Renascentia

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Renacentia, Calliope XLVII, 2016
Literary Arts Magazine
University of the Pacific
Calliope, pronounced Kuh-Lie-Oh-Pea is named for the muse of heroic poetry in Greek mythology and is Pacific’s student literary and arts journal. First published in the spring of 1970, Calliope has since woven itself into Pacific’s literary and art fabric. It features original art, poetry, prose, fiction, and essays created by Pacific’s students. It is sponsored by the Pacific Humanities Center through the collaborative efforts of students from the English and Visual Art Departments under the mentorship of Professors Courtney Lehmann and Brett DeBoer. Since 2009 each annual edition has received national acclaim by winning an Apex Award for Publication Excellence.

Previous literary publications that served as inspiration for Calliope were The Pharos, an annual published from 1893–1912 and The Hieroglyph from 1931–1933. The cover of the first issue of Calliope is the only one not illustrated with artwork produced by a Pacific student, instead featuring a copy of an illustration by Art Nouveau artist, Alphonse Mucha. In recent years, the cover design has not only reflected a specific genre or theme but has also paid homage to our namesake, Calliope, as muse.

The cover of this issue is inspired by its subtitle Renascentia and references the neoclassical bust of Madame de Sérrilly by Houdon.

Calliope continues as a vehicle of self-expression and creativity for Pacific students, and each issue reflects the talent of the students who contribute to it. Financial support comes from the Humanities Division of the College of the Pacific and we all benefit from this continued generosity.
Compromise, contemplation, coffee, and consistent communication; if you ever want to make a magazine you’re going to need these four things. As the visual editors for this year’s *Calliope*, we found out that it takes more than a few meetings to create a literary arts magazine. We stayed up late, we deliberated over the design, and we talked a lot about what we wanted our readers to take away from *Calliope*. The aesthetic of our edition of *Calliope* is best described as airy and modest. The best attributes of our individual styles have come together to create a medley of design. What we found in this process was that we valued the unspoken strength of negative space. We became infatuated with the simplicity and dignity of a straight line. We began to crave the touches of red-orange that run through the composition like a thread weaves through a tapestry.

In our efforts we sought to avoid distracting from the sentiments roused by the works themselves. Sensuous and passionate, the stunning visual works exhibited in this edition of *Calliope* evoke the feelings and emotions associated with this year’s theme *Renascentia*, meaning rebirth.

We hope that in viewing the magazine as a whole, our readers relish in the harmony created when literature and art unite as one.

“Perfection is achieved not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.”—Antoine de Saint-Exupery
Serving as the visual editors of *Calliope* was easily one of the most rewarding, intense, and formative experiences for us during our time at Pacific. Now that all of us have moved into the professional world of graphic design, *Calliope* stands out as an incredibly unique opportunity to explore design outside of the classroom, giving us a glimpse into what our future careers could be. It gave us a taste of what the professional world had in store for us—setting deadlines, working with professional printing companies, and combining the ideas of multiple designers into one great idea. *Calliope* also provided us with the experience of working with a large group of diverse people in a working society. We experienced how graphic designers interact with different teams in order to come up with a final product. For us, it was working with the literary team, our advisors, and the production team.

Interacting with other professionals who shared no similar opportunities in their time as students helped us realize that the culture of our alma mater is unparalleled. *Calliope* brought together people of different backgrounds and talents. This encouraged us to play with possibilities—a step often skipped in our lives now driven by deadlines and schedules. To us, *Calliope* is not just a lesson we once learned, but still serves as a continuous reminder to explore possibility and think diversely.
LETTER FROM THE LITERARY EDITORS
EMILY OLSON AND SARAH YUNG

“I give you this to take with you: Nothing remains as it was. If you know this, you can begin again, with pure joy in the uprooting.”—Judith Minty

Stories are told in negative parabolas. As writers, we are taught to arc the narrative from beginning to climax, and to allow the events to fall into cathartic conclusion. Such a structure provides the writer with predictable patterns in which to tell events and provides the reader with emotional release.

This year’s Calliope chooses not to follow the narrative arc. Denouement, or the sense of cathartic resolution, is absent from most of the pieces selected to appear in this volume. These writings are, in essence, the absence of denouement. Instead, they unabashedly embrace the first half of narrative: the origin and birth of a story.

Fittingly, the theme of this issue of Calliope is “Renascentia.” This Latin phrase, meaning renaissance and rebirth, was chosen to characterize the introspection and bravery of the authors whose works are featured here. This volume is born from the simultaneous passion and vulnerability of writers who are telling their own stories in their own way for the first time.

Sometimes, it is harder to challenge the past than it is to face the future. The past is amorphous and can only be characterized through memory, which itself is ambiguous. This volume of Calliope confronts the past with unrestrained vivacity, emotion, and heartbreak. The
works reflected here are our textual commitments to telling the stories that are conflicting, equivocal, and unashamedly real.

We invite you to find joy in our authors’ freedom.
“What is Calliope?”

There is a simple answer to that question; however, what makes Calliope unique requires a longer explanation. In Issue XLVI, I wrote that “to write and create is to question, to protest, and to reveal the hidden and the confined,” and that is what Calliope represents to me. Calliope is a form of intervention that tells a story about a community of artists whose voices often go unheard. Calliope is an exploration of the here and now, but also of our past, our histories, and the small moments that seem insignificant until we stop to consider their importance. Reflecting on these moments, sometimes mundane and other times provocative, is what makes us unique in our experience and as artists. We as artists create to be understood, and this issue of Calliope captures exactly that.

Moving from last year’s theme of writing serving as a form of confrontation, this issue moves beyond a mere confrontation and toward being understood through our experiences and origins as artists. Since my time as the Editor-in-Chief, I have been reflecting on what importance Calliope held in my experience at Pacific. I believe its importance is more than that of a mere literary and visual arts magazine. Its importance is not only reflected in the subject matter laid out within, but also in the sorts of opportunities it allows the Pacific art community. Writers and visual artists alike utilize this space to share their stories and visions as artists, creating a very unique experience for its readers.
The heaviness of the monsoon drowns
the noise of every breath,
muffling sins, covering every inch of my body.
The whimpers of a bird that has yet to fly
are hushed by the storm.

The brown water hides the ground,
The pink flower?
destroyed.
Seeds float to the top.
Mixing and becoming one with scum.

Now, the water reaches my waist,
I reach out to grab the bird,
To comfort it before it inevitably dies
becoming an uncomfortable part of me,
Taking refuge in my heart.

When telling the story of the little bird
the words become impossible to utter.
Building a sanctuary in my throat
comfortably living and
burning me from inside.
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HIS HANDS
SIERRA GONZALEZ

Hard Hands,
kissed by dirt
they tell the story of garden secrets
and flower magic.

Clean palms Reveal
stains from
splintered earth and sheet metal.

Each Fingertip
calloused
and perfumed by
citrus-mint herbs
and cologne-spice.

Artists Hands.

Earth Child Man Hand's
wild and poetic
pure and raw
belonging to no one,
and connected to everything.

They
dig deeper;
planting seeds of wisdom,
potting earthly tokens of the heart
and ripping away the roots of blooming love.
They are
warm and rough.

Belonging to no one.
Connected to Everything.

rough and warm
contoured to clay creations and succulent sculptures,
ythey caress only fresh flowers and growing gardens.
FACES GONE
FACE THE OTHER WAY
BRIAN FARR
The lip of her stomach spills out and over the waistband. It hangs there, pasty and lumpy and accusatory, a tangible testament that her latest “revolutionary” lifestyle change has, yet again, not been particularly effective.

Beneath her skittish fingers, the stretch marks that map the rolls and hills of her body tremble, expanding like fault lines, like coffee stains, across her sallow skin.

She prods at the generous pillow of lard encasing her hips.

*If you dug down about five more inches, you could almost excavate my hipbones,* she thinks, and the bitterness spreads through her very being until she can almost taste it settling on her tongue: heavy, and gritty, and inky, a flavor she is all too familiar with, thank you very much.

She settles herself down gingerly onto the plush velvet stool, shifting to accommodate her excess. Smoothing the puckered fabric of the waistband under her thumb, she bites her lip, deep in thought. She can reinvigorate her diet tomorrow—cut out a couple hundred more calories no problem, no more sugar or gluten or dairy, map out a more strenuous exercise schedule somewhere in there, too—but for now, maybe her anxieties will be soothed, at least for a short while, by squeezing into a smaller size.

*Size is just a number,* she scolds herself, reciting from the healthy lifestyle magazine she’d flipped through in line at the grocery store. She attempts to block the image of the fit models on the cover from her mind’s eye in vain.

*It doesn’t matter what size you wear as long as you’re comfortable in your own skin. Size doesn’t matter. Size is just a number. You cannot predicate your sense of*
self on the relative growth and shrinkage of your body. Your body is a vessel. Your body, a temple. Nevertheless, she cracks open the dressing room door, beckoning the retail assistant close with one pink sausage finger. (Even the fingers obese, the skin bloating around small rounded shells of fingernails.) The assistant is tall and blonde and willowy—the kind of girl who looks like she could parade around naked under these damning fluorescent retail lights and still appear a supermodel—and she approaches in deliberate, mincing steps.

And there it is again, that familiar look. She can see it in the sales associate’s eyes: the initial reel of revulsion, the hint of sympathy curling instantaneously around her perfect, full mouth—but she doesn’t need this retail worker’s sympathy. What she needs is a smaller size. She needs the fleeting sensation of satisfaction that comes with the laboriousness, the sore fingertips, with straining to button something just out of reach. To transform the body. To reshape the vessel.

She tilts her double chin up and clears her throat, mustering up the last of her dignity as the assistant’s eyes flit down toward her thighs.

“Can you get me a size smaller than these? They’re a little... they don’t fit properly around the waist.”

Her throat burns in shame as the sales associate’s artfully arched eyebrows rise ever so slightly. The associate purses her lips and then swallows before speaking, her swanlike neck bobbing with the effort.

“I’m sorry, miss, but we don’t carry anything smaller than a 00.”
They told me not to write.
“More experience”
“Too young”
“Don’t write—yet”
So I threw myself:
Into cars, going too fast for their own good
Into parties, place to place, no address
Into relationships, both shallow and sure
Into circles, that never started but seemed to end
Into a plethora of experiences
None, for me.
They told me not to write.
But here I am,
Spilling ink
Spilling me
This is all I haven’t lost.
This is all that is left.
And they told me not to write.
The first time I remember my grandmother forgetting was when I was six years old and she misplaced her potato salad. I am sure this is not the first time that she was forgetful—in fact, it may not have been a symptom of her Alzheimer’s at all. After all, I frequently misplace things that turn out to be right in front of my face and, to the best of my knowledge, I do not have a neurodegenerative disorder. But for some reason, this is the moment that my brain draws forth as the start. After picking me up from first grade, we had gone to our local Raley’s supermarket and she had purchased a small plastic drum of potato salad for lunch. Just moments after arriving back at home, my normally demure, collected grandmother was stomping around the kitchen, flustered, unable to find the potato salad. “It’s right here, Grandma,” I offered uneasily, gesturing at the top of the printer in the next room. She had set it down there when we first came into the house. “Of course,” she smiled, relieved that she hadn’t left it twenty minutes away in the checkout line. She didn’t comment on it further—and what was there to say? She had misplaced her lunch—but I was left with an uneasy feeling in my stomach that I couldn’t seem to shake.

We visited Raley’s almost every day after school. The occasional detour to the Jamba Juice next door held the true allure for me, but for my grandmother grocery shopping was a social experience. She knew nearly every employee by name, and I’m fairly confident that the ladies in the deli section counted her as a genuine friend. They would chat amiably about husbands and children while I gazed absentmindedly into glass cases of lunchmeats and marveled at the bakery section. There were a few employees who continued inquiring with my mother about my grandma’s wellbeing even years after she no longer came to the store.

Over the years, I have unearthed countless examples of what I now think of as “Romantic Alzheimer’s,” dreamy TV-appropriate versions of reality where dementia patients keep their long-term memory but get “confused” about the present, or who find new love and somehow remember it when all else fades away, or who miraculously become lucid for hours or even days at a time, even in the advanced stages of the disease.

I have since learned that, while such things do happen,
they are far from the norm, and they certainly shouldn’t have been what I was expecting. I think perhaps my least favorite example of Romantic Alzheimer’s is when I see people on social media attest that their grandfather loved their grandmother so much that he never forgot who she was (<3). I think the reason that this makes my stomach want to crawl out through my mouth is its corollary: that perhaps the reason my grandmother forgot me is that she didn’t love me enough.

It’s easy, in retrospect, to see this wasn’t at all the case. My grandma was in Kauai with my parents when she found out that my mom was pregnant. Since my dad is her only child, that made me her first grandkid. From what I understand, excitement doesn’t even begin to cover how she felt—ecstatic, perhaps, would be closer. On the plane ride home she announced to everyone that she was going to be a grandma. She was so delighted, in fact, that she retired from her job as a legal secretary when I was born and moved in with us, expanding our family of three to a happy family of four. Since both of my parents are teachers, she was able to care for me while they were at work during the day. She taught me about letters and colors and how to make friends with all the animals we could find on the ten acres of property surrounding our home. She would push me on the swings and sing me nursery rhymes. She let me play dress up with her clothes and shuffle around in her shoes, many sizes too large. When she watched As the World Turns in the afternoon, she encouraged me to stand in front of the television and dance to the theme song, even if that meant that sometimes there was a toddler obscuring her view of the soap opera’s first few moments.

Perhaps as a side effect of a child’s memory, perhaps as a result of commuting between homes after my parents’ separation when I was six years old, I recall my grandmother in two separate but distinct ways. It is almost difficult to think of her as a single person who underwent a dramatic change; instead, I remember two people who were unfortunate enough to wind up sharing the same body. She forgot my name first, and then my father’s, and then finally her own.

The grandma who helped me finish jigsaw puzzles when I got too frustrated to continue slowly gave way to one who didn’t have sufficient motor skills to button
a shirt, who was unable to remain present for long enough to bathe herself. The love disappeared from her eyes, along with the compassion and eventually the understanding. When working as a legal secretary, my grandma knew true shorthand—like another language entirely, a single symbol represented an entire word. When I was thirteen, the year before her death, I watched her write the words “O God” on the stone surface of our living room table. I never saw her pick up a pencil again.

That was the same year that my grandma left the house and refused to come back. During the day she stayed with an adult daycare facility to prevent precisely this type of incident. Although I recognized the necessity for assisted living services, I don’t think that she liked it there. I believe that there was some part of her grappling for dignity as her faculties deteriorated in a way that she could not possibly comprehend. Although she was well treated, some angry part of her psyche resented being looked after. She would frequently leave the building with new friends and utterly forget them by the time we made it home.

It was a warm day in early fall, the sort of day when the light goes hazy and everything looks just a little bit tired. The summer heat had cooked the tall grass carpeting our property into long, brittle stalks, telling secrets in the soft breeze. The wine grapes in the vineyard across the long, empty country road hung heavily on the vine, waiting for noisy machinery to come and vibrate them off into a bucket for collection. It was the perfect day for a walk, which I suppose was the initial thought that crossed my grandma’s mind when she slid on her shoes and walked out the front door of our house. My dad sent me after her, assuming that she would walk the couple of hundred feet down to the end of our gravel driveway and then return, as she usually did when she wandered out of the house. At fourteen I already had far too many years of practice caring for my grandmother, so I should have been more than qualified for the job.

On this day, however, she did not turn around. I jogged to catch up with her.

“Where are you going, grandma?” I asked brightly.

“Home,” she spat, shocking me with the venom in her tone.

“You were just at home,” I tried to explain, pacing beside her down the hot blacktop.

“No, that’s not my home. I have to go home,” she insisted, sounding quite confident and increasingly agitated. I tried to explain that this house was her home, that she had lived there for more than a decade now, that all her belongings were there, that her son was there, that I was. In short, curt statements, she informed me that I was wrong. Normally I would have acquiesced, but we were now nearly half a mile from home and she showed no interest in turning back.
“Okay, then, where do you live? Where is your home?”

In retrospect, I suppose that I can understand why that question would have shaken her, because I realize now that the answer was that she didn’t know. I had, at the time, assumed that she must have been thinking of a real place in the wrong time, but I am now fairly confident that she had no clue—and that not knowing must have terrified her.

“Leave me alone! Stop getting in my way!” She had begun to shout. “Stop following me and leave me alone!” It was at this point that I began to panic and called my dad on my cell phone, asking that he drive down and pick us up. When I hung up, my grandma stopped and turned to look at me.

“I don’t want you here! It’s bullshit!”
“What is?”
“It’s bullshit to think I ever loved you!”

She turned to continue stalking down the road, just as my dad pulled up beside her in his filthy gray Prius. He reached across the center console to shove open the passenger door.

“Come on, Mom. Let’s go home.”

She climbed wordlessly into the car. My dad offered me a ride, but I decided to walk back up to the house—slowly.

Later that year, on the last day of November, 2011, my grandmother finally passed away.

Usually I would not use the word “finally” to describe a death because it makes it sound as though it’s something that was long anticipated, long awaited. In this case, however, that makes the word a particularly apt description. Though Alzheimer’s Disease has a special way of killing a person, it rarely actually takes a life—rather, it causes such severe incapacitation that infections or falls kill patients first. It was one such fall that landed my grandmother in the hospital with a broken hip, and then sent her to hospice care, and then sent her home in a black cardboard box of ashes on my father’s work table. She sat there for some time before he finally moved her, and I suspect that the only reason he ever took action at all was that he was afraid that a cat would bust into the box and try to eat her.

My mom, my dad, and I were all together when it (finally) happened. Since I wasn’t yet old enough to drive, my parents had to shuttle me back and forth between their respective houses and they had decided that it was easier just to meet in the middle than to take turns driving the full 40 minute round trip. I was about to seal myself into the warm cocoon of my mother’s car when we heard my dad’s cell phone ring. We all knew what it was before he even picked up.

A few moments later, he joined my mom where she stood beside the open passenger door, keeping watch over my huddled form.

“That was hospice,” he said simply. “Grandma died.”
The call had come through in a tiny, two-minute window when the three of us were all together. We didn’t say anything else. We didn’t even cry. We just sat there together under the stars.

Four years later, I am finally able to think of my grandma with her good face on, her true face, the person she was prior to the disease taking root in her mind. The woman I remember taking me to get smoothies after school and helping out in my kindergarten class is my grandmother—all the rest was brain death. And I am strong enough now to say firmly, confidently, that nothing that she ever said or did took place due to a lack of love for me or anyone else in her life. The grandma I got to know had more love than nearly anyone I’ve ever known. So now I think back mostly with nostalgia, sometimes with regret. There is a poignancy to my remembrance of her, knowing how proud she would be of the life I’m living if she had only lived long enough to see it.

A couple of months ago, I took my boyfriend of almost three years to Jamba Juice. The Raley’s next door closed down years ago in favor of a newer version a few miles away, and I haven’t really thought about it since. For some reason, though, on this not-quite-hot November afternoon, I rub my thumb across the dusty glass of the huge front windows and look inside.

Everything is exactly as it was, as though frozen in time. The large red armchair sits beside the side entrance, its color dulled by a thick patina of dust. Empty magazine stands lurk beside empty registers; shelves that once stocked firewood and patio chairs are barren but exactly where I left them eight years ago. Large signs loom above empty aisles: Dairy, Pharmacy, Deli.

My boyfriend looks on, baffled as to why tears have suddenly started streaming down my face.

“She would have loved you,” I tell him. “She would have loved you so much.”
PASTEL GRENADES
DELAINEY WILLING

It's one of those nights
Where the stars don't shine so bright
One where I wear your old sweaters
To feel like the world isn't caving in
It's one of those nights
That feel a little more lonely.
Everyone's been asleep for quite sometime
The night's too inviting to give up yet

We wished for changed
With unknown consequences
Prayed for something different
Now the pain's gone away
Replaced by nothing
There's an emptiness clawing
its way from my heart to my brain
The hole is dark where something once was
And there's no hope for the doomed

In five years a lot can change
I'm only at the top of my game
When I'm insane
Oh, I'll take this little secret to your grave

But I'll scream and shout
All the way back

I can't believe I ever thought
Love was a collection of pink and orange pastels
Because it actually feels like a grenade
Went off in your chest
Leaving a gaping hole in its wake

After the first explosion you're not sure you
want to love again
But you do.
Because we have no choice but to feel
Everything.
Every little drop of sorrow
Every shock of pain,
We have no choice
And so we bear it with the new knowledge
That love isn't what people taught us it was

Love isn't the embodiment of young girls twirling
in beautiful silk skirts
Love isn't free and it sure as hell isn't equal.
We’re jaded
After that first whirlwind love
Disgruntled and unbelieving.

Until another stranger walks by
And manages to catch your eye
Leaving you wondering
Why you thought love was such a bad idea
So you introduce yourself and fall
A little more for the soft smiles and expressive eyes.
Until it all becomes too much again
And we’re forced to say goodbye.

Love is a never ending cycle
Of pain and misery
But also of amazement and unadulterated joy
Because the human heart never learns
That to love,
To give yourself to another,
Can only ever end
In loneliness.

DRAGON SCALE
BRIAN FARR
PHYLACTERY #5
ALEC SHIGETA
EVERYTHING

ANONYMOUS

nothing

was so nice as the feel of your skin yielding when pressed against mine

on days like yesterday when the air is bakery fresh and twice as warm

when you first cut me i thought life had finally seeped into my bones

your fatal flaw was that you cut me open but you never watched me bleed

you eviscerated me but i had never seen my organs laid out so nicely

my fatal flaw is that i let you and worse that i enjoyed every bloodletting

only later did the lacerations fester only later did the sutures unravel

and you aren’t a surgeon after all and i don’t owe you

anything
MOTHER AND CHILD

ALEXANDRA MCBRIDE
I knew as soon as I walked out the hospital doors
That you wouldn’t be my baby anymore.
The conversation when I had to say goodbye
You spit and spattered, but I had to tell you I loved you
And let you know how much you mattered.
When you went from one mother’s arms to another
My heart broke and my world was shattered.
I knew I would always love you, just from afar,
But I envied the mother who got to take you home
in her car.
I mothered you, grew you, loved you, and knew you.
The way you kicked when I would sing,
The way you rolled when I was sleeping.
The doctors said you were perfect.
With raven hair wisps and soft blue sea eyes.
But I felt I couldn’t take the credit
And say that angel, she’s mine.
For months I hugged my belly with you inside,
Praying you wouldn’t leave, because you would
still be mine.

But I had a dream for you.
That exceeded anything I could do.
Your parents will love you, I can see it in their eyes.
They will guard you, guide you, ease all of your cries.
The look on their faces when I told them they would
be your home
I knew in my heart that I couldn’t raise you alone.
But my love you have a chance, and every opportunity,
To be what you want, and make your dreams a reality.
I’m sorry I never gave you a lullaby, and I hope you
don’t hold it against me.
I couldn’t find the words to sing, but now I want you
to hear my dream.
I want to see you love earnestly, honest, and fervently.
To hear a laugh escape your smile like a young child.
To take full control of your life, and never stop doing
what’s right.
Just be the best you can be, be the best you can
be for me.
Because I love you, Addy.
Death sleeps at the foot of my bed. It is usually quiet, and doesn't take up much space. But sometimes Death is talkative, and we chat, two old friends. We discuss how our days have passed in the other's absence, As Death makes thousands more absent in those solemn moments. And sometimes I bear witness to Death's morose profession. It is not cruel, but it does not know how to comfort when I mourn.

Death complains of an aching spine when it rests in my presence, And I think of Atlas, cursed to hold up the world on his shoulders. In bitterness I ask my dear friend if it is similarly cursed to hold up the world.

For I would think that it would lighten its burden daily, By spiriting away all the bad luck children, The comatose romantics, The hopeful, hopeless, and those lost amidst. The flesh of the world is a despairing husk, and you lighten that burden, layer by layer By taking my friends and my family, those I love and those I never got to meet How can we curse you then, my friend, if you lighten your curse? Death dismisses its persecution Alas, life is more infectious than death Nearly twice as many first breaths are taken to replace the final exhalations.
It is all Death can do to not be buried with its victims in the face of so many births. I apologize.

Sometimes at night, when insomnia enfolds the both of us, We gaze out the window above my bed, lingering on the lights dotting the dark above Stars die too. Do you claim them as well? Stars don’t argue with their fate so much when I pay a visit. What fuels their apathy? Even when stars die, their light prevails for thousands of years more. Their light is their trace of memory. Do humans have a trace of memory? Humans are social, and when one expires, others grieve and remember. Stars are not social, so their memory is allowed to shine for a while longer.

We come to a quiet consensus that night, Gazing at the stars, all of whom look alive but many are already long since deceased. We agree that while death is mournful, it is not a finale, For as long as a memory lives on, Whether as a light in the sky or a mind’s memoir, our story has not ended. And eventually when that light is extinguished, Or the memory succumbs to tragic forgetfulness, it will be okay. Everyone has their fame, and everyone has their curtain call. Living forever is a rather dull thing. Death would know. It tells it to me in lullabies as I fall asleep. And I let Death live with me, another time into the waning dark. Death sleeps at the foot of my bed. Good night, my friend.
I ATE MY HEART FOR DINNER

ANASTASIA CHILIMIDOS

I ate my heart for dinner
I sautéed it with white pepper and mushrooms
Some crushed garlic bits and some crushed guilt bits
And a glass of bright red wine

I had been doing it for so long, every day,
Nibbling and aching with yearning
Reaching for everything I could never attain,
Spending my days making wish lists and sighing at the world
Might as well make it literal

I drizzled my feelings-
Sticky sour scornful sauce
A dash of salty anger
Richly flavored lust and longing
- over the meal
(With sweet melancholy sadness on the side for dipping)
And cheery cherry pie for dessert

Next week
I think I’ll just try chicken fried steak
These emotions are too rich for my stomach
HARDENING HEART
EDNA RUSH
AFTER THE STORM

CHAIN O.

i.
Autumn slits his wrists when the last sparse leaves are just barely clinging on to the branches still.
He bleeds out into winter with a sigh, he intends his hibernation to be permanent.
Winter doesn’t see what August has done, he’s too high on snow and heroin; junkies, like the season, shiver, wear sweaters, and eventually grow cold.
His lips turn blue with the blooming violets.
Spring sprouts blankets over each of their graves.
Dandelions for wishes, poppies for sweet dreams.
She knows her roots are drying out, but when the belladonna kills her, she wants to go out as a garden.
Summer is the last one left. She desecrates her brother’s grave,
she dresses for war, in army green because he took amber and carmine from the world when he died.
She is alive, alive, and alone, alone. Missing him is as vast as the ocean.

ii.
When the storm comes, it bears a gift no one expects: the biblical floodwater drowns the soil where they are buried, seeps into their coffins, and calls back the sleeping dead.
The season is all seasons—it is a natural disaster of epic proportion.
This is how Spring and Autumn meet, for the first time.
When the storm settles, they still stick fast.
He is crackles and windswept hair and dry wit; she is hummingbirds and fragrant breeze and flower petals that land on his face. They are dusk and dawn, united.
It is Spring who introduces him to Winter.
He had blown away too soon to know him.
To Autumn, Winter seems too cool, all smooth ice exterior, so certain, chiseled marble gray. Like Spring, Winter believes there are warmer days coming —
Autumn thinks warm days are in the past.
To Winter, though, Autumn is the robber of his frosted breath.
Autumn is the farthest day he never dreamed he’d see, a dizzying palette of colored leaves.
He is the sticks that feed the fire that warms Winter’s cold ground.
iii. How do seasons fall in love?
Winter falls for Autumn like a snowstorm, like a sled crash, like standing on the surface of a frozen pond when the ice cracks, and suddenly you are plunged under and the hypothermia grips you so quickly that all at once you feel warm. Spring falls for Winter like a cherry blossom, spun in the grips of the whimsical freefall. She falls like a seed pod, whirling round and round too fast to see the ground. She falls like a baby bird from a tree, and nurses her tender wings back from injury.

iv. How do seasons fall from faith?
Summer falls when the dog days come, when it seems her sibling won’t be seen again. The fireflies are out like battle signals, she falls like silence on a summer night. The dark falls late but completely, and it is still hot. Autumn falls like a rotted tree, eaten away at the inside. He falls from clipped branches, from severed roots, from the pruning and chopping of being "fixed," from the river that diverted. He falls in a forest with nobody there to hear it. It does make a sound.
How do they find it again?
Spring finds faith when Autumn starts to glow.
She finds it on the ground, with buttons, pieces of twine, lost pennies, and cattail reeds.
Spring finds faith by making it. She builds a nest.
Summer finds faith in returnings. It washes up, piece by piece, with the tide after the storm.
She turns from bitter kisses to the dry basket of a brother back from death. She offers him a sun-ripe pear.
Autumn finds faith in Winter, what he thought was a dead end.

(Well, it was, until it wasn’t.) Who loves bone-dry leaves and hollow stumps?
Winter does; these are where he keeps his heart for when the melting comes.
Autumn fell from faith and into love.
Winter finds faith at first in the blizzard, which brings frostbite, and then in Spring, whom his frost bites.
He looks for faith in a solstice, in a calendar, in a church.
When Autumn comes he finds that faith was in his heart, held by another.

TASTE THE RAINBOW
BINAYPREET SINGH
MY LONGING IS A HOUSE
SARAH YUNG

This longing is untenable.

Define untenable: shaky
Unable to be defended, weak
Unlivable. Then, my longing is

a house you can no longer live in, its walls scripted for foreclosure
due to unsustainable conditions.

Festering foundations, is what they whisper. Built upon the sands of time, no wonder it wouldn’t last,

no wonder she’s collapsing under the harsh strain of expectation—yet lost, still, in one room within, the stark reality of its futility paling in comparison
to drinking in the light of your laugh,
a single endless night spent savoring
the stretch of time between glances,
words spun into the air. Enraptured by your gaze, your smile, the electricity
of touch, the taste of chocolate lingering in your mouth. Balloons living and breathing and dying
in the shadows beneath the bed.
BARK
SAMMER MITRI
He peels the blood orange with slender fingers that caress the sweet rind with rhythmic precision.

A dark, musky scent, like warm earth when it meets the summer sun, desirous life and drowsy heat, tangled.

Fragments of peel rest languidly about his feet where I once shed my own trembling skin to move inside his consciousness in a smooth choreography of vowels, like the firm, fertile shape of the blood orange. Decadent flesh, it drips juice as he breaks it open, as he once split into me, only to find words spilling from every hollow, restrained by gasping commas and the bracketing parenthesis of fear, so contradictory, like the blood orange cupped in his hands: saccharine flesh and bitter, smoky surprise.
“she used to surprise me every week with a new sandwich inside them was always a new surprise, you see, with the sauces she would draw me little faces some smiling, some silly, some with heart eyes in certain places every night she would play an hour of her favorite video game in short shorts and a big shirt, it would always be the same but i never seemed to grow tired of seeing her in that state her eyes fixated, her mind determined, and still stubborn as always with our part times jobs and high rent, a hot tub was but a dream so she scavenged the money she could and bought us a kiddie pool and a heater to create some “steam” as lame as it was, her attempt was still cute especially her on out patio standing there in her bathing suit on her birthday, i swear i have never seen her look more beautiful while she already was naturally perfection, the outfit she wore and the makeup she put on brought with it a new confidence that only deepened my affection for mind, her body, her personality, and soul i didn’t mind taking pictures of her for her instagram or facebook wall but beyond all these beautiful days, were unnecessary fights, that led to arguments that would go on from hours to months and i just couldn’t have it so finally on march thirty first, i broke up with the love of my life a couple of hours later, on the counter she left a piece of toast on a plate with a crumpled face of sadness out of mustard left distinctly in place a few days later, she moved out, and at the time i couldn’t wait
because having her still so close was nothing
but emphasis to the heartbreak
behind she had left her console and favorite
video game
with a note addressed to me that read “Time
goes by so fast. Don’t forget to take a moment
to play.”

now i’m sitting here months later realizing i had
made the biggest mistake
she had moved on, i had put work first, and
now i play that game everyday
thinking back, i do not regret the time we had—
because, you see
when we first met, i had convinced her to just
give me a chance
that if i could make her smile then, hey it
wouldn’t be so bad
so even though i miss her everyday, and she has
moved on
i still do not consider it to be so bad,
because i treasure every second, of everyday,
of every month we ever had

when she left she taught me something

something i would not have realized on my own
that it is the little things that matter, like the
acts of love in a home

while i did not get that second chance, i must
admit i stand on the sidelines and cheer for her
every endeavor
because although her happiness no longer lies
with me, it is the simplicity of the smiles that i
choose to prioritize whatsoever—

the difficulty may be in the wake of every
passing day
keeping her beautiful smile up, and supporting
her from miles away
with a mindful heart i must honestly say
... she will always be the “one who got away.”
- d.o.
ANXIOUS NEGATIVE
ALEXANDER COCOLES
How can you write so many stories about the same people?
How can you craft so many verses about one or another day,
and each one seem new?

Well: some things you don’t run out of thoughts for.
Some things, like a boomerang, haunt.

There are so many angles to torturing yourself.
Poem: how the night started. The willow tree. The moon. The kiss.

Here is a poem, I could write a dozen verses for just three lines:
—Why won’t you?
—I’m fifteen.
—So?

Here is a poem:
—I did that for you, so you owe it to me to touch me too.
Writing about biting back what I’d wanted to say, which was:
—I didn’t want you to.
Here is a poem:
When will I stop remembering this?

Here is a poem:
Why did I forgive him?

Here is a poem about the concept of virginity.
Here is a poem about whether it's really rape if you say 'But,' if you say 'I don't want to,' but you
don't say 'No.'
Here is a poem about a park bench and sitting on him to stay warm.
Here is a poem about why did I wear a skirt that night? About remembering my long socks and thick tights.

That's only one eve's worth of poems. That's not even the whole night.

Here is a poem about the teenagers at the community center, and steamed windows.
Here is a poem about the bark beneath the playground,
and wishing boys knew what to do with their fingers.
Here is a poem about out-of-town texts on the phone bill, and printed out IMs that I read at parties. Here is a poem about phone sex, and, while we’re at it, another poem about whether it’s really rape if you’ve had phone sex with consent.

There are so many poems I could have written instead. Poems about an insomniac loving a narcoleptic. Poems about the first boy who wrote me a song. Poems about a family on the train tracks in a bad town, with too many brothers, too many bruises; I could have written a thousand poems from there. I could have written about two last names, and the first name from his hated father. It would have started something like, *I didn’t know what names to write on the envelope I sent him,*

*except for the street: Cherry Lane.*

But Cherry Lane doesn’t bring much back for me. Neither does his Alkaline Trio t-shirt, which I had conquered my dislike of scent for, learning to appreciate the tickle of his cologne. My kindergarten best friend meeting him beneath the Town Center clock tower.
I don’t remember what the ring looked like, just that it was delicate.
There will be no poems about that.

Oh, long-lost lover, if only you knew I’d write so many poems about you.
If only you knew they’d all be the same:
swingsets,
a pleated skirt,
your old car,
a dewy bench,
the willow tree,
kneeling on asphalt,
your whispered voice,
the taste of salt,
numb legs,
cold air,
midnight.
SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

JONAIR ORNELAS
There is mulch here.
It lies at the base of a stump,
And keeps invasive weeds away.
Though a few pesky plants sneak
into the light,
They too will fall in time.

There are scraps here.
Scraps of a fallen giant that lived in
the way.

And when its cousins spring into
the new light,
They have but a moment to honor
their friend.

There is a mad man.
Who gazes at nature and sees
a soul.
He weeps for mulch and
repurposed wood.

And praises such a common thing
as weeds.
Then berates others for caring little
for the meaning of mulch.
He was a star, who had fallen to protect the sky. It had been the hardest decision he had ever made, but he never had any regrets. But he misses the sky every day, and from the planes of earth he stares yearningly up at those broad expanses of blue.

The first night he had been on earth he had screamed and cried with frustration. Since his fall, he was confined by the weight of gravity, and now his feet would forever be rooted to the ground.

No longer would he be able to float weightlessly, watching the world below.

And with that realization, he had fallen onto his back, lying in the soft, half-dried grass and watching as the indigo of the night sky was touched with the pink of dusk.

As the dark of night had faded, so too had the luminescence of his skin, the warm, radiant glow that seemed to come from beneath his flesh becoming muted and soft. Without his light, his skin had taken on the earthy hues of the humans he had once watched from his place in the sky.

It’s been a year, now, since he fell, and he’s spent the majority of that time in the wild, living in the forest. Because he still hasn’t quite gotten used to the restraints of gravity, he can’t bring himself to be further restricted by living in a permanent home.

So he roams, experiencing the vibrancy and wonder of the world that before he had only been able to watch. He rests in the dense foliage, climbs trees, and plays tag with the wildlife. And, on the rare occasion that humans
enter his forest, he studies them with curiosity, but never does he approach. And each night he watches the sky, his eyes finding the other stars, observing their dimmed lights and their half-hearted, weak twinkling. The only star who remains strong and steady in his luminous glow is Polaris, the Star of the North.

And he remembers that time a year ago when Polaris approached him and told him to fall to Earth. Polaris had said it was for the safety of the sky, and Castor, ever dutiful, had followed Polaris’s order without hesitation. Certainly with some sadness, though.

He is in a tree now, clinging to the broad trunk with his arms and legs, watching as the sun begins to sink beneath the tree line to rest on the horizon. As the darkness of night chases away the sun’s rays, he turns his face up to the stars, who are just beginning to wake.

It is as it has always been for the last year. Except… near the patch of empty blackness where he used to perch, a white tail is forming. It becomes a blaze, as it drops from its place, down, down, rapidly down towards the Earth. Another star is falling.

He realizes this with surprise and wonder, and then he swiftly begins climbing down from his tree, because the falling star is dropping directly towards him. The atmospheric heat makes his face feel hot as it passes directly overhead, only to crash to the earth some yards away.

When his bare feet touch the ground, he takes off sprinting towards his fallen brother or sister, concern and excitement warring in his heart and head.
Did this mean he will no longer be alone? He doesn’t dare hope, he doesn’t dare think.
Not until he finds the other star.
There is a massive crater where the other star has fallen, the foliage around it smoking, the earth scorched black. Lying limply in the center of the crater is the last star he expected to see.
The other star’s skin is still glowing with that intense light that he used to have, and when the eyes blink open, they shine with an unearthly radiance.
“Pollux?” His voice is a dry croak; he hasn’t used it in a year.
“Castor?” the other star asks, marveling at the sight of him.
“I haven’t been called that in a long time,” he says quietly. “Not since landing on Earth.”
Pollux shakes his head, the expression on his face becoming melancholy. A small shower of stardust shakes free from his hair with the movement, but his brother doesn’t pay it the slightest attention. Pollux’s gaze is locked on him, as though Castor would vanish if he were to look away.
“Do you still not know the true reason you were sent here? Polaris informed us that he told you it was for the sky’s protection.”
Castor can feel his face shutting down at his brother’s words, but he doesn’t know how else to react. There’s a pit in his chest; granted, it is a pit that has been there since he fell to Earth, but now it feels as if it is growing deeper and stretching wider.
“Polaris did it for you, you know. He told us, after you fell.”
Castor has the sudden urge to cover his ears. He does not want to hear more, because it means that he may again suffer from what he had thought he had adapted to.

“You were at your life’s end, Castor,” Pollux says. Pollux doesn’t seem to pay any attention to the fact that Castor feels as if he’s about to crumple—but then again, he never did. “You wouldn’t have followed the normal life cycle. You would have become a supernova, and then a black hole, and then you would have destroyed everything around you. Polaris sent you here not just to protect the sky, but for your own safety as well.”

Castor blinks slowly at his brother, studying the other star’s expressive face. He can read Pollux like an open book, just as he always has. Reading Pollux is easier than trying to read what he is feeling himself.

“Why are you here, then?” he asks with a sniff. His brother’s glow is already starting to dim; the light that manages to shine through is not the pure white of a normal star.

Pollux smiles slowly, his smile bright where his skin no longer is. “Couldn’t let you have all the fun on Earth now, could I?”

Feeling his own face split with a grin, Castor reaches down with one hand to help his brother out of the crater. When Pollux stands next to him, at the lip of the crater, they embrace.

“Besides, since I’m your brother, I could’ve become a black hole too, and I don’t think anyone’s ready for this pretty face to explode yet,” Pollux says thoughtfully.
With an abrupt but well-placed shove, Pollux is suddenly sent careening back down into the crater, where he crashes into the earth for the second time that night.

Castor crouches down at the crater’s edge, and his gaze flicks up to the sky, where he can see Polaris’s resolute radiance. He gives the smallest of salutes in the direction of the North Star, and then turns his eyes back down to the Earth, back to Pollux, who is reciting a steady stream of curses as he tries to climb out of the crater.
UNACHIEVABLE MAN
SARA DUTTON

Got to make it work
Got to bring home the money
Provide for your wife
Got to build a life
Got to have a legacy
Man

Got to fight for rights
Got to give up your life
Conquer a new land
Got to hold a gun
Got to take a life and run
Man

Got to keep your bitch in line
Got to raise a hand
Keep fear in her eyes
Got to make her listen
Got to make her understand
Man

Got to be in charge
Got to be tall dark and handsome
Drive a fast car
Got to put your life on the line
Got to live on the edge
Man

Maybe somewhere you can be a new man
Be a real man
Be all that you’ve dreamed about
Always so close
But never enough
Since you were born
You’ve been trying to live up to this idea

Of what it means to be
A man

OFF SEASON
ALEXANDRA MCBRIDE
THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

KYLE SABBATINO
Once upon a dream,
Is when we met,
Almost like Cinderella and the charm.
A poor girl,
Who just wanted to be
Pretty as a princess,
A girl who lives in a castle,
With the man every girl wants to spend the rest of life with.
We danced through life,
As if evil could never look through our eyes.
We blocked them out so no one could make us see otherwise.
We were so in love,
Every affection was true.
And in that moment,
Was when I realized,
Fairytale do exist,
Cinderella wasn’t some fictional lie,
I loved this charm, I never wanted it to die.
Then the days and nights went by,
My charm started doing more important things,
Work, friends, even the hours at the gym,
Was no match for my princess looks.
Kisses and hugs didn’t help either,
He was satisfied with a peck,
Then went to lift some weights.
One night I sat,
Alone in my bed while you went to get a drink,
And thought to myself,
Fairytales are never like this,
This happy ever after,
Is something that doesn’t exist,
If all you feel at the end of the day
Is lonely and depressed.
UNTITLED
NIKAANSHA PRASAD
When the high waters came, it was too late for most of my village.

When it was over, a thick sea of water, house debris, and floating bodies coated the village grounds.

At the evacuation center, I watched from a televised broadcasting as my father and brother vanished amongst the second waves as they tried to pluck a survivor from the tip of a palm tree.
YELLOW ON THE SCREEN
DAVID SRIBOONREUANG

My skin you can’t find on the screen
On the old silk screen maybe but with a yellow-face
So many faces not like me
I think I might die before I see any diversity
Wait
Too harsh maybe
We see a new American girl after 20 years
Thanks Margret Cho
Let’s not go into a circle though
There can be some who are Fresh Off the Boat, quite many actually
But the many roles, always for the same people
The camera does not like my skin
It is out of place but when used put into a category
Accent
Kung Fu
Expressionless
Can we be American and also celebrate culture
And history without it solely be defining
It’s hard to relate but the screen is slowly trying to compensate.
SYMPETRUM FLAVEOLUM

MARGARET BRUNET
Cheeks still damp from kisses,  
We turn back.  
This time, cheeks damp from tears.

Tall men tower over us  
Wearing neutral faces,  
And dark blue uniforms.  
They hand us a folded flag  
Too perfect, too pristine.

The pain hits us like the shrapnel in his body.  
Hard, piercing.  
Attacked with emotion, we try to take cover.  
But there was never a ceasefire.

We line up along the casket like troops along the battlefield,

Bombarded with apologies  
and regrets,  
And we are fighting.  
Mother clasps my hand, not wanting to ever let go.

But she must.  
I must.

Cheeks still damp from kisses,  
We turn back.  
This time, cheeks damp from tears.
SELF PORTRAIT

ANNEKA WEINART
She twirled the paintbrush absentmindedly
Between her fingers.
Staring with head titled,
Brows furrowed in concentration,
In front of the canvas.
With a blink she straightens up.
Turning to me with a smile and a wink.
She dipped her brush within the can of inky darkness,
With a flourish it flew across the blank space,
Slowly it bled,
Covering the empty spaces of the glaring white.
She hummed a senseless tune,
Shaking her hips to music only in her head.
I watched transfixed.
She threw the paint brush in a huff,
Leaving streaks of paint upon the wall.
Grabbing my arm she tugs me closer.
With a mischievous look,
She thrusts my hands within the paint cans.

Paint your soul she tells me.
Open myself up and don’t stop.
No longer constricted to just the canvas
We paint with our hands.
Touching, feeling each swipe,
Creating a piece of the puzzle.
Slowly light and dark clashes upon every surface
Like the stars outside that fight
To break through the endless space.
You can only see them now when out in the country.
Where no pollution dilates their beauty.
Where the darkness does not win.
They shine in triumph.
We painted and painted these scenes of battle
Between the light and dark.
That forever reaching space that we call the universe.
We see but only a small section of the picture.
It will never be finished.
Nancy, from two offices down,peeks her head in one afternoon. She launches into an unprompted speech about how she listens to movie soundtracks when she works. The whole office knows this because we hear movie soundtracks when she works.

But today she clarifies—she says it’s “because it makes everything feel epic.” She smiles as she says it. She’s a new hire, in the new style. She’s a project manager, and this means her job is only to make sure I do mine.

When I work, it’s with headphones and a Youtube video titled “10 hours of gentle rain.” Because rain is the real deal. It doesn’t f*** around, doesn’t try to impose emotions or confuse reality. It’s not inefficient; it doesn’t even think about that.

Rain, unlike jazz, doesn’t advertise its originality. Unlike acoustic coffeehouse beats, rain doesn’t need hipster approval. And unlike movie soundtracks, unlike Nancy, rain doesn’t make money by adding to the noise.

Nancy is only gone for a few minutes before I pause the rain, turn my chair, and look out at the sun, wishing that something could be done.
How I love thee cannot be counted
in enumerations of kind and simile.
Aleph null and infinity are cramped conceptions,
vainly straining against the fondness and devotion of my heart.

Why I love thee cannot be expressed in words.
They look like a mockery, forgery, dishonesty
against the veracity of my soul.
Any poetry leaves an inexplicable scratch
upon the oft-froze surface of your skin.

The love I bear for you is incapable of measure.
No system can quantify it, no bars hold it in song.
I want to wrap you in an embrace of extended decimal points
an endless polar growth of life, love inside love;
binary codes activating over our mutual love.
Enacting archaism, one and zero, on and off.
My love is a fantasia upon you. It is not selfish, it is a devotion that baffles doctors of divinity, laugh with gaiety, weep against loss, loss to find myself alone, to know humanity in the symphony of your arms, to hear the concerto of ideas performed in antiphony on bassoon and on trombone and in the dark, the cool colors, the rich-earth tones of our polyphonic voices.

The intercourse of humanity betwixt our twain is a connection, A profound second-person, a greater truth, My love is a fantasia upon you. it is an adoration that makes me stumble, an embrace of you. knowing outside the self, a meaning. You... You... You are that is. That is. Is! Existence. Experience. Sensation.

The sensations of our friendship, convictions of love, inarticulate, fulfilled, fearless, experiential, sensual, living, the manifold language, the words and songs that speak my love for you. For you. For you, that is, you are that is, my love, you are! The counting of my actions to you, for you.

You are!
STUDY OF A ROSE

PATRICK KLUNK
Your breathing sounds like the ocean I once heard in a shell. It is midnight, darling, and the world is sleeping with you.

[Freeze frame us here, please]

because it is six hours to sunrise, and I hold your soul in my arms.

(interlude)

and as dawn breaks, I know you do not hear what I hear (let him go). So many come to call you home because you were loved by so many.

[press pause before it is too late]

Play. Play in death (your interlude) my darling and do not weep. Death is only as long as it takes for me to find you again.