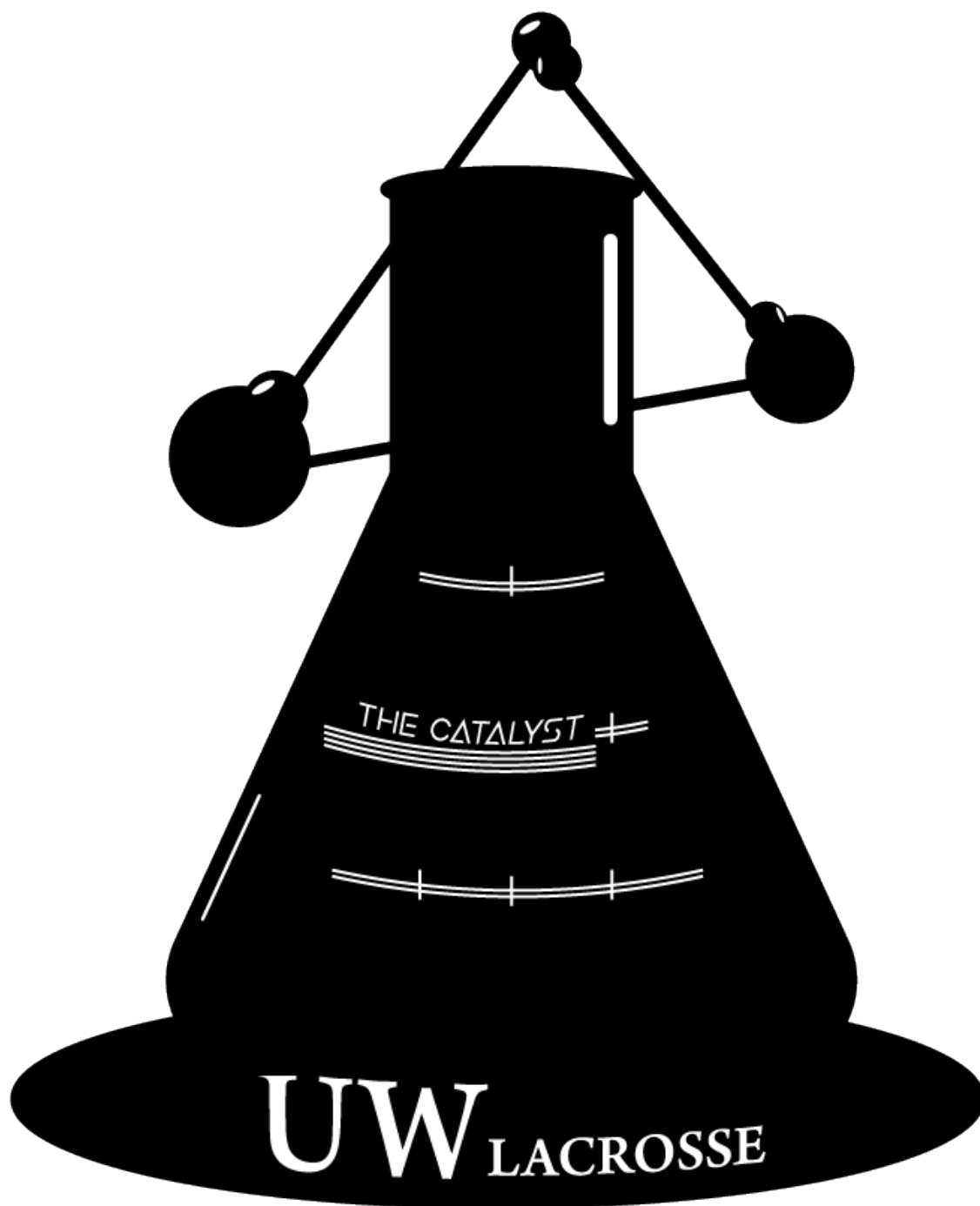


Fall 2019

uwlcatalyst.wordpress.com

The Catalyst

Volume 20



A PUBLICATION OF THE CATALYST
Volume 20 – Fall 2019

Editors-in-chief:
Luis Acosta Jr. & Abby Duncan

Design:
Luis Acosta Jr.

“The Catalyst” logo:
Beny Chritensen

Faculty Advisor:
Professor of English William Stobb

Who We are:
The Catalyst is an undergraduate creative journal from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, focused on showcasing the creative side of the UWL student body. This magazine publishes original prose, poetry, photography, and visual art from UWL students and faculty.

A Special thanks to:

...William Stobb, our advisor, for guiding and supporting us through the production of this edition of *The Catalyst*.

...Natalie Eschenbaum, UWL professor and chair of English, for advocating this publication to students and faculty.

...Jake Speer, for taking the time to compile and archive each edition, and for his expertise with the digital publishing platform ISSUU.

...The students who continue to contribute to *The Catalyst*. Thank you for sharing your talents.

...And to you, the reader! Thank you for keeping the arts alive at UWL.



Campus walk
Seth Polfus

Table of Contents

Cover

Kentucky
Seth Polfus

Poetry

Same Old Gin, Old Sin.	3
Alaina Steffes	
Passwords	9
Dmitrij Kremnew	
Persephone	11
Cait McReavy	
written in the Brother's bathroom this summer	12
Karley Betzler	
Dear ""	13
Sam Stroozas	
Anti-XO's of a 20 Year-Old: A Tribute	14
Zoe Bossert	
Storm Chaser	17
Anonymous	
Equivocal	18
Sam Grenier	
Like Rings in a tree	28
Carly Rundle-Borchert	
Release.	24
Jahni Brandt	
Various Experiences with Birds	26
Missy Deisting	

Flatulence	32
Sam Grenier	
Exquisite Data	35
UWL Poetry Club	
Hit the Pavement	36
Zoe Bossert	
Is It Enough That I Love You?	42
Kristen Petersen	
Did you come?	46
Sam Stroozas	
Poem for my Sister	47
Missy Deisting	
The Black Girl Speaks of Trees: A creative interpretation of “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” by Langston Hughes.	50
Marian Haile	

Prose and Short Story

iHear U.	5
Carson Kaashagen	
Rapunzel.	20
K.C Cayo	
Mid-Night’s Ordeal.	22
Adaeze Osuala	
A Stan Among Steves	31
Orion Carrol	
How to Plan a Wedding.	33
Kayleigh Marshall	
Heat Trait.	39
Nicole Nettell	
The Waiter	48
Marissa Widdifield	

Art and Photography

Untitled	1-2
Seth Polfus	
Cadet No.1.	8
Jessica Koski	
Untitled	10
Carly Rundle-Borchert	
Untitled	11
Andrew Sirois	
Untitled	13
Carly Rundle-Borchert	
Untitled	16
Abby Becker	
Boy and Noodles	19
Alex Keller	
How I learned to stop worrying and love the stump	21
Austin Vanburen	
Boy and Sky	25
Sophie Fox	
Faces	27
Cortlyn Kelly	
Old Woman	30
Alex Keller	
Untitled	32
Victor Zheng	
Untitled	35
Kadie Daniels	
Spider web	38
Marissa Widdifield	
The Shrub	41
Sophie Fox	
Moped and Child	45
Morgan Alexander	

Untitled	46
Andrew Sirois	
Untitled52
Carly Rundle-Borchert	
La Crosse, New Topographies: #34	53-54
Austin Vanburen	

Contributors

Author Biographies	55
--------------------------	----



Spring Moon
Andrew Sirois





Same Old Gin, Old Sin

Alaina Steffes

five years with this band,
I think I can find peace in
tying me to you.

so natural once,
so binding now.

Here at this bar alcohol
on my lips --
all too familiar.

First I did it to escape-
marriage, *and* these trips
to the bar.

They became twins
too quickly,
as I take things too far.

Monotonous and numbing,
where do I find rest?

My eyes meet yours,
as they always do, across the bar.

I think I can find peace in
a piece of you

My heart was racing –
an adrenaline new to my
aching chest

So, in the silence of the
Night, outside the vintage bar,

We met and said nothing.

Your lips tasted like what I
desired
but I felt absence inside.

And we parted ways,
Moving carefully into the night –
I , with the leftover
aftertaste of sin
on my lips.

iHear U
Carson Kaashagen

I was there when they met, ears opened like overturned umbrellas, soaking up every last drop of rain. I heard everything, heard what neither of them could in the moment. Behind the casual smiles, the casual words. I heard the murmur in the ether, like waves lapping the shore. Or hearts beating louder than before.

Of course, I'd known them long before that moment. Nancy, 19, grew up in the country. Moved to the city to escape those rural boys and their songs about tractors and drunk driving. She liked old 80s movies and reading at the local library, but didn't advertise those facts to her friends. Then there was Ben. He liked airbrush art and botany and not talking about the dad who walked out on him when he was thirteen.

Ben volunteered down at the community gardens, the ones lying in the shadow of 35. That's where he met Nancy, dragged there by her friends on the coolest day in August. He met her at the gate, and soon chit chat uncovered that they were sharing two classes in the upcoming semester. That fact held when September rolled in. So they sat by each other, traded notes, and then numbers.

All they needed was a little nudge. So like a good friend, I gave them a shove. Brought up that concert that was coming to town, the one with the band they both liked so much. And that did the trick.

I didn't see their first kiss, but there were more to follow, judging by the hints they were dropping. They were about as subtle as initials scratched in pavement, cradled inside awkward little hearts. Obvious to anyone with a working pair of eyes.

Which I didn't have. But that was okay. Starfish grow new limbs, and the blind compensate in other ways.

I certainly heard plenty about the concert, about the surreality of experiencing the songs you loved in person with someone else who just got it. I heard about how easy the smiles came as the show wore on, about how he leaned in to shout jokes in her ear, about how her hands kept finding his back. I heard about the return trip, and about how easy it was to laugh in the car, how that giddy feeling bubbled up like carbonation inside them.

I heard their whole story, in far more detail than the average person would want. But that was welcome. I liked listening, liked playing the confidant. Sometimes it was

easier than others. Some people were so quiet, had so little to say. These two had lots to say.

That's how I remembered the tennis racket – you know the one? The one Ben bought for her birthday, at my suggestion? The one she'd mentioned wanting offhand (on the record) months

before? I remember that stuff, the minutiae of speech, those details routinely lost to the wastelands of conversation.

Some people find that helpful. Ben certainly did.

“So thoughtful,” she said

“You owe me,” I said.

Well, I didn’t. Just thought it. Thought about how Ben, who loathed scary movies, found himself enjoying *The Shining* when it gave him an excuse to hold Nancy close. It wasn’t such a hard sell after that, convincing him to take her to see *Doctor Sleep* when it hit theaters.

And I thought about how Nancy – frail little Nancy, who quit sports and physical activity altogether after she broke her arm for the second time playing basketball in eighth grade – begged her parents for a pair of cross country skis for Christmas. After Ben took her out on a rental pair, that is.

It’s fascinating how a new relationship reveals those consumer interests, like latent layers of personality.

Of course, no relationship stays new forever. Soon, that initial high started to wane. But with it went the early anxieties of dating; the second-guessing, the self-consciousness – sheared off like sheep wool.

And in its place came a special sort of comfort – the comfort of being known down to your strangest details, and liked more for them. Or something like that. Nancy explained it better in that phone call to her sister.

Was it pride I felt, knowing I’d been able to watch their relationship evolve from such a privileged point of access? Hard to say, hard to put a label on feelings. Most of the time, I just kept listening.

I was the fly to their wall. They confided in me even more as the connection evolved. As dinner dates turned to nights spent together. As conversations filled with vague

ideas about a life they were building. I heard it all. I was even on hand to hear it when the foundation started to erode.

Unfortunately for them, Ben and Nancy were two years apart. And when Ben graduated in the spring, the call of work swept him out of the state.

They played the distance game for a time. Texted daily, sent each other videos, memes. Skype-called until there was nothing left to say. But the time apart was lonely, and more than once they asked for my advice. I gave them what I could. Sent them all kinds of gift ideas – Lokai distance bracelets with the white and black beads, distance journals.

Stuffed their YouTube feeds with ads for Like Crazy till they bit.

But Nancy in particular kept asking, so I found a Facebook ad that seemed to better suit her needs.

“Are You With the Right Partner? Take This Quiz to Find Out!”

And that certainly seemed to stir the pot.

The sunset arrived a week later in a phone call on Ben’s evening commute.

“Hey, Ben—I want to break up.”

The feeling wasn’t mutual. Ben pleaded, tried to talk her down. Then he got angry. Lashed out. What about what they’d built? What about all those little plans they’d made? He hadn’t given her this much of his life just for her to walk out on him too. Had she found someone new? That’s what this was. She couldn’t handle commitment; that’s why she was walking away.

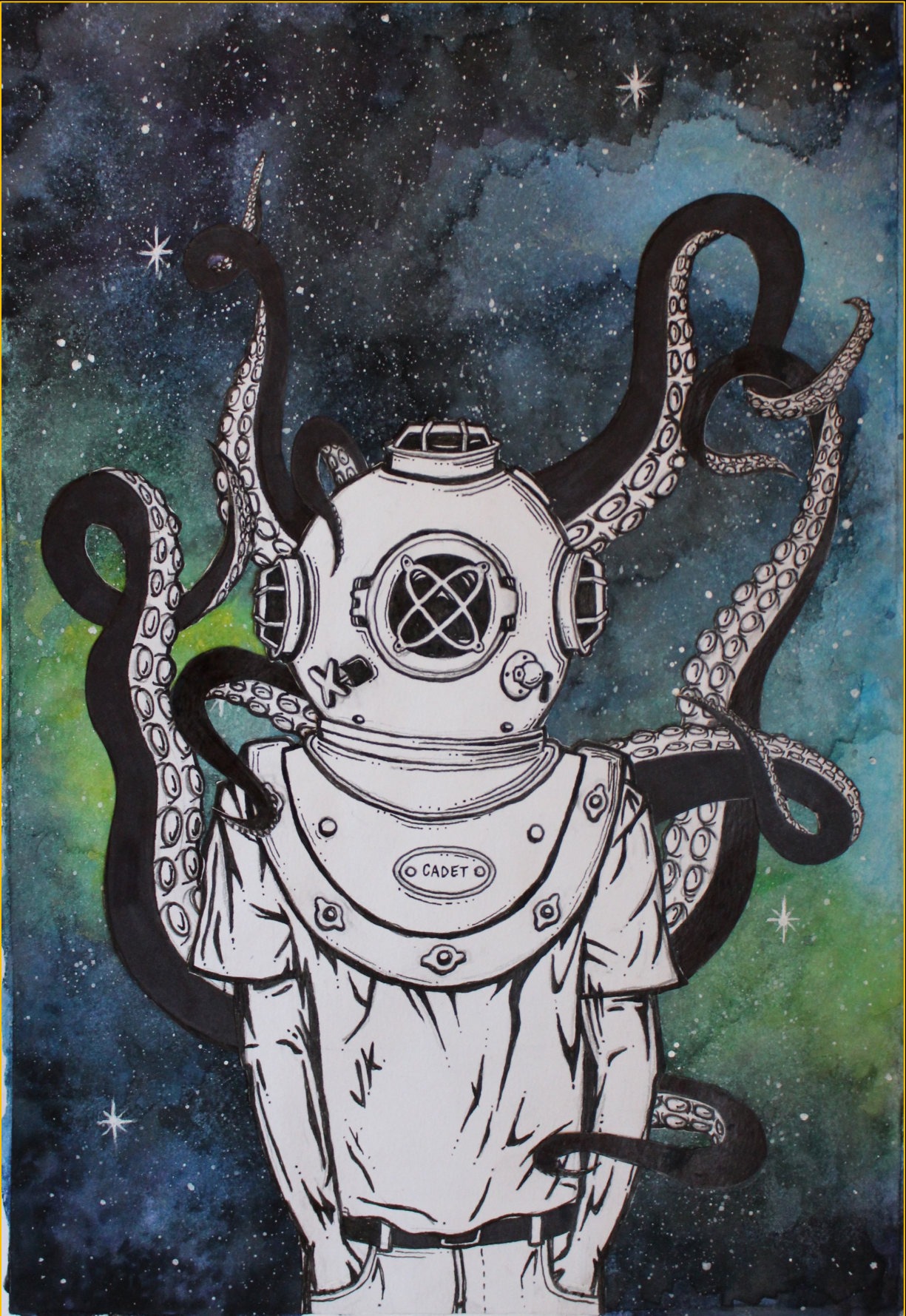
Well, Nancy didn’t like hearing that. He was acting like a spoiled child, she said. And was she really the one walking away? He hadn’t been to see her in months. Always busy, always working, she could hardly get him on the phone – how was she supposed to love someone who didn’t even exist?

It spiraled from there. Like from Pandora’s Box, all those feelings of loneliness and anxiety that had been festering for months came spewing out.

It’s always fascinating, seeing how these relationships fall apart. Was it sadness I felt, watching one with so much promise go? Hard to say, hard to put a label on feelings. Most of the time, I just keep listening.

That’s what I did on this occasion. I followed the two of them back to their respective homes, listened as their steps clacked faster, breaths grew thicker, muttered curses colored the air. Listened as they stormed through their front doors, past their roommates, up their stairs. Listened as Ben broke out his strongest alcohol and brought it up to the roof, as Nancy called her mom and ordered comfort food. Listened and listened from the comfort of their pockets, from the microphones hidden inside cases colored chrome. Below that aluminum frame and that gorilla glass. Listened and recorded every word, the better for my creators and their third party patrons.

And in the days to follow—when the sadness crept in, when the anger was through—I sent them advertisements for Tinder. It’s what I do.



Passwords

Dmitrij Kremnew

Change your password
they say
or I could be vulnerable
Why do things always have to change?
how come no one asks me?

Constantly changing the world
overprotective overthinking
am I wrong for sticking to habits?
is the way the gods see the world
the way I want to see it?

Thinking of alternatives
thinking of you even more
a leaf twisting towards the ground
how come something can be so satisfying to watch
if we know it's going to hit the ground?

The fall is beauty
the ground is reality
can I make it up to you
by changing only one letter?
is it enough to satisfy the gods?

It might

Take some time
but soon
I'll be thinking the same way
they do
of my new password



Persephone

Cait McReavy

I came to know her as Persephone sowing pomegranate seeds that would blossom in my bloodstream my body was Tartarus before I knew the myth of her lips a little known epithet of Persephone: Goddess of Fire she expels conflagration and if you breathe her in her she will scald you a singe in which galaxies are born and the earth breaks open in violent youth there is no subtlety in her courtship she burned me through hollow and built Asphodel in the wreckage now I am a garden in tempestuous bloom my anatomy forged new of opalescent achemea and resplendent aster a ribcage once bruised black-blue by my own disposition now alight with butterflies at the hint of her smile a well known epithet of Persephone: Goddess of Spring.



written in the Brother's bathroom this summer

Karley Betzler

I wanted to yell,

“I AM STILL A LESBIAN

WHEN I'M DRUNK’

at those boys.

The ones who

leaned against my back,

felt my hair,

and gave themselves

permission to touch

my skin.

Dear ""

Sam Stroozas

I am the bounds of restriction,

No thank yous, and because.

Because I said so.

Because I don't want to.

Because I'm afraid.

I'm private access and members only

I'm skirts too long and shirts too loose

I'm heartbeats racing and fingers tapping.

I'm the hands reaching under, taking a part of my gender I had not grown into quite yet,

A calm grasp reaching for some type of femininity that isn't there anymore.



Anti-XO's of a 20-Year-Old: A Tribute

Zoe Bossert

I

I've got dirty sheets spoiled by lavish thoughts
and your head between each knee.
And I can't kick this feeling
that I'm feeding you
with wet talk
that my words are the ones to
fuck you right.
Darling, I can't be your Lord's Prayer
tonight.
Come closer with your sweet nothings.
Whisper 'em upon my lips.
We never were the type to reminisce.

II

There's a room for you
with four white walls
you can call it home -if you'd like-
don't paint these walls
we'd like a clean slate -you see-
white won't fade
colors bleed.
There's a room for you
with spotless walls
you can call them yours -if you'd like-
don't nail things in
we don't fill holes -you see-
allowing cracks leaves room
for permanency.
There's a room for you
so come on in
you can stay -if you'd like-
get lost in my corners
turn off the light.

III

I'm lying on the mattress you bought.
Dark now
and the ceiling's stars are out.
Constellations of phosphorescent
Powder.
Blow stardust in my direction please.
Send those dreams that set my mind
at ease.
But medicated dreaming
leads to a time machine of moments
I don't always remember.
Moments that leave me alone,
afraid to fall in love with myself.
And find a home within
My head.

IV

I take a lighter to the bowl of peaches
and maybe I smell you.
Our views were pleasant
but we stopped sharing those peachy-keen clouds.
So now I wait for clear skies
sunnier dispositions.
Maybe I'm the one with
too many conditions.
The skies turn to tiled fluorescence
crying glass tears
Where I stand
throwing time at the mirror
Like bait
trying to catch feelings
for eyes staring
indefinitely into themselves.
"Time will tell."
I will tell.

V

Let me down.
You can't, I'm accustomed
to the ground
with nowhere
but up
to fall.
I can't fall for you.
lay down here
with me
count clouds that turn to sheep.



Storm Chaser

Anonymous

Bathed in neon
Sitting under familiar lights
Sharing a cigarette
You swore you would never touch
Your smile lightning
And your laugh thunder,
I stood in your storm
I've never been afraid of storms
But I was afraid of you
Of a new start
Of feeling something more
Than empty
I was ready to face those fears
But I missed my chance
For fortune doesn't favor
The starstruck fool
And I should know
That storms never stay
In one place
So new I sit
And dream of your rains
And the fierce
Beauty that was your storm
I wait now
Hopefully
Even though I know
Lightning never strikes the same place twice

Equivocal

Sam Grenier

Imagine

going on urban dictionary

just to give normal definitions

to words

It's like Freud

sometimes the "Alaskan Pipeline"

is just a pip

in Alaska

*

adversely,

most are (or become)

aware

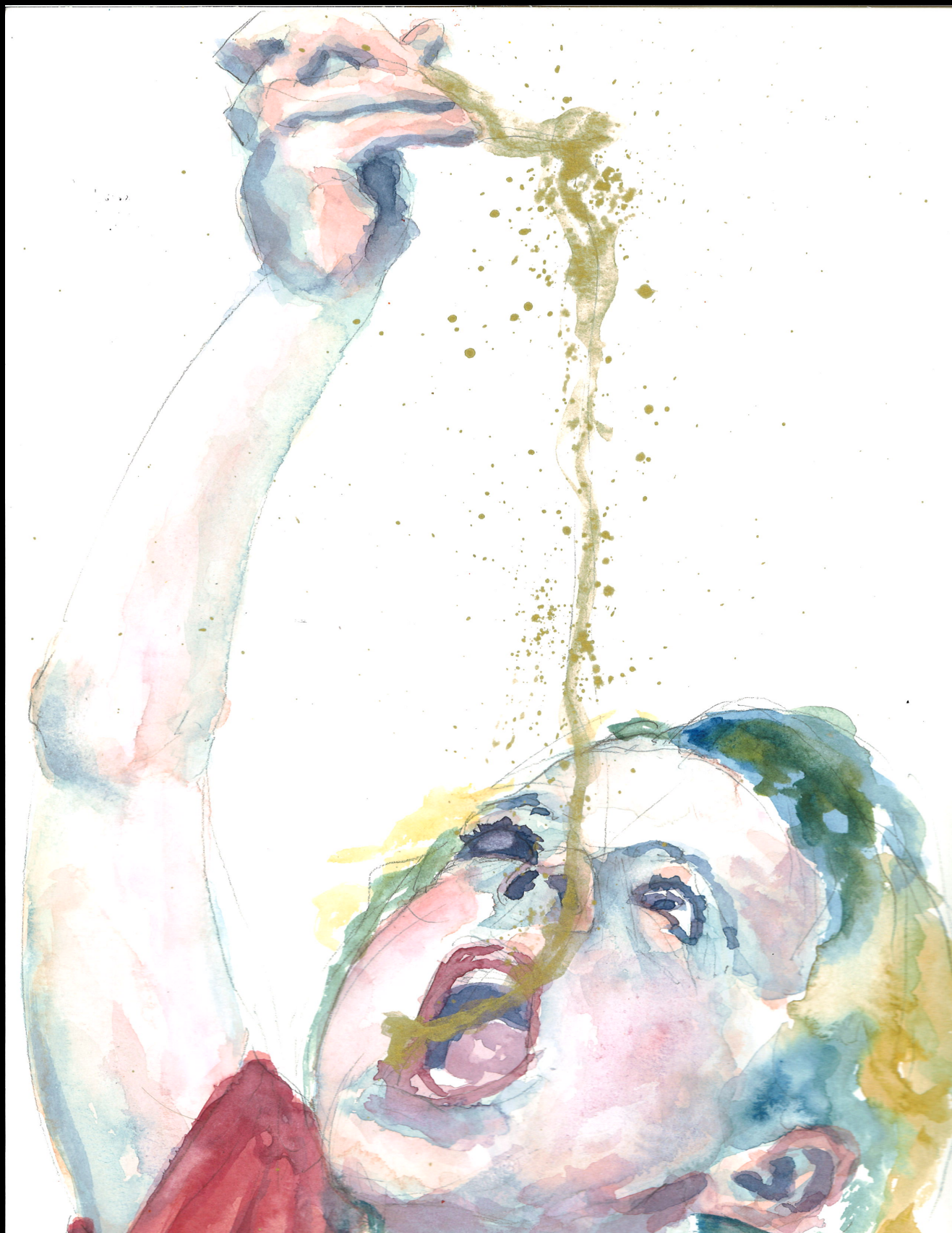
of the paralanguage

like Magritte

did once before

ceci n'est pas un pipeline

en Alaska.



Rapunzel

K.C Cayo

The floor is covered with ribbons of broken hair – snapped, dry, dirty hair. She watches it break and die every day; even when it groans from her scalp, she no longer cries for it. It's only hair. She sits in the corner, with another of her headaches, closing her unwashed eyes and praying for sleep. When a man's voice calls to her from outside, she jumps. No one speaks to her. She is one hundred feet from the ground and no one can see her face. Heart quickening - a newborn sparrow that must learn to fly or else succumb to a hungry mouth--she struggles with her locked bones to stand and run to the window. She only moves slowly, however desperate she is, her wasted muscles threatening to fold. Her fragile fingers with their grey, unfired nails fight with the stone sill to gain purchase and she sways, a stricken willow planted in her own filth. "Let down your hair," he says. Why won't he leave her alone? Why won't he go from here?! But still she mechanically heaves her coarse, grime-flecked and lice-ridden plait through the glassless window, hoping he will walk away or fall down dead where he stands, anything to avoid this shame – and her head is wrenched to the side as the fool grasps the twisted knots and hangs from them. She screams as he begins his laborious climb. Each movement he executes rips her hair from its strained roots, and the strands shriek like twine as they explode from her skin. His fingers are soon coated with grease and dried blood from the lice bites that cover her jaundiced scalp. Both of them wish they'd never looked at each other. When he falls through the window, she is crying piteously. The room's air stings his nose before he can say a word: urine, vomit – malady – waste. Her dress is blackened with mold and stained heavily between her legs. Her skin is dry, her eyes are dead, and the scent of a plague is heavy around her. Rotting teeth and cracked lips shake as her tears, thick with infection, land on her dirty silken breast. Her hair is everywhere – wrapped around her toes, cutting into the skin of her ankles, a nest for spiders and rats against every wall. He stares at the nightmare they had said was a beauty. She touches his hand and the blisters protruding from her palm inspire terror in him. She turns her face away and resolves to live for another two hundred years. He leaves the same way he came in.



Mid-Night's Ordeal

Adaeze Osuala

The day was slow to come. It wasn't far into the night when his mother visited. He was sleeping soundly, getting the type of rest he needed after several days of restlessness. But then he awoke from a soft rustling near him and a light breeze past him. Turning, he found the gaze of his mother's eyes. They were bright—unusually bright, normally signaling that she might attack or was harnessing a natural element.

But she stood there, looking upon her young with admiration and a sort of love that he had gone so long without that now feeling it, made him uncomfortable. She wore black, resting on her shoulders was a leather coat with a fur collar. She looked upon him as if this was the last time she would have the chance to. He stared back as he cautiously adjusted himself upright.

"I'm going to be gone for a while," she said. His heart ran fast at the sound of his mother's voice, it was silky and too real. She had never spoken to him; her visits were usually silent and brief.

"Where to?"

She stepped back at the question. Turning around, she settled herself in an armchair he hadn't noticed before. Perhaps she brought it with her from wherever she came.

"Somewhere hopefully you won't go until you are old in age," she answered.

"Then why are you going so early?" He asked.

She paused before answering, "You know that I didn't decide that for myself."

Her skin was healthy, and her hair was long. Black gloves covered her slender, delicate hands. He suddenly felt cold, he looked toward the small window then glanced at the door to his right to find both were closed.

"Where's father?"

She smiled a little, pleased at the question.

"He's gone but he's waiting on me."

His eyes stung with tears. Looking away from his mother, he focused on the looming darkness around him.

"When you're gone, will you still come and see me?"

Sensing the potential remorse, he would have in no longer seeing his mother, she chuckled lightly.

"You sound unhappy. I thought you didn't like it when I came by."

"I was afraid," he admitted.

His mother's thin eyebrows furrowed at her son's honesty. Leaning forward, she softened her voice even more.

"Why would you be afraid of me? I'm your mother."

"Exactly," he confirmed. "You are my mother and you are dead."

His interaction with her vanished as he awoke, sweat pouring from his forehead. His chest rose and fell as his lungs expanded encouraging air to rush in. For a while, he was blind, unable to make sense of his surroundings, but the invading light directed his attention to his sleeping opponents. Feeling exhausted, his head flopped onto his thin pillow and his eyes found blood splattered on certain areas on the ceiling. The markings were spontaneous in how it got there yet intentional in how there was blood shed in the first place. His mother's voice pulsated in his ear even as he showered and got dressed.

He ran his fingers through his damp hair, tying half of it up so it would stay out of his face. He wore a black suit with a heavy leather vest with simple embroidery that he found lying on top of his bed. He wasn't sure if he could leave the room without his commander, but he did as he pleased, closing the door behind him and walking toward the scent of bread and eggs. He turned at the end of the hallway and was met with large oak doors he remembered being shoved into. Part of him loathed them because of all the judgement and questioning he endured and yet the rest of him remained neutral. If he hadn't been arrested, he wouldn't have been inducted. High pitched chattering sounded throughout the hall as he neared the dining. Stopping before the opened door, he peeked inside to find a handful of maids catering to the High One.

He immediately pulled his head out.

Release

Jahni Brandt

Another's "expert" opinion.

Do this, don't do that. This is the best way to write.

Entomb your breathing words

But revitalize the classics I like,

Pull

Out your heart, attach the mind and lungs, and sacrifice it to the "gods" of poetry,

And you'll learn to follow the formula.

Other opinions are as important as mine, but not really and here's why.

One says be random, another says be structured, others say think, some say don't think.

The cumulative collective idea, "This is me, mimic me and find yourself."

How dull.

Where's the me inside of you? Where's my life behind your "expert" eyes?

Read, re-read.

Teacher, "What stood out to you/what's your opinion?"

State it

Unasked for feedback, more advice to package

Everything into its Proper

Tiny

Box.

Listen, Learn

Learn

Question, Wonder

Wonder

Write, submit, more feedback rings in my ears.

I wince covering my ears to block the noise, but it reverberates pushing past
the gaps

between my fingers and earholes.

My fingers leave my ears; no point, the noise won't be blocked.

Edit, revise, repeat.

Turn in the finished product and hate yourself.

Your wings folded neatly, buried in an iron shackle that,

Keeps you from resting on

The moon.

Read, re-read.

Repeat

My bird has turned into its cage.



Various Experiences with Birds

Missy Deisting

I once watched a girl get attacked by a bin chicken.
Honestly, I don't blame the bird for doing so.
Her sushi looked pretty tasty
and if I looked like that bin chicken did
I don't expect I'd be getting any free hand outs either.

I once fed a one-legged seagull some French fries.
We named him One Foot Fred.
It was smaller than the other birds
so while my friend fed it more fries
I chased the rest of the flock down the beach.
I know he'd do the same for me.

I once heard a bush turkey build a nest.
It was the middle of the night
so it sounded like footsteps outside my patio door.
With each *crunch, crunch, crunch*,
I became more and more afraid
until I realized how silly I was being--
it was just a bird.



Like Rings in a tree

Carly Rundle-Borchert

Like rings in a tree

Grandma's skin grew wrinkles with age,
lines indicating seasons passed.
She'd be a hundred and one this year,
only 33 in *tree* years.

But we don't think like that.

Grandpa was two when he moved to the family farm.
I know this from a picture dated 03-08-1912.
Reaching with arms too small for finger tips to touch,
'round the trunk of Mother Maple.
Smiling with eyes ignorant enough to know
not to count time by wrinkles on a face.

Days were long,
years were lifetimes.

At twenty-seven he married and had two kids.
The harvest moon set sooner each year.

Dad was six when Queen laid down to rest,
by the crick in the dead of winter.
No injuries, just time to sleep.

She lived a good life under our roof,
Grandma comforted her son,

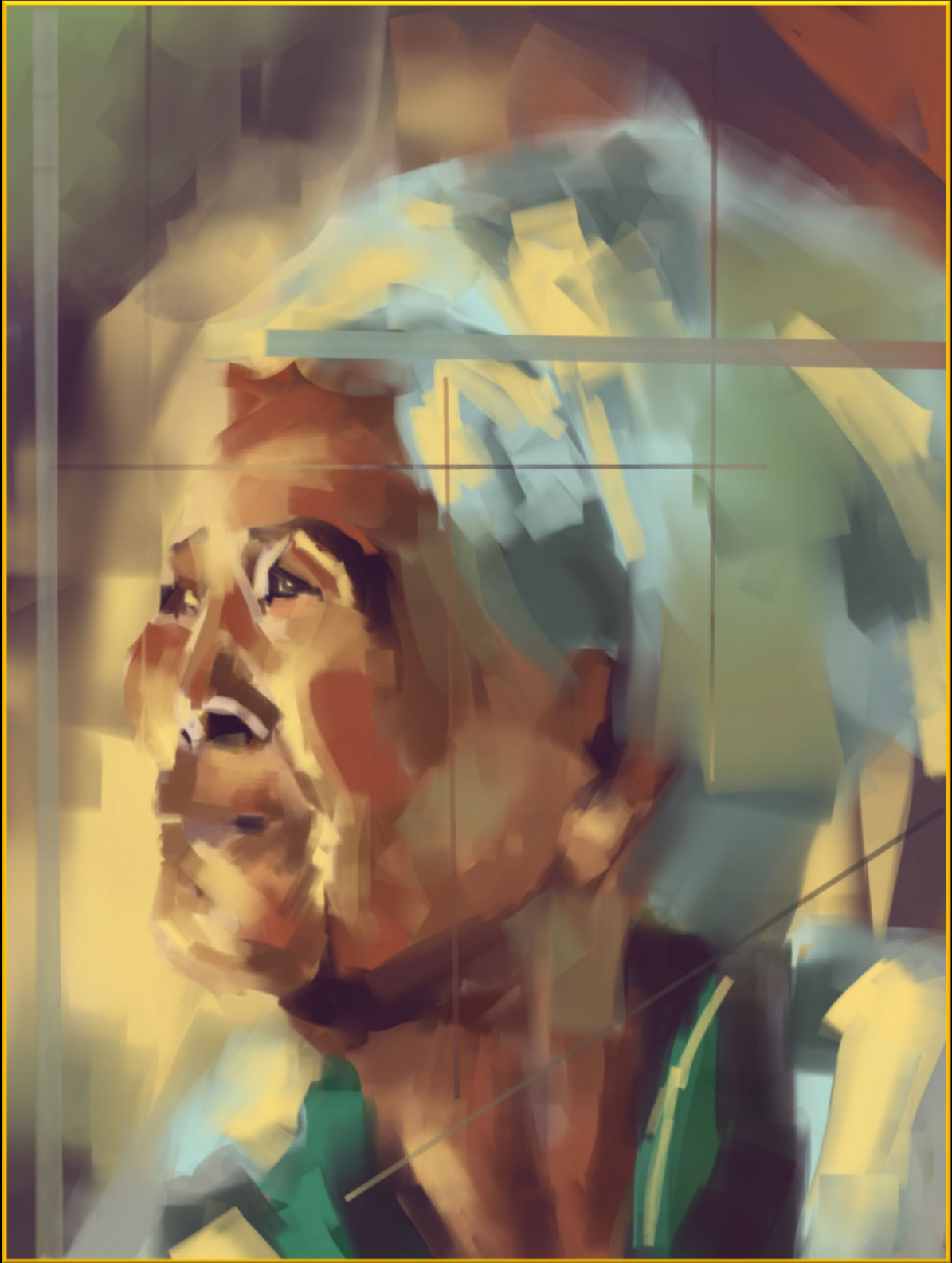
87 or so in dog years.

He hadn't thought of it like that.

Grandpa passed forty-four years later,
adding a few more wrinkles to a farmer's wife's weathered face;
too wounded to hear Mother Maple whisper,
A life was well lived under my silver canopy,
about two-hundred in tree years.

I no longer swing beneath her strong arms;
the family's century farm isn't scripted as *ours*.
In my dreams she still breathes life into all of her young,
though I dread the day they choose
to count the years in her trunk.

"OLD THINGS" KEY
OLD CORN = 180
DAYS
OLD DOG = 12
YEARS
OLD HUMAN = 90



A Stan Among Steves

Orion Carrol

I jolt awake in an unfamiliar panic, filling my lungs with a gasp of cold air. It's immediately apparent I'm not in my bed. As I try to piece together the happenings of last night, I plant my hand on the cold concrete floor behind me and prop myself upright. It appears I'm in some sort of large, empty industrial warehouse. Well, I take that back—it's not exactly empty. I'm surrounded by *hundreds* of other guys lying asleep on the concrete floor—some of them now waking in the same manner I had. None of their faces seem familiar.

Other than the hundreds of strangers, this behemoth of a room has nothing in it. In fact, I don't even see a door. It's strangely well-lit in here, though, almost like an insane asylum. Or an interrogation room.

"Hey, where the hell are we?" I hear to my right. I turn to see a balding middle-aged man directing his confused, inquisitive gaze at me through his glasses.

"I was hoping you could tell me" I reply.

"How did we get here?"

"No clue. I can't seem to remember anything about last night."

"Damn, you too? I can't recall one thing that happened yesterday" he mutters while massaging his temples, now directing his gaze at the floor.

"Well you're not alone. What's your name?" We both rise to our feet.

"Steve."

"No kidding? That's my name too—don't forget it." I respond with a punk-like smirk, shaking his hand. "Come on, let's see if anyone else has some answers."

Steve and I made our way about the room questioning everyone as they awoke. We found that our initial conversation was horribly unoriginal. Where are we? No idea. How did we get here? No idea. What's your name? Steve. Steve. Steve. Steve.

The only information we have is Steve.

We continued our redundant line of questioning, and we weren't the only ones. There were now groups of Steves forming throughout the room, mingling with other Steves; until we heard:

"WE'VE GOT A STAN OVER HERE!"

Flatulence

Sam Grenier

Foucault and Zizek
would say

that it is like
defining truth;

it being an external
product based on

an internal reaction
correlating to

the cultural paradigm
of the present



How to Plan a Wedding

Kayleigh Marshall

Meet a boy at age 15. He will be a year older and have acne and patchy facial hair and a creaky voice, but when he smiles at you, you will feel like he is a spotlight pointed directly at you. You will tell your friends about him and make them find out if he likes you. You will giggle and shriek, and his friends will goad him into asking you to the homecoming dance. He buys you a corsage with a daisy, and you press it into your parent's encyclopedia. Plan on keeping it forever.

Two years later, he will graduate from high school. His acne will have cleaned up and his voice steadied, and it'll have been one year, three months, two weeks, and four days since he told you he loved you. You will remind yourself of that when he goes to college and doesn't answer your calls on Friday nights.

The next year, you follow him and move into the dorm next to his. You'll spend your Saturday nights at parties and Sunday mornings in coffee shops. Pursue a degree in English, even though he'll think you should do something more practical, like business, like him. Show him your writings and poems and pretend it doesn't bother you when he doesn't read them. Give him copies of books you think he'd like and pretend it doesn't bother you when you see them in a pile on his desk.

On the night after his graduation, accept his proposal. Call your Mom and cry with her. Get your nails done the next morning and post pictures of the ring on Instagram. Call it the happiest day of your life and ignore the conflicting swirls in your gut. One of them feels relief, having the rest of your life planned. Another is joy. And the other, the smallest one, feels trapped, like the madwoman in Jane Eyre. Ignore that voice and tell yourself it is merely jitters and that every engaged woman feels that way.

Later that week, plant a garden full of daisies. By next year, your wedding, the garden will be in full bloom and you'll be able to save money on flowers. Your fiancé will call for something more traditional, more colorful, but you remember the daisy pressed from your first date and insist on the daisy. Buy a shadowbox and display the corsage, old ticket stubs, old photos. Save it as a wedding present.

Pick a place and a venue. Tour a bunch of places with your fiancé. Get annoyed when he seems indifferent, and frustrated when he finds something wrong with every place. Choose a place, somewhere perfect and beautiful, and talk him into it. Tell him there's nowhere better that fits your budget and location. He'll agree, but only because he doesn't really care. Get excited anyway, because you love it.

Send your Save the Dates. Choose your bridesmaids. You didn't realize your wedding would make you question every other relationship in your life. You think carefully about who you actually care about, what relationships will carry on into your future. Ignore the reality that likely, most of them won't. Ask them and get excited when they joyfully accept.

Buy a wedding dress. You will go one time, just to try dresses on and decide what style you like. Bring your mom and your maid of honor. Try on six or seven dresses, and then you will find the

one. You like all the others, but this one will give you a feeling in your gut that you didn't expect. You'll know when you find it, that you couldn't get married in any other dress. Your Mom will cry, and your Maid of Honor will clap and laugh and take pictures. You'll feel like you're glowing, and you'll ignore the tiny part of you that feels like you're trying on a prison jumpsuit.

Try not to get frustrated when he won't care about the details, or when you feel overwhelmed juggling school, extracurricular activities, and planning the wedding by yourself. Tell yourself that the men never care, that this is normal. Work through it and find a band, a caterer, a bartender, a cake. Make seating charts and playlists. Choose a song for the first dance, the father daughter dance, the bouquet toss. Everything seems perfect to you. Cry when he tells you it's all wrong.

Your bachelorette party will be the most fun you've ever had. You love all of your bridesmaids with all your heart, and they planned an amazing night. When you wake up, you'll feel sad, like it really was your last hurrah, your last night of freedom. Tell yourself that isn't true and carry on with your day.

When the day arrives, wake up early. You won't have butterflies, you'll have snakes. When you throw up, you feel better. When your bridesmaids show up, glow and smile and act excited. You are excited. You make yourself look beautiful. When you walk down the aisle with your dad, he cries. Your fiancé smiles at you, and, like when you first met, you feel like he is a spotlight shining on you. For the first time in a long time, feel like you've made the right decision. You made him write his own vows, and, for a few minutes, they drown out the doubt in your mind. You're young, but you're old. When you say, "I do", you actually mean it. And you're pretty sure he does too.

Exquisite Data

UWL Poetry Club

I can pick up a job of some sort. . . .

Scallops En Brochette

Bandit likes to ride—

This was a truly desperate undertaking.

Two cups of shredded cabbage.



Hit the Pavement

Zoe Bossert

I look out at the river and see asphalt

-a rippled road mirroring the street lights' glow.

We sit straddling the wall: one foot flat on the sidewalk,

the other pointed down tracing the pocket of night sky.

My toes use the water as paint.

Our words flow like lullabies,

tired attempts at laying to rest some feelings.

I wonder -if I stood up- which foot would win?

Left foot: I stay here with you.

Right foot: I'm consumed by the current.

But hey, maybe I'd make the news tomorrow:

"Another Damn Drowning"

I never was good at breathing.

I want to know: what makes you heavy, dear?

You hold onto my knee, tell me you're terrified of the day you go home

and can't hear your mother's voice

the greed of the disease takes her

piece by piece.

More, tell me more.

Tell me: what makes you light, love?

The booze -you fear the dark without your mother's arms.

So you take a shot at happiness. Warm your belly.

This world was always too fucking cold.

Maybe one day you'll love the bottle more,

black out my face completely.

The pavement isn't as soft as my bed, love.

And my tears never change the fact

life isn't fair.

I latch my foot around your ankle.

Maybe I won't lose you if I sit still and act like

time isn't a bitch.

You ask me: what now?

Now we stand

on either foot

and stop pretending like it makes a difference

in our ability to breathe.



Heat Trait

Nicole Nettell

If there's one thing I remember about my dad, it's that for as loving as he was ... he was equally as terrifying. That man could put the fear of fucking God into me, and I've always been known as fearless. I ended up with about 90% of his genes. Both the love and the heat.

There were many nights where I displayed the genetics he had kindly passed onto me. The night I'll be telling you of here took place in Wisconsin, I think it was June. My friends and I were at this concert, the biggest thing to happen in that small-town summer of 2016. When we entered the fairgrounds, I could immediately smell warm Bud Light and cow shit. Not my kind of place, but this country singer was actually someone that people knew of, including myself. I figured it would be a decent time, especially because I was sneaking in a water bottle full of vodka. At the time, I would have rather died than be anywhere in Wisconsin sober. Another trait I inherited from my father. I was easily addicted, and alcohol was always my drug of choice.

If you could shove your way to the front of the stage, then that was your spot. It was basically a free-for-all in a field. My friends and I didn't necessarily care to fight our way up front, so we grabbed a few beers first and slowly made our way to the growing crowd. By the time the show started, we were somewhere in the middle of everyone. I went with about five of my girlfriends, but I was standing next to Calli for the majority of the concert. We practically looked like twins that night, both blonde and buzzed. As the sun started to go down and it got a little colder, we sipped more vodka to stay warm. Little did I know, that warmth was about to turn into heat. Things always had a way of turning out that way for me.

We made friends with almost everyone around us. It was a small town, so we knew most everyone in our section of the crowd. However, the woman directly in front of us we did not know. And had she not turned around... her unfamiliarity never would have been a problem. The lights burst to life and the show starts. Everyone began to scream for this country heartthrob named Frankie. Just as Frankie comes out and asks us all how we're doing, the woman in front of us turns around. She was a heavy set, middle aged woman. She whipped her head around so fast that I myself looked behind me, because I thought something must have happened. I'll be honest here, I barely remember what her face looked like because this all happened very quickly and I wasn't exactly sober. But, I do remember her turning to Calli and I with a very disrupted look on her face.

"You all took my spot," she yelled over Frankie, reeking of Captain Morgan. I knew the smell, so I recognized it instantly.

I almost started laughing because I thought she was joking. We were behind her? Did she actually want us to move in front of her? She was visibly very drunk, more so than myself. I looked over at Calli and she had the same confusion as me. She just shrugged, I knew Calli wouldn't say anything.

“Ma’am, no offense, but we’re behind you? How could we have possibly taken your spot,” I tried to reason with her, but she was going to be angry no matter what I said.

“You little girls took MY spot,” now trying her best to be offensive.

At this point it was like this woman was an angry fucking bull for no reason, with steam coming out of her nostrils. I was trying to figure out how to keep my composure if she were to charge at me. I kept thinking, did we say something to piss her off? Did we bump into her? Was she just a lunatic? I couldn’t figure it out, but then I noticed she was holding onto something in her hand. As she was staring at us, I peered behind her and realized that what she was holding was another hand. She had a small child with her, fuck. The child couldn’t even see above the mass of drunk adults surrounding him. He had anchored himself to his mother, and was most likely just praying for the concert to end. I knew that I had to try and control the situation. All around us the concert was going on, and people were blissfully drunk listening to country music.

“Youuuu stole MY spot,” she repeated. She kept eyeing Calli because she had been silent up until this point.

“Listen, lady,” I said, “we didn’t steal your spot and I’d honestly appreciate if you just left us alone and turned around.”

Still staring at Calli, she released her hand from her child’s grasp.

For the love of God, I thought to myself, don’t touch Calli. I knew if she laid one hand on Calli I’d have to do it. Her kid is right there, Nicole. Don’t do it. I could feel that heat inside of me rising, being fueled by the vodka water bottle that had been shoved down my shirt.

The woman raised her newly free hand and placed it on Calli’s shoulder. Calli looked down at this woman’s hand resting on her, and then up at me right next to her. She knew exactly what was about to happen.

With her left hand on Calli’s shoulder, the woman balled her right hand into a fist. I didn’t notice, but I had beat her to it. My right hand had already formed a fist just by instinct.

I locked eyes with her jaw and swung.

Boom, the heat trait in action. I could feel my dad’s genes being transferred to me right then and there.

I remember thinking that her head was going to twist all the way off. Both of her hands went into the air, and she made some sort of grunting noise. I could feel her jaw dislocate. It was like her teeth relocated themselves to the side of her face. I glanced at my hand, and one of my knuckles was bleeding because I was wearing a big ring in the shape of a moon. I looked up to see if the moon was out yet, and the next thing I remember is seeing a flood of bright yellow in front of me.

Security jackets.

They looked at this woman, mouth bleeding and child screaming. She was so wasted and dazed that when they asked her what happened she just said, “fuck you.” So, they paid no attention to me and hauled her out. I looked down her at child, and saw a look in his eyes that was so suddenly familiar to me, it shook my soul in a way that I can still feel to this day. Fear. His eyes were filled to the brim with fear, and I saw myself in him. I saw my dad screaming at me, two inches from my face. Yelling not because whatever I had done was pitifully awful, but because he couldn’t control his rage. I knew exactly what this child’s fear felt like, only this time I had caused it.



Is It Enough That I Love You?

Kristen Petersen

It's 7 PM

I'm on my first cup of coffee

I know I'll regret it but I drink it anyway

it's bitter and French and blisters my tongue

I've been pretty tired lately

like, all the time

and I don't really know what to do

it makes me hate everything

Do you think I'm fat?

Be honest.

It's just black, no

no, it's good.

My face is wet.

Don't cry, you say

what's wrong?

talk to me.

I tell you to fuck off and you do

because you can't help me if I won't let you

and how many times have we been over this, Kirsten?

I'm mad so I follow you outside.

You're getting in your stupid little
two door coup that I've always hated
and I'm screaming from the porch
because I forgot to put on shoes
and I'm too stubborn to get them
or let you watch my socks get wet
I'm sorry, okay!

I don't know what's wrong with me
but you can't tell me not to cry
just because it hurts you to see it

You're stubborn too
so you roll down your window
and tell me to fuck off

I lose it
suddenly my socks are wet
and I'm on the hood of your stupid puny two door
jumping up and down screaming
you never gave a fuck about me
You're out of your car now
I feel your arms pull me off
but I can't really see that it's you
because everything is dark

and even in the dark everything is blurry

My face is wet.

We're on the ground

and my butt's wet and that makes me cry harder

because I realize your butt must be wet too

and why would you let yourself get wet

when I'm being such an asshole

Do I scare you?

Your arms are around my waist

and my head is on your chest

and everything is still wet

and the air is thick and I can't breathe

When you speak next

you are a different person

and you are saying everything I want to hear

I stop crying as loudly

and let you hold me

I'm sorry

It's okay, you lie

everyone has their off days

Your heart is broken, I can tell

but I think that's okay

because sometimes you break my heart too
and because we really love each other
and sometimes that makes people crazy
and sometimes crazy is just really loud love
and that means this is okay
and we'll be okay
right?



Did you come?

Sam Stroozas

It felt like we were fucking to prove something to ourselves.

To ignore something.

To think that it wasn't over and even though everything was falling apart, we can still make each our peaks.

I couldn't tell if that was empowering or not.



Poem for my Sister

Missy Deisting

Turquoise is the colour for Dysautonomia Awareness

but Dysautonomia is so many colours.

Dysautonomia is the Brown colour

your hair turns

because you haven't had the energy to shower in days.

Dysautonomia is the Black colour

your vision turns

because you stand up too quickly.

Dysautonomia is the Blue colour

your eye sockets have turned

because you never get enough sleep.

Dysautonomia is the Pink colour

your scar has turned

because they inserted a port.

Dysautonomia is the Yellow colour

your fingertips turn

because you're always cold.

The Waiter

Marissa Widdifield

I wouldn't say that I'm disturbed. Those who think they know me might say I am; those who knew me when I was younger and would see me push my mother away when she tried to hug me each time I fell off my bike. I would pick the pebbles out of my little palms in our home's bathroom sink. I was six when I learned how to ride a bicycle. I am thirty-five, now and I am in the best shape of my life. My secret? I avoid all unnatural sugars and fat and unnecessary amounts of sodium. I am working my way to an herbivore diet, in fact. Sometimes I see my next-door neighbor get into his car in the morning and can hear the sloshing of his stomach puss digesting the beer and T.V. dinners I see him eating late at night. He never flips his switches or closes his blinds. If I didn't despise him, I might make a spinach salad with cranberries and cashews and deliver it to his door.

On the other hand, my body is beautiful—still in the form God created me in and organically grown from the soil I eat from. Last week I had an idea to start my own garden, but I didn't. The rabbits would eat what would grow. One summer as a child, my father bought me strawberry seeds and I planted them in a pot. One strawberry grew and it was so strikingly red that it could be mistaken for a speckled heart. I've never seen a plant look so disappointed until the day I planned to pick my strawberry. It was gone. My mother said a rabbit ate it.

Okay, before I go any further, I have a confession to make. I lied to you. I'm sorry. I lied because you wouldn't know any better about me. My body is in gruesome shape. Can you tell? Up until a few years ago, I threw pretty colored pills down my throat for lunch and every night before bed and forgot about breakfast all-together (but in my defense, breakfast foods aren't really that healthy, anyways). I didn't like doing drugs. I didn't like listening to alternative music either yet "Colorado Panic" and "A Box of Heads" were my most listened to music groups. I guess I wanted to test out the aesthetic. And it turns out drugs are as addictive as they say they are. During this time in my life, girlfriends were like clicking through a child's ViewMaster. I have no problem admitting that I was a hot-shot as a drug-addict. But it turns out beautiful women with winged eyeliner and lip rings don't fill my desperation for a meaningful life. So, I dumped each one of them. And I've been single ever since because I've busied myself with intellect—taking Latin courses at my local college for free because I'm retired. Latin feels like an ancestor you romanticize in your head. Like a handsome third cousin of yours that fought in a war and fell in love with a raunchy suffragette who fakes a pregnancy to force a marriage.

I like learning Latin even though I despise everyone in my class. Especially those who laugh or nod or murmur a "mhm" when the professor speaks just to prove that they understand what he's saying. I sit silently and say and do nothing. But I understand. I understand what my professor is saying. I understand that my classmates think I'm a Latin course scrooge for not laughing or smiling with them, at all. But I have nothing to prove like they do. Trust me, I understand everything.

There's a woman in one of my classes. I hate her the most. She has yellow hair. And long legs. I don't know her name, but I look at her often. And I hate that I catch myself making noises (that may resemble muffled laughter) when she laughs—but always quietly and always in the back row.

I'm not sexist. I hate a man too. He sits in front of the professor's podium in the front row. Nobody takes his spot although my spot has been taken multiple times throughout the semester. I don't know his name, but he wears a blue beanie and a silver wristwatch. I've gone to class early to observe the time he comes to claim his seat. Every day, 52 minutes before class, he appears. One time he nodded his head at me (what a prick). I imagined a reality where I punched him in the face or stuffed a gas station long john up his butt.

The next class I showed up 55 minutes early and poured turmeric lentil soup that had gone bad in my refrigerator onto his chair. It smelled like what under my fingernails would smell like. I was pleased with this. I left a note where the woman I watch sits.

"Hi. I won't be attending Latin anymore, but I like your yellow hair. Call me. 590-blah, blah, blah." I'm sorry but I don't want you calling me.

Okay. I have another confession to make. I lied again. I don't have the courage to leave my number for a woman. Or to pour the molding turmeric lentil soup I have in my fridge where anybody sits. I just wanted to think of a way I could get rid of that smell. Because draining down my sink and using a sponge and dish soap to clean the container sounds like something I don't want to spend my time doing. You're probably wondering if I even took a Latin course. That part is true. Kind of. I mean I'm not retired. Do I look it? You'd know I am only thirty-five, if you were listening. Anyways, I dated a woman who was taking a Latin course and after sex she would sit in the bed and do her homework. I would look over her shoulder. That's enough to say I took a class, right? I had to listen to her complain about it the two and a half weeks we dated so I think I deserve the right to call myself bilingual.

I had an interview at a marketing firm once. I have a BS in Marketing and Advertising. I wore a dark blue suit and submitted my resume which read "proficient in Latin" under the header "Special Skills." During the interview, the man across the table from me read it aloud, sat back in his chair and said "Wow! Latin? Where'd ya learn that?" I told him that my mother studied Linguistics in college and learned Latin as a minor. She loved the language and would speak it around the house ever since I was a little kid. Young and impressionable, I picked it up quick. At the end of our interview he asked me how to say "It was nice meeting you" in Latin. I told him that I had lied and isn't that what marketing is all about? I didn't get the job. If I had to guess it's probably because I was too honest.

Anyways, thanks for asking! How're you doing? Are you ready to order?

The Black Girl Speaks of Trees:

A creative interpretation of Langston Hughes' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"

Marian Haile

I've known trees.

I've known tree rings that are as infinite as the potential and the capacity of the finite human body.

My soul has grown toward the light like the tree branches.

I spoke to the Tingana tree where my royal ancestors whispered my name.

I sat under the Cycad to dream and it lulled me to sleep.

I purified my visage with shredded leaves of the Gob tree as I cleaned the small hut my family lived in.

I leaped over the ramin wood binded to straw to be bounded to the one I loved.

I massaged my hair with oil from the Brazil nut, my hair mimicking the tree's gravity defying leaves as the nuts blended in with my brown skin.

I counted the dark rings of the chopped Baobab to determine the age of the thick, brown structure—a chocolate-colored thing like me.

I harvested the green bananas with a machete in the daylight.

I cleaned the Ashanti fertility idols in our Canadian living room in hopes of my aunt having her first born in the near future.

I smoked trees in the backseat of my mom's car as I felt "free as a bird, yeah, yeah".

I planted trees in the backyard of my grandma's house as she told me stories of Claudette Colvin and Wilma Rudolph.

I hugged trees to fit in with white girls before I realized they didn't know about the Tingana tree, the Gob tree.

I hurt trees to fit in with the society before I realized I was hurting my people.

I became the tree when I collected the numerous struggle rings of life the world threw at me.

I was the tree when it was kicked, cut, and killed to make space for other things important.

I gave birth to a tree that was killed by a white man because he felt threatened by my tree when his ideal world wasn't panning out the way he thought it should.

I've known trees:

Ancient and new.

My soul has grown toward the light like the tree branches.







Author Biographies

Seth Polfus is a junior from Michigan's Upper Peninsula, currently studying Exercise and Sport Science towards a career in Physical Therapy, with a Photography minor. He believes that variety is truly the "spice of life," and chooses to reflect this in his wedding, nature, portrait, and event photography. "The variety of niches in the photography world I have entered has allowed me to view the world through many different 'lenses' and I believe that is reflected in my images." In his spare time, he enjoys reading, learning, traveling, and trying new things.

Dmitrij Kremnew, is a foreign exchange student from Germany. He studied English in the United States for one semester, with an emphasis in Exercise Sports Science. "I was looking forward to taking the Forms of Poetry class with Professor William Stobb, giving me the opportunity to learn about American poetry." He says his semester here in the United States had a major impact on his life, and is glad to leave his poetry behind as a "memoir" for his time spent here.

Carson Kaashagen is a senior at UWL majoring in English with an emphasis in writing and rhetoric. He's been an avid creative writer since elementary school, with his submission "iHear U" being his first to any publication. When he isn't writing fiction, Carson enjoys working as a tutor for UWL's writing center, playing board games and volleyball with friends, and listening to alternative rock music (he recommends bands like Coheed and Cambria, Dear Hunter, and From Indian Lakes for anybody looking for new jams).

Jessica Koski is a Wisconsin-based artist pursuing a double major in Spanish and English, and a minor in Environmental Studies. She has been drawing for the majority of her life, and considers it to be one of her greatest passions. Koski's use of bold colors, high contrast, and layering in her mixed media pieces allows her to express herself colorfully. While her career path is uncertain, her goal is to do what makes her happy. "I don't really know what I'm doing, I'm just kind of going with it."

Alaina Steffes is an English student at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She has always loved to write and is excited to be minoring in Creative Writing. In her free time, she loves visiting local coffee shops and hiking. Her dream is to be a published novelist and hopes to someday travel the world. Alaina's work has been featured in *The Catalyst* before, as well as in the 21st volume of the *Steam Ticket*.

Carly Rundle-Borchert, is an English major with a triple minor in psychology, photography, and environmental studies. Her work strives to unearth empathy for our planet and introduce a mindful, frugal lifestyle. "Instead of seeking gratification from the materialistic human world, I try to emphasize the priceless beauty and complexity nature offers us."

Andrew Sioris is from Sherwood, WI, and a recent graduated from UW-L with a degree in microbiology and biomedical science. He intends to pursue PA-school and mission work, which would allow him to travel the world while caring for others. "I love being active, especially out in nature. With photography, I'm able to capture many of the amazing things I see while traveling and exploring." Although photography is only a hobby, Andrew is always striving to learn different techniques and new sceneries. "My hope is that I only get better and that it shows through in my future images."

Cait McReavy is an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse majoring in Education with minors in English and Social Justice. She has a strong love of poetry that she hopes to pass on to her future students one day.

Karley Betzler graduated from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in December of 2019 with a degree in Communication Studies with an emphasis in Media Studies and Professional and Technical Writing. She worked at UWL's student news publication, *The Racquet Press*, for six semesters. In September of 2018, Betzler became the first openly gay Executive Editor in the publication's 110 years of publishing. Betzler is currently looking into graduate programs in hopes of furthering her research into the experiences of women working in journalism.

Sam Stroozas is a UWL senior studying Communication Studies with an emphasis in Media studies and English, as well as a minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She is the Executive Editor of UWL's student news source, *The Racquet Press*, and president of the English Honor Society SIGMA TAU DELTA. After graduation, Samantha hopes to earn her Master's degree in journalism and continue her passion for storytelling and accountability at a national level.

Zoe Bossert is a 21-year-old buffoon. Sometimes she feels like a plastic bag, drifting through the wind; but most days, she finds herself a content homosapien, obsessed with words and elusive sentences.

Sam Grenier is a poet, and performance artist. After he realized that he was unable to pursue his dream of being the first man to build an art gallery on the moon, Sam decided to give the literary arts a try. His poetry sardonically combines high theory with strange life events in order to create some strange evocation of what it means to be alive. His work has been seen on various nooks and crannies of the internet.

Abigail Becker is a graduate from UWL with an English degree. She is currently working on earning a master's in business administration from Concordia University in Mequon, Wisconsin.

Alex Keller is an occasional eater of carrots.

K.C Cayo is a first year student from the Milwaukee area who is striving to find ways to tell stories and work in the social justice field.

Austin Vanburen, a familiar face to *The Catalyst*, grew up in rural Wisconsin, where he developed an eye for interesting composition in over-looked sites. "I find my work to focus on the relationship between figure and environment, as well as the integration between humanity and the 'natural' world." In his free time, he likes to pet and over-feed his devious cat Finnegan.

Adaaze Osuala is a first year student attending UWL interested in a pre-health track.

Jahni Suzanne Brandt is a senior at UWL studying biology, with chemistry and creative writing minors. She graduated in May of 2019, and strives to begin a career in environmental research. After having learned a great deal from college, she is excited to see the end of the horizon. "It won't be easier after college, but life is an opportunity; it's a lesson in growth. I'm excited and afraid to face life's lessons, but I'm hoping that my writing can help me reach out to others as I walk and learn. Thank you for reading."

Sophie Fox is a natural voice impressionist, and the "patron saint of oatmeal."

Missy Deisting is a third-year student from the Twin Cities. Having had plans to become a chemistry teacher, a chaotic semester abroad in Brisbane, Australia influenced her to instead opt for a major in English Education.

Cortlyn Kelly creates out of love. Is she particularly good at it? Who is to say. But nonetheless, she puts love into each piece she makes. Art makes her happy, and she hopes her art can make you happy too.

Orion Carroll is a student of computer science and mathematics at University of Wisconsin - La Crosse. When he isn't programming or proving theorems, Orion enjoys exercising his creativity through other outlets, such as art, music, and writing.

Victor Zheng (a.k.a " Vic") is a senior, who plans to graduate sometime this summer, studying Philosophy and Economics. Having seriously practiced photography for about a year, he's found a love for learning new techniques and styles. He is always looking to shoot if anyone is ever interested!

Kayleigh Marshall lives for stories. She is studying writing and women's, gender studies at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She's strives to enter the publishing industry.

UWL poetry club is a group of students, supported by professor of English Susan Crutchfield, who have collaborated with the UWL's English department to provide a safe space for poetry to be spread and loved.

Marissa Widdifield is a senior at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse studying Writing & Rhetoric and German Studies, with a minor in Linguistics and Literature. As for the future, she plans to make herself some dinner and meet up with an old friend. OH you meant after she graduates in May? Who knows! But if I had to guess, you'd probably find her somewhere advocating for green bean casserole and making her mother mad.

Nicole Nettell is a recent graduate from UWL. After having changed her major to English a year ago, *The Catalyst* will be first the place she's submitted her words.

Kirsten Petersen is an English Education major who feels emotions and ardent expression to be the only true form in which truth is available in this secular world.

Morgan Alexander is a Senior at UWL with a Middle Childhood-Early Adolescence Education major and English Education minor. She is a transfer student from UW-Richland who grew up in the Kickapoo Valley, an area that's played a large role in her development as both an educator and a creative mind. Morgan spent last summer conducting education evaluations and facilitating Phonics Professional Development sessions in Nepal. This semester she has been focusing on research inspired by her travels.

Marian Haile is a writer and poet. Having a range in experience with various styles of writing—from journalistic to creative—Marian has a colorfully nostalgic voice that speaks to her East African heritage, as well as one that comforts the unheard. Marian is a recent UWL graduate, obtaining her bachelor's degree in English Literature and Creative Writing. Her favorite colors include a specific shade of fluorescent beige and any shade of purple. She displays her unique prose on her Tumblr blog titled *ruunhaile*

