

THE CATALYST

FALL 2022/VOLUME 26



Volume 26 | Fall 2023

Cover art by Ava Wille

Cover Design by Madison Vaillant

Editors:

Madison Vaillant

Evelyn Van Ess

Connor Stenz

Devany Bauer

The Catalyst is a student-run creative journal of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, publishing prose, poetry, photography, art, music, and all other creative works by the students and faculty of UWL.

Faculty Advisors:

Jennifer Williams, Art

William Stobb, English

Table of Contents

Anonymous	
Frogs	1
Pantoum for Groceries	3
Alicia Barber	
Hearty	5
Lydia Bergerson	
It's Okay	7
Alicia Barber	
Mommy why am I just a number	8
Lily Garcia	
Dreamland Headstand	10
Alicia Barber	
I come from the sun	11
Bronwyn Bond	
The Fields of Korth Park	13
Judy Crook	
Chevy and Callie	14
Jack Bringe	
Clarity After a High	15
Nighthawks	16
Ava Wille	
Laundromat	18
Jonathon Brueggeman	
How to Survive Summer Camp	19
Katie Cox	
Double Fudge, Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough	23

Aftertaste	25
Lily Garcia	
Golden Opium	26
Aidan Donahue	
The Start of Something	27
Ms. Maple	28
Anna Giese	
Pick Me Pickle	29
Judy Crook	
Lefty	31
Esther Hammen	
Smile	32
Jaci Mannisto	
Our Blood Isn't Thicker Than Water	33
Sidney Mitchell	
Nov 17, 2016	34
Lydia Bergerson	
Tired	36
Sidney Mitchell	
Favorite	37
After	39
Bella Smerz	
Hexagonal Days	40
Marlie Voigt	
Youthful Spirits	41
Tanishka	

YOU!	42
Taylor Trost	
Any Body	43
5 Minutes of Fuck Offs	44
The Romanticized ED	46
Lily Garcia	
Dreamland Natalia Vodianova	48
Anna Weyenberg	
Gull	49
Sun-bleached	50
Lydia Bergerson	
Traveler	51
Contributor Biographies	52

The Catalyst

Anonymous | Frogs

Within the labyrinth heart of some collegiate sprawl
Hangs a talcum white board, lined with news
Framed in bold deep blue
A peppy question:

“If a frog prince/princess asked you to kiss them, would you do it?”

Yes, No, Maybe
Thirteen, Zero, Four.
Love always wins.
Even for frogs.

Yet I, the lumbering thing, spies it once
Twice, then thrice, and at some point doubling back
Limping, deciding then to unleash myself upon the board
Coal-black marker scrawling, into a jargon that they could maybe understand

The Frog Prince/Princess is a problematic cultural fable as it promotes an unhealthy paradigm for an idealistic relationship and the savior mentality of romance. The frog is enjoyed for its propensity to be indebted to its fortunate savior for love, wealth, and social status, as a form of reward for bringing it to a human ideal. The frog is not enjoyed for its own merits, and it is unthinkable that a frog would not return undying love to its savior - to want to merely be friends with the frog is an insult. It is entirely anthropocentric to assume that the royal frog is in need of saving, and that its condition as a frog is undeniably worse than being a human. In conclusion, this promotes unhealthy mentalities when it comes to relationships and frogs.

And there it remains
Nailed for two-three days.
And then it's gone.
In its place, ill recompense

"I'm really sorry. I never meant to offend anyone."

You didn't.

I never once was.

In fact, I should be the one who's sorry.

I'm sorry that you will never again see a frog as more than only thus.

Anonymous | Pantoum for Groceries

It will never leave you, this thing
A deviant shadow, clinging to the hem of your dress
Its soiled fingers stain the cloth
So nearly synced to your thoughtless meanderings

Clutched firmly to you, this child of an absent stranger
As it spouts quandaries and loathings
One-beat off sync as you wander the aisles
You can kick it, yet still it persists

Quandaries and loathings
“The other bread is easier on the gut.”
Like a whining pye-dog, it insists
“There’s a lot of corn in that cereal.”

“This bread is made entirely of chemicals.”
“People are trying to make farms of ostriches these days.”
“Many hayseeds suffered cancer for the syrup of your Wheaties.”
“Do you know how milk was discovered?”

“Do you think they can put their heads in the sand, on a farm like that?”
How it cowers from the glares of sweeping overseers!
“He missed his mother, that’s why it happened.”
A pursuing, fervid goose, it waddles by your side

How it recoils from the touch of unconscious consumers!
Beneath the colorless lights, the smothered songs of ages past
A creeping, choking vine, it dodders along
Quickly now; imprison your spicy chips, your ice cubes, your beer cans

Beneath the buzzing spotlight, the mollified warmth of a counter and her line
The pounding compulsion to leave, to be quit of it
Quickly now; score your pig’s feet, your mock roe, your milk boxes

"Is that thing yours?" No, no, not at all

The cool embrace of night, to be free of it
...It had already left, a shadow returned to the dark
Was that thing yours? Maybe so, maybe so
The walk home is long, burdensome, cold

It had already left, a shadow returned to the dark
Its soiled fingers have stained well the flesh
The walk home is cold, dark, silent
This thing. It will never leave you

Alicia Barber | Hearty

You might ask yourself sometimes
what that deep squeezing pressure that makes its way into your heart
What is it that crawls into your chest and
wraps it's figures around your heart, and grabs strings
To pull them just right.

Fat rain drops fall from your glossy eyes
Down your face, to either continue falling
or travel down your neck creating a trail,
etching a story into your skin.
What is it?

This doesn't feel just like sad usually feels.
Sad is low maintenance, comfortable.
Sad is an ocean that you sink into
Your body breaking the icy top of the sea,
and your body falling limply down and down and down.
Hoping to hit the bottom.

Sad.

Where the cold comforts and your mind can sleep.
This isn't just sad.
It's hearty. It's a hearty sad.
The kind that wakes you up.
It lifts you up.

It grabs you by your hair to drag you out of the water.
It shakes you awake
Leaving bruises on your arms from squeezing you.
The light burns your eyes, as you blink the salty tears and wipe the water from your face.

It chokes you up, making the dark hole hiding in your body work its way out as you cough it up.

Your body aches, you feel sore from your sleep.
You feel again.

The sun shows itself for the first time in so long.
You stare and crawl on the ground,
Picking up handfuls of fresh dirt from the ground.
Moving it around in your fingers
And breathing in the earthy aroma of the soil.

You sit on the ground
Your legs criss crossed underneath you.
Dirt in your hands
Tears and sun in your eyes.
And the squeeze releases its boney fingers from your chest.
And you're alive again.

Lydia Bergerson | It's Okay
(Acrylic)



Alicia Barber | Mommy why am I just a number

Why am I a number, why does my unforeseen destiny as a woman cast me out of our human race and take me as a number.

Why is my waist size equivalent to my worth, why does the symmetrical value of my face determine if people want to hear what I have to say.

Why does the weight on the scale categorize me as fat when my doctor says I'm fine.

Why does the burden of womanhood have to give me such big hips?

Why do men want such big asses but if you have one roll of fat you're disgusting.

When will the beauty standard not be impossible?

Why am I a number, why did my mom call to ask me how much I weigh.

Why do the ladies at work ask me how many boys I've been with.

Why can't I eat until I'm full, why must I deny my stomach the satisfaction of getting a complete meal.

Why is feminism forbidden.

Why is my existence a burden to straight males?

Why does it only matter if I'm hot and single.

You don't give out you are just a prude, you make love and now you're a slut.

Why is my weight a justification for your disrespect?

Oh how you hate me when I use my voice.

Oh how you despise me when I disagree with you.

Oh how I hate you when you take what is not yours!

You take what is mine, my words, and my feelings, my thoughts and my emotions. My body. All without my permission. And then you throw them away.

"Not all men are bad!" You yell as we quiver. "Why are you crying" you say as we shudder. We shudder in fear because of the natural instinct in us to be terrified of men. Why is that?

"Rape is not a culture"

"Rape is not a problem"

Then explain to me why we carry pepper spray, why I have a hammer in my purse and my mom calls to ask me if I made it home safe. Why do I belong to THREE generations of victims of sexual abuse.

Why do I feel so angry when you won't hear what I have to say?

Why am I just a number? My rating... solid 4. Personality or body they ask. Why am I categorized to a number? Why am I a number? A number on a list of things you want to collect. A collection of people that you treat like dolls. A piece of trash, that you keep until you throw it away. Not to be recycled because it's used up.

Our world has condemned me to walls of numbers and equations that add up to my worth and those equations subtract the more I use my words.

"I like when girls are more natural, glam makeup is disgusting. But shave your body hair because hairy legs are vile."

Sometimes I ignore my own preference because I want to stand up to society and break the norms that keep me handcuffed to the objectification of my body. I grow my leg hair in protest to the men... I mean boys who try to tell me that smooth equals better.

Don't tell me I'm cool because I'm pretty, don't kiss my ass to later disregard me when you find out I have a partner. Don't tell me I'm straight because I have a boyfriend. Don't tell me I hate all men because I don't. I just hate you. The ones I can see in your eyes that the words I speak invoke anger. The words I say you want to protest and scream that I'm wrong about you and your opinion is valid.

It's just a preference you say.

Fight back. Is what I say.

Lily Garcia | Dreamland Headstand
(Acrylic)



Alicia Barber | I come from the sun

Today I knew would finally be
A good day
I knew this because
I could see the light shine
Onto me as I awakened

For a brief moment I forget
The hurt that has kept me up
Night after night
And asleep, day after day.

The light filled my eyes
As it crept past my windowsill
Lit up my plants and illuminated
My heart.

Days like these make me go outside
As the sun fills my eyes and shines
I feel the warmth on my skin
Which pleasantly surprises me.
The cold February air squeezes
My lungs, but I don't care

The thought of yellowy sunny
Rays kissing my skin makes
The chilly morning was worth it.

I stare and stare,
Across the soggy cold campus
The snow has become black
Hugging the cracked sidewalk

Strangers with familiar faces

Fill the salt covered walkways
As they make their way
Where they need to be

I close my eyes
As I remember the
Anticipation of spring
I open them and look directly
Into the light

As the snow melts and earth
Begins to grow
It is not only the plants
And color that reappear
But also the people

As warm breezes roll in and send
The ice back into liquid
Young people blossom out
Into the open of a warm day

As I feel the warmth
Fill my lungs I can now
Finally have the desire to start
Romanticizing my life once again

I am sad to let go
As the day is gone and
The sun retreats
The darkness begins to grow

I see now why people cry
Why I cry.
Because the waiting hurts so bad
But March will soon be here
And then the wait won't be

So long.

Bronwyn Bond | The Fields of Korth Park

These fields alone have seen what few can know.
The leaves will die with no one at their wake
and snow will fall to seal their brittle bones.

What's lived will thrive, when thrown there down below
The cries from earth can't fix, but will create
These fields alone have made what few can know

What once decayed we know will one day grow.
Rebirth in time can free the dead from ache,
and snow will fall to seal their feeble bones.

A plant will bloom, the same from long ago
to see the sun once more when dawn will break.
These fields alone have heard what few should know

One story told can still be heard from crows,
from early lives they chose not to escape
when snow did fall to seal their ailing bones.

They sing of grass that knows, and love it shows
to all who've passed, those finally awake.
The fields alone have loved what few can know
with snow that falls to heal the resting bones

**Judy Crook | Chevy and Callie
(Photography)**



Jack Bringe | Clarity After A High

1:04

the A.M. dew begins to settle

1:04

your arm drifts towards mine

the TV static tells me more
than any word you could possibly say

at least it speaks in black and white
not the slurry haze escaping your teeth

you live to play, or rather play to live?
a 20-something werewolf, a two-faced coin

1:12

your nerves are rusted cold

1:12

too late to confess my soul

you laugh, but you are not happy
you talk, but somehow say nothing

i watch your arm slither across the sheets
a snake, steadily making its way to touch me

but it snaps, retreats back to your side
not quite ready to eat me; your prey

1:23

you lie in numbness

1:23

do you care that I'm here?

do / care?

molasses sky
and bleak building sides
faintly illuminated by
lights, coming from
a corner-side café

light not quite warm, no
synthetic, a green hue
a buzzing sound
numbing the molded wall
until 2am close

inside, a furnished bar
mahogany wood
worn, leather stools
here and there, fitted
with sugar and salt

midnight, a missing moon
and a barkeep
dressed in white
tends to his evening guests
the *Nighthawks*

one sits alone
his coffee, decaf
sits patiently by his
side, warm, but he
will never touch it

two more sit nearby
a man and woman
married, devoid of love
sitting idle with

despair in their eyes
and the barkeep
washing his last dishes
watches these *Nighthawks*
frozen in time, wondering
what they do in the day?

but *day* is only fantasy
a different world, alien
where light, laugh
and fire bleed
through city streets

this night is eternal
a solemn breath
echoing across time
reflecting familiar dread
on different, beat faces

the dishes, still dirty
the coffee, untouched
and the cold green remains
aglow, vibrating
through nights yet to come

Ava Wille | Laundromat
(Procreate Digital Design)



Katie Cox | Double Fudge, Chocolate Chip, Cookie Dough

After every baseball game
we would go to the local Dairy Queen
My dad would order us girls Double Fudge
Chocolate Chip
Cookie Dough
and ask for two red spoons

As we sat there on those sticky benches
Silently, we would play our game
For every bite of cookie dough on our spoon,
we would hold up a finger

I bought a gallon of ice cream
the other day at Aldi
I grabbed one silver spoon
and played the game in my head

I missed you more than normal that day
I missed being a kid with you
Giggling with red faces
and having tan lines from our days spent outside

Adults don't really giggle, do they?
They laugh
It's much more sophisticated that way
Showing giddiness that's more refined

I miss sharing a bed with you
Yelling in the night as the blanket gets pulled either way
The fan too noisy
or not noisy enough

I miss fighting with you
Screaming in the car

until we make the other person cry
And then promising not to tell mom

I miss being close to you
You don't even really like ice cream anymore
Did you even like it back then?
I think you must have
because you never do something you don't want to do

My heart aches a little thinking about our old purple room
But I don't share these things with you
Because you might not understand
and we aren't that overly sentimental

I write sappy poems
and you work on calculus
but somewhere in the middle,
we are the same

With poorly defined chins
 quick dialogue
 stress-induced headaches &
 too many pop-culture references to count

Our friendship is built on tree forts
 peanut butter & jelly sandwiches
 and an equal hatred of doing the dishes

So call me when you're free
Because I don't know the next time
I'll be home

And I miss you, okay?

I would like to swallow a lemon whole
Its peel leaving traces of yellow on my lips
and its juice still lingering on my tongue

Golden seeds would settle in my stomach—
only to be awakened by the November sunlight,
drawing my cheeks to the clouds

The warmth of the day makes me close my eyes
and inhale a melting earth

The sun settles on my forehead,
painting my face with a red blush

I stand there humbly, quietly
almost like a tree

Looking expectantly at the skies,
hoping I didn't pick the wrong fruit

Lily Garcia | Golden Opium
(Acrylic)



Sepia fires

Full, fleshy

Feed

Set ablaze

Brand

Darling fires

Thick and lathered

Alight

You've changed

Ms. Maple

I heard your voice

While I was

Walking my dog

I saw double-stuffed oreos

Ms. Maple

In your shopping bags

You sent me

Ms. Maple

A happy Thanksgiving text and

Signed it like you

Usually do

But this time it

Didn't say Mrs.

Anna Giese | Pick Me Pickle

So, I'm here at the grocery store because I feel sad.
I feel sad because nobody is in love with me.
Nobody is in love with me, but everybody loves me.
Everybody loves me because I'm good at making people feel good.
I'm good at making people feel good,
because I've had a lot of practice on myself.
Practice on myself because I feel sad a lot.
I feel sad a lot, but when I make people feel good, I feel good for a moment.
just a moment.
then I get lonely.
I am uncomfortable in my lonely.
In my lonely at the grocery store I practice trying to make myself feel good by pretending I'm a
regular
person, buying her groceries,
not the very sad person trying not to cry.
What sad people do when they are lonely looks a lot like me wandering at the grocery store.
In my lonely at the grocery store I feel sad, but I look just like everybody else, while picking out
carrots
and limes.
Items nobody refers to as "comfort food".
Comfort food makes me want to crawl into bed.
To crawl into bed reminds me of two things:
I am sad and I am alone.
I am alone at the grocery store, strolling slowly in the pickle aisle.
Everybody knows in the pickle aisle it is perfectly acceptable to stand around for too long.
Stand around for too long and I begin my antsy pantsy tip tap toe dance to the beat of the pasta
salad

being slopped into buckets at the deli counter.

I think to myself while waiting in line to reach the cashier.

She says nothing else except debit, credit or cash.

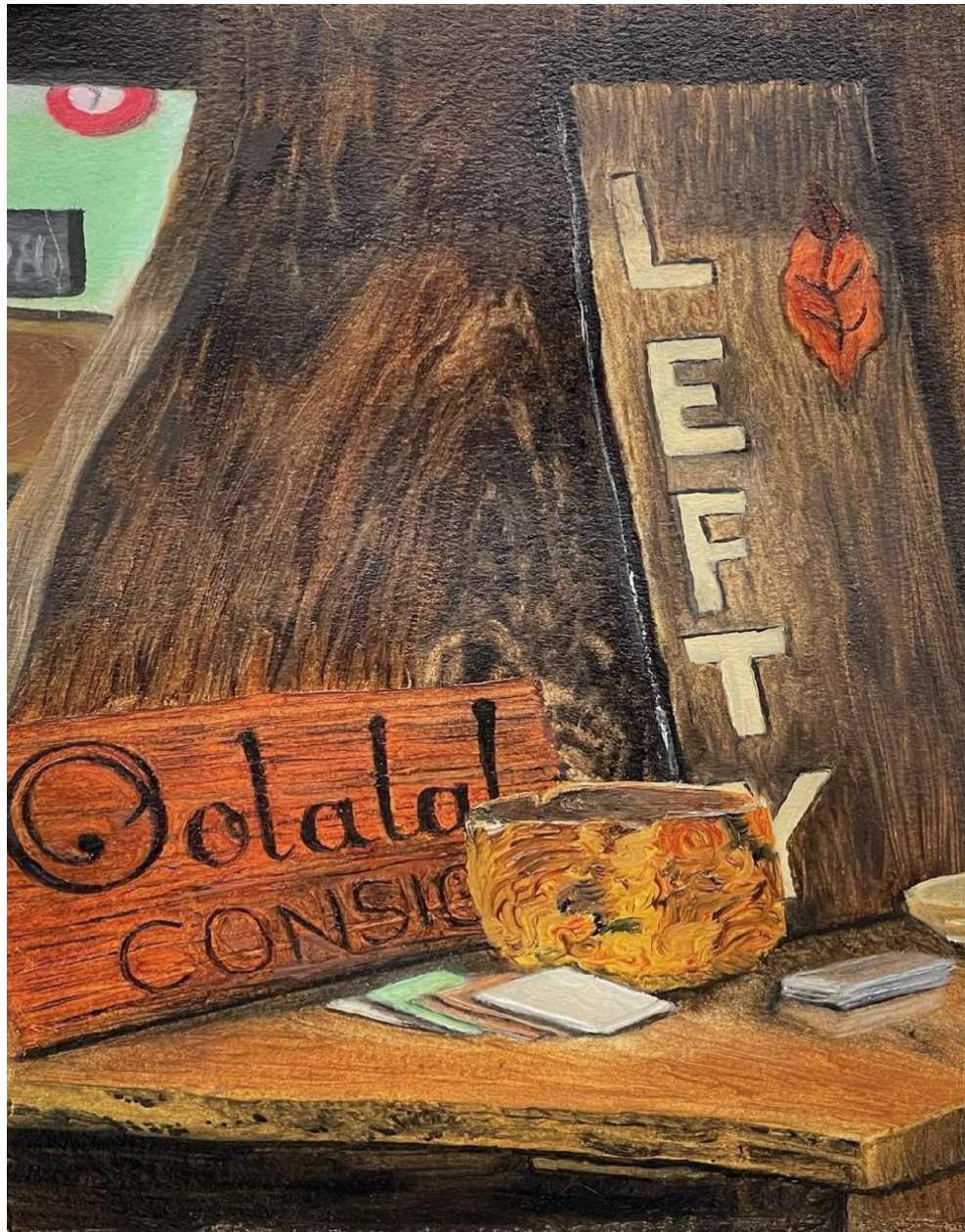
She waves goodbye.

Goodbye is the saddest word I know.

My name wanders around the pickle aisle and feels less sad.

Less sad because at the grocery store at least nobody knows there's nobody in love with me.

Judy Crook | Lefty
(Oil)



Esther Hammen | Smile

I'm sitting in a chair, in front of a table. I am wearing an apron that shows everyone here that I work for [REDACTED]. I have a bin of two hundred crafts to give out to kids as they pass by. I made them myself. I also have a McDonalds coffee next to me. I did not make that myself.

Mr. [REDACTED] and Mr. [REDACTED] stop by my booth with their wives and their kids. They say that it is nice to see me. They ask how I'm doing. They smile. I smile back.

I have never given anyone that big of a cock-sucking motherfucking cockadoodle hippy-dippy singing and dancing Julie Andrews smile. Here at the [REDACTED]. Everyone's smiling. But nobody's smiling like I am.

Jaci Mannisto | Our Blood Isn't Thicker Than Water

My first ever best friend was you. "My built-in best friend" as mom used to say. You used to protect me, as older brothers should. I took advantage of that and beat up on you every chance I got - and you let me. We'd make up games and play one on one "football" in the living room, even when mom told us not to. Our idea of fun on the weekends was sleepovers in your bunkbed; you on top bunk, me on bottom. And every day after getting off the bus we'd run to the backyard to play in the sandpit until dinner time, no matter the weather. Me and you, we were inseparable. And then you got to middle school. And all of a sudden having a younger, clingy sister wasn't cool anymore. And you stopped playing football in the living room with me, and instead started playing on a team at school. And mom and dad got rid of your bunk bed, and got you a queen instead. And the sandpit grew vacant, the toy trucks and barbie dolls buried somewhere underneath. I couldn't even beat up on you anymore, because now you'd return the favor. And one day I cried after you tackled me a little too hard in the snow, and that's when you started telling me you wish you had a brother instead. So, I fell in love with football and learned all about baseball for you - just so it was something we could talk about. I made mom buy monthly subscriptions to Sports Illustrated Kids so I could study the biggest names in sports. And now, whenever I watch a game with a guy and they surprisingly ask me how I know so much, I have to pretend that I didn't force myself to - just for you. Because through it all I thought I'd impress you even a little bit, but I never did. But at that point I was only nine, and I didn't understand why my best friend had decided I wasn't good enough anymore. So I thought, maybe when I get to middle school then I'll know why. But I never did. And now I'm in college, and for the past ten years I've been trying to fix the mistakes that I didn't know I made. But the unread text messages and the pathetic familiarity with your voicemail tells me I lost a part of you I can never get back. And even though I only hear from you at Christmas and sometimes on my birthday, I still question why I'm not good enough to be more than just a sister to you.

Smoke smells different
when it's your own
belongings
burning.

It's acidic
too many chemicals mixed together
like there was a mistake in the lab
and an explosion is bubbling.

The sounds of your
memories being destroyed
hisses in your ears.

The fog sits
on your tongue
and you can try
to cough it out

but all you get in return
are more fumes
billowing into your mouth.

You'll try to reach
your phone to call for help
but the screen
sears onto your skin.

Finally when you
open your eyes to
find an exit

your irises

begin to burn
and you're blinded
by the clouds.

You can't do anything
except maybe try to scream
but no one seems to be coming
and your head is getting foggy
and it hurts to breathe
and you lie on the floor

waiting.

Lydia Bergerson | Tired
(Acrylic)



I will never be my father's
favorite daughter again.

He will never show up for me
again.

He will miss every birthday and
avoid holiday gatherings.

I will not receive anything
from him again.

No more surprise visits or
unexpected gifts.

All because I spoke my truth
and all he heard were
lies.

He couldn't accept that I wasn't
so easily influenced

I am no longer a little
girl to be manipulated.

So now I can't talk to my
dad.

Now he refuses to speak with
me.

At one point I was the
light of his life.

His greatest achievement,
His favorite thing to brag
about.

Today he has cut me
out of his
life.

Pretends I do not
exist.

He was convinced
that I was telling
lies

and nowadays when people
ask him about me

he is the one who
lies

because I am not my
father's daughter
anymore.

After the fight

I sobbed
and didn't wipe away my tears

After days

I chopped my hair off
and deleted social media

After weeks

I went back to school
and tried to act normal

After months

I got diagnosed
and got medicated

After a year

I bought the plane ticket
and went on the trip

After you

I started writing again

Bella Smerz | Hexagonal Days

I see butterflies in moths

I see shapes and animals in the scattered clouds in the sky

I see fairies when I rub my eyes too hard and occasionally, I'll see tears fall from the heavens

I thought I saw my grandma the other day

And then I remembered she's been sprouting flowers for six years

Like a honeycomb, some days are so very sweet to see them the way that they aren't usually meant to be

Marlie Voigt | Youthful Spirits
(Linocut)



Tanishka | YOU!

Sometimes I dream about full conversations,
but what I wake up to
is empty notifications.

I keep on waiting for you, to show up.
but you never do.
we fight,

It goes on the next day. which is all unintentional, but understandable.
I guess.

even if I try and not respond to you, I feel an urge to speak up.

I'll tell you this today,
I love you.
Even when you are with me.
Even when you are sleeping in someone's arms, who then is yours.

Taylor Trost | The Romanticized ED

1 finger, 2 fingers, 3 fingers slowly fit inside me.
Not in my pussy but down my throat.
My nose starts dripping and my eyes water
but nothing comes out of my mouth.
I spit and try again, harder and faster.
It's painful, but worth it,
if for a second, I don't feel the weight of food in my belly.
Or to finally feel like I'm doing right to make myself skinnier tomorrow.
God, I need help, I think to myself.
But needing it and getting it are two very different things.
No one tells you how addictive and needy eating disorders are
Besides, it's not really an eating disorder if I never actually throw up right?
I look down at my toothbrush,
which I've used to replace my hand, hoping for better results.
Dotted with blood, bristles coated with saliva, but not even a hint of vomit.
I know what I'm doing is wrong,
but there is an even thicker sense of guilt
washing over me.
Because I can't even accomplish this one fucking thing.
My chest hurts and it's not just from everything I pushed down my throat tonight with the hopes of
something coming up.

Taylor Trost | 5 Minutes of Fuck Offs

Gross ass toenails

Weak tea

Dirt on my floor

Greasy Bacon

The constant replaying happening in my mind

Cold Rain

Creepy men and their dick pics, in places that are supposed to be safe

Little bits of leftover nail polish on my fingers

Crumbs on my futon that I didn't make

People who think I shit talk them when I don't

Weird mouth noises

Command strips that fall

Blame

Monday afternoons

Icy roads and slippery slopes

Upset stomachs, not just from food

My messy desk

Shaky hands

Watered down coffee

Bits of food stuck in the drain

Hair on the wall in the shower

Long distance friendships

Dying plants that are my fault

Smudged glasses

Anxiety

Roommates who don't respect my space

People who don't respect my boundaries

Hair ties that break

Taylor Trost | Any Body

It's unbelievable how much worth

is put on a body.

10 fingers 10 toes

2 cheeks made for caressing.

1 heart that I imagine must be made to be broken.

Why am I so much more than my body and yet so much less?

My body is everything, holds everything,

encompasses every part of me.

And then, in a snap,

gets reduced to nothing.

To nothing more than a body

2 legs to slide between.

Somehow I dissolve until all that is left is a lifeless shape that you can fuck.

And I wake up tomorrow pretending it was more.

Pretending that you care about me and my body,

my heart and my soul.

Maybe you do,

tell me why I feel so used.

You said you wanted to go slow,

but I saw no yellow lights

Only red flags that appeared green from a distance,

entrancing me to believe it was real.

And you say we are just friends,

but we spend nights wrapped in each other.

So I am left to wonder what it all means,

questioning your intentions, your heart and soul.

It's so beautiful and tempting, your body and your brain.

Your sense of humor and touchable cheeks.

Your 10 fingers holding mine, as you dream,

and I debate in my mind.

I am not any body.

I am somebody.

And these 10 toes deserve to be seen in as my 10 toes,

attached to my brain and my heart.

I reflect and wish and reflect around the idea

of being more than a body to hold,

but a body with a name, a person to share with another.

Lily Garcia | Dreamland Natalia Vodianova
(Acrylic and Collage)



we lay on the hot sand, watching
as a seagull takes
its final breaths, wings
broken in too many places.
the gull's body twitches— its nose
buried in the sand. it's
unbearable.
i want to help, to run and save it from the misery.
but i don't because you tell me not to.
i watch as the wing moves
ever so slightly, until it finally falls
once more.

“you won't be coming back next summer, will you.”

“no.

i don't think so.”

the waves never stop.
we've been at this for a year now
and i know things change
and that life is supposed to happen
like this and we are grown.
but
the wing has stopped
moving and the body has stopped twitching.

Anna Weyenberg | Sun-bleached

i've known this
swing set for one day,
my father has known it
for almost five months now.
the rotting wood and rusty chains
and the sun-bleached plastic that once
belonged to the laughter and tiny hands of
another family, now belong to wrinkled hands,
freckled from years in the sun, and lungs filled with
thick cigarette smoke, and blood fused with burning alcohol

it took me five months to see his new home, the one he
lives alone in. i don't resent him; he was there for
my laughter and tiny hands. but in some way,
i know he won't be there for my wrinkled
hands, freckled from my years in the
sun. and i know he won't be here
for their brand-new swing set
with fresh chopped wood
and shiny chains, and
their tiny hands.

Lydia Bergerson | Traveler
(Watercolor)



Contributor Biographies:

Alicia Barber born in Southern California, wishes to become an English Teacher. She loves spending time in the sun and hopes to make a difference for young writers.

Lydia Bergerson is a senior at UWL, using their art minor to keep them afloat with a biology major. They say they do art not only because they want to, but because they feel like they have to. It speaks to the little weirdo in them who feels everything deeply.

Bronwyn Bond is a second-year English major at UWL. She wishes to become a librarian in her future because there's no better feeling than being surrounded by stacks of books. She enjoys writing poetry in her free time, especially in the villanelle style.

Jack Bringe hopes you have a good day.

Jonathon Brueggeman is a short story writer. Occasionally, he writes a story that doesn't suck.

Ellie Burns is an art major at UWL with a minor in theatre tech and design. They work most often in metals and makeup but love art in all of its forms. They seek to show the beauty in even the darkest subject matter and hope to provoke deep emotion in all viewers of their work.

Katie Cox is a (soon-to-be graduated!!) history student with an admiration for stories and words. When she isn't writing, she enjoys watching good movies, pretending she can play chess, and spending time with the people she loves.

Judy Crook is a returning student and grandmother who is majoring in archaeology and minoring in art. She believes it is never too late to pursue your passion. Judy has been an At-Large Director for the Wisconsin Archaeological Society for the past 2 years and plans to become a Wisconsin archaeologist when she graduates. She enjoys spending time with her husband and family, exploring nature, learning, and creating artwork. She hopes you will help celebrate the

upcoming 120th anniversary of the Wisconsin Archaeological Society by attending some of the great events planned for 2023.

Aidan Donahue is currently a junior at UWL studying English, Creative Writing, and Legal Studies. He works hard to balance his love of writing and table-top games with his passion for procrastinating and abandoning drafts after the first two pages. He can be formally contacted at wearcolors.aidan@gmail.com.

Lily Garcia writes: "I paint the human experience as it pertains to self-ruminating and idealization. I paint from a surrealist perspective the whimsical idealizations of the human form and their impact on their relative atmosphere. The subjects themselves speak to movement and color to form a substantial presence to the viewer. Paintings are largely acrylic based with some mixed media components to encapsulate unique characteristics of the subject matter."

Anna Giese is an English and communication double major who is just trying to stay caffeinated while making a better world.

Esther Hammen is a junior at UWL. She majors in English with an emphasis in Writing and Rhetoric. She has been writing poetry for seven years, and this is her first submission to The Catalyst. She hopes you enjoy her writing and encourages you to do some of your own, too.

Ella Harris is currently a third -year student at UWL. Ella enjoys using the creative process (drawing, photography, and writing) as a means of inner healing.

Jaci Mannisto is a second year student at UWL who enjoys reading the poetry of Emily Dickinson as well as writing poetry herself.

Sidney Mitchell is trying her best.

Bella Smerz is a junior at UWL who is majoring in Psychology. Bella is an adventurous person who loves to travel, eat good food and write about the world and its unique relationships.

Tanishka is a student and writer who writes expressing her feelings and experiences through her writings.

Taylor Trost is a Communication Studies student entering in her last year here at UWL. She uses poems and writing to express herself during high times of emotions and feelings. While all of her writings in this issue are a tad depressing, rest assured she is okay. In her free time, she loves reading cheesy romantic novels and browsing Booktok. The last book she read is *The 7 and a half Murders of Evelyn Hardgrave*.

Marlie Voigt is an art education major at UWL. Their preferred medium is print and painting, but as an Aquarius through and through, they are always looking for another medium to explore.

Ava Wille is a French major and Psychology Minor at UWL, just does art in spare time. This piece was an experimental work and her first time using Procreate, elapsed time was 9 hours.

Anna Weyenberg is a sophomore at UWL majoring in Communication Studies with a double minor in Literary and Cultural Studies and Creative Writing. She loves reading at the local cafe, hanging out with friends who also enjoy reading at the cafe, listening to music, and caring for her plants like they are her children.