstream turns my insides green,
daffodils for myelin,
roots spring from the floral sheath.

Imagery is imperative.

I lay in a hospital bed, head propped to watch
Adventure Time, a cartoon in bright colors.
Missing the Christmas special was the only thing I worried about.
I worry about everything now.

Self reliance lies

at the heart of sin.
How self-reliant I've been.
Daffodils for myelin
bend
my body into a pin cushion.
I trap arrows like flypaper
My skin be a spider web.

Body stained from dirty water.

Tainted hands wonder if they belong to an archer,
hope that this affliction is only physiological,
just to make the suffering more noble.

What can wash away my sins
free as breath or pirouette?
What can make me whole again
unlike myself or Lady Macbeth?

Elizabeth Osifalujo
Letter to HEART

Drenched in gold,
pierced with petals
whose leaves are stained
with red and green watercolors,
you, my historical bracelet,
have the noisiest hooks.

Within you lies
the richness of history
as your smooth edges clench
the wrist of a beloved.
The vibrancy of a culture.
A symbolic wedding ritual.
You are passed on from generations to generations,
Mother, to her cherished son.
Man, to his treasured wife.

And then, suddenly,
you lost your significance.
Woman, to her secret lover.
Paramour, to his companion.
Friend, to a traitor.
Merchant, to his highest bidder.

HEART, you eventually found your way to me,
but I am not sure from whom:
an old lover, my best friend, or my mother?
I am still in my early twenties,
but my memory ages ahead of time.

You have come a long way,
my dearest HEART.
Home at last to me.
Wait till I bear my first fruit
and your tales will forever be
on the lips of my descendants.

Allison Wendling
Biological Retention

We got there by plane and it needs to be said that this was not my decision. Arguably, though, I seem to have egged it on. For years, I had been telling my parents I'd like to visit Hemingway's Key West home, planning hypothetical getaways on several occasions, all of which fell through due to my lack of resolve and my anxiety to travel anywhere, either by myself, or with my family. Then one day came a reversal of roles, and my dad was the one coming to *me*, eyes wide, saying, *Let's go this Christmas. I found a cruise that docks near Hemingway's home.* And because I hate the holidays, I said sure, and it was in this way that our absence from family Christmas—what a relief—warped into maybe another thing I was afraid of: a weeklong cruise to the Bahamas. But because both of my parents expressed satisfaction in that they found it out, and showed so much enthusiasm for going, how could I be so low as to complain about my inclusion on a *cruise*? I played the part of obliging daughter, then, and feigned excitement.

My parents, my sisters, and I flew into Ft. Lauderdale days before the holiday. From the airport, we visited a Denny's for dinner, and then holed ourselves up in a Holiday Inn, where outside in the warm, a blind couple in furs were smoking and fighting, her saying *You never listen to me,* and a girl and her tattooed father, white wife-beater on, were picking up trash that had toppled from the four-lane highway, into a small wetland, and further still, into a residential street, one I assumed to be theirs.

#

We boarded the ship at four the next afternoon. We were funneled immediately to deck eleven, where we would be eating lunch and breakfast and now, as well. It was an all you can eat buffet. Everything natural there sat under the glare of fluorescents and shows its sallowness.

After eating, we crossed the hall to the main deck, where was this electric-blue carpet, and smudged glass guardrails snaking around the perimeter. We stood looking at it all a level above the chlorinated pool, which was in the center and matching the bright slides and gazebos and no one was swimming, as it was fifty degrees and getting dark. As we pulled out of harbor, I saw a coast guard speeding alongside us, a long gun at ready. By the time he veered away from us, the shipping crates and cranes and carts back at shore and the skyscrapers behind them had turned to this flattened skyline, its third

dimension gone.

We sailed south as it became dusk, and looking down I found swerving waves, tossing into the ship's hull like sloppy kisses. When I stared out further, I saw the gentle pulsing of currents, and the furthest waves appeared as funneling storm clouds.

All this time I had been looking out, people were passing behind me, loud, with drinks in their hands. A band was playing rock a level below. On one side, stood a soft serve machine: to the other, a man blending margaritas. A blowing spray on my face felt like pin pricks. A succession of unfamiliar movements and my own nausea made me feel airborne. But my feet were planted firmly in human territory, however egregious.

#

At dinner, we were seated at a white tableclothed table with another family. Looking around, I saw children in soft shorts and parents wearing hoodies, faces warm with candlelight and pink-toned. The contrast was humorous if not unsettling. Our waiters, Ashvin and Komang, introduced themselves, explaining they'd be serving us each night. My father and the other father sat next to each other, and theirs asked, seconds later, pointing a finger, "What is your name again?"

"Ko-mahng."

"Ko-maing?"

"Ko-*mahng.*"

"Okay, Ko-maing."

"You can call me Andre," he said.

"Alright, Andre," said the father, and Komang nodded and gave this great gummy smile.

They lay on our lap's cloth napkins, and as the meal progressed, moved our utensils and arranged our table just so, with a logic none of us cared to follow. Ashvin gushed about the entrees and answered our questions about what tartare and Bolognese were. He brought me ham which fell apart and melted in my mouth badly, and an almond-roasted-brie with a cranberry reduction which amounted to a large mozzarella stick with a side of raspberry jam. It was not anything I held against him, and not something I dared reveal as both our waiters were so kind. After only a day on the ship, I knew the norm here was never to express or even recognize dissatisfaction.

Ashvin brought me dessert which I could not eat, and told him so, but he insisted on bringing it. "Whatever you want, I'll bring to you," he told

us, and checked in with us and our excessive number of dishes constantly. "Is it all right, family?" he asked, again and again.

#

To reach our cabins in the rear of the ship—my parents in one, my sisters and I in another—we followed a carpeted hallway, not just the floor but the walls, too, gold and red, herring-bone and diamond-patterned. The hallways were so narrow I could pass other passengers only by scrunching my shoulders. The ship did tilt, and it was back in our cabins where we could feel it worst. When it rocked one way, I held my breath until it righted itself and rocked the other way.

Nights I tended to wake often and hear echoing thuds. I imagined them to be run-ins with rock or shore, the ship's hull skimming along something hidden just below the surface. But nothing ever came of any of it. Sometimes, I thought I'd much rather hear commotion, that is, something to warrant me springing out of bed rather than continue to lie stiff and belittled by fear. One night, when waking, the ship tilted in such a way that it caused my leg, under covers, to slip down the sheets and slide away from me. I gasped. I opened our door, looked left and right into the hallway, fluorescent and empty, and thought, *Is no one else noticing this?*

#

My sister and I attended a yoga class. Picture us facing a mirror, facing a quiet instructor, behind us floor-to-ceiling windows showing the sea and ellipticals and treadmills and free weights and people sweating. There were no walls between us and them. It was loud. My sister and I toppled over when moving into tree position. Afterward, we each signed a receipt for $14.

To head back to our cabin afterward, we had to pass through the casino. There is neon coursing through glass and screens lit up as they were programmed to. Stepping out of the dark and onto the deck, I see the sea stretched far and wide as it has always been. In both cases, there is not so much variation, and yet the stakes are so high.

#

There was often trembling coming from downstairs, under me, most noticeable during the night. There was also this creaking of the ceiling, leading me to worry about the stability of the decks stacked above me. And I pictured them easily, then, all floors perched precariously on the ceiling of my room, and under me, the ship, and under the ship, the enormous weight of the ocean. I considered this hierarchy flipped; my stomach turned. The sea could

easily retaliate. The sea did not have to hold us up. And why should it? What we were doing there was *vulgar*.

#

Days I laid on white plastic reclining chairs where I could read and see the sea. I was able to finish four novels that week because rarely would anyone be out there; there were buffets and bars and indoor malls behind walls. On nights, I would show on the main deck, stories above the water, as it tended to empty after dark.

One evening, it was ferociously windy, and on that night, I buttoned my flannel up to my neck. I had two small soft serves, one in each hand, and I was alternating eating them because if I didn't, one would melt down my wrist. I sat there looking out at the sea. If I strained to hear beyond the radio music, staticky, I could hear the currents tripping over one another, the water crackling and churning. I could even see the image from the TV screen behind me, reflected out there in the sea—cartoon grass, cartoon flowers and sky. The horizon was smoky. The sky was dark in a way that illuminated everything else. The wind was blowing with such force that it made my ears feel plugged.

I pictured myself where I was and thought it was the most dignified and flattering image, I had seen all that week—sitting there with my hair blowing wildly and quickly licking the two ice creams around in circles. Being defined as so, relatively, was not too difficult, though. We on that ship lost all integrity. And still sometimes, I think that the ocean is many hands clamoring up my leg and hungry, and thinking poorly of me, too, as I'm participating in this assault on it.

#

I departed early from dinner one evening with a migraine that hit hard and dazzling. Komang, noticing my distress, had brought a ginger-peppermint tea to our table, which I tried to sip. But the throbbing continued and soon made it so that I thought I might throw up. Shortly, I gave up and went back to the cabin.

When I woke up again, already morning by then, I saw a plate sitting on the vanity, covered as room service meals are. Underneath was a chocolate cake, triangular and impossibly smooth. And on the plate, beside, two mint leaves. There was no way for me to wrap the cake up. I had no napkins or empty containers; the automated intercom announcements, directing us where to leave our luggage and how-to un-board, were also reminding us to leave behind any unwrapped food. I had no other choices but to either eat it, right

then, seven a.m., or leave it behind. So, I left it behind. I took only the mint leaves, and at the airport, I pulled them out and smelled them until they were dark and smelling of reeking mulch, pleasing me much more than the cake would have, I'm sure of it.

CONTRIBUTORS

Adil Akhtar (b. Cincinnati) is a working analog and digital photographer. His interests include skateboarding, editorial, nature, and documentary photography. His photographs tell stories without words, revealing a glimpse into the intimate world of his subjects. Adil is willing to travel anywhere to tell new stories.

Cora Angel is a photographer currently studying at Northern Kentucky University. She was born in the Cincinnati area, where she is currently based. Heavily inspired by documentary photography, Cora's work frequently addresses issues in mental illness and dependency. Her photographs illustrate her own struggles with identity, memory, and the growing relationship with her family and community. Cora takes a journalistic approach, helping others to tell their stories and highlighting social issues that are often overlooked. She works closely with local non-profit organizations to help spread awareness within her community.

Kayla Belser is a senior at Northern Kentucky University and a writer. She is in the midst of completing her first novel manuscript, so yes, it is safe to say she is on the brink of insanity. Beginning at ten-years-old, she spent Saturdays in front of a boxy computer with a fuzzy screen typing away on MS Word 2003 until her mother made her do something else. Kayla keeps writing because she loves the power words have to bring the images of her mind to life in someone else's.

Bianca Calipo is a Media Informatics and Integrative Studies Major (Studio Art, Creative Writing, Psychology), with plans to get into the creative field as an artist. She loves 3D modeling, creating 2D artwork both digitally and on paper, as well as experimenting with other art-making processes. She enjoys traveling, having been to Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay this past summer to visit family there for the first time. In her free time, she's working on her own projects, playing video games, and going to the gym. Currently she's an Assistant VR Developer at NKU.

Gabriella Delaney is a 20-year-old Exercise Science major. She's the oldest of 5 kids, 2 brothers and 2 sisters. Ever since she was younger, she has aspired to be a published author and photographer. She spends a majority of her time with her head in the clouds. Any free time she finds is spent with her eyes glued to the pages of a book or with her hands stuck to a camera, waiting for the perfect picture opportunity.

Maria DeWald is a second year Visual Communication Design Major and Marketing Minor. She is currently PR for the NKU Design Guild. This will be her second time published in Loch Norse Magazine.

Brittany Haney is going to college to become an elementary teacher. She loves taking photos of nature. She doesn't see photography as a habit, she sees it as a life changing skill. When she is sad, happy, angry, or bored, she takes photos. When Brittany isn't out taking photos, you can find her hanging with friends and family. She lives her life the way she wants.

Jason Houston is a current junior at Northern Kentucky University studying in the field of Electronic Media & Broadcasting with a minor in photography. He is an aspiring cinematographer but when he is not on set for film, he is taking pictures of whatever he can capture in front of his lens. Having a respectable reel of films under his belt as well as a freelance business (JTH Media), Jason is looking to graduate college in the strongest way possible.

Caitlin Kemme was born and raised in a small town in Cincinnati, Ohio. At nineteen years of age, she has graduated from Reading High School in 2018 and has since moved on to attending college at Northern Kentucky University. She is currently a junior and majoring in Integrative Studies with minors in creative writing, military history, and evolutionary studies. Her passion for writing and photography has grown over the years, especially with taking creative writing classes in college. She hopes to publish her first book in the next few years.

Julia Manning graduated early in the fall of 2019. She pursued a Bachelor's degree in English with a track in Creative Writing and a minor in Marketing. She was a member of the English Honor Fraternity, Sigma Tau Delta, on NKU's campus. She also has been an editor and affiliate for three magazines on NKU's campus, Pentangle (2017-2019), Loch Norse (2018-2019), and Licking River Review (2019). When she has free time, she enjoys running, reading, writing, and walking her cat—Bee. In the nearby future, Julia hopes to pursue a Master's degree in either Librarian Science or Literature.

Mercede Maschinot identifies as a writer but is too afraid to call herself one. She is an undergraduate who studies creative writing in preparation for a career in content writing. Outside of University, she works as a Starbucks barista and a Campbell County library page. Mercede is vice president of the university's SGI organization and a member of Alpha Lambda Delta.

Camden Mecklem is a Senior majoring in International Studies with a minor in History. He is from Northern Kentucky and has been reading and writing from a very young age. Some of his favorite short story writers and sources of inspiration are Anton Chekhov and Flannery O'Connor. He is working on a historical fiction novella for his capstone project which will be completed in May 2020. In his spare time, Camden also listens to music and plays video games. He is excited to share his creative work with others both now and in the future.

Elizabeth Osifalujo is an international student from Lagos, Nigeria. She is a psychology major. She loves writing, and she always says, "writing is her life." She owns a blog titled, 'www.elizabethosifalujoblog.com,' where she shares ideas and her faith to help others get through life. She is on a path to self-discovery: finding God's purpose and fulfilling his calling for her life. She believes college is where you learn about the things you genuinely enjoy doing and it is important to seize the opportunity to explore your interest and trust that it will guide you to where you want to be.

Mikaylah Porter is a junior at NKU. She is currently majoring in Theatre and English with minors in History and Celtic Studies. She started writing creatively at the age of 8, inspired to be a song writer. After the birth of her sister and Mikaylah's love for fantasy evolved, she decided to be a novel writer at the age of 11. Poetry isn't where she is most experienced, but she enjoys it nonetheless. This is her first publication.

Alexandria Roy is a sophomore English Major in the writing studies track. She is a member of Presidential Ambassadors and Theta Phi Alpha Fraternity. Her poem, *Our Mountains*, was inspired by the Appalachian Mountains visible from her childhood home as well as a deep longing for the familiar. This is her first time experimenting with poetry but she hopes to contribute more works for publication in the future.

Sara Sutthoff is a 21-year-old student at Northern Kentucky University, graduating in May 2020 with a BA in Electronic Media and Broadcasting and a Journalism minor. While live sports production is her passion, photography is her favorite hobby. In her off-time Sara enjoys hanging out with her pitbull, Butters, and binge watching their favorite Netflix shows.

Breanna Tanksley is currently a junior at NKU with a major in studio arts and a minor in creative writing. Breanna's creative work tends to take inspiration from her personal experiences as well as pop-culture. It consists of pictures and pieces of writing that have been made based on the real

world as well as her imagination. Her work is mainly meant to articulate and inspire thought. If the viewer or reader can spend time with a piece and take something away from it then it's serving its function.

Mary Catherine Thomas is a first-year student at NKU and has been writing poetry for twelve years. Her hobbies include writing, cooking, and comedy. @its.mary.catherine is the handle of an Instagram page dedicated to her writing, and she encourages you to check it out!

Thanh-Mai Tran is an art student Northern Kentucky University with a focus on digital illustration. Originally studying to be a programmer, in 2018 she pivoted towards art and hasn't looked back. She primarily works using the drawing program Krita while sketching traditionally with graphite or colored pencil. Her current work is portrait-based, displaying the personality of her subjects or using their likeness to spread awareness about social issues.

Onyinye Miriam Uwolloh is a Senior at Northern Kentucky University with a Psychology major and a Biological Sciences minor. She is in the NKU Honors program and is an International student from Nigeria. *Ẹzịnụlọ Fureduri* is her first short story that has made it to print. However, her Moby-Dick inspired Pidgin English haiku are published in After Moby-Dick: An Anthology of Poetry, and they are incorporated into her Senior Capstone.

Cameron Wells is a sophomore in the English secondary education program. He loves reading—his favorite authors being C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. He is also very fond of writing, he likes to write sci-fi and fantasy, but primarily focusing on poetry. Cameron's poetry has deep spiritual implications and applications, which reflects who he is as a person—a devoted Christian. After graduating from NKU he plans on becoming a High School English teacher, where he will work hard to grow students' appreciation for the English language.

Allison Wendling is a senior at NKU. She will be graduating in December 2020 with a major in sociology and minors in English, political science, and honors. She is also the founder of NKU's Hiking Club. This is her first publication.