

THE CATALYST



VOLUME 14 - SPRING 2016

“IT IS SOMETIMES AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO REALITY TO GO INSANE”-PHILIP K. DICK

A publication of *The Catalyst*
Volume 14 – Spring 2016

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WHAT WE ARE:

The Catalyst is a student-run creative journal of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse English Club publishing prose, poetry, photography, art, music, and all other creative works by the students and faculty of UW-L. Each semester, the student editors pick a new theme and accept submissions about and outside the chosen theme.

THIS SEMESTER'S THEME:

It has been 13 semesters since *The Catalyst* was taken up by the UW-L English Club. This semester's theme was brought about by the Editor-in-Chief. In a week filled with writer's block, she went to her trusty quote book and stumbled upon the gem that is now the theme for this semester. Enjoy!

- The Editors

GUEST WRITERS:

Author *Jill Sisson Quinn* is a nature writer and teacher living in Central Wisconsin. Her essays have appeared in *Ecotone*, *OnEarth*, *Orion*, and many others. Quinn is a regular commentator for WPR's *Wisconsin Life* Program.

Author *Jennifer Morales* is a multi-genre writer and a performance artist. In her writing, she wrestles with questions of gender, power, identity, complicity, and harm. Even so, she finds the world beautiful.

WORD OF THANKS TO:

William Stobb for being such a great advisor, supporting us and pushing us to grow into the publication we know we can be.

The UW-L English Club for helping us obtain awesome submissions, and for spreading the word about our publication.

Rob Wilkie for helping develop our new website and all the tech support he has provided through the years.

Jake Speer for spending so much time helping archive all of our previous editions, and for IT information.

Everyone who has submitted to *The Catalyst* in this publication as well as in the past.

And, of course, all those who read this publication and support the amazing creativity we have here at UW-La Crosse!

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April Showers

Libbie Miller

April is Sexual Assault Awareness month.
Join me at these events to win 200-dollar prizes
Donated by an administration that cares
(About publicity)
And unwillingly learn a little about these statistics
Who are standing next to you.
Here, take these bloodstained fliers.
I can rattle the invitation off so quickly
They fly from my mouth
Like a pearl-white tooth the day he said
He loved me.

Red is the color of love.
And if you can see it, the tangy slick love
I never wanted to remember,
I am sorry.
Red makes me wish
I could claw out your insides so
The room could match
The haze of your eyes. . .
That is not love.
That is my stolen lifeblood.

Shift.

April is National Poetry Month.
Months are social constructs
Like gender and racism and love.
Months are not exactly exclusive
To human attributes
Like rape and poetry.

Rape and Poetry.
They're purposely paired:
Beautiful things.
Boys speak in words of one
And never read the other.
Rape is for boys

But poetry is for survivors.

Pardon me if I can never
Beg the words to match
The thickness of my tongue
Or the message that runs
Down my spine
Every time I receive a hug
My body tells me to run.

Because rape is not eloquent
Or living in figurative devices
Made to make our world more bearable.
Rape is grunts and grasping breathes
And hushed threats disguised as
Declarations of love.

Poetry is for victims.
Consuming books and friends
And distress tolerance packets and counselors
Are figurative devices
Made to make our world more bearable.

Shift.

I tried to find comfort
Within my body.
In an emergency situation,
I can run
Carrying a 200-pound man on my back.
I can run
Feel the tension beneath my skin.
Exhale my broken words
And never invite them
Back in again.
Push me.
I am an emergency situation.
I feel beautiful.

Until I remember my body
Is not mine.

How can I find solace
In a temple you have
Destroyed and claimed
As your own. Rename
The ruins of sacredness
To worship the God
Born from your brutality.

You crept in
Bestowing gentle kisses.
You began at the hands and lips;
You whispered lies.
My ears were yours.
Caressed my cheek and chest and anything else
You took my love by storm
You took my body
In steadily growing thorny tendrils
Like property signs that grew
Nourished by fear disguised as adoration.

Shift.

No.
My body is yours.
My mind is mine.
But even April is not my own.
I share it with a quarter of
The women in this room and
Every love poem ever written.
I share April with this false tooth
And Rudyard Kipling and isolated ladies
In attics and drunken lovers
Fucking against the
Magnetic poetry splayed across their fridge.

So take the damn flier
Attend the events.
Educate yourself on the
Monster lurking beneath your skin.
Win the mini iPad
Forget every statistic

Ever drilled into your brain
But never let me know.
Say goodbye and whisper
Sweet Poetic nothings to
The statistic wearing
A snarl disguised as a smile
As she is tucked beneath your arm

Shift.

Rewind: 1 year.

April is National Poetry Month.
I know this because there is a crate
Filled with printed poems at my library.
My fingers skim over the paper.
I pick "Where have all the flowers gone."

I don't get it.

The Idaho Lovers

Mikayla Peters

She rested peacefully in the velvet wrap of earth, her eyes closed for now. Her mother-stalk's bright green, perfectly-shaped leaves, warmed by the sun, sparkled with the few pearly drops of crystalline morning dew not quite burned off. Her man would come soon, she knew. He came every day, bringing water, nutrients, and life to her, caring for her as a loving mother would care for her unborn baby girl . She knew her man loved her as much as she loved him. Every so often, she would dream of being with him, their roots travelling deeply into the earth, tunneling down past the thick mud that tried to stop them, past the dark clay, the smell of manure and waste, the sand and soil, down into the deep warmth of the dark earth, where they would live forever in safety, their shared stem snaking through the dirt like life-aiding worms, and bursting into a bouquet of leaves at the surface of the earth to touch the gentle, silky strands of sunlight.

Her dreams kept her growing as big as a dinosaur egg, while her man's dog-like dedication kept her healthier than the underground springs. She had nothing to worry about, and she knew it. The sunlight kept her mother-stalk warm and allowed the chlorophyll to make the food needed for her to grow, her man kept her free from frost and disease, and the earth remained full of bugs and worms that kept the aeration and water-flow to her perfectly balanced.

The vibration had just barely begun to register on her skin, the dirt around her pulsing with the waves of it. She knew the vibrations as harbingers of her man's approach, like how sparrows fly before a storm. Wave, wave, stop...Wave, wave, stop... She felt each wave of vibrations grow stronger and stronger. Although she did not know why the vibrations stopped every two waves, or why they meant her man advanced up to her, she knew that was simply what happened. None of the other potatoes gave off vibrations like her man did, but they didn't offer her water and nutrients like he did either.

The expected sprinkle of water through the dirt and the slight compression of earth around her normally indicated his presence like the vibrations did. But today, something felt wrong. Instead of the

earth packing against her with one of the waves of vibration, the dirt loosened, and something as soft and pliable as fresh mud touched her, dissipating the darkness around her. She shrank at her first brush with sunlight, starches hardening within her to avoid the fiery burning of the light, feeling the roots around her pull up and away as she desperately clung to them. The safety of the velvet blanket of earth fell from her shoulders like a discarded silk shawl. She hung in nothingness, only having the roots to hang on to. Exposed and helpless, dangling like the last grape on a high vine in the wind, she wondered where on earth her man had gone.

She could find nothing kind or gentle about this, so whatever did this did not belong to her man. Ruthlessly ripped from home, torn from comfort, tossed into a bright, cold, and unfamiliar world with a single root to hang onto, left her filled with fear and terror. The safety of her home, the security in knowing her man would help her, and the happy company with the bugs and worms had all vanished, save for the delicate teardrops of dirt desperately clinging to her skin.

But, even that comfort ended. The creature that had torn her up carried her from the harsh light into a different light that seemed artificial, tore away the final comforting thread connecting her to her roots and siblings, dropped her in some sort of small pond surrounded by a synthetic-feeling material, scrubbed her, and violated her with something that had coarse roots. The roots rubbed against her and tore the last bit of comforting dirt off of her, slitting small sores into her skin. She wanted to scream in pain, sure this was the end.

But everything grew worse.

The harsh scrubbing stopped, leaving her riddled with pain and dishonored. She felt broken and used, her purity stolen. Yet, even as she rested and attempted to recover, something sharp slipped beneath her skin. Slowly, the sharp object peeled away her skin bit by bit, exposing her pale innards to the mock sun, tearing both eyes and skin and bits of her insides away and letting them drop into the false pond. Desperately, she prayed for this to be a dream and nothing more, just a terror in the black night that would vanish quickly.

Once every bit of her skin had fallen off, she felt herself moved and set upon a rock-like surface. A sort of calm came over her at her last touch with something semi-natural. The sharp object came again, splitting her into thin sticks. She died before her pieces hit the oil.

Untitled

Joshua Jarrett

Is this pain real that I'm feeling, or is it simply just an impulse in my brain? I can feel the pain of humanity being slain in vain, for it's all to maintain the reign of a cancerous drain originating from the left-brain or maybe Cain. The *true* nature of this reality is difficult to ascertain, and life is difficult to maintain with that heavy question on the brain; the wonder of it all makes me want to go insane. Why can't we just live in peace, enjoy the rain and smoke some Mary Jane? If we want to remove the pain, we must first consort with Jane; but then we must fix the corrupt campaign; for it's the pulmonary vein of the cancerous drain that's unjustifiably inhumane for the purpose of capital gain; maybe its reality that's insane. But the key to the ball and chain lies within the human brain. Don't let the cancerous drain drive you insane; don't degrade yourself to the fear-based plane that the politicians maintain; you have a thinking brain which provides you with the ability to ascertain that your consciousness will *never* wane.

Untitled
Elise Burns



You Love Me, Right?

Abby Barickman

I reached for you in the middle of the night.
My body instinctively seeking yours.
I couldn't find you and I was angry.
Can you believe that?
Angry.
Because I still want you.
Because I'm still yours.
Because you love me, right?

I broke a glass in the kitchen this morning.
My heartbeat quickened.
My palms grew sweaty.
I raced to grab the broom,
Ducking down and covering my face.
It was minutes before I realized.
Your anger wasn't coming.
And a part of me was sad.
Can you believe that?
Sad.
Because I still want you.
Because I'm still yours.
Because you love me, right?

I gave a speech yesterday.
I was well-prepared and even a little excited.
But I stumbled over a word.
And when I looked up, I saw your face.
In every pair of eyes in the room.
I felt your disapproval.
I heard your words of mockery.
I was embarrassed.
How could I let you down like that?
Didn't I know you deserved better?
And then I remembered.
I left you.
And I cried.
Can you believe that?
Cried.

Because I still want you.
Because I'm still yours.
Because you love me, right?

A man asked me out the other day.
His eyes were the deepest blue.
And he had the sweetest smile.
He is smart and kind and patient.
I wanted to say yes but I felt sick.
Can you believe that?
Sick.
Because I still want you.
Because I'm still yours.
Because you love me, right?

I had sex with a stranger this weekend.
Because I was drunk and he was cute.
Because alcohol made me uninhibited.
He was respectful, he didn't force me.
He was tender, he didn't choke me.
He was kind, he didn't degrade me.
He didn't do anything you used to.
And I felt empty.
Can you believe that?
Empty.
Because I still want you.
Because I'm still yours.
Because you love me, right?

I heard you were dating someone new.
I heard you cheated on her.
I heard you called her names.
I heard you beat her senseless.
And I felt jealous.
Can you believe that?
Jealous.
Because I still want you.
Because I'm still yours.
Because you love me, right?

I saw my therapist last week.

She told me I was better off without you.
She told me you didn't deserve me.
She told me that you never loved me.
She told me, "Real love doesn't hurt."
And I wanted to scream.
Can you believe that?
Scream.
Because I still want you.
Because I'm still yours.
Because you love me, right?

I threw myself down the stairs tonight.
My ribs hit the wooden steps
Then my arms
Legs, and head.
I crumbled at the bottom.
I ached from every limb.
And I felt good.
Can you believe that?
Good.
Because I still want you.
Because I'm still yours.
Because you love me, right?

Untitled

Madison Haus

It always seems like people think you're slowly going insane when you talk about things that they don't understand.

Like how when you see a dog on the sidewalk you never pass up the opportunity to pet it, and treat it like it's more human than the old friend you crossed the street two days ago to avoid.

Or how you seem to forgive so much easier than you can forget; you still remember how hard your hands shook when your friend didn't say sorry for breaking your trust but you said sorry 12 times for being upset about it.

Like how it's been three years since you've heard your grandmas voice but the sound of a similar laugh suddenly makes the wind smell like breakfast when you were 10 and the grass reeks of the funeral home.

Or how you'd rather scream at the top of your lungs on the mountains than at a concert, and would rather lie in the grass than on top of a crowd.

Like how sometimes you want to talk about something that's bothering you but not about how much it hurts you, and you want people to know how you feel but you don't want to be the one to tell them.

Or how you get frustrated when your parents treat you like a child, yet you still find yourself using your fingers to check what letter in the alphabet comes next.

Like how education has proved that A's mean more than your mental stability, and how you find yourself falling asleep more often on your textbooks than on your pillows.

Or how you fell in love with your best friend after denying it for three years, not over fancy gifts or drunken kisses but by late nights at the library and decks of cards.

Like how we preach to not body shame other people but we do it effortlessly to ourselves every time we look in the mirror.

Or how when you were a kid you couldn't wait to grow up and live on your own, but now all you want to do is go back to being 7 years old when your dad would have to carry you to your bed after you fell asleep on the couch.

So some people may try to make you believe that there's a right or wrong way to feel and that your beliefs are simply crazy. But here's the thing that those people are too scared to admit: everyone is a tad bit insane, some are just better at hiding it.

Untitled Photos

Dahli Durley



My Sister

Christina Griffin

My sister is an interesting story. One day, she was driving down Highway 94, chewing a wad of bubblegum and singing along to Madonna on KZ95.3. Preparing to hit a high note, she inhaled – and sucked her gum right down into her windpipe. Panic gripped her as she started to asphyxiate, and she jerked the wheel into oncoming traffic. She struck Ed Hannigan's blue Chevy Malibu head-on. Her car skid to a stop astride the center line, while Ed's Malibu went for an unanticipated off-road trek.

Ed was an off-duty police officer. A month before, his wife had given premature birth to a baby girl. They had been in the hospital for almost four weeks, but they were finally headed home. Ed had decorated their living room with pink balloons and streamers. He considered himself only an Easter-Christmas Catholic, but as his car careened into the ditch, he found himself muttering a near-nonsense prayer for the safety of his daughter.

Luckily, the new parents were unharmed. The baby – Melinda Jo, what a pretty name – was shrieking, and Ed leapt into the backseat with his wife to check and re-check her tiny body for signs of internal bleeding. Meanwhile, the defective airbag in my sister's car only half-deployed, preventing her from hitting either it or the steering wheel with enough force to knock the gum from its position lodged in her throat. As Melinda's parents fussed over her, my sister choked to death on Bazooka.

The Zoo

Abby Barickman

I went to the zoo yesterday.
I walked around, taking in all the sights.
Awkward giraffes, roaring bears, calculating tigers.
Their cages were large enough to separate them but not high enough
to keep them apart.
I could feel tension building and a part of me was excited.
I wanted to watch a brawl but was terrified of being caught in the
middle.
After all, these were animals.
I looked for a zookeeper, but there wasn't one.
It appeared as though the animals were in charge.
I felt dizzy and overwhelmed.
I sat on a bench and closed my eyes.
I sat very still and evened my breathing.
I heard low mumbles and slight snorts.
I felt the animals' presence and knew they were close.
One even sat down next to me.
I could feel its eyes on me, watching, waiting.
After a few minutes, a tentative paw rested on my leg.
I stayed very still.
Eyes closed, steady breaths.
I was unsure of what would happen.
I didn't want to anger the animal.
I felt the paw move from my knee to my hip.
There was a sharpness to the movement; claws tickled my leg.
I opened my eyes and turned towards the animal.
My eyes locked with dark, green cat eyes.
The tiger tilted its head to one side, staring, waiting.
I started to smile because it looked just like my cat, Henry.
Claws that once tickled now dug in, piercing my flesh.
My smile vanished.
I looked around for help.
No zookeeper, no tourists.
Nothing but animals.
I locked eyes with a horrified giraffe as the tiger pounced.
Its claws ripped my skin, tearing open my soul.
The giraffe seemed to know my pain but made no move of helping.
I tried to escape but that only aggravated the tiger.

Instead, I stayed very still again.
Steady breaths, eyes closed.
Hours passed, or so it felt like, until it was done.
Satisfied with the amount of blood, the tiger relented.
When I was sure it was over, I opened my eyes.
I once again locked eyes with the tiger.
Fierce, green, dead eyes.
It cocked its head again and I was reminded of Henry.
But that wasn't Henry.
Or was it?
I stood up, clothes torn, blood dripping down my legs.
I walked through the zoo toward the exit.
None of the animals noticed me.
I was invisible.
As I walked out of the zoo, I caught a glimpse of my reflection.
I stopped and stared.
What stared back at me was a giraffe.
Movements awkward, eyes black as night.

Untitled
Danielle Nolden



Lost in Translation

Christina Griffin

I think
 she meant it
to be beautiful.

I think she pictured her porcelain body floating serenely in the warm
 water,
her arms crossed modestly across her chest,
her eyes closed as if asleep or in prayer,
with the instrumental version of “What a Wonderful World” echoing
 against the tile.

While the bathwater was running, she tidied up her apartment,
programmed the song to repeat, dialed the volume to a comforting
 level,
and removed her dress and panties, stacking them neatly on top of
 her dresser.

After swallowing all the pills from her recently-filled Ambien
prescription
and chasing them with a shot of Prestone,
she replaced the caps on both bottles
and stored them back in their respective cabinets.

I think she meant it
to be beautiful,
and maybe
it would have been.

But no one found her for a week, until the landlord,
responding to a neighbor’s complaint of a moldy, fecal stench wafting
 through the wall,
found the door unlocked and let himself in.

He saw her purplish pale body, awkwardly rigid in the tub,
with all the blood that hadn’t gravitated to her backside pooled under
 her slit eyes
and a splatter of vomit down her chin that polluted the water she lay
 in.

At some point, the CD player had malfunctioned so that
a single tone from “What a Wonderful World” repeated over and
over
until it nearly drove the landlord mad.

I think she meant it
to be beautiful,
but the beauty
was all lost in translation.

Untitled
Allison Johnson



I'm Fine

James Groh

I'm going to tell you I'm fine, but I'm not.
I'm not fine because I want to spend every
minute of my spare time with you and
I don't have anything to distract myself
since I finished watching the last episode of the
last season of the last series on Netflix and
my computer battery is drained so I wait
for it to charge biting my nail arranging the books
on my shelf by author, by topic, by color, by font,
by date starting with the oldest leading closer to
you nail now bleeding computer charged
scrolling, pictures, rants, posts, porn,
what should be considered porn but isn't,
top ten ways to live, die, fuck, boil an egg—
my world wide waits for you and I'm not fine
because that means I'm clingy. I'm not fine
because being clingy makes me upset.
I'm not what you want, I'm not fine. I'm not fine
because saying that shows insecurity and
lack of confidence in the way I view
myself and how I think people view my
inability to do what I should be doing because
I've been told that's what I want to do
in holding your hand while we walk
down the street but we can't because we are
different wishing I wasn't *different*
wishing I didn't wish I was *different*
but I'm going to tell you I am fine. I'm fine
because I look forward to seeing you. I'm fine
because you make me happy. I'm fine because
for now I can call you mine and
that's all the reason I need to try and be better
for you.

Peach Tea

Christina Griffin

Katie's lips tasted faintly of peach tea, and she left a red lipstick smudge on the corner of Aaron's mouth, which he wiped on the corner of her floral pink bedsheet. It was Friday. He planned to ask Stephanie for a divorce later that evening. She would refuse with the same reminder she used whenever he expressed concern about their relationship – "All couples fight, Aar" – at which point he would tell her about the affair. He wondered if she would believe he'd had sex with one of his students. Probably not.

He didn't know why he'd done it. A part of him still loved Steph, the woman who had cried when the home pregnancy test showed two pink lines, cried again when the ultrasound technician said, "Congratulations, it's a boy," and cried every year on the morning of Dylan's birthday as she stirred the batter for chocolate-chip-banana pancakes. He supposed his attraction to Katie was, in some way, a revolt against Stephanie's familiarity, against how old they had grown together in such a short time.

Katie seemed so brand new. He liked the sway of her hips when she walked, the creamy swell of breast at the neckline of her low-cut t-shirt, and her casual confidence. Not one wrinkle reduced the beauty of her face; not one stretchmark blemished her tightly-toned abdomen. When her body shivered against his, he felt blissfully irresponsible; for ten minutes, he could forget the weight of Stephanie's head on his shoulder as he sat awake fueled by bitter hospital coffee, the paleness of Dylan's face that looked whiter than the pillow under his head, and the white-coated blue-eyed doctor who'd said, "I'm sorry, your son is gone," as if Dylan had snuck out of the ICU without permission instead of taking a final, harsh breath and then lying still.

Stephanie would be heartbroken. But Aaron couldn't stand another morning waking up to Dylan's button nose on his wife's face. He wanted to forget, no matter how weak that made him. He wanted to start over.

On his way home, he stopped in at the Shell station. He was craving a peach tea.

Mama

Mikayla Peters

*When You're Awake, You Know You're Awake. When You're Asleep,
You Don't Know You're Asleep.*

Mama left us again to go get more Brothers and Sisters. She leaves all the time, and we stay together, playing and waiting for our new siblings.

I'm five. At least, that's what Mama told me long ago. She said I drowned. I don't remember. But, if I think really hard, I remember mama pulling me up from the water, her white hair dry, her white eyes crinkled as she smiled at me. She brought me here, to the home, to be with the others. My siblings. My brothers and sisters. My family.

There are others here. Hundreds of others. Thousands of others. They surround and push in and play with all the toys. We like playing make believe. We pretend to live again. But, then we get sad, because living again means not having mother or all the brothers and sisters, and for many, it means living alone or in a bad place or with bad mamas. So, we stop playing, and we play with the toys until mama returns again.

My brothers and sisters are all ages. Some are itty bitty, small enough to fit in my hand. Some are almost all grewed up, and they help take care of us. We didn't have names when we came here, but mama can tell us apart. She always knows just what each of us likes, and she brings back toys from her trips, along with special treats.

"Sister?" I turned around at the call of my name, smiling up at Brother, who towered above me. He said he's seventeen, but he's a million. He's tall and has hair that doesn't grow on top of his head like a normal person. It grows around his head, like a picture frame. He smiles at me.

"Yes, Brother?" I said. "Is Mama back yet?"

"Tsis muaj. Niam hasn't returned yet." My heart hurt, and I sniffled a bit. I missed Mama when she left. She brought happiness and safety to our world, and took part of it when she left. You could always tell when Mama was gone, because the sky looked darker, the clouds grayer, the grass browner. Brother sensed my feelings, as we all could, and he smiled at me. "Would you like to play hide and

seek?" He spoke funny, but everyone did here. His funniness was the "W" sound, which he made sound like a "V."

I nodded. Hide and seek was the best! We played all the time. My favorite spot was on top of the cloud, but they always found me, because that's where everyone hid. But, up there, you could see all the trees, all the rocks, the green grass, the flowers, everything. The world mama built for us. I slid back up into the clouds, watching everyone scatter. The smallest hid behind petals of flowers or beneath leaves. The biggest climbed trees or joined me in the clouds. And Brother began to count.

"Un, deux, trois..." All the way up to a hundred. He then opened his eyes. He didn't have the weird hair all around his face. He had curls all around, down to the middle of his back, the color of fire. I hadn't seen him before, but I could tell he wasn't new. He knew many people, and his emotions ran free like the rest of ours. Those who just came here didn't let emotions flow like we did. They kept them inside, giving off only the scent of scaredness. "Cent!" he called, opening his eyes and looking for us.

He began to search, finding only a couple hundred people before a cry rose from the door, traveling through us. Mama was home. Everyone hurried from their hiding places to the big, black door that we weren't supposed to go into, holding flowers and whining for hugs.

I rushed down to get near her, pushing aside the others as I tried to reach her black dress, her black boots. She smiled and welcomed us all, setting down the new children. There was Brother, a short one with dark skin and hair. Sister, a tall, blonde girl with eyes like grass. Sister, a tiny one who curled up behind Mama's ear. Brother, a big boy with hair all over his face and neck and chest. Many more slid out from Mama's sleeves and from her arms and down her hair. She opened her cloak, and they kept falling out to join us. Mama sank back against the door, her eyes closed. A few new toys fell from her hands.

"Haha must rest," Sister explained, her dark hair falling over her eyes. She helped the others back. "Let's play hide and seek. We haven't finished."

"Maman must rest," Brother repeated, closing his eyes again. "Un, deux, trois..." Everyone scattered back to their hiding places, the new ones joining in the game.

Brother sat by Mama, stroking her white hair and bringing her back to her room, hidden behind a door. I heard him murmur, “Es ist fertig. Mutti kann schlafen.”

It is done. For now.

Untitled
Danielle Nolden



The Cellist

Kyndra Rothermel

Beep, beep, beep... The alarm clock rings in my ears. 3:30 AM. I reach over the body next to me and quickly turn it off, the sound lingering in the back of my head. I look down at his face; his eyes are still closed, and in the dim moonlight I can see the quick movement underneath his eyelids. The alarm didn't wake him; it never does.

I reach up and gently caress his lower lip with my fingertips. He stirs, his body turning slightly and pulling me closer. When he has settled, his arms are wrapped around me, almost possessively. I always feel so safe and protected in his arms. I can feel his fingers press lightly into my back, then quickly change pattern again and again. After four years with him, I have come to learn all of the chords on the cello, so I immediately recognize the pattern for Dvorak's *Cello Concerto*. The first song I ever saw him perform.

It was four years ago. After five years of college – super senior status – I had no idea what I wanted to do, all I knew was that I needed adventure; I wanted my life to be like a cheesy romance movie. So a month after graduation I found a temp job and bought a one-way ticket to London. My days were spent working as a personal assistant to some handsy, old businesspeople – both men and women – and my nights I spent going to museums, nightclubs, movies, and concerts. On one such night I decided to go see the London Symphony Orchestra perform, and he was the guest performer.

I remember thinking that it looked as though the cello was a part of him when he played. I had seen cellists perform before, I had even seen this song performed live before, but there was something about him playing that made me sit on the edge of my seat... My heart sped up... A chill ran up my spine. Maybe it was the fact that the cello seemed to be an extension of him. Or maybe it was the way his fingers masterfully glided across the fingerboard from note to note. Or maybe it was just his charisma which seemed to radiate from the stage and into the air around me, forcing me to breathe him in. Maybe a combination of all those things, but whatever it was, he was magnificent.

After the performance, as I was leaving, I bumped into him at the door. When I looked up into his face he smiled at me, causing my breath to catch in my throat and my toes to curl. I was too caught up staring into his eyes – his dark brown eyes with tiny flecks of gold

around the edges of his pupils – to notice that he was holding the door open for me. Not once did he make any move to make me snap out of the moment, but the old woman behind me did. She nudged me forward so that she could go out the door, causing me to stumble into him. He immediately caught me and helped me regain my balance. Once I was righted again, he still did not let go.

We stood there for several seconds, just looking into each other's eyes. I was so aware of his presence that I felt his hand came up before he tucked a stray hair behind my ear. He asked me to join him for a drink.

Over the next few weeks, he came up and spent Monday through Friday with me. He said he wished he could stay longer, but his weekends had to be back home in Bordeaux. He was using the excuse that he was going to perform with the London Symphony again, which was true, but he only spent a few hours a day practicing with them, the rest of his time was with me. We knew that he wouldn't be able to continue performing for them after this second performance; he would have to return to the Paris Symphony and his students at the University.

After the performance, we were lying in my bed, and he asked me to move into his apartment in Paris. At first I hesitated, wondering whether or not this was the life I wanted... Until I realized that it was. I had moved to London for adventure, and here he was offering me what would probably be my biggest one ever. Soon I found myself living in Paris, working as a private English tutor for some of his fellow professor's children. Several months later, I was able to obtain a position at the University as an assistant professor in the Language department. When this happened I went from only seeing him in the evenings Monday through Thursday, to all day long plus one weekend a month when he was performing for the symphony. No one else in his life got to see him as much as I did...

I look over at the clock: 3:36 AM. I know I need to wake him or he will be late. Already, these six minutes means that he will be leaving at 4 rather than 4:15, so that he can get breakfast. These six extra minutes are causing me to lose him sooner, but nonetheless I continue to lay in his arms, trying to think of ways to keep him here with me even longer; I could fall back asleep and pretend the alarm never went off... No. The last time he was late I didn't get to see him for thirty-six days, and the time before that it was fifty-nine days. Both times it nearly killed me to be away from him for so long.

The first time was a week into summer vacation, the second was a year later during winter break. If it was back during the semester, there wouldn't be any discussion of him coming back Monday morning for classes. But it is summer, so I know it would be several weeks before I saw him again if I were to let him be late for his train.

I look at the clock again: 3:40 AM. Reluctantly, I lean up and press my lips to his. Gently at first, then with more fervor as he begins to wake and kiss back. His fingers abandon Dvorak to entangle themselves in my hair.

"Bonjour mon amour..." He says when he pulls away before looking over at the clock: 3:42 AM. His body tenses and he mumbles *merde*. Shit.

I lean my head down and kiss his chest as guilt begins to fill my own. He must sense my guilt because I feel his body slowly relax, and his lips press a reassuring kiss on the top of my head, before rolling out of my arms and going straight for the bathroom. I sit up, the sheets falling to my waist, leaving my skin bare to the cool air. I wait until I hear the shower turn on before reaching down to the floor and scooping up the shirt he discarded the night before.

As I button up the shirt, a strange feeling creeps up within me; I should be used to all of this, but something feels different about today... I push the thought to the back of my mind and head down the hall into the kitchen. I don't normally wake up with him when he is leaving, so I begin to make him breakfast, hoping to keep him here for that additional fifteen minutes. I am flipping the omelet when he comes out of the bedroom, his travel bag in hand. He smiles at me as he places his bag next to his cello case, and is still smiling as he comes up behind me and places his hands on my hips. He whispers *merci* in my ear before kissing my shoulder affectionately.

I plate the omelet for him and turn into his arms, holding it out to him. He takes it from me, but immediately places it on the counter behind me, a smirk on his lips. He kisses me passionately, his hands reach under the shirt and caress my naked skin, sending shivers through my whole body. I clutch onto his chest, balling up the fabric of his t-shirt in my fists.

For a moment I think he has decided to stay with me, when the phone starts ringing. He pulls away and we stare into each other's eyes; the gold flecks dulling to a light tan as they always seem to when he is sad. We both know who it is; there is no one else that

would be calling at 4:04 AM. We wait until the answering machine kicks in, and listen as *she* leaves a message.

“Bonjour, Émile. Vous devez déjà être sur le chemin du retour. Je t'aime et tu me manques!” The line clicks, and he pulls away from me and grabs his omelet before going to sit at the breakfast bar. It takes me a moment to compose myself, my body is cold from the absence of his.

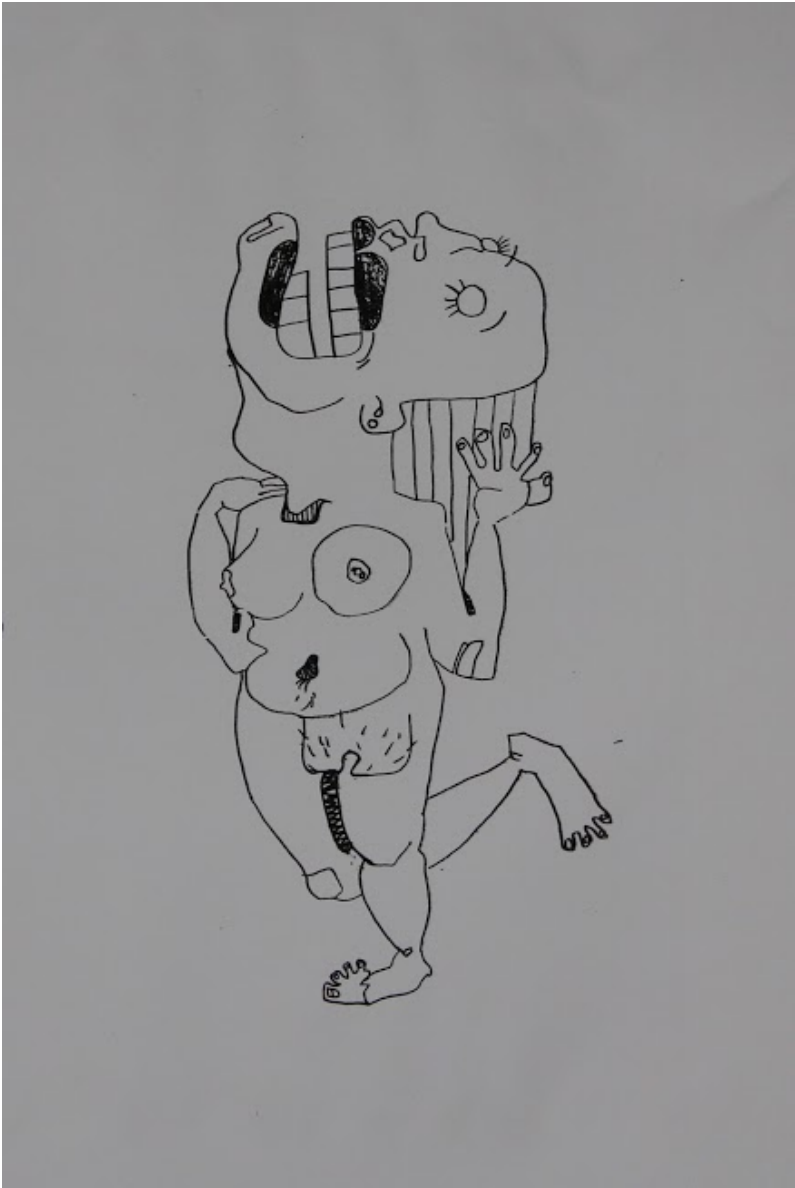
Once my mind finally accepts the fact that the moment is forever gone, I grab the espresso I made, and set it by him before taking the seat next to him. We don't speak while he eats. My chest clenching a little more with each passing second. When he is finished all he says is thank you before getting up and grabbing his cello case and bag. I want him to say more. I *need* him to say more to me before leaving. I feel as though he is about to say something when he comes up and kisses my forehead, but he doesn't. He has to feel the apprehension I am feeling at this moment, right? When he does stop in the doorway, my heart races with anticipation. Maybe he has finally sensed my sudden anxiety.

“And Sam...” I perk up even more when he says my name. Whenever he says my name it always sounds more feminine than when others say it; it makes my heart flutter. “Zee symphony ‘as an event Friday night. She is coming, so you will need to be out ov ‘ere oontil Sunday evening.” He doesn't turn around as he says this, and when he is finished, he walks out closing the door behind him.

Funeral Bouquet
Kaitlyn Kaufenberg



Oranges, The Kind You Eat- Lithograph
Elizabeth Brown



Leftovers (accompanies previous page)

Elizabeth Brown

Today, I will break my neck
and allow myself to cry on my own shoulders,
I will kiss my cheek and laugh at how soft my skin is
in a world that can be so hard.
I will wrap my arms around my wishbone,
and tell myself that my ugly,
is the most beautiful thing I have ever felt.

Today, I will gnaw on my own rib-cage
until I pick my heart clean.
I will hand a sign that reads
"Do not feed the animals."

Tomorrow, I will come back for seconds of you,
Microwave the leftovers,
And nothing will have changed.

Grief

Danielle VanBrabant



Forever Traumatized

Fue Yang

Have you ever wondered how you ended up somewhere, but don't remember at all? We were walking out of my two story home that I never lived in before, but it was my house. Situations like this you do not get to create.

About half a block up the road we stopped and observed a house like families at a zoo waiting for the lazy silverback to get up and do ape things. My imagination morphed the windows and door into a face while the little boy creeped at us from inside. The empty in ground pools in the back gave me an unnerving feeling. Then the boy appeared on the patio! Immediately our scene changed like a cartoon show, sliding from one end to the other. I still noticed the little dent on my sixth grade locker when I kned the door shut in order to lock it.

I was lying on my right arm, partially underneath my comforter blinded by a light. I never leave my lamp on. My alarm only read 6:35AM. At the speed of light, darkness swarmed my room. I felt the presence of an uninvited entity standing at my door. My body anchored like a fallen tree. It stretched across me like a shadow and descended upon me.

I was lying on my right arm, partially underneath my comforter blinded by a light. I never leave my lamp on. My alarm only read 6:35AM. At the speed of light, darkness swarmed my room. Frozen like a fossil, I waited and waited and waited for a familiar event to happen. The clock reads 7:10AM; I finally stood up and made my own decision.

The Donut
Abigail Voyer

DONUT WORRY



BE HAPPY

Just a Dreaming Dog

Brooklyn Massey

There you lay with a crooked smile suspended on your lips.
Your illuminated chest sinks as you let your warm breath escape.
A soft whimper makes me rotate my entire body in your direction.
I cannot help but wonder:

Are you the Rottweiler, who's scared to leave its own yard,
But his owner praises him as the guardian of the family?

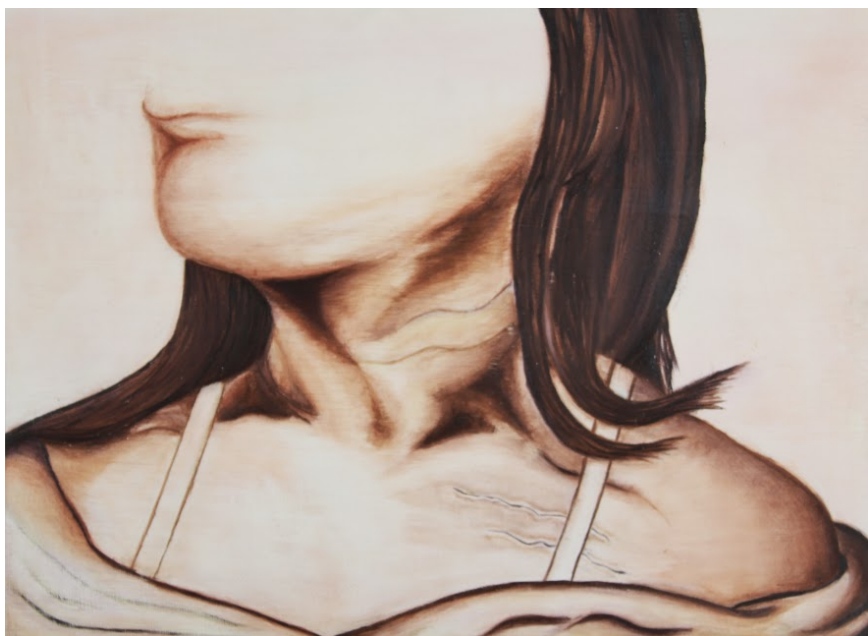
Or the Poodle, whose coded genes yield the perfect curly coat,
But only ever wants to have straight hair?

What about the Black Lab, trained to retrieve any game that falls from
the sky,
But is absolutely mortified by feathers?

Could you be the Pug, who is always being cradled & appreciated for
its convenient size,
But would do anything to stand tall like a Great Dane?

For just a moment are you thinking about being one of these dogs?
Anything but yourself.
Sweet dreams my darling. Drift into an unexpected world. Be wary of
consciousness.

Now I Hang On To These Things They Call Dreams
Nhouchee Yang



Boy Blue

Jennifer Surber

Fingernails stained blue and bitten down low
match the maze of veins visible in her
pale hands that sweat when she gets nervous.

Brown strands of hair cling to her sweater
as she clings to every last memory she had with him
until the day she decided he deserved better.

Caffeine hits her hard and her hands shake
as she grips her pen to write about the
time he stole her heart and never gave it back.
But the ink runs out before it gets good.

Palms stained blue from the ink
that got smudged along the journey
and can no longer be seen as words
but as memories of what was once written.

An eyelash on her cheek offers her a wish.
But there is too much to want, too much to need.
She just wants him. She just wants him back.

Brand new blue jeans stain her knuckles
as she slides them up and down her leg anxiously
until it burns. Time to start over.

The notebook paper is so smooth and it feels good.
So fresh and new to write about that boy again.
That boy who ruined her life in the most beautiful way.
That boy so blue just like her.

No Worries
Nhouchee Yang



The Edge

Kyndra Rothermel

As I stand at the edge, peering down the twenty-seven stories, I contemplate death. It isn't the first time of course. I believe it is human nature to think about death and what comes after – heck, one of Shakespeare's most famous lines is "what dreams may come." The difference between this time and the rest is that, this time it feels more concrete. In the past I would be watching a movie, or reading a book, or thinking about it at church, I was not standing on the edge of a bridge preparing to jump.

The first thing I think about as my toes dangle helplessly over the edge is my family. My mom, who at this very moment is probably halfway to work, listening to her favorite talk radio. I can hear the host reading off the weather report every twenty minutes, in between topics. That host used to annoy me as a child, her voice just a tad bit too high and of course the fact that she never seemed to spend enough time on a single topic to really learn anything about it. As I grew up I began listening to her myself, and now find that her voice is a part of my morning ritual.

Growing up to be like my mom was always something that I had joked about, and now I have. The radio show is just one case in which I have become my mom. Growing up, people would comment on how strange my relationship with her was, and it wasn't until I was in high school that I finally realized that not everyone's relationship with their mother was like mine. I consider my mother my best friend; I know all of her secrets and she knows all of mine. For a short time I started to listen to those telling me that I shouldn't have that kind of relationship with her, and I regret those few months. But I know some good came from that time of doubt, I learned to really appreciate her. I trust her more than anyone. Well, possibly except for my dad.

My dad. My sweet, goofy dad, who has always quietly been there for me. When I first moved into my own apartment, I had an issue with getting the landlord to replace my bedroom door, so after a week I came home to find my dad fixing it himself. He does all of this for me, and he didn't have to be my dad. He could, very easily, just have been the man my mother married when I was 4 years old, but he chose to be more. This makes my relationship with him more special. I could not imagine my life without him, but for some reason my sister didn't accept him like I did...

My sister, who is probably fixing my nieces breakfast right now. I can see Carla, the four year old spit fire, trying to hug her two year old sister, Taylor. Somehow she always ends up dragging her little sister to the ground, the two rolling around, both giggling uncontrollably. I can not understand how they do not stress my sister out! I watched them for a week, with the help of three other people, and I wanted to crawl into a hole and cry. I joke that they are my “birth control.” However, whenever I see my brother-in-law and my sister with the girls, I know that that isn’t the case.

I always wanted a family of my own. Over the years my idea of what kind of family and when I want it has changed, but having some kind of family at some point has always been there. When I was eighteen years old, I thought that I wanted to have three kids all by the time I was thirty. By the time I was twenty, I had no idea what I was thinking. I couldn’t even imagine myself having any children until I was at least thirty, and I had decided I probably wanted to adopt at least one of my three children.

The main reason I had changed my mind was because I realized how much I wanted to do before I started a family. I wanted to see as much of the world as possible and do as many things as I could possibly do. I wanted to go to Cape Town and go diving in a shark cage, I wanted to go to Beijing and walk the Great Wall, I wanted to go to Kumkale and see the ancient ruins of Troy, I wanted to do all of this and more.

I look down once more toward the ground. Twenty-seven stories down flows the Orta River. I wonder how cold it is. It is late spring, so the water is probably still quite cold. I take a deep breath, my heart pounding hard in my chest, feeling as though it is beating twice per second. I jump forward off the railing. I had expected this to go quickly – that the five seconds would feel like five seconds – but time seems to slow. Each heart beat seems as though it is several seconds long, starting the moment my feet leave the railing.

Ba bump. I am at my first swimming lesson. I am three years old. I had already spent much of my time growing up on the beach, playing in the water and I had worn my favorite swim suit, the one with Esmeralda from *The Hunchback of Notre Dome* on it. I feel so confident, and when I get in the pool, I immediately start to doggy paddle around. I watch as my friends attempt to do the same, but smile as they all need help from their parents who are with them.

Ba bump. It is my first day of pre-school. I am so excited and am running around as my mother introduces herself to my new

teacher. I run up to a girl who is staying close to her mother, and try to pull her away to play. Her mother laughs, and introduces the girl to me as Anna. Anna gives me a look, letting me know she thinks I am crazy. "You are going to be my new best friend."

Ba bump. I am in kindergarten and I have my first crush. His name is John. It is spring, and my mother and dad just got engaged and are planning their wedding. I am telling all of my friends excitedly, when one of my classmates, Lucas tells us that his father is a pastor and marries people. We all decide that during recess we will all couple up and Lucas will marry us. I quickly go up to John and tell him he is going to be my groom, and he accepts. We are the third couple, and when Lucas says "You may now kiss the bride," to my surprise John kisses me. My first kiss...

Ba bump. My big sister and I just got home from school, and as we go around to the back of the house and sitting in the middle of the backyard is a brand new trampoline! Both my sister and I have been begging our parents to buy us one for months; I didn't really know what they were, but I knew that my sister wanted one so I went along with her. I look over and see my sister removing her shoes, so I follow suit and we both climb up onto the trampoline and start bouncing around. I now understand why she wanted one so much: this is fun!

Ba bump. It is the day after a huge snow storm and schools are closed for the second day in a row. I call my best friend Anna, to tell her to come over and play. When she gets there we decide to shovel all of the snow in my yard into a giant pile. Once we have gathered it all in one place, we decide it isn't enough and branch out to my neighbor's yard. The snow pile is nearly the height of the garage when we think up to turn it into a snow house for us to play in.

Ba bump. It is my last day of sixth grade and I am standing outside the school waiting for my mom when the eighth grade boy I have been crushing on comes up to me. He asks me if I want to go see a movie with him that night. I eagerly accept and later that night, him and his mom picked me up. She drives us to the theater and he buys my ticket to see the newest *Scary Movie* movie. Throughout the movie I anticipate the end, and him dropping me off. I hope he will kiss me, but when they drop me off, he doesn't even walk me to my door. I am very disappointed in my first date.

Ba bump. I am sitting on my bed and I have decided that I can't take it anymore. I am no longer the great student I used to be, and Anna just a few days ago told me she couldn't be my friend

anymore – she wants to be a part of the popular group and I don't. I thought I could get on without her friendship, but I see her every day. I take several prescription pills from the medicine cabinet. Several minutes later I realize what I have done, and call my sister, who is away at college, several hours away. I tell her and she calmly asks me to take the phone to our mom. When my mom gets off the phone she immediately takes me to the hospital where I spend the night.

Ba bump. High school graduation. I am so excited to be done with this part of my life and to move on to prepare for the life I know I was meant to lead. Over the last three years I have been able to overcome my first, horrible year of high school. In the fall I will be starting at one of the best universities in the Midwest. Our principal, Dr. Marks hugs me as she hands me my diploma. "I am so proud of you." She whispers into my ear, she was my biggest advocate when I realized I wanted to do better.

Ba bump. I am walking up to the second floor of the English building, heading to class. I have pulled up my emails on my cell phone, and right on top is an email from Random House Publishing. Opening it up I squeal in delight. Several people look at me, including my friend Hannah, who gives me her infamous WTF face.

"I got the job!" It was the first and only job I applied for when I realized that in less than three months I would be graduating. She too begins to squeal with me, causing more people to stare.

Ba bump. I am standing in front of The Water Lily Pond. I have been standing here for the last six minutes admiring one of the most beautiful paintings ever made, by one of my favorite artists, when I suddenly feel a presence behind me. Arms wrap around my waist and lips press gently to my throat, just below my ear. I lean back into his arms, a sigh of joy escaping my lips. He whispers "I love you" quietly into my ear.

A jolt pulls me from my memories, and I see the river getting farther away. I keep watch as it comes closer, then the jolt pulls me away once more. I begin laughing from the adrenaline rushing through my veins. I just crossed off number twenty-one on my bucket list: bungee jumping.

Some Like it Hot

Jennifer Surber

For Marilyn

Shiny letters on the marquees
line up in the sequence of her name,
but spell out a person who isn't her.

The cameras snap her with a slap.
She is blinded by the reflections
that consume her identity.
She is deafened by the demands of a man
trying to make his living.

Snow white hair is sprayed stiff and curled
and poisonous red lips beg men to take a bite.
Her cream silk dress is for
the lustful imagination
and with one breeze,
the perfect shot is stolen.

Her teeth shine bright
like the diamonds that frost her wrists.
Her satin skin draws eyes.
Her angelic voice makes graceful waves.

But inside she is crumbling.
She has become a product.
Nothing more than flexibly sexual dimensions,
an abused muse who wasn't rescued,
but destroyed by Hollywood.
Soon she will feel as empty as her pill bottle,
and as heavy and stiff as
the muscles of the man who
finally rescues her.

Telepath

Jennifer Morales

"What hath God wrought"
we are fast unworking,
constant as bees ravaging the flower,
ready ants marauding in sugar.

No. There is no parallel.
We are the human machine
with metallic brains and jaws
uniquely chewing our way through
the net which suspends us.

No one can suspend our chewing and ravaging.
The sky clogged with planes.
The cells of fish
flesh rendered plastic.
This stream undrinkable,
the soil inert.

If you are not already slowing, slow.
We went too fast, together.
Unplug the fixtures.
Incite the bygone filaments,
rekindle the old flames.
From flax we can make cloth and wick.
Weave branches into huddles where
we will await the deer.

Shelter the bees, those tender marauders,
and gather the star moss.
Wounds may be bound in plantain and boneset.
We went too fast
and we are broken fast,
together.

Our descendants will understand that
we communicated in a flash.
But they will be confused,
calling it

"telepathy."
Do slow. Do.
The suspense is killing me:
"Calling all.
This is our last
cry
before our eternal silence."

Author Jennifer Morales read from and discussed her short story collection, "Meet Me Halfway, Milwaukee Stories" in the fall when she visited campus. Her book, published in 2015 by University of Wisconsin Press, address race-relations in Milwaukee.

What to Do With the Body

Jill Sisson Quinn

The eagle stands like a child dressed for church—white shirt, brown pants, hands in pockets—in the far corner of the lawn, as if trying to get as distant as possible from the one who will whisk him away to worship. I watch, confused, assuming he should carry his meal to a high-up throne. Once I have fancied a full nest of rabbits gone—who decimated my meadowsweet, who wait for my broccoli and beans—I go to take a look. The eagle flies. I find nothing until I cross the sharp line between grass and field, step through the mud toward some dark matter twenty feet out. From a dead barn cat, light-years of entrails uncoil.

Inside, we carry the universe. You thought you were whole, an indivisible substance, one important element. When you were young in another field far away you found a goose with a golden egg. At the time, a fable was more believable than what you really saw: not an egg but an organ—a stomach or bladder, bloated, made of shiny inner skin that glistened in the outer world. The goose was dead. Death appalls mostly because it reveals our true architecture. Impermanence can be storied away, but viscera are palpable; we who inherit the kingdom of heaven still slave to a gross anatomy. There's always the problem of what to do with the body. Blood spews, bones snap. If only we could live whole and die whole, like iron, like gold, dissolve and precipitate, be always what we thought we were.

In 1825, a young voyageur named Alexis St. Martin was accidentally shot at close range through the abdomen. He survived. In 1980, I watched a children's science show reenact army surgeon William Beaumont observing digestion through the hole in St. Martin's stomach, which healed but never closed, until, in Beaumont's own words, it resembled, minus the sphincter, "a natural anus." On the TV screen, the actor portraying Beaumont roughly pushed a finger into the hole and fished out a string he had inserted there earlier baited with pieces of meat and lettuce, now unrecognizable. I was horrified—the body's systems up to that point more fantasy than the idea of God.

"Where should I look for the body?" my husband jokes, prodding me to tell him where I plan to go each time I leave for a hike. I live near a trail, the Ice Age Trail, which follows the farthest reach of a glacier that retreated ten thousand years ago. I walk the trail like a child exploring lines on the face of a grandparent: here, joy; there, a

long sadness. The glacier, too, has left its impressions: winding creases and deep pockmarks.

A few weeks ago, I was looking for salamanders, circumnavigating every kettle pond along the trail. The going was rough: a trail seems wonderfully wild until one leaves it and must break new ground with each footfall. Cutting across inclines the foot shifts inside the shoe like a continental plate, causing blistering orogenies in surprising places, the inside of the big toe, the knuckle of the middle one. Your bushwhacking knees become tick magnets. Limbo-ing beneath partway-downed trees and stepping over rocks and logs feels like some sort of geriatric aerobics that ends up kicking your butt.

I had just leapt over a narrow slough, sunk half my foot in mud. The water seeped into my left boot, ungluing the heel part. Then there, before me, lay the full skeletons of two bucks. The winter had been cold. These two lay close, as if they had curled together one night and not woken up. Bodies completely decayed, they lay like ancient aristocrats with their riches—two great racks: one six points, one eight—ready for the rut in heaven. I wanted the antlers. I gripped the end of one and gave it a tug, thinking the pedicel might snap from the skull like a floret of cauliflower, which it resembled. But what I felt instead was a strange kind of gravity, the full weight of the fleshless head and spine, the pull of what this animal once was. The pedicel stayed fused to the skull. It was like heaving an anchor up, and set me trolling in waters I did not like.

My father is having trouble seeing. He missed the main event: in the back of his eye a blood vessel burst, splattered blood across his retina.

It could happen, the optometrist said, to any vein in anyone at any time. High blood pressure, though, is the likely culprit. My father's hypertension is the kind with no underlying cause, called "essential," as if he couldn't live without it, as if he were always seething just beneath the surface, a pot about to blow its lid, this man who sleeps easily and is happy raking leaves or reading a historical biography. The blood that coursed through his veins just had to get out. The rupture went unnoticed, but now the world is difficult to notice: his granddaughter smiling, the letters in a TV ad.

The Ice Age Trail stretches for 1,200 miles, etching a backwards "S" across the state of Wisconsin. But I hike, regularly, from County Trunk T to County Trunk Z, the New Hope segment, just 1.2 miles of it.

Last week, I sat along the trail above a pond set in the forest like a deep bowl barely filled. Something pushed a V across the surface. I moved from the rim down to the skeleton of an old beaver lodge, mud-less and white, and zigzagged out over the water on the main beam, its branches, gnawed to points, both obstacles and handholds. I sat precariously, legs crossed so I touched the spine of the lodge at ankles and tailbone, the beveled edge of a branch poking my back, arched to keep my rear from aching. The original yoga, I mused.

My perch descended into the water six feet in front of me. On my left waited a cluster of wood frog eggs in a cloud of algae and mud that could very well have rested on the back of a turtle. Suddenly, to my right, the V approached. I froze. A muskrat streamed over the log like a platelet or microphage moving through the pond's very veins. I couldn't have placed him more squarely in the crosshairs of a telescope, magnified in the tannin-colored water made transparent by sun high in the sky.

Thoreau calls a lake the earth's eye. I wish to observe not the workings of a pond but our planet's ocular system, how the earth sees, extract, like Beaumont, strings of facts. But perhaps I am less spectator than cog. We have the universe inside us—a system of interworking parts that can spill in a field contained in a whole not fully sentient of its design: all that pulsing, secreting and dilating we're not conscious of. Likewise, are we not part of some greater system, not fully sentient of what contains us, the nature of the entire?

"The whole," Aristotle said in *Metaphysics*, "is something beside the parts." By morning, the eagle in the yard doubles; two sit where there was one—the dead cat their midpoint—as if the first had split. In single-celled organisms we call this doubling asexual reproduction but in ourselves, when it occurs, as everywhere it does (in our hearts, our livers), we call it mitosis. Why? The process is the same. We give birth every hour. There are muskrats in our veins. So, too, are we the daughter cells of some universal marrow. Born through a wound that heals but never closes, we are blood that wants out. We cast our lines, and catch ourselves.

Author Jill Sisson Quinn visited UWL in February 2016 as part of the College of Letters and Sciences' Creative Imperatives Festival. She read a few of her works downtown at a local coffee shop, The Root Note.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

ELISE BURNS

DANIELLE NOLDEN is graduating from UW La Crosse in May and preparing for life as an art educator. She finds that maintaining a balance between both making and teaching art is crucial to the development of her career and future aspirations.

MIKAYLA PETERS is an English Literature major and German Studies major. She is from Onlaska, Wi. Her interests include writing, reading, and working within the community. She's volunteered at Capable Canines of Wisconsin, Mission America, Feed My Starving Children, The Humane Society, YMCA, and more. Other interests include creating and playing video games, learning new languages and cultures, and studying psychology.

LIBBIE MILLER is a teller and listener of stories. She writes as much for herself as other people. She has so many plants on her desk, it has become impossible to study there. Spring makes her happy.

JOSHUA JARRETT is a history major and a philosophy minor. He enjoys reading, writing, gaming, and poker. He looks forward to the day when love replaces hate in the world and peace finally prevails.

ALLISON JOHNSON is an Art and Philosophy double major. She created the pieces to mirror the absurdity of life because we are infringed by a society bound together by time and space. This society has manipulated the way we see ourselves, see others, and how we live (or do not live) our life. These pieces deal with the issue of society putting artificial restrictions on what is to be considered beautiful. In actuality, everyone embraces the utmost beauty which is only enabled through the differences amongst each individual. Once you break away from society or "reality" people can begin to see the beautiful nature in every aspect of both life and death. In response to reality, if we are lucky, we will go a bit crazy, but with this craziness and insanity comes a new beautiful world of wonder.

ABBY BARICKMAN

JAMES GROH is a senior graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Biology with a biomedical concentration as well as minors in chemistry and creative writing. Upon graduating he will be attending Utah State University to pursue a Master's of Science in Health and Human Movement while specializing in Health Education. Although he is first and foremost a science nerd, creative writing has been a hobby of his since high school. He mainly writes poetry but has recently began to explore prose and the short story. Inspiration for his writing comes from all aspects of life including the mundane and the magical. Everywhere you look there is a story to be written.

MADISON HAUS has come to terms, throughout college, with the fact that there will most definitely be ups and downs and whirlwinds of stressful

situations but its how you react to those situations that makes you who you are; never apologize for how you feel and how you decide to cope with things around you. You are your own person-be proud of that.

DAHLI DURLEY is a native of Potosi, Wi., but has called many places along the Upper Mississippi home, with La Crosse being her current residence. Photography is her most loved creative outlet for exploring less seen spaces and faces of the Driftless region, utilizing natural light and an eye for candid moments.

FUE YANG

KYNDRA ROTHERMEL is a senior at University of Wisconsin La Crosse majoring in English. In the fall of 2016 she will be moving to Italy where she is pursuing her teaching certification. This is her first published piece.

CHRISTINA GRIFFIN is a senior at UW- La Crosse with a double major in biomedical science and world history. She currently lives in Galesville with her fiancé and their mini-dachshund, Oliver.

BROOKLYN MASSEY

JENNIFER SURBER is a Communication Studies Major with a minor in Creative Writing. She transferred to UWL from the Chicago area in the fall of 2015. She's been writing poetry recreationally since middle school and fell in love with it so she decided to make it a bigger part of her life.

ELIZABETH BROWN is a mixed media artist, poet, and teacher. Her work is compelled by the idea of the "beautiful-ugly" and the juxtaposition inherent to the human experience. It is her belief that art is a language, and the viewers interpretation is as crucial as the artist's intent.

ABIGAIL VOYE was born in Minneapolis, MN and is now a senior at the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse. She enjoys deep chats, rainy days, hand calligraphy, and dogs. In her free time, you can probably find her downtown at a coffee shop or curled up in a bed with a book.

NHOUCEE YANG is an art major and photography minor at UWL. She enjoys many forms of art such as painting, printmaking, drawing, and photography. She mainly focuses on portraits no matter what medium. She will be graduating this coming fall and plans to continue to make art as much as possible.

DANIELLE VANBRABANT is a senior undergraduate majoring in biology. In her work, she explores the connection between science and art, using subjects such as the human figure, animals, and natural landscapes frequently to represent cyclical processes. Going forward, she will be studying scientific illustration, a field that utilizes artistic skills to create visuals of complex biological concepts that will help teach and challenge others.

KAITLYN KAUFENBERG is a senior at UWL with a major in Therapeutic Recreation and a minor in Art with a drawing emphasis. The piece she submitted to The Catalyst is from a series of pictures for Art 462. The series ties together birds and how people have different concepts of what death means to them. She chose birds for the piece because of death's connection to crows and vultures across cultures. She wanted to expand upon that. She thought that through showing the emotions that come from these different concepts she could look into the culturally taboo subject as well as the variety that people can think about with one concept.