

THE MANUSCRIPT SOCIETY



MANUSCRIPT

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WILKES UNIVERSITY



# *1947 FOREWARD*

WITH THIS ISSUE OF THE MANUSCRIPT, A NEW PUBLICATION IS LAUNCHED ON THE BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS IN WILKES-BARRE. THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS COMING INTO BEING EARNESTLY HOPE THAT THROUGH YOUR EFFORTS AND THE EFFORTS OF THOSE WHO COME AFTER YOU THAT THIS MAGAZINE WILL DEVELOP INTO A COLLEGE TRADITION OF WHICH WE MAY ALL BE PROUD.

SINCERELY,  
THE EDITORS





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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## LIZ KELLER

Before Our End	1
Never	3
But Not For Me	5

## JACOB O'BOYLE

Succession	6
Autumn	8

## LINDSEY CHRISTIAN

Nihil	9
Chameleon	11
Carrion, Revere	13

## AUBRIANNA HARTE

the Piranhas sleep sound tonight.	14
-----------------------------------	----

## LEAH SMITH

Rainbow Void Burrito	18
----------------------	----

## JAKE MIDDLETON

not home for supper	23
---------------------	----

## JAZMIN HIGH

The immortal song	24
Choke	25
Clock	26
Ambush	27
For What He's Not	28

## CADEN TEMPLE

may i tonight in darkness speak	29
---------------------------------	----

## SINNER JOAN

The Mad Poet to His Muse	30
Twins	31
Red, <i>Concerning Premature Baldness</i>	32
Dion	33

## KYLIE SABLE

Anxiety	34
---------	----

## GRACE CAINS

OCD is not something you can shove into a rhyme scheme, this is not supposed to be pretty, ok?	36
Jaded	

<b>MADI WESTAWSKI</b>	38
Ode to Forgotten Park Benches	39
<b>LIV SERKOSKY</b>	
Magnolia	40
M.	41
if i were you today (the things) we fear, but fight)	43
<b>NICHOLAS PENGLASE</b>	
Predator Recall	47
No Healthy Upstream	48
<b>KRYSTAL CRESPO CLARK</b>	
People think poor	49
<b>CRAIG CONVILLE</b>	
The Mistake From an Unsavory Past	50
In What Sin Do You Relish?	52
<b>JACK DELUCA</b>	
The Seven Deadly Sins Killer	55

**NATE STAVISH**

I Remember the Girl	57
The Museum of Atomic Warfare	59
Biāpolis	61

**ANTHONY ELMS**

Windchimes	62
------------	----

**SYDNEY AHRBERG**

Vincent	65
Leonidas' Swimming Creek	66
Space Dog	67

**FRANKLIN COLLAZO**

Confounding Variables	69
-----------------------	----

**WAYNE MCCORMICK**

American Werewolf	70
-------------------	----

**AUTUMN EVANCAVICH**

Spectator	74
-----------	----

**KAILEY VOGEL**

Love Through Death (The Girl, Her Ghost, The Kiss, All Mine, The End)	76
--	----

# Before Our End

Liz Keller

It is fell mockery to deem you dead.  
As you doze not far from this wretched place,  
I could not face you in that sterile bed.  
What a coward, to flee with such disgrace.

Though my aching love shall span eternal,  
You are but a grey husk of your brilliance.  
Craven confessions, my heart infernal.  
I weep - cling to your stubborn persistence!

I abscond the snarl of mortality.  
Though it was likely our final meeting,  
The anguish of your fate thrashed throughout me.  
Why must my spineless soul keep retreating?

Still, I yearn for wings to whisk me ahead,  
Away from Ones whose shrill gossips draw blood!  
To find solace where the lost are not dead!  
This brook will soon surge into raging floods.

How dare your sons leave your petals to wilt,  
In your garden that once blossomed so bright?  
Do they pride their vile acts? No shred of guilt?  
Then demand your daughter bear all the blight?

These 'men' left breathing are as good as gone,  
I tally the dates till their final parties.  
Each day a torture, each hour sorely drawn,  
I ache that you stay, midst my hearts' pained pleas.



Yet! You'd not wish to heed my sorrowed spite.  
You once tended me like your precious roses,  
I wither now, saved by lone fading light.  
But your love trails on as our world near closes.

I retrace your home, oh, how I miss you.  
I search for your warmth that once set me free,  
Your echoes linger within, softly true,  
Never fully gone – forever with me.



## Never Liz Keller

When the world was ours to conquer,  
where tyrants failed to cry “no!”  
we soared free across golden skies,  
I thought I loved you so.

You carried us up Devil’s Peak,  
and dried up dunes of dust.  
For you, I’d do it again  
to cease the moment’s rust.

Amid years of fearless battles,  
our souls, truly blessed!  
Guide the way, for memories’ sake,  
may this dream never rest!

They joked you’d die in glacial streams,  
I held you close that day.  
But when the winds began to shriek,  
I watched you drift away.

Eras lapse; glory escapes us.  
Tomes tell our tall tales,  
but their pages have been altered  
and true nature unveiled.

A wicked phantom, you’ve become.  
And I, your favored haunt.  
You must’ve got lost along the way;  
the kin I loved is gone.



I seethe when you are at my side,  
your words send us downturn.  
Yet when you sail the seven seas,  
I weep for your return.

Those brilliant blues were sanctified,  
a frontier meant for us.  
I wail my stranded lullabies  
yet you've marooned my trust.

Our encounters now are fleeting.  
I'll wear your dolty caps,  
pretend to like the Bank ball games,  
in hope of scanty laughs.

Though I've never been a jester,  
I'll amass noble courts.  
You'll never grace my audience,  
but coast to foreign ports.

I'll endure all your shallow feats  
to maintain tarnished gold,  
yet you never sense to prevent  
the rust that claims my soul.

Why do I even fool myself,  
these journeys end the same.  
The world we loved has come and gone,  
I've lost my kindred flame.



## But Not For Me

Liz Keller

I've roamed your foreign realm a pale specter,  
no body to scour souls that stir within.  
Your silk, my steel; forbade claim. Your nectar  
is all this mold craves, aching for your sins.  
Like droplets from the Heavens, caressing  
my skin, giving form to flutters on flesh.  
Leave me drowning, wailing. Bathed in blessings  
on the altar; urge me into a crest.  
My veiled ecstasy, yet I yield your touch.  
Command and condemn me, down on my knees.  
Be the One I worship – breathless and hushed  
as we tangle in vice, pleas, and decrees.  
    Damn me to Hell, craving unions misled.  
    I bet she's divine – if just in my head.



## Succession Jacob O'Boyle

After the fire  
as the embers cool  
from great revolt and fervor  
and the creatures of this humbled wood  
lull from their stupor.

A great rebirth,  
though a supreme upending  
emplaced in a ghastly scene  
exalts that the worldly slate  
now lies wiped clean.

And new life may spring  
in ginger leap and bound  
from sprout to bud  
and leaf to ground,  
a golden fleece hides the ashen mud.

From here, all else follows;  
the pirouettes of aspen  
and the follies of pines  
gamagrass and goldenrod  
forming mile-long can-can lines.

Here, too, the oaks find their rise.  
Though frail at first,  
they soon shall grow  
and this new crop  
to eclipse the royal reds of old shall go.



To gnarl and arch  
and sag and sprawl,  
spread canopies wide  
and engulf all within;  
a world of diverse splendors under which hide.

And mast they will  
so the squirrel and the 'munk  
may eat their fill  
and gorge their children  
until they are ill.

But the shade proves too much  
and the mast seasons soon senesce  
so that this vibrant land  
once teeming with life  
grounds to silence at oaken hand.

Though dead limbs may lazily fall,  
the forest shall remain choked  
until, as if by holy decree,  
the lustfully righteous flame  
shall set this land free.



# Autumn

Jacob O'Boyle

What few golden rays  
do break the fog  
and grace my shoulder lightly

shine forth  
in a cold, grim world

and serve the remind me  
that one day

Spring  
will come again.



# Nihil

Lindsey Christain

I often feel as if I am a blank canvas  
A painter approaches, trying something new  
They give, they take away,  
Over and over  
Layers scraping over layers,  
Until I forget what lies before.

And the only thing that remains  
Is that I am nothing  
In search of something

Something to call my own  
Something that has a name  
But the only familiarity  
Is simply,  
A longing for something  
When I am nothing.

Nothing in the sense that  
My soul is nameless—  
A wanderer  
Cain himself,  
Walking endless roads,  
Bearing the mark  
That I tried to hide  
Scrubbing until my fingers ached  
And my nails bled dry.



Nothing in the sense that  
I am solid, yet pliable—  
Clay that never hardens,  
Shaped and reshaped,  
Kneaded endlessly,  
Yet never whole.



# Chameleon

Lindsey Christain

When will I be enough?  
Will I ever be enough?

Will it be when my edges dull,  
When I sand myself into something  
Soft enough to be held?

Or when I pull myself outwards,  
Take out all of the undesirable pieces,  
And put myself back together?

Should I become a color you'd prefer?  
Green,  
Yellow,  
Blue?

Tell me—what suits you?

Because I'm tired, tired beyond belief—  
Of twisting into something  
Palatable,  
Digestible,  
Easy to love.

I want to be loved  
For my horrific, dull scales—  
The ones passed over in the pet store,  
Left behind for something brighter.



Because I don't have forever  
To keep repainting them.

A Chameleon only gets so many seasons,

And I have spent mine  
Becoming someone else.



# Carrion, Reverie

Lindsey Christain

Matted, bloodied fur  
Smearred across the concrete  
Glazed over, hollow eyes  
Reminiscent of what was before.

Did they know of the dangers  
Of a bustling highway?  
Or did they simply  
Need to get to their  
Destination—  
Unaware of what follows.

The moment comes crashing down,  
The world rushing in.  
And there is no time to call,  
No whisper of prayer—  
The moment slips past,  
And grace cannot be reached.

Do roadkill go to heaven,  
Or are they forever damned?



the Piranhas sleep sound tonight.  
Aubrianna Harte

i was young and never pretty.  
this was a fact i knew about myself  
and the Piranhas are always looming.

a  
dr  
op  
of blood hits the water  
may as well be  
f l o o d i n g.

perhaps pretty is a disguise i can put on?  
drip  
p  
i  
ng.

perhaps less fabric will do the  
t r i c k l i n g .

perhaps a proper pose as i

*snap*  
*snap*  
*snap*

run

nin

g.

the picture?



u s h  
g i n g .

come fishy, fishy,  
come.

BUR **except** STING.

there is always  
more than  
one

.  
.  
.

one picture becomes infinite as it's reduced to b  
i  
t  
s by what feels like

i n f i n i t y

c  
a  
r  
v  
i  
n

into my body through spiked jaws and what makes it

i n f i n i t y



is that it

never ends and when it does the scars are reopened and at least their teeth touch me  
and at least their teeth love me even if they are reducing me to bits until I'm no longer  
whole even if I'm being whittled away into flesh particles dissipating through  
out the water I'm still receiving love and I'm still meeting God right I'm still meeti  
ng God right I'm still meeting God right

take me like I'm your holy communion.  
drill holes into me until I'm no longer whole.

disperse me like s

c  
a  
t  
t  
e  
r  
i  
n  
g ashes,  
leave me

naked

, as intact as pink mist.

if I were to pass you in a crowd, which would you recognize first, my



f a  
c e  
o r  
my  
b o d  
y  
?  
e i  
t h  
e r?

are  
you **me** full  
of?

do you even think of me now?  
remember me?

chew me until i'm gum.  
digest me until i'm your  
excrement.

until you deem me soiled.  
until i am soil.

until another fresh drop  
dri

p  
s

.  
. .  
.

You're always looming 17



# Rainbow Void Burrito

## Leah Smith

Times Square was bright and bustling, as it usually was in the peak of spring. Cars beeped and buzzed, crowds of people would bump into each other and shout. Even if I wanted to know what they were saying, I couldn't tell over the yacht loads of empty conversations that would fill my ears. Someone's arguing with a partner, someone's finding out they didn't get the entry level job they needed. Same shit, different day. The past few years haven't felt like different days. It's like the universe, God, or whoever is in charge of this circus, took the calendar, beat it to death with a hammer, and shredded it into a blender. The days were mushy piles of gray matter that we all had to pretend were different days.

Inside the depths of the flashy capitalist utopia of Time Square, was where serfs like myself would work to the bone just to get by. I was a cashier at Dunkin'. The clock on the wall beneath the digital timekeeping system struck 4:00 p.m. Energy coursed through my left hand as my fingers tapped on the tablet to clock myself out. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw one of my co-workers, Polly, striding by wearing a shiny white grin. She looked exactly like a Polly Pocket doll except if poor ole' Polly had to work a dead-end part-time job in New York. The screen finally completed my transaction and clocked me out. I turned around and Polly appeared right in front of my face. I jumped back slightly.

"Oh, I'm sorry Kristin, did I scare you?" Polly asked.

"No, just startled me a little," I said.

"I'm sorry, Kristin."

"I'll live."

I walked past her as passively as I could to get my backpack in the bathroom closet. However, she followed me.

"So, I was thinking, I'm getting together with some girl friends of mine and I was wondering if you wanted to come out with us!" Polly squealed.

"What are you guys planning?" I asked.



“Oh, you know, probably go bar crawling, might do some karaoke, might stay over the night at some guy’s house. Y’know, the usual.”

I shrugged. “I don’t know Polly, I have a lot on my plate at the moment.”

“Oh, yeah, you’re still doing that creative writing class?”

“Yep.”

“It’s just one night. You never come out, it’d be nice to see you out for a change.”

I shook my head. “I promise, Polly, I’m good.” I didn’t think I said that too harshly but given Polly’s abrupt silence, it seemed I may have bruised her spirit a little by rejecting her.

I finally reached the bathroom when Polly lifted her head up from the ground.

“Well, if you change your mind, give me a text, okay?” Polly asked.

“Sure, Polly. Have fun, I mean it.” I really did mean it, I didn’t like coming across as a dick even to co-workers I didn’t entirely vibe with.

She nodded and walked away. Shortly, I opened the bathroom door and stepped inside the claustrophobic nightmare. I swung open the closet door and grabbed my black and white zig-zag backpack. Before I lifted the bag’s arms over my shoulders, I zipped it open and took out a burrito wrapped in tin foil. I bought it earlier that day at a random vendor during my lunch break. The guy running the burrito stand seemed kinda weird, speaking under his breath like he was hiding something from me. That’s New York though, it was probably just me being anxious.

“Hickory Creek” by Whitechapel blasted through my black headphones as I bobbed and weaved my way through Times Square. I wanted so badly to roll myself into dozens of blankets, pop an edible, and watch Supernatural re-runs with my cat, Aragorn. However, I felt this gnawing inside of my chest. It wasn’t heartburn, it was something more than that and I could’ve sworn it was calling to me. I loved writing, I ate, slept, and breathed it. I’m not saying I was slipping or that the love went away, it’s just, no matter where I applied to, it was always rejection after rejection. Maybe I should’ve said yes to Polly and got drunk and slept with some sexy stranger. That’s what the high life was, right? I don’t know... Every day would’ve still felt the same.

My fingers began unwrapping the tinfoil like I was defusing a bomb. Carefully,



the burrito revealed itself to me in its glorious grilled chicken and melted cheese fashion. I took a bite of the burrito and as I began to chew it, my taste buds rang the alarm. This tasted like garbage. That wasn't hyperbole, like the garbage I'd have to take out sometimes at Dunkin'. The chicken tasted like stale coffee grounds and the cheese and Chipotle sauce had a kick of hellish gym sweat and centuries-old donuts. I puckered up my mouth and covered it with my arm as my eyes scanned for the nearest trash can. A few inches away from me, underneath a platform of steel and metal, was an empty black trash can. I swiftly shuffled to it and spat out the burrito and nearly threw up everything else I ate that day into it. I threw the rest of the burrito inside the can and before I walked away, my ears rejected the music I was playing into my headphones and instead picked up an eerie sound of static. I placed my headphones onto my neck like a head rest and picked inside of my ears with a painted black pinky finger. However, it wasn't tinnitus or a blocked ear because the sound persisted and grew louder. Then, I heard voices among the static. There were multiple voices, like a choir harmonizing in my ears and only my ears.

“Looooook belowwww youuuuu and find your homeeeee.” They instructed me.

I looked down into the trash can and I saw the burrito open itself up like a cocoon. Instead of revealing the contents of the food I spat out, it revealed a flowing rainbow wave. The rainbow wave swayed smoothly, a calm beach that promised me reassurance.

As I leaned closer into the trash can, I let go of the sides of the trash can and fell inside the rainbow wave. My body was a feather flying from the peak of a mountain, the seconds counted down to microseconds, even less than that. I closed my eyes as I fell into the wave but I opened them and I saw that I wasn't falling to my death. The rainbow wave became a waterfall swirling like a cyclone, except it wasn't aggressive or fast. The rainbow cyclone was a mother rocking her baby in her arms, a feeling I haven't felt in so long. The choir went away and what I heard instead was a combination of soothing sounds such as rain trickling down outside a window and fire crackling outside during a summer barbecue. I was confused, but I wasn't afraid. I wanted to see more, learn more about this strange place if what I was seeing was real. Crap, that



was probably why that burrito vendor was acting weird. He must've put something in my burrito, that must be why I was seeing all of this and experiencing this strange calming feeling.

Suddenly, a window-shaped white light appeared in front of me. The menagerie of soft sounds simmered down as a voice I knew I couldn't mistake was calling to me.

“Kristin, honey! It's mommy! Come over here, I've missed you!” My mother called in her chirping voice.

In a heartbeat, I swam into the white light. Then, I was taken into a patio looking out onto the beach. The waves were swaying calmly as the sunlight was kissing the ocean with its soft buttery lips. I was seated on a wooden bench in front of a table with open notebooks of stories written on them. I was in disbelief, I had to be dead. My mother died when I was nine inside her bedroom after she overdosed on painkillers. Were the drugs playing a trick on me? Am I dead?

All of a sudden, I heard soft purring against my ankles. I looked below and it was my fluffy tabby cat, Aragorn. I smiled and lifted him up to my lap. I gave him a few soft pets, his fur brushed against my fingertips like a knitted blanket. Then, I felt my mother's hand caressing my shoulder. I looked up at her, her face was upside down but she looked just as I remembered her. Short, cropped brown hair, black rimmed glasses all topped with a soft smile. She soothed my black hair with her hands and kissed the top of my head as she walked over to the other side of the table and sat across from me.

“Are you ready to share your stories with me, Kristin?” My mom asked me.

I looked down at the notebook placed in front of me, I quickly examined the words written in the paper. This was the horror novel manuscript I was writing for my creative writing presentation. I chuckled.

“What's wrong, dear?” My mom asked, cocking her head to the side.

I shook my head, fighting back tears. “I just, heh, I just don't think you'll like it. It's a dark story.”



My mother smiled reassuringly. “Nonsense, Kristin. I don’t mind if it’s dark. All that matters to me is that it’s written by my daughter.”

I wiped the tears coming down my face with a quick arm swipe and nodded. I began reading the story to my mother.



not home for supper  
Jake Middleton

34

"AFRICA OR DEATH!"

parents did not see him home for supper. At dusk his mother could not wait any longer and she went to all the neighbors looking for him. But no one had seen him all day. The desolate mother was almost out of her mind. He never did anything like that before, something must have happened to him.

His father was not less worried, but not knowing what else to do, he tried to hide his feelings and quiet down his wife. "Nothing to worry about. He has been going up there often lately. And certainly he knows that mountain better than you do. Let's go to rest!"

But neither parent could sleep. In the morning the hermit to the mountains and this was the last adventure of Daniel.



# The immortal song

Jazmin High

The choir is tired of the song, the prayers.  
I know the song well.  
I sing the tune, biding time, unwrapping layers.  
Tell me what can never die?

Your very name is a taunt.  
A prayer.  
Unanswered that hangs in the wind.  
I know the prayer well.  
Tell me what can never end?

I'd cut out my tongue, but I wouldn't need it.  
Pluck every tooth, and I'd still feed it.  
The urge, the itch beneath my skin.  
A prayer so dark I'd call it sin.  
Tell me what can never die?

Before wounds become scars, they will itch. Before answered, prayers  
are a thought—a wish.  
Before a song, there's a melody— a tune.  
A feeling at the instant,  
That this girl is across a room!

And I'll unwrap the parchment, as gently as possible.  
For if the gift underneath is lacking,  
I can look back on the effort and smile.



## Choke

Jazmin High

I mourn the dead before they die—  
I'm quite productive in that way.  
I dig the hole, and engrave the tombstone.

However, I still stay long after the ceremony.  
I can't seem to put the body in the ground.

Tears turn dirt muddy, and I know it can't be,  
But as I dandle the cumbersome and unyielding Hope,  
The creature who can never die,  
I pray tears can play the role of life  
Like water, and bring you back to me.

I cradle Hope in my arms with care.  
It grabs on the collar of my shirt and chokes me,  
Wailing out and demanding attention.

Where I once prayed for you, I now pray for air.



# Clock

Jazmin High

I called you on the phone the other day.  
I asked you when you'll be here, and you said 'in no time at all'.

And so I sit in front of a wall, watching this clock.  
The ticking constant, but the idea of it stopping overwhelming me.

Days go by. The clock, stature tall, engulfs me in a shadow.  
Heirloom passed down through generations of youngest daughters.  
You'll know what to do when it stops,  
so I sit in agonizing pins and needles waiting for you.

Family will intervene,  
find ways to maneuver me out of this room,  
but I am so consumed.

I wake from my sleep,  
thinking I heard a tick skip or a tock off beat.  
The clock is always just fine.

The rhythmic sounds are enough to to drive you mad,  
so mad that you'd wish it would *just...*

Because you are tired of mourning the dead before they die,  
and you've been mourning since  
you knew his name.

Master of all, servant of one.

You called me on the phone the other day,  
and asked when I'll be there.  
I said, staring at a still clock,  
'in no time at all'.



# Ambush

## Jazmin High

I am finding new things about you.  
Too much information, possibly,  
but I'll welcome it with open arms.  
What choice do I have, when showing up to an ambush?

Love is a song with no timed rhythms, beats.  
It has no place in a choir,  
and yet.

It is in the way your eyes hold Mine, I can feel it sink into My brain.  
It squeezes the corners, and under the pressure, I can't help but look away.

The morning dawns on me in the middle of the night.  
Something has shifted.

my actions serve a place in Their minds,  
my clothes, my words, myself.

You asked why i care so much, how people see me.  
It's because, truly, without them, i'm not sure if i exist.

You are finding new things about me.  
Too much information, possibly...  
You welcome it with open arms.  
What choice do You have, when showing up to an ambush?



# For What He's Not. Jazmin High

Stars are all about the burn.

So, is fire evil then, just for burning? Just because it hurt you?

Because *your* hand was too close?

And you knew him. The way someone knew what they were doing tomorrow.

The same absolutism God laughs at.

A snake in the grass that bites ankle,

Then ask why you're limping.

What's deep for you, is a crack for him.

As he haunts your ceiling at night,

As you regret letting him close enough to scorch

Remember: the lover always wins.

Because stars *do* burn bright,

But stars will always burn alone.



may I tonight in darkness speak  
Caden Temple

may I tonight in darkness speak, like the wooden floors of windy and brittle mornings, a song for only you to hear. and may it be acknowledged, not the sincerity of loosely threaded thoughtfulness, but of the serrated edges of wounds once again opened, shown of grinding teeth and clenched fists. tourniquet any and all remaining transmissions continuing to unfold falsities, disturbing a broken silence previously developed in light of sullen promises. may I tonight in darkness speak, deteriorating as felled firs of solstice, a message furthest from the closest bottled shore. lost in arrogance and tormenting rapids, watered and wasted by quarrels unseen. introduced unwillingly to perils of life I lack the intentions of knowing twice, the wheel continues spinning without notice of an ending prize, or so it has been called. a gift followed of smiles and controlled chaos, yet deception sneaking its wretched teeth into necks of attentions lost to a world of wonder un-wandered.



# The Mad Poet to His Muse

## Sinner Joan

I will win you a country,  
melt kings to their throne,  
build you a palace,  
then leave you alone  
to spend the morning  
gazing at bright blazing words,  
reflecting the flame  
with each single turn:  
dum-dah dum-dah dum-dahdo dee-lie,  
Tell me, sweet lady, wouldn't that be nice?

Take your lunch to the orchard  
by the deer in the park,  
feed the little spring doves,  
call the hound from the farm,  
pat the pup's head as  
white spots flee to the oaks,  
then walk to the creek-bed  
and light up your first smoke.  
dum-dah dum-dah dum-dahdo dee-lie,  
Tell me, sweet lady, wouldn't that be nice?

Now evening stars cast the day's last light,  
stack soft pillows and sleep through the night,  
dream of castles, cattle, pastoral delights,  
dum-dah dum-dah dum-dahdo dee-lie  
I can't help but think it all sounds so nice!

But if all this proves too much for your heart,  
I'll take it all back and hide in the stars,  
and dream on this each day and night:  
dum-dah dum-dah dum-dahdo dee-lie  
I can't help but think it all sounds so nice!



# Twins

## Sinner Joan

Maria, do not cry,  
we rest on lumps of flesh,  
just the first kick inside  
(Soft shadows streak by dim white light)

I look at you and see  
my eyes, blue, black and white,  
two new mirrors stare back,  
I will not cry  
(soon mother dear guides aimless eyes)

We twist, turn and tie  
our chains, like a vine,  
cascading down  
the  
last  
breathless  
gasp  
inside.

Let me reflect you,  
I will not cry.



# Red, Concerning Premature Baldness

Sinner Joan

Red, red, all top me head!  
Day I born till day I dead!  
(At least that's what the old man said!)

But blue, blue, now I all blue!  
When ya lose ya red, what else do ya do?  
Be blue all day long  
like a spot on ya bread?  
Or blue all the night  
like a lost robin egg?  
Or blue like your face  
after your first cigarette  
sucks all the air till  
there ain't nothing left?

No, I'll be blue like two eyes gazing back at me,  
Not wasting any time looking thru bad poetry,  
Not caring one bit for what's under this cap,  
(follow the bill as I fold it on back):

I bald, all bald, all top me head,  
I lost my hair, my youth, my red!  
And now I all blue till the day I dead.



## Dion Sinner Joan

Come, Dion,  
and set each thread  
of this thatch roof world ablaze!  
The goats are cold, the goatherd's gone,  
and sacred spring seeds no more.

Dion! Thrice-born, thrice-dead, half-god, half-man,  
Take thy black panther coat and be our Superman!  
Spin the world back in time, unbind thy band  
And bomb Lex Luther to ashes and sand!

But know there are no maeneds left to meet,  
from rose-colored dawn to the wine-dark sea;  
no Margot Kidder shooting the breeze,  
no little kings left dangling from trees,  
Hell, e'en Clark Kent's just old Christopher Reeve.

So come, Dion, and kiss thy tormenting bride  
for the grapes that suffer spill the sweetest wine;  
be Superman once more, but take off your disguise,  
then mount the world, dig thy spurs in thy ride.



# Anxiety

Kylie Sable

Tick...  
tick...  
tick...

The timer crashes down  
You're running out of time  
You can not do it  
You will never accomplish your dream

Tick...  
tick...  
tick...

The timer slowly fades  
Its alarm blares,  
Filling your ears,  
You failed again

Tick...  
tick...  
tick...

The timer explodes,  
Along with your dream  
Nothing can stop  
The spiral as it implodes

The timer reappears  
The cycle repeats  
Ready to ruin,  
Decimate your life  
Demolish your fantasy  
Dismantle your future



Tick...  
tick...  
tick...

The timer crashes down  
Race to your dream  
Don't let the road implode  
Your dream cannot explode

Tick...  
tick...  
tick...

The timer stops  
A nonexistent crash,  
Does not show.  
My dream is real

The timer vanishes  
Shoved to the background  
Ticks will still persist

Yet I will now live my life  
That will never implode



OCD is not something you can shove into a rhyme  
scheme, this is not supposed to be pretty, ok?  
Grace Cairns

Someone across the globe is probably jesting  
“I’m so OCD” as they straighten papers on a desk,  
While I am up at 1 a.m. again  
because I noticed chips in the rim of a glass candy jar  
and then took each candy out to inspect it for shards,  
While my brain tried to convince me they were embedded in the back  
of my throat (God forbid),  
so I tried to look but you can’t see that far, so I gargled some water and  
somewhere  
Someone is jesting  
“I’m so OCD” but I do not know where it ends  
and I begin.  
It engulfs and shapeshifts to resemble me  
and there is nothing organized about OCD.  
It is a civil war in the mind, which as in real life, there is no winning  
side-  
It is ambushes and traps and mirages that either root my feet to the  
spot or send me scrambling  
in wrong directions  
OCD is not organized, you see, I’ve written about it in prior poetry,  
tried to make it presentable in all its animosity,  
but I am unsatisfied with these writings, for they are not enough, be-  
cause OCD is not organized,  
It is so, so many metaphors that they stream through my mind and get  
lost in the tide,  
But there’s one about war, addiction, a clawed creature or one with  
sharp teeth, the jilted lover there are even metaphors that reference  
Harry Potter characters (professor Quirrel, ifykyk)...



All of these are their own poem which I should write eventually but it's far past time to go to bed,  
and I'm thinking about sleep and peace and ecstasy,  
but I'm still thinking about the glass and this stupid scary story  
I heard in fourth grade which cost me the ability to sleep  
without listening to disco music, and why does my brain insist on scar-  
ing me  
Just so it can pretend to be my protector from its very own creations?  
Jack-in-the-box, there's another metaphor, and my mind is like a spi-  
der web.  
OCD is eating away my sanity, but then what even qualifies as sanity?  
We all have different interpretations of normality, but anyway it's bed-  
time, and also I am still, of course, thinking...



jaded  
Grace Cairns

he's an aries  
I was a pacifist  
and I hate the color red  
it was like racing icarus  
just to take the fall for him  
so let the maroon fade from my skin,  
now bathed in cool shades of jade



# Ode to Forgotten Park Benches

Madi Westawski

I move through the streets  
passing piles of burning trash  
and enough dim-witted minds  
to switch out a singular light bulb

Once I hit the last red light  
I'm forced to be beneath  
the monuments of America's best men  
not the halal cart guy,  
nor the noble ones forgotten in alleyways,  
living lives so unlucky  
they've been struck by falling pianos twice

but the ones with briefcases  
heavy with commercial desperation;  
their eyes chiseled  
like those of a cornered dog,  
a kind of recklessness  
that leaves them even more exposed.

If you lift the pompadours and veneers,  
something always slips through.  
They are the least careful.  
That's the way it goes.

Walking, I remember

the meek shall inherit nothing.  
What else do I see?



A Brigitte Bardot type,  
searching for herself  
in every reflective surface  
down South Main Street,  
hoping the next pane  
might reveal a different woman  
Maybe one with fuller lips

A junkie  
smoking gas station weed  
and chewing black licorice,  
its color blending in  
with his twelfth molar.  
When you have that much time,  
what else is there to do  
but acquire bad taste?

And everywhere  
men with so much masculinity  
bleeding out of them  
that they forget they came out of a woman;  
too focused on taking their vitamins  
trying to cultivate something  
that was never theirs to hold.

None of them notice  
the young man who died;  
his name etched there  
as they take turns  
sitting on the bench  
that prohibits the junkie from lying down.  
They'll never notice.

I go home  
and cancel my Time subscription.  
I wasn't really using it anyway.      40



Magnolia  
Liv Serkosky



M.  
Liv Serkosky

I love her with my whole body.  
Each breath makes me tremble,  
And every moment I'm away I think,  
"How would she really feel?"

Suddenly my lungs ache with exhaustion.  
My heart leads me closer towards her.  
Watch the longing in my tired eyes,  
I want the time to memorize her.

Please don't pull away when I reach.  
She knows me well, and I know her.  
Over the laughing of our mothers,  
Her and I shared an apologetic glance.

By my own design I purchased flowers.  
My little brother handed them over,  
But they were meant to be from me.  
She arranged them by her dorm room bed.

You shied away when you needed me most,  
I was alone with nothing but dread and fear,  
Even though I opened my arms and eyes for you.  
Through it all, I needed you too.



I love you with all my body.  
The pang and chime of my hitched breath,  
How my muscles ceded control for you,  
When I stop running to look your way.

I feel my lungs ache with exhaustion,  
So I pull away and inhale strongly.  
I need your air as you need it, too.  
We can share this time and space.

Please don't pull away when I reach,  
Let your hand wrap around mine.  
I want you to stay inside my life,  
Yet it remains unknown to you.

By my own design I gave you space.  
You needed a break away from life,  
But did you have to step out of mine?  
Did you need to block out my existence?

I shied away when you needed me the most.  
If I exist around you for too long,  
I'm afraid I'll want to kiss you,  
And then I'll never escape love.



if i were you today  
(the things we fear, but fight)  
Liv Serkosky

when they silently lined up outside,  
i reached for my phone.  
i reached toward my friend who lives on  
that block.

i called,  
i heard static.

cars stopped, blockaded, as boots  
hit the ground,  
then the hushed raid.

the worst part isn't the  
waiting or the silence,  
it's the knowing you can't do anything.

one, two, three, and their door is obliterated.

i grab my phone, my keys, his leash,  
and then i pray.  
beyond my curtains i see the yards,  
the flowers they planted gone,  
the ones from the Pueblan Market,  
the name of your home,  
the one you taught me about  
for Spanish class.



i dial again, but still  
i hear static.

i rarely curse, but this time  
i did as i put my shoes on,  
paws matching beat with my feet.

it was too late, i could see,  
as you and your mom  
hit the ground

i scream, he barks, but mom  
holds me back, while you cry.  
the door is gone, and your Pueblan  
flowers.

you showed me how to plant them,  
i taught you about back lighting.  
and that was just yesterday.

i have pepper spray in my hand, but  
it's on the ground with my keys  
maybe i thought for a moment  
i could save at least one.

the sirens start and match tempo  
with my tears as they  
hit the ground  
while your blood - a cut on your temple -  
is censored.



i reach out again, and this time  
a noise erupts from my soul.  
this time tomorrow i was supposed  
to plant my own  
Pueblan Flowers.

*Dedicated to Rachel, Kipper, Dan, and Lisa;  
and to those enduring the violence being enacted  
on their lives by a nation that's supposed to protect them.*



# Predator Recall

Nicholas Penglase

Arise  
    slathered in clay.

You

the deep-  
    forest night, flooded

by white moon. Quiet,

    immense.

    The eyes  
of an animal –

Soon, scaling the ribs  
of remote mountains, you  
                    ascend,  
            swollen with  
green-wood air.



# No Healthy Upstream

Nicholas Penglase

Unfurled skin  
as a protection

spell, I have  
always been

built  
for traveling  
these wind-

swept corridors

An iris  
beset with

colored

bloom

peering down



# People think poor

Krystal Crespo Clark

godfather a new suit. People could not help thinking how he was always the same Daniel, so wonderful with the poor and the sick.

Soon after, while walking down the street he met a very poorly dressed old man. He stopped and recognized his teacher of the first elementary grades. He embraced him and walked along with him for a while. Upon leaving him he put a big donation in his pocket.

On September 29, he said good-bye to his wonderful "Paesani," to the dear parish church, his unforgettable mountains and deep blue Garda. Everything was just beautiful, but the homesickness awakened by the mysterious Nile and the constant memory of his Africans—suffering in slavery had a much stronger appeal. Africa or Death.

Back in Verona, he planned the European trip that, due to his poor health, he had been advised against taking soon after his consecration. Heedless of personal well-being, he visited Austria, Germany, France, Belgium. Everywhere he met old friends who gave him most splendid receptions, with many generous donations of which his assistants were so terribly in need.

In Brussels, he talked for two hours with King Leopold II. The year before in the capital of Belgium, a conference had been held with the intent of exploring and civilizing Africa and abolishing slavery. National committees were organized in every country and an international commission presided over by King



# The Mistake From an Unsavory Past

## Craig Conville

When you love something, deeper than you've ever loved before,  
Before you speak, you should think. Think of what you're about to do.  
Do you want to do this? Do you want to go through with what could hurt her?  
Her feelings are essential to you. They matter. They matter a lot.

A lot of things hurt her already. You know this. You protect her from this. This is what keeps you going. This is what allows you to feel justified. Justified to indulge. But it isn't true. You cannot indulge. You cannot keep doing this. This isn't right. This isn't what you should be doing. You need to confess.

Confess to your sins. Confess what you've done. What you've done wrong.

Wrong. You've made a mistake.

Mistake your actions for something controllable. You aren't well. You need help. Help her. Help her understand. Help her heal. You've made her hurt again. Again and again you try. Again and again you dig yourself deeper. Deeper you fall within your own anguish, deeper yet you cannot control yourself.

"Yourself" is an enigma. Who are you, anyway? Is this who you want to be? Be something hurtful? Be the same as all the rest you've sworn to be different from? From what point do you draw your self-pity? How dare you desire forgiveness? Forgiveness is what's given to those who confess to God for their sins.

Sins are all over. Sins lie within your digital encryptions. They're carved into your skin. Skin you shouldn't be comfortable within. How can you live with yourself? "Yourself" is an enigma, because she's not comfortable in her skin either. Either way, you are and should be to blame. Blame yourself rather than forgive.



Forgive her. She cannot help her own feelings. She cannot help her hurt.  
Hurt yourself. Hurt her. Hurt everybody. It does not matter. It will never matter.  
Matter flows down again. Dripping, shaking...this is indulging too. That won't save her.  
Her own stance on forgiveness is convoluted and complex. Perhaps she forgives that sin.

Sin is forgiven by God alone, but you were never the religious type to begin with.  
With what do you base your future on? Why should she want to be with you all this time?  
Time is ticking forward, and she's leaving you behind. She doesn't need you anymore.  
Anymore, she can handle herself. She loves you yet, and yet you cannot love yourself.

Snap out of it, you wretched fool! You're going to destroy your life if you continue.  
Continue to push. Continue to try. Never, ever give up. Giving up won't save her.  
Her entire existence is based on pushing forward. She's stronger than you. You know this.  
This is what keeps you going. You admire her strength. So find it in yourself.

"Yourself" is an enigma. You don't know who you are anymore. You cannot know.  
Know the sins you've committed. Know you may never reach forgiveness.  
Forgiveness is given to those who confess to God, but you don't know God.  
God, why won't this stop. Stop. You need to stop. Please, stop. She needs you to.

To a future me, I hope you listened early, because I cannot bear the thought of when.



# In What Sin Do You Relish?

Craig Conville

What sin do you relish the most?

They relish most in lust; it keeps them human.  
Humanic desires are hardly sinful if they're natural.  
Then why does it cut through me so?  
Am I to be God? To decide what is sinful? Perhaps I shall.

Lust is the deadliest of sins, because it is shrouded in self-deceit  
They do not know how to love. They know how to lust and pretend that's the same.  
The purest among them allows lust to be a point of luxury.  
It is not sin if you do not relish, if you only have a little taste.

But if I am to be God, I would decide that's worse than relishing.  
Relish in the truth; sin is sin.  
And pretending to be pure is dirtier than accepting Satan with open arms.  
You disgust me.

My disgust is not justified; I relish most in envy. I relish in greed. Greedy for a taste of  
lust; to feel without shame.  
Envy for those who can sin so wrongfully so happily.  
While I cannot healthily express it without bile building in my throat.

My envy is not green. It is black. It is all consuming. My envy relishes in greed. If I were  
to be God, I would not subject a sinner to that torment.  
This isn't supposed to be hell yet.  
The lake of fire does not belong among the lakes of earth.

I relish in wrath. It is the only way to face my sin.  
To be angry. To spit acid at sinners. To pretend they are worse than me.



To push people away unjustifiably.

I relish in the loneliness I cause when I am both too prideful and too wrathful to love.

I relish in pride too, as one would if he were to be God.

To establish yourself in the role of God is surely the ultimate demonstration of pride.

What give you the right, you disgusting sinner?

But in an atheist's world, God and Sin and Man and Life are all the same problem.

What more is there to do than relish?

I can only relish in sloth on the basis that I have no energy to do otherwise. And I relish in gluttony if sins can be considered sustenance.

My relishing comes in septuples, because that's what the rules say.

But I also relish in anguish. Why stop at the original seven?

God only knows mine number more than seven.

At least, in a perfect world, he would;

If I could know God, I wouldn't need to relish.

To relish more than seven must be a sin in itself.

Those who owe their loyalties to God cannot relish.

Not because they do not sin; they tend to do that more.

But they think that God will forgive them.

And if I were to be God, I wouldn't.

I certainly can't forgive myself. And I relish most of all.

They relish in Lust.

I relish in Envy.

I relish in Greed.

I relish in Pride.

I relish in Wrath.



I relish in Sloth, and Gluttony.

I relish in Anguish.

I relish in Pain.

I relish in Despair.

I relish in my earthly blood, flowing down my wrists like the Styx,

Relinquishing a poison much richer than that of the previously mentioned. The poison of my sin. I relish in the flow. I relish in the sins that it represents. That is the only way I can relish in control.

If I were to be God, I would be in control.

But I do not know God.

And God knows me not.

I do not know myself. I am God.



# The Seven Deadly Sins Killer

Jack Deluca

## I- Pride

He starts with mirrors, polished bright,  
A shrine to faces bathed in light  
He carves the charming smile from the vainest skin,  
Whispers, "Pride's reflection dies within."

## II- Greed

Gold teeth glint in candle's flare,  
He counts their coins with chilling care.  
Each corpses he leaves, a ledger closed,  
The wealth of sin now decomposed.

## III- Lust

Red lace and strong perfume haunts the air,  
He hums a hymn, seductive prayer.  
The heartbeat slows, the body frozen and still.  
Desire devoured by his will.

## IV- Envy

He finds the ones who covet all,  
The perfect lives, the grandest halls.  
He stains their glass with emerald hue,  
A jealous end for envy's few.



### V- Gluttony

A feast prepared, a poisoned plate,  
He feeds them slow, then seals their fate.  
Their final breath, a choking tune,  
Beneath the blood-red harvest moon.

### VI- Wrath

His hands now tremble, rage untamed,  
The fire burns, the world inflamed.  
He paints in crimson, wild and raw,  
A sinner's justice, savage law.

### VII- Sloth

At last, he waits- no rush, no sound,  
Among the graves of the six victims found.  
The seventh sin completes his masterpiece of art,  
For sloth has stilled his beating dying heart.



# I Remember the Girl

Nate Stavish

Piece of shit

Motherfucker

My guts spill out like pounded roadkill

Doctors would say it's a .45 to the abdomen

Feels like a black hole devouring my insides

and shitting them all out

White snow stains red as it hurls itself against me

I remember the girl

Black hair, blacker than midnight

Eyes burned from the sobbing

Dead friends can rip you open like a starved animal

Your grief stringing you up on its meathooks

The rest of the boys in blue maintained an apathetic crime scene

I was boiling with rage

Crazy sonova bitch

Dual-wielding bullet hoses

With razor wire where his brain should be

Running at me like a cheetah after a gazelle

A coked-up monster with homicidal tendencies

White powder stained red the moment he started losing his mind

Couldn't keep running

Had to face this bull head on

Moments of action form a mirror in your mind

I remember the girl

Was strung up in the meat locker with her

The chains of our hooks clattering against each other



Her friends were packed cold cuts  
Along with my partner  
She was waiting to be butchered  
I couldn't help but butcher myself  
This time I had an excuse

White snow stains red in equal parts neon light and blood  
David v. Goliath ended in a tie  
More holes in me than a poorly written plot  
Leaking like the faucet husbands tell their wives they'll get to eventual-  
ly Coughing, choking, and stuttering like a busted car  
I think I'll lay here a while  
The mirror forms in the faint deep blueness of the sky

I remember the girl



# The Museum of Atomic Warfare

Nate Stavish

I.

The Atom

A lumpy mass of protons and neutrons

Forever orbited by charged electrons

Split them

And boom

Millions gone in a flash

Eviscerated into dust

Their shadows burned into the ground on which they stood

II.

The Fat Man and Little Boy

Both teardrops with wings

Salty water of mass destruction

Reduced to a footnote in the back of the museum

The originators of wartime catastrophe

Crowds should feel small in front of them

They shouldn't feel small in front of the crowds

A mock bullet that killed 200,000 souls rests in front of them and they barely feel a thing

Just "Oh, that's neat."

III.

The Atmospheric Ignition Device (A.I.D.)

Death himself hangs above a silent audience

His scythe slashing across a planet's surface in a white hot blaze

No countdown. Just gone.

The plaques say it's a war crime to drop one unannounced



But the first one was a heart attack in the planet's skies  
A true display of annihilation sits before them  
It seeps into their skin and sticks to their bones  
like smoking phosphorus

IV.

The surface of Prometheus-6  
Burned so black it was like staring into the night  
The home of billions reduced to an unsanded ball  
Planetary revival is deemed impossible  
They talk like it was an act of God  
Like nothing could have been done  
But a president gave the order, engineers built the bomb, and soldiers  
deployed it  
Only man can kill itself so effectively



# Biāpolis

Nate Stavish

Smoking cigarettes at the silent auction.  
Blind men bet on mystery boxes.  
Hands rise up and roll down.  
Almost in unison.  
In belief that whatever is up there can be theirs and only theirs.  
Slow thoughts and slow minds ignore what's outside.

Tall grass susurrates in the wind  
Entirely ignored, the field was beautiful

Red bricks were bored through to find a way out.  
Course close quarters that didn't guarantee a route to safety.  
Sifting through the sulfuric stench of the city  
to rupture the pipeline of Americana,  
a nostalgic man's vision and nothing else.

Wild avians chirp  
Singing a composition shared by all

Georgie Boy's head was gashed by a guillotine.  
Regicide raced through the rooms.  
Chaos crashed through the crowds.  
Bloodthirsty rage became a rabid predator.  
Gasoline hurled itself down the gutters.  
The inferno dance set it ablaze.

The dove thought of the flowers  
The wolf thought of a meal.



# Windchimes

Anthony Elms

I looked down and saw a basket of folded laundry and atop it sat a Snoopy Red Cross T-shirt. I grabbed it by the collar as its folded creases came undone and brought it up to my nose to take a deep breath. It smelt like.....detergent. The Snuggle bear and him. Just for a moment I felt relief and just as quickly came the nauseating truth. I looked at the shirt and remembered a conversation I'd had with him where I asked if he could snag me the shirt the next time he went to donate blood and he said he would. He'd regularly donated blood as long as I'd known him and he never really thought anything of it. He even would eat things like spinach and liver just to get his iron up so he was eligible to donate. The nurses loved him, partly because he was so personable, partly because he was O-. But he never really talked about what donating blood meant to him, or why he did it; it was more or less just a task for the day, in between the grocery store and returning a faulty battery. Perhaps he was a true altruist, or as close as one can be. Maybe that's a dying breed?

I folded the shirt again and tucked it under my elbow with guilt.

Just guilt.

I couldn't tell if I wanted the shirt because I liked it, because it was his, because he said I could have it, or somewhere in between these options. I told myself he would've wanted me to have it, but it didn't help me feel any less grifty. An opportunistic carnivore, I thought to myself, like a vulture. I don't know when the feeling starts or why it stops or if it stops. Things must be sorted through, and it feels wasteful to send everything to the landfill so then why does the thought of keeping something that I like feel so slimy? How could I walk through this house as if it was a department store? Browsing the aisles, putting things down just as quickly as I had picked them up. Sifting. Sifting? It felt like a constant



back and forth between sensibility and horror. Rationality and the dark, deep-seated feeling that the last interaction I would have with this space would be one in which I was the consumer. Damned if I do damned if I don't I guess.

I walked over to the nightstand on the far side of the bed, facing the windows. She had always slept on this side and even after she'd gone he wouldn't dream of migrating across the covers. He always stayed on his side because for him she'd never left. At least I didn't think so. Like the duvet was still warm, as if she had gotten up for a glass of water and was headed back up the stairs. She had been heading back up the stairs for a long time. He talked to her a lot. This furthered my belief that for him she was still there, an active participant in his life.

A few nail polish bottles still stood on her nightstand. They weren't covered with a film or anything, but I wasn't sure if he cleaned them and put them back alongside the usual dusting. This was true throughout the house, her secretary desk still littered with opened envelopes and a five year old calendar that had every day crossed out except the 9th of April. The bathrooms still had hairspray and toothpaste that weren't his, cook-books bursting with post-it notes in the kitchen he would never use. The house hung heavy with lives lived and stories told. It was oppressive, but the summer breeze would come wafting through the windows and carry this weight off just for a moment. God it was so quiet. People always say death is peaceful, but maybe it's just as peaceful for the people who get left behind. Nobody talks, nobody moves. Just... stares, off into the distance, waiting for something or someone to bring them back to a world that chugs onward without them. Overwhelmed, I turned on my heel and left, shutting the door behind me. Every step down that hallway in reverse echoed with laughter, cries, screams, embraces, kisses. The biggest moments for generations happened right where I stood. But with a cruel brevity it was done. It was all done. A chapter of my life had



ended before I could even realize. I didn't sob, I didn't scream, I didn't throw things around and wave my fists at the sky. It was almost as if I was in a museum, and any sort of disruption to how they had left it would have felt like the ultimate form of disrespect. At most a single tear rolled down my cheek, as if not to impose upon my surroundings. Of course disruption was inevitable. The house would sell, and a new family would move in. But for that small moment in time, the space was still mine. Was still ours. It existed in a purgatory of sorts, a liminal space where Rod Serling narrated my every breath. But I wasn't stuck and couldn't be stuck. I had to leave. I should leave. I didn't want to leave. I wanted to get out. It hurts. It hurts so fucking much.

My eyes glazed over and I left. How could I leave in such an apathetic fashion? Didn't I care at all? Didn't they mean anything to me? I hated myself for it and that's the thing about grief. Everyone loves to drown you in the five stages to the point that you could throw up on their black patent leather pumps they dug out of their closet to show some semblance of sympathy. Grief is negotiation. Are they here, or are they not? Are you a horrible person, or are you scared? Are you sad enough, or are you selfish? Some of these feelings smooth over time, like a gash in a tree that is grown over and over again. Some of these feelings linger and creep up on you at your most stable, as if you'd dropped a glass and just when you thought you were done a shard lodges itself in your big toe. Even thinking about one's own reaction to the situation feels like an exercise in narcissism. You're not dead...they are. Don't be so goddamn self-absorbed. But I guess to be human is to be self-absorbed, whether it is objectively warranted or not. I don't know what healed means, and I know for sure you can't be fixed. But what I do know is how little I actually know at all.



“Vincent”  
Sydney Ahrberg

I don't think the world was ready for you,  
a soft heart in an armored world.  
You painted your canvas in every hue;  
up in the sky, your starry night swirled.

Your brain was too loud,  
you needed some peace.  
You burst through the crowd.  
You fall to your knees.

Stomach of lead,  
head full of dreams.  
You're placed in your bed.  
Your brother screams.

You said, “this sadness will last forever,”  
and I think you were right.  
I don't have it in me to handle the weather  
on this starry night.



## “Leonidas’ Swimming Creek”

Sydney Ahrberg

My dog swims in the creek ‘til his belly gets pink.  
Stubbornly refusing to take a rest,  
he keeps going ‘til he starts to sink.

He jumps off his favorite rock in a blink,  
by baptism of stream water he’s blessed.  
He swims in the creek ‘til his belly gets pink.

Balancing on slimy rocks at the brink,  
we make him get out, and he’s unimpressed,  
but he would’ve gone ‘til he started to sink.

Crayfish in the bottom like splotches of ink  
watch him splash like a dog possessed  
as he swims in the creek ‘til his belly gets pink.

He’s tired, we should go, we think.  
But he won’t stop swimming; he’s too obsessed.  
He keeps going ‘til he starts to sink.

His joy for swimming will never shrink.  
That’s why we make him wear a life vest;  
my dog swims in the creek ‘til his belly gets pink.  
He keeps going ‘til he starts to sink.



## “Space Dog” Sydney Ahrberg

Hey there little Laika,  
floating up in space.  
Are you full of anger  
pointed at the human race?

Do you hate us all for taking you  
from snowy northern streets  
and putting you in a rocket  
just to log data on our sheets?

They say you died of panic,  
so scared your heart could not keep up.  
That big heart was why they chose you—  
you were the sweetest pup.

Your eagerness to please  
made you easiest to train  
and we rewarded your good nature  
with a death of fire and pain.

As you burned up in the atmosphere,  
your rocket your funeral pyre,  
did you hope that those who sent you there  
would likewise face Hellfire?



Do you resent us, Laika,  
for sending you to die?  
Are you a star of retribution  
up in the dark night sky?

Or do you still want to please us,  
and be told you're a good girl?  
You're such a good girl, Laika.  
The best in all the world.



# Confounding Variables

Franklin Collazo

The moonlight and streetlights clash for luminosity,  
powerless against the milky fog.  
I am a shielded observer, driving through their gray remnants;  
their influence decaying in the grand scheme of things.

I yearn for their affairs to terminate—  
can they not see their efforts are in vain?  
Perhaps, there are confounding variables that justify this skirmish,  
but I lack the instruments to discern this.

Instead, I am left to the monotonous tone of the road,  
a white-noise frequency that plays with my ears,  
quietly orchestrating the celestial war.



# American Werewolf

Wayne McCormick

Legend tells of an insatiable hunger that can overtake a man. Once you've carried the fulfillment of ravenous gluttony to term, you are forever trapped in the cyclical need to feed. All inhibitions towards desire cease and the hunger demands you consume.

Craig steadied his hulking frame against the counter and calmly repeated his order, "Correkct," followed by a three second dry swallow, "300 nuggets with 10 barbeque, 10 honey mustard, and 10 ranch dips." He hiccupped slightly and gave a lengthy exhale that was half sigh, half burp.

The cashier was reviled and annoyed. It was quarter to two in the morning and she didn't get paid enough for this. "It won't let me ring that high of an order up."

"Yeah it will, should come out to \$178.82." Craig produced his credit card and slid \$40 across the counter, "Sorry for the trurble-" After he heard his own slurred speech he shook his head hard side to side, like a dog trying to shake off water. "Oof, can you add a large sprite?"

Outside, Matt had been listening to Lisa rant about her boyfriend's actions for over 10 minutes straight. While they were also far from sober, each had paced appropriately and maintained their wherewithal. The central theme of the rant was after Craig gets to drinking, all motivation is directed towards whatever he wants to do. His emotional momentum is matched by his physical, as it is nearly impossible to redirect all 6 foot, 7,255 pounds of him.

"I just can't believe he's doing this again! He skips dinner, gets absolutely loaded, and puts himself down for the night with an ungodly amount of fast-food shit." She stood firm with her arms folded across



her upper abdomen, anxiously bobbing one foot on its ball. A deep hardy laugh was audible through the glass panes, and she spun to see Craig talking and laughing with other customers waiting for their food. Even though almost everyone looked like a child next to him, he was always the most childish in the room.

She whipped her head back towards Matt with a look of pure incredulity, “And everyone loves him when he gets like this! It doesn’t matter whether we’re back in Jacksonville or here or wherever, it’s all about what Craig wants.” She pulled out a cigarette and began to frustratingly try to light it. After four failed attempts to produce a flame, she spiked the cheap lighter into the sidewalk. “Can I borrow yours?” The next six minutes were tolerated in silence as Lisa fumed and Matt tried not to feel like the third wheel.

Craig burst through the push door butt first carrying two of the largest bags available at McDonalds. As he turned around, he had a cheek-to-cheek smile that was acting as a dam for his hypersalivating mouth. Eager, angry, and awkward they set off for their hotel.

Back in the room, Lisa had turned up the TV’s volume, commanded Matt’s bed, and rolled over to not bear witness to the event about to occur. Matt watched from the desk chair the room provided, unconvinced that someone could physically eat this much.

Craig began his ritual preparation. He was given 20 boxes each with 15 nuggets and 30 sauces. Splayed in a ring around him on the bed, the 20 cardboard oysters sat open presenting their deep-fried pearls. One additive at a time, he’d pick up a box and drizzle a dip sauce across the nuggets. When the natural flow stopped, he used the straw from his sprite to scoop out every iota of each molasses. Every few boxes, he’d scoot himself in a circle just a touch. He looked like a craftsman set to work, methodically and rehearsed he diligently applied the frosting to his cake. After one total revolution, he distributed the remaining 10 dips across all the boxes, being careful not to add the same sauce to a box



twice. He closed each box after he was satisfied with their wetness.

His third go around the circle, he'd pick up a box with both hands and begin rolling the food inside around. Three circular motions forward, three left, three right, and three backwards. Then he would set the box down back in its place in the circle and move onto the next one. Each set of shakes was the same as the last, producing identical rhythms and sounded like a set of Wilfred Brimley's maracas.

As Craig was ending his third lap, without redirecting focus or missing a beat of prep, he asked, "Matt, you know how they reward stallions after they work all day? They put the fuckin feed bag on them." And with that, it began.

The first box was lifted by one hand underneath, and with the slightest pressure from his thumb and pinky pushing on either side, the lid shot open. A few wisps of steam fluttered off the chicken and a heated mix of buttermilk ranch and BBQ permeated around the room. He cupped his hand like a Lego person and scooped all 15 nuggets out of the box in a single, effortless glide. Craig's jaw momentarily looked unhinged as a bacchanal of meat, breading, and sugar was forcibly lodged inside before it snapped shut. Audibly, it was a mix of suction, oral muscles straining to process, and pleasurable moans.

Swirled in a realm of ecstasy, Craig savored the initial endorphin rush. Slowly, massagingly, he masticated his dinner. After he worked down around half of the first payload, he instinctually crushed the small box in his hand, tossed it to the side, and prepared the next round.

The fourth lap of this unmiraculous mile was grotesquely fascinating to Matt. With the steady pace of a marathoner and the determination of Kobayashi, his friend persisted. The cholesterol paste filled his buccal spaces, being replaced as fast as it was swallowed. The longer it went, the more labored his breathing became. Each clamp of the jaw came with an orcish sounding exhale. The crushing of shotgunned boxes slowed into managed crumples with disinterested tosses. But like a



foot racer unwilling to quit, he rounded his final corner by double-fisting the final 30 pieces into his mouth by alternating two from box A, then two from box B, and so on. After an ordeal lasting 36 minutes, 44 seconds and over 12,000 calories, Craig sat on the edge of the bed in a deeper stupor than alcohol could have taken him. He began to growl uncomfortably before releasing the loudest belch Matt had ever heard: The howl of the American Werewolf. Then he collapsed into the strewn about carcass pieces littering the bed and began to snore.

Craig's eyes snapped open with a sharp nasal inhale. He went to sit up but every fiber of his abdomen felt like it was going to tear. He struggled to sit up in the bed. Shame and guilt flooded his brain as he looked at the remnants of his work. The rush of emotion transformed into a pang of actualized pain as he looked over to see Matt already awake, who silently scrolled on his phone. When their eyes met Craig broke the quiet. "I did it again, didn't I?"

Matt only saw an American Werewolf once again in his life, when he watched a man attempt to eat 150 chicken chalupas in a single sitting.

These people lurk amongst us. They are your neighbors, coworkers, and relatives. They consume without remorse and if you're not careful, the gluttony will grow inside you too. Legend tells of an insatiable hunger that can overtake a man.



# Spectator

Autumn Evancavich

Speck of dust  
It must have flown  
Learned every place  
In my old home  
Latched to my sweater  
Stuck to the glue  
I used to mend  
My broken shoe

I hate the dust  
So I clean  
Until the air  
Is safe to breathe  
Until my shoes  
Hit the ground  
And no particles flow  
Round and round

I hate the specks  
That never leave  
The ones that fly  
As I collapse on my knees  
In the hall  
At your door  
In every place  
I once adored



Oh, speck of dust  
It must have known  
My house was far  
From my home  
It must have known  
I planned to go  
It must have known  
I would not, could not

Go.



# Love Through Death

Kailey Vogel

## The Girl

In the distance stood a girl  
so far away from view  
When I first saw her  
I thought it can't be true  
Near the lake I watch  
her glimmer off the waves  
I approached her and we kissed,  
got married, dug our graves

As the years went on  
I found it hard to speak  
'I love you' once so simple  
now came out a squeak  
I trudged the dark, brown  
muck both thick and slow  
then I lost all feeling in my soul.

My job is gone, but still she did stay  
together we dwell on the good memories of an old day  
The doctor seemed so worried  
my love, she seemed so scared.  
Dots soon filled my vision  
into the dark I prepared  
to meet the other side  
I once was so 'fraid  
I miss my love  
I wish I could have stayed



## Her Ghost

When he awoke  
Her hair he did stroke  
As she smiled sweetly  
He disappeared completely

Up near the tree  
He watches as she  
Walks towards the lake  
Was this all a mistake?

She turns around  
And stares at the ground  
From behind the bark  
Here emerges Mark

She begins to question  
A change in her expression  
Could he have been her ghost?  
This would make sense the most

Ghosts don't exist and he is gone  
She smiled at the man and they talked through dawn



## The Kiss

The kiss

Not of death

But forbidden love

Not in the unrequited sense

Nor the prohibited tense

Instead forbidden

Refusal to admit

To conquer their love

Instead they hide it

Bottling up

all their fiery heat inside

“I long to feel your lips on mine”

He watches down on her from a different time

A few months may be too soon

But he knew now

She LOVES somebody new

“If she feel the need to love another man

I will inflict death upon all so we can meet again”



## All Mine

All mine

Only mine

Marie will keep me company

Can't think straight

Eyes fuzzy

I'm seeing red and now she's dead

Quick breathes

Tight small knots

My lungs collapse as thunder claps

Head hurts

Ears now ring

She's in my arms with no more harm

Push back

Run away

What have I done, she died so young



## The End

Death \deth\ n. 1: Me; 2: The identity I am too scared to see

Dis·ease \di·zez\ n. 1. What I inflicted upon jealousy

Fam·ine \fa-mən\ n. How I starve for her to rejoin me

Geno·cide \je·nə·sīd\ n. The results of blind hatred and envy

Hurt \hərt\ vb. A feeling of pain of which I'm free

Mur·der \'mərdər\ vb. The blood on my hands that stain like coffee

Pain \pān\ n. I have paralyzed all with the sting of a bee

Sor·row \'sôrō\ n. Now the world has heard my plea

The End? Reunited finally with my dear Marie



# AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Liz Keller** is a third-year Political Science major with minors in Legal Studies and History. She'll never shy away from the opportunity to admire Victorian-era artworks, especially the self-portrait locked away in her attic (which is certainly not cursed and decayed).

**Jacob O'Boyle** is currently enrolled in Keystone College '27 M.S. in Wildlife Biology. Jacob is currently lost in the deep, dark woods on his search for more tasty blueberries.

**Lindsey Christain** is not only a lover of writing but also a compassionate observer of the natural world, holding a deep appreciation for all life forms, big and small—from cats to tiny, often unnoticed slugs and beetles.

**Aubrianna Harte** is a junior English and Secondary Education major and says, "I do not have a cat."

**Leah Smith's** favorite kind of music is metal. So, instead of listening to calm wave sounds to carry her through her writing, she prefers wailing electric guitars and people screaming their lyrics. Her favorite bands are Ice Nine Kills, System of a Down, and Spiritbox.

**Jake Middleton** is a student at Wilkes University.

**Jazmin High** is a senior Psychology major closing out her career on the manuscript board, and she'd feel a little hypocritical to not submit after convincing friends to.

**Caden Temple** is a student at Wilkes University.



**Sinner Joan** is a senior English major and enjoys riding Appaloosas in Springbrook Township in their spare time.

**Kylie Sable** is a senior neuroscience major who hopes to get her PhD in Behavioral Neuroscience but likes to give her brain a break with writing poetry. She is also currently the Associate Editor for the Manuscript and a proud member of the dance team!

**Grace Cairns** is an English major who will graduate in 2028. She is actually part penguin and spends free time swimming around and finding food.

**Madi Westawski** is a 2028 Accounting major who can wiggle her ears when needed.

**Liv Serkosky** is a fourth year Theatre Arts BA major and 4+1 Creative Writing student. They're an actor, author, director, singer-songwriter, and activist. World's most dramatic queer, enjoyer of sapphic media, and lover of all animals. They spend their time keeping engaged with the political world and using their social platform to keep friends, peers, and strangers aware of the world. They currently work in film and aim to one day live in California, restoring life where the fires took it while finding their own.

**Nicholas Penglase** is a graduate student in Creative Writing and has a dog with one eye, and two cats without tails.

**Krystal Crespo Clark** is a DDMA major and Dance minor. She spends much of her time in dance classes and on dance team.



**Craig Conville** (best known to Wilkes campus as “Craig the Wilkes Guy”) is a Mechanical Engineering major at Wilkes University. Extracurricularly, he is an Admissions Student Ambassador, E-Mentor, Residence Hall Assistant, and Treasurer of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance. Poetry as a medium is his chosen coping mechanism for the social stresses that come with knowing many people and reaping the mental consequences of both his and others’ decision making. His Wilkes University Endeavors, as well as Wilkes Merch Shop, can be found on Instagram: @craig.the.wilkes.guy

**Jack Deluca** is a 2029 English major and spends their spare time usually writing horror stories, horror poems, making costumes, and making short horror films.

**Nate Stavish** is a senior English major and is Larry Davidmaxxing.

**Anthony Elms** is a senior History major and their favorite fruit is honeydew.

**Sydney Ahrberg** is a senior English major finishing out her two-year tenure as Executive Editor of the Manuscript Society. In her free time, she enjoys reading, snuggling with her dogs, and thinking about how unfair it is that she can’t pet a sea lion.

**Frank Callozo** is a senior Data Science major and says, “When I consume soda, I open it partially to decrease the flow rate, allowing me to savor every drop.”

**Wayne McCormick** is a junior Creative Writing major and News and Sports Reporting minor. He rejects “just say no” and says “perhaps” to drugs.



**Autumn Evancavich** is a freshman Biology major. She's a lover of both music and poetry, enjoying when the two blend together as she listens to her favorite rap artist Juice WRLD.

**Kailey Vogel** is a sophomore with a double major in English and History, who is projected to graduate in spring of 2028. Vogel has once been told she could be eligible for Miss Wilkes University due to her heavy involvement on campus, which includes: The Honors Program, Barre Scholar Program, E-Mentor, Resident Assistant, Dance Team Captain, Editor of The Beacon, HSPC, Programming Board, Wilkes University chorus, Presidential Student Leader, peer math tutor, note taker, and Honors Peer mentor.



Thank you for having us as long as we were here by your sides, creating to show the world what can be done through the power of words. Keep writing and keep creating, even in the darkest moments when it matters most.

We will cherish these moments until the day we become the subject of someone's love letter to the world.

Thank you, Wilkes, for leading us this far.

You will see our names again one day.

With love, The Graduating Editors  
*Sydney, Kylie, Liv, and Jazmin*

