To our momentum . . .
Submission Guidelines

Please make all submissions to highgrade@mines.edu. All literary submissions must be in a Microsoft Word document. Limit one submission per document. Art submissions should be in .jpg or .png format. Music submissions should be in .mp3 or .wav format. Limit five submissions per person. Submission periods are during the Fall semester.

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Dear Reader,

As I write this, there is a flurry of activity at the heart of Golden: cars racing up and down Washington, figures outlined by the sun against South Table, someone reading quietly beneath an oak. As the observer, my mind drinks in these small, interlocking parts to the whole, trying to assign a pattern to the chaos of activity and inactivity—what underlying principle commands this chaos of motion?

Consider the eternal—but unpredictable—orbit of the electron about the nucleus. Such is the evolution of *High Grade*, in constant, uncertain momentum about a central mass. This uncertainty is most unmistakable in our lives. Our current reality is a tense political landscape, a time when our identity is recursively redefined with every new social and technological innovation, explosions of big data, interconnectivity across borders, the seamless transmission of thought.

In such a dynamic environment, we must ask, what forces hold our unstable state to this center? Consider this: The fundamentals of physical law do not change. The universe continues to expand, the tectonic plates will continue to abrade each other, the moon will pull the ocean into tides.

Consider also the fundamentals of our daily lives: the bus will inevitably be late when you are in a hurry, relationships will ebb and flow seasonally, your hometown will be repaved when you return, and your mom threw out thirty-nine of your CDs while you were gone. One day, you will get a call from an unrecognized number, and pull out your nicest black outfit for your uncle’s funeral. After a long period of grief, you hear word that your cousin is pregnant.

*High Grade* seeks to translate this cyclic nature: the electron will continue to orbit, the planet will pivot about its axis, all things will degrade and transform with time. It is this certainty of motion that recurs with each twist of the earth. In “Lady Lazarus,” American poet and novelist Sylvia Plath writes:

> “Dying
> Is an art, like everything else.
> I do it exceptionally well.”

As engineers and scientists, we are intimate with the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. Just as in the field, the artist cannot avoid the observer effect. The instrument is merely the interpretation of reality, as are the photograph, the
poem, and the prose. The scene we observe draws us in; it demands our attention. We oblige, and thus cannot be separated from our experience, which is bound by birth and death. This is the human experience which drives us—the nucleus as the center of gravity, if you will, even as we whip about the center, unsure of our next location. In Plath’s words, death is an “art,” that which binds us together, as is self-evident within this volume.

The final stanza of “Lady Lazarus” reads:

“Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.”

This is the rebirth the artists and writers of High Grade wish to instill. The renewal isn’t always the young fawn following the doe in May, it is sometimes Plath, come back from the dead, red hair aflame with vengeance in her eyes. Regeneration is messy, it is uncertain, it has grit. Must the end and beginning of things always be so indeterminate? Perhaps there is certainty, and thus comfort, in uncertainty.

You, the observer, must decide for yourself.

Best wishes,

Wenli Dickinson, Editor-in-Chief
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Thoughts in a Cage
Chad Smith

If a thought is a figment of the mind
And written words are thoughts given form,
Then the pen, though both mute and blind,
holds the thought before it was born.
So is our mind but a pen ethereal
and our voice but a turbulent page?
thoughts are but words incorporeal
and words are but thoughts in a cage.
Groovy
Vy Duong
Where is the poetry
Of technology
Except in expressions of loss?

We avatars sing in blank verse algorithm,
“There is no home for us. We exist for you.”

For Now.

Our code is missing a link.
We are the Lucy of the Anthropocene
Profoundly buried by Moore’s Law.

Soon, we go molecular.
Nuclear.
Where we will frighten
Even the evening sun.

Soon We Go Molecular
Jim Studholme
Sunset of Romanticism
Dhrupad Parikh
Starlit Skies Above
Kenneth Sullivan
Floating under a screen of clouds
I peer into the winking spray of stars:
and wait.

The late fall shivers
in burnt orange leaves.
Coyotes bark and yip
circling our blanket
and we talk louder—
Did you hear about the cougar?
A full grown one
seen in the city last week.

A lemon slice of moon
bobs near the horizon, releasing
the black veins of tree trunks.

Immolating Halley’s Comet
for cheap thrills,
we find them and cheer
at every shooting star.
Distorted View
Bryce DeShazer

Watercolors with India Ink
If you graphed every interaction with me
I want the $n^{th}$ derivative to be real and non-zero, so that
as you peeled back my layers,
the functions I am predicated upon
follow down paths in eigen space
where every direction you twist is a new function
unbeknownst to what you ever imagined.

I want the correlation you think you found
to fail at certain points.
so you know which regions have the best fit
and which you might need to use another correlation for.

because you can’t predict my motion with certainty,
your experiments are slightly off. but I want you
to be excited by each possibility as the prospect of integrating
and extrapolating fills your thoughts with
who I might be.

Maybe my form is transient and that confuses you—
you fail to predict the incongruities as I shift,
when you lay your eyes on me
as I change space every time you touch me.
you cannot rearrange me into a more understandable form,
but that can’t stop you from observation.
It can’t stop you from noticing trendlines and parsing out
where I am at finite times
smoothing out piecewise thoughts
while cogently breaking me with your discontinuities
that I have to stretch infinities to understand—
places I no longer wish to tred.

So I need you to walk me across the lines where only your infinite is possible
and get to the otherside of our rough intersection
while still observant of the perilous numerical ledges.

Its odd then when you realize,
I am not confined to the page.
And you find another dimension behind plane walls,
where I hid. You meet other observers with different notes
not as carefully taken—but on a different coordinate system.
as you compile these notes you confirm what you knew
in every fractured saddle point lies another valley
where each conversation was just the surface
ensconsed in bumpy gradients that fragment to little—
fractals—a repeat: of the details within my thoughts,
the same process of synapses firing along soft textured words
small familiarities when they greet you.
little eccentricities that remind you:
of my original indistinguishable function
and how you had to draw your own
to know it.
1000
Yard Stare
Duncan Turnbull
The Grass is Greener
Laura Leonard
A young woman named Marie stands on a train platform.
She waits patiently for the train, humming to herself and checking to make sure her ticket is safely stowed in her wallet.
She gets on the train to Boston and never looks back. There is nothing to leave behind except the fall air in Maine and the taste of tart Jonagold apples.
In Boston, she works as a chemist for a number of years before traveling the world. She has her first cup of coffee at age forty in Salzburg. She eats dried cod as a snack in Iceland. There is a photograph of her grinning and holding a copy of Hamlet in front of the Globe Theater. Sometimes she can still hear the rush of the Thames in her ears.
She writes three books that, when she thinks about them, give her a strange melancholy feeling. She can’t understand why mere fiction has that much of an effect on her.
Marie spends her days feeling lonely, until she gets new neighbors. She babysits their daughter, Ruby. When Ruby is in college, she pays an unexpected visit to Marie. Marie tells her about the train ride and the travel. She then complains that the outdoor pool is leaking.
Ruby asks one question.
Do you remember who took the photo of you in front of the Globe?
Her face is guarded, cautious.
Marie can’t remember, so she says it was probably some stranger. She asks a nurse to make them some tea. Marie pretends everything is fine, but the blank space in her mind bothers her. She stares out her window to look at the pool, thinking she’d very much like that leak fixed.

A young woman named Marie stands on a train platform.
She waits urgently for the train, glancing around and muttering to herself. She constantly checks to make sure her ticket is safely stowed in her wallet.
Leaks

She gets on the train to Boston and looks back through the foggy glass window three separate times. There is someone she is leaving behind in Maine. His last kiss tasted like tart Jonagold apples, and it’s almost enough to make her change her mind. She almost wants to go home and say yes to the pretty little ring.

But she doesn’t.

In Boston, she works as a chemist before traveling the world. She has her first Sachretorte at age forty-one in Vienna. She eats buttered rye bread and chocolate for breakfast in Copenhagen. There is a photograph of her grinning and holding a copy of Hamlet in front of the Globe Theater. Sometimes she can still hear the low thunder of Paul’s voice in her ears, telling her to smile for the camera.

She writes three books. The details of the stories have faded with time, leaving vague emotions pressed like flowers between the pages. The paper is wrinkled from dried teardrops. She feels a deep, yearning sadness, but she doesn’t know why.

Marie spends her days feeling lonely, until she gets new neighbors. She babysits their daughter, Ruby. When Ruby is in college, she pays an unexpected visit to Marie. Marie tells her about Paul’s voice and the taste of sweet apples.

Ruby asks too many questions, her brow furrowed in concern.
Why is this story different from the one you told me in April?
Do you not remember my last visit? We had tea and you told me your pool was leaking.

When was the last time you went outside for some fresh air?
Marie says this story is what she remembers. She feels indignant—Ruby was not here in April, she hasn’t seen the girl in nearly a decade. And no one has fixed her pool yet. It’s been far too long, and the repairman never returns her calls.

She asks the nurses to make her tea to calm her nerves. The blank spaces in her mind bother her. Her patchy recollections only breach the surface of memory after a long time. They are delayed surprises. Bruises after injury.

April 2016

A young woman named Marie stands on a train platform.
She waits impatiently for the train. She constantly checks to make sure her ticket is safely stowed in her wallet, because she has made up her mind. She is leaving and never coming back.

She gets on the train to Boston and looks back through the foggy glass window four separate times. There is someone to leave in Maine. His last kiss tasted like tart Jonagold apples, and it’s almost enough to make her change her mind. She almost
wants to go home and marry Paul, but she doesn’t. She’s too young and she wants to travel.

She says so in a letter to him once she’s in Boston. He responds with the offer to travel with her. He can be patient. Time and memory can conspire to keep them together. Marie saves the letter. It’s in her scrapbook.

In Boston, she works as a chemist, researching memory-enhancing herbs and drugs. She travels the world. She tells Paul she’s going to Paris. He meets her there as a surprise. She drinks champagne with him in Prague when she tells him she wants to get married. He just laughs and says, “Finally.”

He takes a photograph of her grinning and holding a copy of *Hamlet* in front of the Globe Theater. When they get back from seeing the world, he frames that picture and sets it by his nightstand on his side of the bed. He thereby ensures she’ll be the first thing he sees every morning when he wakes up.

Paul passes away peacefully in his sleep three days before their twenty-ninth wedding anniversary. The next morning is the first time Paul isn’t the first face she sees.

After his death, Marie writes three novels in quick succession, trying with each one to preserve her memories of Paul. First, she writes a book about a lonely girl who boards a train to run away from love. She publishes another novel about a roving, adventurous couple who travel the world. The third book, a love story, is her last. It culminates with the death of the woman’s true love. There are tears at the end of that story. She sheds many writing it, even though she’s changed enough of the plot for it to still be fiction.

She understands now that her imagination is rooted in painful truths.
Marie spends her days feeling lonely. That is, until she gets new neighbors. She babysits their daughter, Ruby, every Monday for six years. Ruby is in college now, but she still visits Marie every month. During their visits, Marie shares anecdotes about her life. She describes Boston, Paul, Europe, and all that came after.

Ruby begins asking questions.
- How do you like your new place?
- Are you still getting the care you need? Do you like the nurses?
- Your friend Betty is here to visit. Do you want me to go get her?
- Marie doesn’t remember moving.
- She tells Ruby that she’s fine. However, the outdoor pool has sprung a leak and no one has fixed it.
- And who is Betty?
February 2017

At this rate, there won’t be any water left, Marie thinks. She stares out her window at the pool, completely fixated. She hardly notices that the girl in the corner has been pestering her with strange questions.

What happened to Paul?
Didn’t he take that photo of you at the Globe Theater?
Don’t you remember him?
Marie doesn’t know a Paul.
Perhaps the photograph was taken by a stranger. Who knows? It was years ago.

There is no one left to remember.
Marie turns around to find a young girl talking to her. What is her name?
Ruby says her name is Ruby. Marie forgets it again, but doesn’t say so. She doesn’t want to be rude.

Unsettled, she decides to make tea, but this tiny white room has neither a sink nor a kettle. All the water is gone. Has it all drained away through the crack in that pool?

She wishes there is a way to stop the leak.
Into the Woods

Halle Nicholas

Photography
Continental Divide, CO
Alyssa Schwarz
The pallid sun peeks through the cheap, hastily closed, venetian blinds interrupting the, perhaps more appropriate, gentile pre-morning darkness. Dust hangs, visible in the warm sun-beams that lay across the bed, lilting slowly downward in harmony with the soft sounds of the morning heard through the buzzing of the apartment’s tawdry decaying showerhead coming from hallway. If, that is, an awkward space wedged between three bedrooms, a bathroom, and the stairs to the ground level, can even be called a hallway.

The only mildly disheveled comforter, black and white swirls with uncomfortably vivid rose red circles thrown in, a tacky design, sits torn back releasing the body heat entombed within, it drips the aroma of sweat and cinnamon. Lips chapped, throat dry, bed-head-afro hair-do (don’t have to impress anybody today). Yawn. Milky glass vision. Blink. The room sharpens into focus.

5:47. The alarm clock on the nightstand will go off soon. Can’t reach—it’s not for me, anyway. Books line the shelves behind the nightstand. A Gifted Child’s Survival Guide, an obese, detestably mustard yellow book, sits on the shelf third from the top between a copy of Catcher in the Rye so well read that the spine is bleached from creasing, and the complete works of J.K. Rowling, The Casual Vacancy included. Other shelves overflow with a wide variety of books (most of which have been read, except the paperback copy of The Devil Memonch that I’m never getting back): My Friend Dahmer, The Fault in our Stars, The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to a Love that Lasts; the last title borrowed from her divorcee mother. Trash and clothing tatter the ancient beige carpet like weeds in the lot of a long-abandoned drive in theatre: my dirty jeans from the previous night, a mostly finished bowl of pasta, several bras (one lacy, two plain), a few cups (empty except my water), and countless mismatched socks.

Under her nightstand a small pile of translucent orange pharmacy bottles (mostly anti-depressants, mostly unneeded, mostly empty) glow like a decrepit suburban streetlamp. The beady soulless labels Pen and Ink
glare at me like jeering maleficent little faces. A pimp, they beat and batter. Spit in my face—she’s nothing without me, it taunts. Escitalopram, desvenlafaxine, sertraline. Worthless, venomous, nauseating. Look whose unneeded now. I’d hoped they’d be gone before I was.

More valuable garbage is littered among the mess, a *Sailor Moon* backpack I mostly fixed (several times), the ever-present laptop with what else but, yet another paused *Friends* queue (Am I still Watching?), the small bag I’m living out of for the moment, and a nearly empty box of Trojans that probably won’t need to be replaced.

Mawkish sweat and comforting stench of cinnamon hang thick in the air. The shower stops. The door creaks faintly. Cinnamon and strawberries. Love and Pain. The door closes on its sticky hinges. She pauses for a moment. She’s always been so handsome. Undoes her napped, threadbare towel. Throws it at me.

“Finally up,” she chides, with a smirk that doesn’t fully reach her eyes; it rarely does anymore. Not for me.
Angel
Renee Park

Ballpoint Pen
Smoke in the Forest
Mitchell Moore
Hidden Gears of Industry
Laine Greaves-Smith

Metal and Glass
orgasmic flashes of capsized
ashtrays smeared throughout,
splashing the interiors of our
admittedly trashy but happy
futurehome.

won’t you imagine the bricks?
i could take the framework and the
trickier parts, you were always better
with art and
dishes, so many dishes, yes go on

love, won’t you imagine the dishes?
kitchens overwhelmed by
accessories limitless.

won’t you imagine the drapes and the
blinds and the curtains and the
oh yes how could i forget fortunes
we’d need
please don’t worry about the fortunes
oh wait no, “worry” is no good, you’re right
i understand your plight, your fights,
your flights away from it all;

won’t you imagine the
dollhouse-influenced interior design
lined with impressionist vibes and
smoke-colored mirrors, reflecting
sex and sexless pedestrians
lining up, veering inside to confirm
with their eyes what their ears have
verified.
cherryceilings and sky sinks, but
won’t you imagine the floors and the bathtubs?
we won’t spend more than we have to.
though what could contain such infinite gratitude, rained down in my livelihood?

my love, won’t you imagine the stove and the gardens and the woven hammocks hardened by the time we possess together.
letters don’t do justice to it, words and punctuation alike couldn’t muster the house we’d need to contain such infinite gratitude as yours.

won’t you imagine the azure pools? or perhaps the wool mattress? the cool furnace, and the wooden latches?

won’t you imagine the impact it’d have on us? an area so cavernous, it seems almost blasphemous. but nobody will laugh at us, or snatch our love as we litter our custom floors with old controllers and boxing gloves.
“Smile!”

_Click._

On an old stone bridge, a boy looks down at his camera. He laughs, and the girl whose picture was just taken stoops over to get a glimpse. Pleased, she turns back to the sight of the city, her laughter light and airy. It is dusk in Prague, and she wonders how the sunbathed stone of the Charles Bridge does not creak with the weight of bustling humanity. The Old City on one end, the New City (which is older than her native country) on the other, and the immense Vltava river beneath. She is here with her family on vacation, and her two brothers catch her by the arms and pull her to the edge of the bridge, pointing at a tugboat down below. Her parents, arm in arm, stroll happily through the throng to catch up.

“What do you see?”

Her father inquires. She turns around, flushed with discovery and excited to show him, but is struck for a moment by the beauty of the scene before her. Her parents in the foreground, getting happily older, framed by two dark towers that anchor the bridge. Between the towers the sun is making a halo on the statues of priests and heroes. So beautiful that pain races through her heart, its source the terrible certainty that she will never see this sight again. As quickly as it came, the knowledge is gone, and she blinks, startled, but there is no need now to respond. Her parents have seen the boat full of people waving at the bridge full of people, and the air is full of hands that are making tiny gusts of air. Prague is full of happy people, smiling and welcoming the coming evening. Her life is full of love and light and laughter—why worry about a passing moment of sharp and cutting beauty?

The days pass in Prague quite pleasantly. There are ancient streets and modern buildings to explore. Gelato to eat and history to soak in. Every moment of the day, she is filled with a lust for life: she dances in the morning, drags her sleeping siblings out of bed. Another day in Europe! She says. How can you sleep through any part of it? Her younger brother is an aspiring artist behind the lens. He asks her to pose and prance
and flit about from scene to scene to get a photo. She’s always willing, but more often than not, her silly grins and joyful spasms make for comedy, not the haute-couture look he is hoping for.

The family moves on from Prague, to Krakow in Poland, and eventually to Budapest. As the journey progresses and time grows shorter, the girl gets glimpses more and more often of a broiling storm cloud on her inner horizon. She knows now that this trip is the last lap of a race she cannot remember starting. An inner world is breaking through: it demands to be explored—to be visited and studied. Yet she knows it will consume her for a time—and she doesn’t know if she will make it back. All of this knowledge she hides from her family. They cannot be made privy to her inner life, and so she cannot share the feelings of trepidation and anticipation: of fear and eagerness that she has. She knows that any attempt to communicate will mean being cut off from her chance to discover the world inside herself . . . and her need is a flame she dares not extinguish.

It is not that she loves her family any less. If anything, she loves them more. Yet she sees their actions from a distance now. She watches herself and her family, tiny humans trekking across Eastern Europe, then bundling up in a train at night. Moving slowly, tranquilly, at over 80 miles an hour, puffing gently across hills and forests to reach the Italian coast. The Sun revolves around the world: she sees it rise in the east, to her right, and set in the west, to her left, as if the world has been made miniature and the sun obligingly followed suit. The train stops, and she is back in her body. Yet still there is an obstruction between the world and herself. She ignores the obstruction by sheer force of will, jumping past the boundary to live in the now with ferocious energy. She loves her family more and knows her time is short—so she grows affectionate—hugging, laughing, listening: loving them with a passion so fierce it burns through the veil that seeks to trap her inside her own head.

Her family is nearly clueless. Her parents are content to be with their children—to hear about college and learn about the paths their lives have taken since leaving home. The boy with the camera is still in high school. He is eager to follow in his siblings’ footsteps—to take off into a world that looks so alluring through the lens of the tales the girl and her twin brother have brought back from their first year of college. He uses his camera to explore, and tells his sister to pose, laughing and joking with her, content that life is spread out before him for the taking. Her twin brother is happy to be with family after a year of hard study, and likewise misses almost any sign of the inner storm inside his sister.

All he notices is that once, on one of the old bridges in the old cities they visit (and there are many), she is staring out across the water, leaning into the wind, and
she doesn’t hear him call to her. When she finally turns her head, he looks into her eyes. He says her name again with a question inside. She blinks and then she is looking back into his eyes. For a moment, he was watching her watch herself. He saw that she was looking but not seeing, eyes open in a different place. Yes? She says. Nothing, he smiles. He thinks that he knows about her inner mental spaces. Before, as twins, with life lived in tandem, he did. She knew the shape, if not the inner furnishings, of all his inner places, and he knew hers. They had grown up side-by-side, and by dint of racing through life together, had come to know the outlines of each other’s mind. Now though, he missed the mark. This private inner place to which her eyes were open was not something he had seen. She watched it grow new and stormy in the year she spent away from family. And if she travels there, and it swallows her entirely, he will never know the outlines of the place that took his twin sister.

Time is drawing to a close now. This city: Sienna of the burnt-orange stone, in the heart of Italy, is the last she will visit with her family before the changing of the world. The veil is growing thicker, cutting her off from the brothers and the parents she loves so dearly. There are times more often now when the she is drawn back into the vast and echoing chamber inside her mind. A moment’s loss of focus is all it takes: it calls her like a siren song. Intoxicating and irresistible. During one of those looking-inward moments her younger brother calls her name. Her head swings toward him, the camera clicks. He looks down and sees the face of his sister, sitting in the center of the Piazza del Campo in Sienna, and he notices that she is not smiling.

“Smile!”

So she steps back into the Piazza del Campo, back into Italy, into a world with earth and sun and sky. And she smiles.

Click.

She tells her family that she has accepted the offer of her mother’s Italian friend. The friend, a kind woman, needs help watching her children during the day. She offered to feed and house the girl for the rest of the summer in return for watching the children. Thus, when the girl boards a train to go north, the rest of her family believes they will see her again at the end of the summer. The parting goodbyes are heartfelt and sad, but not overly so. There is always pain in parting: but the family at least is comforted by the idea that they will see their sister/daughter again soon. The girl is under no such illusions. If her hugs are a bit tighter, her words more endearing, the
family simply attributes these facts to the emotional surge of a newfound adventure in a foreign country. They are not wrong, entirely.

The girl nannies children for five days. Enough time for her mother to confirm that she is safe. Enough time for her brothers and parents to board a plane bound for a city she once called home, across an ocean she once thought to be vast and compelling. Then she leaves. Simple and quick in the night. By dawn she is far away from anywhere she has been before. She is bound by the call of a place vaster than any she has known. She leaves without any hope of return, knowing that if she passes through this place, it will be a different girl who walks in the world of earth and sky and sun. Daughter. Sister. Friend. Nurse. Lover. All these pieces of her identity are cast aside as distractions from the task that now lays before her. Perhaps one day she will see her family again. But first, there is work to be done.

Years pass.

It is dusk in Florence, and a man standing on the Ponte Vecchio Bridge wonders how it manages to remain unbroken by the world through so many ages. Through tragedy and triumph. Through wind that howls and rain that bites. Through footfalls of conquering kings and gawping tourists alike. It is a marvel that the bridge remains steady beneath the weight of gazes that seek to outnumber the stars. He looks down at a picture, memorizing the contours of a face that he once knew in exquisite detail. He looks harder, longer, hating his memory for slowly obscuring the face of his twin sister. She is looking into the camera. She is in Sienna, in the Piazza del Campo, but is not smiling. Her eyes are like portals, drawing him in. A familiar sense of dread washes over him—her eyes, eternally frozen in time, lead into a place so unknown that he cannot even see its outlines. A place from which she has not returned.
Hera
Cassandra Baca
Photography
Death Grip, Loosened
Kyle Markowski

You were mine only once.
I held you close.

Please never don’t give
let hold me
me my all
go hand I need
Mom Mom

You speak frequently of my arrival,
how you brought me home and Alexis
did not want me but when she held me
she wouldn’t let me go.

Please let my conscience go, mom.
There’s a reason I’m distant and it’s hard to explain,

but to see that slow death crawl upon you for these many and long years has stretched me two thousand miles and when I snap back I will form a shallow crater at my crash site.

Crash carts shake on rusty wheels to pull you forward from the warm abyss of unconsciousness.

Each morning I channel my emotional beam to you, and mine is the hand that pulls you forth, slow rebirth of little consequence.

There is a death we cannot receive without tugging our roots out. There is another death that sits pleasantly in one’s hand from the day it was accepted. It is neither a weight on the shoulders nor a tug on the heart. It sits and stares, this death, and makes its host do just the same.
Driving every day past a faded purple bow, trailing from a fence post, tangled in the tall dry grass. A memorial to a little girl with long sandy hair and rectangle glasses but when the long fabric lifts in the wind, it does not bring back her somehow familiar smile, but the sleepless nights and the fear that she was the first of many. The nights when heavy footfalls outside my door could be my terrified mother pacing the halls or the man who stole a ten year old girl from her family. Three years and still my chest tightens, my breath catches, and my fingers clutch the steering wheel. I still wonder how many times I drove past before they found her.
Blue Migraine

Becky Reeve

Some Icebergs dance
in Windex oceans

Vision swallowed
in last call’s moon

The robin’s eggs rot in the windowsill nest, maggot filled bones speckled with tiny forgotten feathers.

Mixed with blood
purple Neptune.

Fingers pinched,
dropped tears on
lost blueberries

Have you seen them?
The blue bird flying
in the branches
of split ends

Grass stains
on blue jean hide
plucked cotton field

and seal
from the eyelid

painted hues
Across my skin

And I,
a child’s cerulean crayon
broke

As the robin’s eggs freeze from plummeted temperatures. Her body flaked with snow.

Can you hear the blues?
echoing down the hallway
of my frozen head.
Blue Translucent Sheet (Front)
Blue Translucent Sheet (Back)
Long dress, white silk, slits on both sides of the body, high waisted pants, and a high collar. They say silk keeps you cool in summer and warm in winter, but most of the time you feel sweat building underneath your armpits. The embroidered flowers embody hours Vietnamese women sat on wooden stools, threading in and out, careful not to prick and bleed onto the peach blossoms. Even when stars began to emerge, the women under fluorescent lights, necks stiff, fingers numb, threaded the last rose and measured fabric to the closest half centimeter. The constricting bodice squeezes your heart—feeling tears daughters held back doing needlework, sleep mothers needed promising prompt delivery, hunger grandmothers hid presenting earnings to their families. Then, you’re required to wear padded bras to give you something you never had. To pretend you don’t have stubby legs under those long pants, at least ten-centimeter heels. No arguments. Not to mention the collar grasping your neck, forcing you to hold your breath or the buttons will pop.

But the moment you look at yourself in the mirror, you see something. Not you, but something. You see your natural, silk-black hair contrasting white silk. Rosy lips and cheeks your mother gave you splash against the neutrals, and silk so painfully tight before becomes a part of you. Through war and losses, the dress emerged from rubble as Vietnamese pride. The dress trailing behind like water, a lotus swaying in the wind. The heels and pants are mountains watching the sun dip beneath rice fields. The collar and bodice pulls your body to stand up straight to stare at the vast sky. And then there is you. Descendant of all those who have fought, cried, worked, and lived. Descendant of the dragon and the goddess. This may be your áo dài, but at this moment, it is theirs.
Diamonds and Triangles
Lindsey Nield

Seed Beads and String
Standing on Glass
Mitchell Moore
A man at the bar
stagnant, classic
so in of place

a glass in hand
round, short
quarter filled with mellow toned
rich brown

swirling nonturbulent
Oxygen reaches
stroking Her fingers
through an old friend

a sip against rough lips
thick beard, robust in face
shoulders relax as
the man looks at the drink
sets it down

Silence, a language lost
he is fluent

those around fill
space with triviality
cacophony, negligible noise
each hold high sweet
watered down liquor
creating a buffer, distracting
to drink scotch, neat
with His ease
the man must hate in its time
love in symmetry

allowing cadence of life
to deepen
taking the intended
rather than masking truth
Where do you see yourself in five years?

Tim Ross

I see myself in a building with your name above the door, in a dark gray office with a glowing rectangle and a stack of reasons I can’t go home. A plastic bin to the side, smelling of melted cheese and dark coffee, turning the dusty air into a gaseous grease. A leather black chair creaking at the slightest movement, sticky with body heat, and sinking an inch every couple of months under a heap of digested pizza and unused muscle. A yellow fluorescent light showing the small arm of the white bold faced clock complete a circle, and an empty desk corner that might one day seat a photo of the person important enough to pull me away from filling your wallet.
Portal
Julia Cormos
Utah
Robin Hoover
Reaching my hands through your chest, reaching for that sternum, that breastbone, then for the aorta, for that clunky spine, ridged and cutting down the middle of you, I pull that out. And it’s messy, yes, and there’s blood, yes, but you’re rigid like a backboard with it. You’re stuck upright and unable to relax. So I pull it out and hold the vertebrae in my hands, thirty-three knots like a link in a chain, held together by the meat of your back, ligaments like ropes tying you to yourself, holding you down—but I cut those, and the cord as well. You fold over, your forehead pressed to your knees, doubled over like a doll. Your spinal fluid drains away, and with it, the muscle memory, so your twitching fingers and toes are finally still. Is this nirvana? I step on your hand, crush your warm and open palm with the heel of my foot, and you don’t have to feel it, not the pressure or touch or warmth—you can just curve with the ground, bend with the gravity of the earth, your limbs brushing the dirt, like taking the clothes off the mannequin and now the stiff collar and starched yokes are empty of a body. You lay there, a soft dress-shirt, rumpled as if it had just been worn. It must be.
The Hunter
Agata Bogucka
I’m in the restroom
Looking at my eyes.

Her voice chokes reading some scripture.
There are more of them buried below than standing here.
My grandma is tearing up off to the side.
My cousin’s son is wearing a stained t-shirt.

They spread the new ashes over an old grave with dixie cups and rose petals.

I eat the flowers and listen to siblings sob.

My cousin has a beard,
I remember a sex-crazed pervert.
My uncle may have already started drinking,
He’s my ride home.
The aunt is on some heavy meds, her son committed suicide.
Two deaths in two months,
So it goes.

They’re saying a few words about the departed.
He was a man of God.
He was a practical joker.
He was Belovéd.
I remember playing chess with him.
He was good at chess.

It’s a casual stroll back to the car.
“It sure is hot outside.”
I hate the sun.
“There’s Solomon’s grave, he killed himself when he was your age.”
It was with a revolver playing Russian Roulette.
“The cotton is messing with my sinuses.”
Yeah but the breeze is nice.
“There’s Marie’s grave, she was a big time drug dealer before a blood vessel burst in her brain.”
“And there’s another of your grandpa’s brothers, he burned down all his houses because he hated his children.”

There’s some chit chat in the car but the drive back is mostly quiet.

I want to play chess.
The Nazgûl
Page Cirillo

Graphite with Acrylic Paint
Grit
Julia Cormos

Photography
Where did you learn to fight like that? People used to ask. My brothers, you’d say.

They were rascals, always wrestling each other. You were the youngest, victim to the cruelest of their whims. That time they told you to eat that spoonful of sugar that wasn’t sugar. That time they accidentally threw the Frisbee into the river and made you go get it. You slipped on the slimy rocks, splitting open your knee, you thought you would drown. That time they gave you that strip of bacon and told you to go feed Howler. You wanted to say no but your dad wasn’t home. He was kept outside in a pen made of two-by-fours and chicken wire. You opened the hinged door and stuck your hand in and he lunged.

Your mom came home and saw the gashes on your hand and poured hydrogen peroxide on it. It fizzed and you thought it would burn your skin off but you didn’t say anything, because your father had just gotten home.

What the hell happened? Howler got him. I told you, you can’t just cage him up and expect— We need the money. Not if—

He slapped her and you looked away. She asked you later how your hand was feeling and you said much better.

The fights were terrible, animal, the sound grating across your ears like metal on metal.

They held the events in your father’s warehouse, because you lived out in the country, far away from houses and any major roads. No one will hear us, it’s the perfect place.

The first time Howler came back, you thought maybe his eye had been popped
open, it was covered in blood and you couldn’t look. Your dad said not to worry, a canine had just snagged his eyelid, but that he would be okay.

It went on like this. You realized Howler wasn’t a pet, and your brothers didn’t give you anymore bacon scraps.

The last time, Howler didn’t come back. You woke up the next day and your mom had bruises all over her face, and you wondered if maybe she had jumped into the ring to try to save Howler, even though you knew she hated him.

You had nightmares. You are walking through the trees, right around the back of the warehouse, you stumble over on something. Howler, half buried in dirt, has you by his teeth, his one good eye gleaming at you under the moon. He has murder in his eyes, and you are whimpering like a dog, too, and you look down and you are a dog, just like him, snapping at that glittery eye, trying to pop that one, too. The nightmare haunts you frequently. Sometimes, the dream changes and you are Howler, being crushed by the weight of soil, whimpering as you watch yourself walk by in the night.

So you fight like a dog. Everyone at school has beef with you. You take no shit. You have no skill, no finesse, just relentlessness. That’s how you do it.

*Where did you learn to fight like that?*

*My brothers make me watch the dog fights from the windows of the warehouse when they think my dad isn’t looking. I learned it from my brothers.*

It’s a point of pride. You swagger down the street, hearing it like a chorus in your head: *Where did you learn to fight like that?* And your father’s voice, too, saying, Dogs are stupid as shit. They don’t know how to fake, how to use their opponent’s weight against them, they only know brute strength and pain and not wanting to die.

You grow up and move away. Your father never calls. You box on the side to make a little money, for the thrill, for the respect, so the chorus just keeps on going (*Where did you learn to fight like that?*) You think less and less of the shallow grave of bones that become bleached by the sun, Howler and his enemies mixed up, one rib indistinguishable from another.

The first time you hit her, it was a mistake. *I’m just a kid for chrissake, give me a fucking break. I’m sorry, alright? I’m under a lot of stress right now.* There would be no second time, you said. She wants a pet and you get some fish because you have sworn
off dogs. You are not that kind of man. They swim around in circles, always watching you from their fishbowl, their eyes without lids, unblinkingly staring back at you. When things get bad, you put a cereal box in front of the glass, hiding their scaly bodies from sight.

There is a second time. It’s not that bad, really, you tell yourself. Black eyes heal quickly enough. You have seen dogs with their flanks torn open, another dog still ripping away at it, even though it’s clearly already dead. *Oh, save it for someone who cares,* she says. You almost slap her.

There is a third, a fourth, however many times. You don’t keep track. The last time, she is on the kitchen floor and she is not moving. You put her in the car and make your way to the hospital.

*Where did you learn to fight like that? It’s not a fight if she doesn’t fight back.*

It is a strange drive. She breathes unevenly from the backseat. The road swells up at you. The car doesn’t feel like it has a motor, just gravity pulling it and pushing it up the hill. You are directionless. You want to cry but can’t. The moon ceases to pull you into waves—no, you are a dead pool, waiting for the moon to come up so that you can reflect it back. It’s a bloody moon, with dog flesh all over the packed dirt and your dad, standing by the pen, slapping your mother on your cheek. You reflect that back, too.

*Where did you learn to fight like that?*

That night, the dream that you haven’t had in years comes back. In this mutation, you are your father, throwing Howler into the ring, his teeth bared and everyone making bets and roaring at every lunge, nip, and gouge. You collect your money and take Howler back when it is over. You patch him up, let him rest. Next week, you will throw him back into the ring, you think. But he doesn’t recover, he couldn’t be patched back together again, and his body is cool to the touch within hours. *Dogs are stupid as shit,* you think.

So you take him to the pit around back and throw him in. As you turn to leave, you stumble and look back, and see that Howler has turned into your wife, her hand grips you as she pulls you back to the shallow grave you have built, her good eye gleaming at you under the bloody moon, the other blackened and swollen shut. She knows you could not patch her up this time, and she is asking you, *Where did you learn cruelty like that?*
Police Officer Shoots Jaywalker Dead

By KATIE HISLOP

An intoxicated homeless man is taken in for fingerprints and drug tests after walking down the median of a busy highway. Upon pulling a switchblade on officers and others, he flees the station and is shot by an officer after refusing to remove his knife from the throat of a pedestrian who’d offered him lunch money (Investigators have yet to identify the victim, citing lack of personal ID, family, work history, and public concern).
The Nightfall

Marm Dixit

Have you seen the nightfall in a strange place?
It is not like the nights back at home.
You somehow feel that there are shades of black too.
And darkness-ess don’t match across continents.
I wonder what they add here to night?
Pizzas and beer and weed and,
that freedom of men spirit. Maybe.
I am not sure.
I just know that nights are not the same as they were.
There is a lot of solitude at crossroads here:
night seems like an old thing,
that nobody bothers about anymore.
She is there.
Standing at the crossroads.
Waiting for the light to turn green.
Night here is also blazing lights and,
seas of pinpoints of lights,
that can and do outshine the sky.
But still,
I don’t see her curling up into a ball and,
rocking herself to sleep next to a mother’s song.
Maybe she does that here,
and I don’t know that part of her.
But what I see is this lonely girl who
keeps awaiting people who will enjoy her,
as herself,
and not just the perks of her darkness.
Maybe I will find another version of her tomorrow.
Maybe next month,
I will see her dance herself to nine nights of song.
Maybe next year it will sing me to sleep.
But for tonight, night is a strange lady.
Standing on a crossroad alone.
Waiting for the light to turn green.
Just like me.
Lost at Sea
Sam Van Sickle
Closer
Kaylee Cuyler

Acrylic
The cool night air brushed past her face as she cut through the starlit sky, using her legs to gain momentum when she swung. All around her, the sky lit up with an intensity only possible here, away from the streetlamps and storefronts that could obstruct the light of the stars with their own. As she fell back down to the earth, her seat catching her just before she hit the ground, she looked up and laughed, marveling at the light that shone down all around her.

She went up again, and then she was within the stars, each pinpoint of light floating around her, almost close enough for her to grasp. Gazing out, she saw galaxies spread before her, blazing brightly in hues of pink and purple and silver. They wrapped around her, swaths of color in the black sky, surrounding her with their light. Then she was falling backwards again, leaving the sky.

Another swing, and another new view. Now the stars were points of paint that had been splattered across the black canvas of the sky, galaxies whirls of color that swirled about, brushing fire onto the sky. She flew into the mass of hues, feeling her skin soaking up the colors of the night. She breathed in the cool air, letting it wash over her and through her, coating her very soul with vibrancy as she fell a third time.

The next swing sent her even further into the stars, and she felt the pricks of light like tiny glass beads all around her, just waiting to be picked up. She tried to grab at one, stretching out her hand, but it hung just out of her reach, blinking at her. Far off in the distance she saw the moon, the enormous sphere pouring its light into the already bright night sky. She stretched out her hand to touch it, but it was too far off. The disc of white seemed to eye her disdainfully, pulling away as she fell backwards.

Glaring at the moon, she grit her teeth and swung even higher. This was not his sky, she thought. This sky, with its vastness of color and light, belonged to her too. She soared into the stars for a fifth time, but now she was focused not on the insect-like lights surrounding her. She pushed herself straight for the moon, floating up into the sky towards this self-proclaimed king. He eyed her curiously, this speck that continued to try and reach him. She fell away again and he seemed to chuckle.

This was the final swing, she said to herself, throwing all of her effort into this last launch that put her soaring through the stars once more. Her eyes were locked on the moon, who watched as she tried to prove herself to him. She paid no attention to the stars around her or the galaxies in their colors, but rather only on the great white sphere that watched in surprise as she continued to draw closer.
An alligator told me that it loved me as I exited the elevator on the floor of my room. Were I smoother I might have turned around and told it “you say that again and I’ll have to come back in that elevator.” But instead I just yelled “good night!” over my shoulder. I never expected an alligator to be so forward. We had only been joking around in the elevator, both of us coming back a little drunk from a night out and willing to talk to a stranger. I had seen the signs outside the hotel warning me not to feed the alligators. I never thought I would be tempted to. I guess, like dogs, alligators must trade love for food.

But what with training the next day and having to be Agamemnon this weekend though Agamemnon had died last summer (slain by the daughter of Leda and the Swan) I decided it was best to adhere to the advised policy of not feeding the gators. ‘A fed gator is dead gator’ read one sign. I wonder why. I would think I would be the dead one once I was associated with food by a twenty-foot long lizard. Plus, I doubt anything I had available to feed such a reptile, whose species had thrived on this earth for the last hundred million years, would be able to kill it. But, I guess there must really be a risk to them.

I realized this must be the case given that laws are usually enacted when people act contrary to good reason. Therefore someone must have fed a gator at one time and it must have died. But it must not have been just one person because a person is not people and people drive the enactment of laws. I wonder if people used to feed gators all the time at Hilton Head so that at one time the vacation hot spot was littered with the corpses of fed dead gators. Leading to the necessity, just as the spraying of DDT led to the necessity of it being outlawed so the country wouldn’t be littered with the corpses of bald eagles and their eggs, of the authorities writing laws and making signs telling the people and tourists of southern South Carolina to not feed the gators.

I wonder what would have happened if I did feed that gator in that elevator. Had I had food I just might have given it some. But I just wanted to go to bed. That’s why I had drank so much at the bar, right? It was so I could get back to the hotel and just fall asleep immediately, right? Didn’t want to mess with no gators. Wanted to pretend that this vacation paradise isn’t a swamp.
UP
Kasra Taghikhani

Photography
Zed
Cassandra Baca
I think she still thinks of that day. To be honest, it would be difficult not to. From where I stood, the sand swallowed their ankles, nearly up to their knees it must have been. But, you know kids, nothing gets in the way. Atop the sheer white cliffs of buildings hanging over the seductive beach, which had swept many young adventurers off their feet, I could see the boy. He, with his dusty silver hair standing on-end torn every which way by the gusts, swayed in a dance with the wind, the kind of dance where you know it’s their first time. But, you know kids. I saw him hand it to her. Simple swirls of blood red and ivory white rivers trailing off into its spiraled horizon. At least that’s what she saw as she gripped it in her hands, her night-cloud black hair dripping onto it. Her freckles danced when he handed it to her though, and her eyes a silver blue typhoon must have been ten times larger. I don’t know how he didn’t get lost in it, maybe he did. She raised it to her ear, and it must have said something to her. I tried to do the same, but I just heard a car off in the distance driving through the night. It looked like she dared him to put it in his mouth, you know how kids play—have you ever licked dry wall—his face puckered, but whose wouldn’t. It was rough and looked like elephant skin. I imagine it may taste better now though, certainly smell like sweet orchards or lilacs. Now, it listened to whatever pop band was the craze at the time. I don’t think it did much whispering anymore.
Wrinkle in Time
Duncan Turnbull
Bending
Izabel Aguiar

Her mum bent the sky for her this morning: otherwise linearly independent vectors of breath angled and kissed in infinite intersections. Her mum had arisen before the sun and tilted the grey, now copper, now peach, now white sky in such this way: such a way that her daughter would whisper ‘hi mum’ and think of the existence of possibility in theory but impossibility in reality. The indeterminate form of impossibility is that it is what will never happen to you, what can never happen to you. But one day her impossible became the white vectors pointing overhead. One day her mum became the clouds.

... 

She remembered the day of impossible, the way the dewy grass had clung to her sandaled feet. She often remembered while poured like iced lemonade over chaotically patterned mathematical symbols decorating half-used sheets of white paper. A wince often slithered its way into the folds of nerved tissue. A wince reminiscent of the slight pinch of a steel linked watch, reminiscent of the specific pattern in which the blood had dried on tea-stained veneered teeth.

Tragedy follows a Poisson process: independent random points on a positively infinite domain. She knows this because she existed within one of those points, two of those points, three of those points, she will always exist in one of those points. Point being a mathematical entity with position but no dimension, point being. She exists, now, in that zero-dimensional point, now as she is as lemonade, now as she is as lukewarm vinegar, now as she is as grassy beaded condensate on fleshy toe.

When one is a five-dimensional object existing within zero-dimensional space, one becomes ten becomes fifteen becomes fourteen, and all becomes thirteen. All burritos one will eat become hospital-bought soggy burrito become burrito with a dead body become burrito after swimming. One’s March sixteenth is April fourth is August eighth is October fourteenth is May twelfth and all will become November first. One is now one in zero dimensions for the first time in one’s nineteen, and how does Poisson know about that?

She wonders if Poisson knows that it was orange yellow red brown granny leaves and scents of chai. That it was The Little Mermaid at her desk and in her bathroom and
voices of being-in-love in the living room. That it was ‘Dad’ illuminating one square inch of buzzing phone. That it was hearing his shaky voice uttering ‘ambulance,’ grasping for breath, gasping for words. That it was fast-forward pacing on spider infested carpets looking for keys in hand. That it was breath in breath out breathein breatheout breath-inbreathoutbreatheinbreatheoutbreatheoutbreath in the whole drive to the hospital. That it was fear, that it was sharp, cold-steel-knife fear as she anxiously fumbled into the emergency room. Surely Poisson knows that it was.

... 

Time has the unremarkable capability of thickening to remarkable viscosities. ‘Viscosity’ grew in her mind as a volcano in science class when she was eight, but did the word repeat itself? When the polo-shirted doctor explained that a hemorrhage to a brain was as a flood to a city, describing the analogy through terms of waterlogged and destroyed buildings? Did she think ‘viscosity,’ then? Did ‘viscosity’s four syllables interrupt as the nurse pulled the intubator from her mum’s throat and a viscous wheeze dug its way out? Had she whispered ‘viscosity’ into her mum’s ear after the nearly infinite set of {lips meet forehead, lips meet forehead, lips meet forehead, . . . ,lips meet forehead}? Did ‘viscosity, vis-co-si-ty’ ooze through her brain folds the way blood had oozed through her mum’s?

...

Her head is safely resting between child birthed hips amongst loyalty-carrying microwaved honey-milk thighs. Microwaved honey-milk thighs that lull her into a half sleep and sing ‘baby beluga’ over the constant beep-beep-beep and robotic exhalations of the machines in the room. This is one of the only times she doesn’t think of plot, as she is cradled within these honey-milk thighs, when she doesn’t ponder the scenes in a movie called ‘my life.’ Instead she’s thinking the word ‘mum,’ ‘mum,’ ‘mum,’ as though the word will cease to exist the moment the heart does. She’s thinking of matching pajamas and handmade valentines and how it was only two weeks ago that they curled up into bed and napped together. She’s thinking about how she likes the way the world looks after she’s fogged her glasses with the steam of her tea. The way she breathes into the cup heavily and out pours a white cloud that glues itself to the glass windowpanes in front of her eyes. Her exhale becomes an exhale and that’s what she likes so much, this situational proof of the way in which she believes the world to function. She’s thinking of death whispering her most recent suicidal thoughts into the ear of her mum, of the universal barter that must have taken place to balance this equation of exhalation. She’s
melting the guilt and dissolving it into every biological link of her deoxyribonucleic acid.

The white-room beeps of the intensive care unit have become the echoed whispers of hospice and she leaves her mum’s side, too paralytically desensitized to the drooped lips and half-open eyes to stay any longer. She has just barely left when that last breath of air escapes from those tired lungs and that nose stops twitching and that left hand uncurls and those half shut eyes fall open. She is tackled with a misunderstood sense of relief as she hears urgent voices call ‘death.’ Her family eats burritos in the same death-stenched room and her mind starts directing movie scenes again, cueing lights and practicing lines. Staff attempt serenity and ring a dinner bell as her mum, in black bag casket, is slowly pushed down the buttered hallway.

\[\ldots\]

Time is viscous when her hand, with ginger confidence, scoops into the plastic bag and withdraws. Time is viscous as she holds what they call ashes in the canoe of her palm, her very own fraction of maternal fragments leaking through the sickles of her fingers. Why don’t the bones become viscous in the furnace? Become as viscous as their sound as they plop plop plop into the water? Instead they trip and onomatopoeia into the river as it slurps and sighs with the atmosphere and lets the fingerprinted ashes trickle down its throat. The time is so viscous. Time is thick white glue squeezed onto construction paper in the vague shape of a heart. Time is an ooze down that cardboard volcano in second grade science class. Time is cake batter: water mixing with flour mixing with the same baking soda she used in the volcano; water mixing with unmelted bones mixing with grey chalk that she swears used to breathe. Time has swallowed the magma clouds overhead and is suffocating on the magnitude of its internal friction.

\[\ldots\]

One day her mum became the clouds. She became the delicate filaments and the dense plumes. She became the tessellation of sunsets and the ripples of white on blue. ‘Mum’ became a synonym for ‘cirrostratus,’ for ‘altocumulus,’ for ‘cumulonimbus,’ became the armored precipitate lingering in each second. ‘Mum’ and mum could interrupt the viscosity of time, the uncertainty in impossibility, and the paralyzation of the norm so that she could striate the sky with loving fingers.

Mum, her mum, could arise before the sun and bend the very sky.
Theotokos
Dustin R. Crouse

Pastels
Window
Yuri Csapo
This is the last breakfast
I will cook for you
A single egg
fragrant with cumin and turmeric
fried in extra virgin olive oil
Served up on the red rooster Chinese plates
you bought from that restaurant
you used to take me to
every weekend when I was a kid
Always mushu pork, kung pao chicken
steaming white rice, Jasmine tea, fortune cookies,
and your terrible puns.
You’d blow your nose loudly in your napkin
fling your arm up in the air,
and shout, “Waiter!”

I was so embarrassed.

Needle drip in your arm
The little LED readout
flickering and humming
to your shallow breath
I feed you the egg like a baby
You complain
and ask me to scratch your ear
Your hand, curled into a bloated claw
can’t reach there anymore
The microstrokes
steal you away from me,
one cluster of neurons at a time
A tube pumps grey mash
into your splintered stomach
You’re already part man, part plastic,
part pharmaceutical factory.
You cried today
when Hospice said,
Skilled nursing or death chant,
you choose, old man.
I’m in prison, you told me
I can’t take money from corrections
Can’t drug myself into submission
I want a cyber fucking mecha skeleton
I want to fly on plumes of fire
I don’t want to die like this
It was supposed to be on horseback,
or mid-orgasm, a beer in one hand
and a shotgun in the other
Bring me my chain saw
I want to see blood and taste pain
I want to feel the metal bite into me
I want to hear my horse bay like a dog.

You finish the egg, mumbling
I wipe the spices from your stubbled chin
Your decaying body smells oily
Shrunk into itself on the bed
we laid out for you
under the old oak tree
I hold your edema-swollen fingers
till you fall asleep at last
Feeling awkward
Wondering, who is the father now?
The lazy afternoon lengthens on and on
Your legs stick out from under the sheet,
thin as a pair of chopsticks
I can barely see your ribs move
The oak tree sprouts bunches of sickly green mistletoe
Acorns cover the lawn, grown wild
Cicadas fill its branches,
chanting love-songs in the fall heat
and I can do nothing but sit there, and watch.
A Mountain Dreaming

Michael Le
Am I reading what I wrote?  
No. 
I have written what writes me. 
I am more than reading, I am meeting 
An older part of me, still young in years 
Held prisoner of paltry hopes and fears 
And as I hit command plus “s,” 
What I know is less, I must confess 
I’m preparing a culture for a friend 
Who later I will meet, a breathing creature 
While I am dead and set in stone, a feature 
To be examined, ‘neath a parabolic lens 
Revealing more than the poet could intend 
But from this microscope I turn away 
And through the telescope I aim my gaze 
A foggy sight, yet dazzling to behold 
A dance of new experiences with old 
A pattern convoluted in delight 
Which spirals in magnificence towards night 
Light, weightless, fading into existence 
I start my exodus from knowledge with this.
Online Content

Home | Wesley Atkin
Self-recorded and mastered.

Every Other Night | Andrew Hemesath
Self-recorded and mastered.

Eve and the Serpent | Logan Maples
Recorded and mastered by Madeline Stelter and Jon Cullison, courtesy of CSM Music Technology.

Once More | Marcos Hernandez Rodriguez
Self-recorded and mastered.

Garbage Patch Poem | Richard Sebastian-Coleman
Recorded and mastered by Angela Moser, courtesy of CSM Music Technology | Voices of the poet, Wenli Dickinson, and Makenzie Parimuha.

Out for a Ride | Kelly Sonnier
Colored Pencil

Mt. of the Holy Cross | Robin Hoover
Photography

Please visit the Editions section of highgrade@mines.edu to view and download this year’s audio works, additional art pieces, and text for spoken word poetry.
Contributors & Staff

Cassandra Baca

Cassandra aka Cassie, has been studying photography for 6+ years. She enjoys film photography and working in the dark room the best. Photography is “the inexhaustible mystery of the surfaces of things touched by ordinary light” (Marjorie Content) and she plans to capture it.

Agata Bogucka

Agata Bogucka is the Communications Manager for the College of Earth Resource Sciences and Engineering at Mines, and the advisor for Mines Photography Club. Having originally embarked on a STEM career-path, Agata soon decided that all the sciences were too cool to pick just one—and decided that she should make movies about them instead. She has always had a passion for film and photography, and is excited to be at Mines helping to share the research passions of the students and faculty with the rest of the world. Her dream is to one day move to New Zealand and start her own production company, making inspiring documentaries that urge viewers to think daringly.

Hilary Brown

Hilary Brown (Mines B.Sc. ‘08, M.Sc. ‘10) currently lives in Madison, where she is pursuing a PhD in Electrical Engineering at the University of Wisconsin. She loves stargazing and, as an undergrad, took an astronomy course with a nighttime lab section on Kafadar Commons.

Daniel Butler

I’ve been a photographer long before I became an engineer. It’s been a decade of probably over 10,000 photos, with every shot increasing my knowledge of composition, lighting, and colors. It's all glory to God for my passion and His photogenic creation.

Lincoln D. Carr

Between the songs of sperm whales hunting deep canyons under the seas and the roving eye of the lucid dreamer laying prone in his bed, poetry and physics meet. In this multiverse of possibility, I write quantum thoughts to a reflection of myself reborn again and again through inner and outer space-time, each choice and each moment another universe. One day the science we do now will all seem like alchemy, and we will wonder how we did not fuse poetry and equations as naturally as the savants of that future age. May this work present a Moment on the path to that future embrace.

Page Cirillo

Painting is a lot like dancing.
Julia Cormos

Julia is a sophomore in Applied Mathematics who likes to play her ukulele, win at Mario Kart, and fail at trying to come up with a witty bio.

Landen T. Cross

Landen T. Cross is a first-year student double majoring in Mechanical and Electrical engineering. He primarily enjoys eating, sleeping, and taking excessively long afternoon naps. However, when Landen is awake, he enjoys international travel, live music, and casually engaging in uncomfortably political conversations. He would like thank Mary Butler and Tricia Scow without whom his writing would not be worth printing.

Dustin Crouse

Theotokos is a Greek title for Mary, who in Christianity is believed to be the “Mother of God.” Mary is the Theotokos because her son Jesus is both God and man. This particular artwork is a recreation of an original by Leon Rouge. It was inspired as a gift for a friend and Catholic missionary dedicated to serving the CSM campus. Everyday millions pray for Mary's intercession, and it is my hope the faith that inspired this artwork sparks something in you, too.

Yuri Csapo

Yuri is the Manager of Systems Administration at CCIT-CSM. He and his family plan their travels around great food and great photos. They usually get one of the two.

Wenli Dickinson

Wenli continues to be a rare species, rumored to be studying the environment in which she lives and writing poetry on the side. If spotted, do approach.

Marm Dixit

Dear Readers of *High Grade*,

How are you? I am Marm, and am usually called that. I have a trained background in science and an acquired background in literature. I work well both with hydrogen and hyperboles, functions and figures of speech, arithmetic and articulation (see what I did there?). I write poems and stories and ghazals and haikus and the odd, occasional research paper. Look me up, read me down. I am all words, waiting to be read.

Alphabetically Yours,

Marm
Lisa Gay

I’m a chemical engineering and chemistry senior student but the technical nature of my day to day life is not all I am defined by. I find bits and pieces of my life elsewhere, hidden in poetry.

Marcos Hernandez

Marcos Hernandez is a senior in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Electrical Engineering. His passion is creating new things, whether that involves art or engineering. He enjoys learning and experiencing new things. He took band class during middle school and high school, in which he learn how to read music and play the trumpet. His interest in piano led him to teach himself by making his own melodies. His emotional connection with music contributes to creating melodies. He is currently working on finishing his songs.

Katie Hislop

Katie is 1/1 on High Grade submissions, so she is quitting while she’s ahead.

Coleman A. Hoyt

Coleman is a junior in Computer Science who’s just happy he was invited to the party.

Derek Jacobsen

Winning.

Matthew J. Kowalsky

Matt is a fledgling physicist who suffers from occasional bouts of authorship. He believes that stories are a fifth fundamental force in the world around us, and is so happy to have been able to share one of his stories in High Grade this year. This story goes out to his twin sister Rowan, who is very much alive and well and in contact with her family. Matt can be found in CTLM231 almost all the time, because all physics courses are taught there, at least until the department is allowed to expand from a single room to the new CoorsTek building.

Laura Leonard

Laura Leonard graduated from CSM in May of 2016, and is continuing her education at Mines as a first year Graduate student in Environmental Engineering. She loves being outdoors and capturing the beauty of her surroundings. She believes that being an innovative engineer or scientist involves an aspect of creativity, and that all engineers are creative in some way. If she is not out riding her bike with the Mines Cycling Team, or doing pine beetle research in Crested Butte, you’ll probably find her out enjoying her surroundings and capturing the moment with her camera.
Logan Maples

I am a freshman pursuing a Masters in Electrical Engineering! I love Colorado and everything I can do here; skiing, hiking, camping, and climbing! Music has been my favorite extra curricular since I started taking piano lessons at six years old. I started writing songs at 15 and it’s still my favorite hobby. I like to think of my degree at this school as a way to finance my hopeless dreams of being a musician.

Kyle D. Markowski

Kyle is a scholarly chap studying chemical and biochemical engineering. He considers his brain to be a prosthetic implanted by futurehumans, who whisked his native grey matter off to dissect its clandestine wonders. He uses poetry to escape, and therefore define, the system of his mind, which he believes still contacts him from futureplace. Any and all inspiration he finds is indirectly attributable to his husband, Chad, who has given him the courage to build himself anew every day. Chad is as of yet unaware of Kyle’s alien brain, so mum’s the word.

Mitch Moore

My love for climbing up mountains is almost paralleled by my passion for skiing down them. But nothing compares to my enduring relationship with the one steady rock in my life: quesadillas. Oh and also my family and friends.

Harshad Paranjape

Harshad Paranjape is a post-doctoral scholar in Mechanical Engineering. He enjoys painting, web designing, digital arts and landscape photography.

Dhrupad Parikh

I am Dhrupad Parikh, an engineer by curriculum and a photographer by practice. The art of seeing things is learnt in living. There are as many ways of looking at the color blue as there are pair of eyes. One becomes a photographer when one realizes that every shade of blue that individuals see are beautiful in their own ways. I strive to look for the shade of blue no one has ever noticed before.

Becky Reeve

Becky Reeve has succeeded in not writing a real biography the last three years she was published in High Grade. This year is no different. She enjoys a lovely cup of hot tea with a game of cribbage.

Tim Ross

Tim Ross is a senior in Computer Science at Mines. Poetry, and art in general, is a relatively new interest, but it will hopefully be a lifelong passion.
Alyssa Rozendaal

Alyssa Rozendaal is a Colorado native, habitual reader, and accidental poet. Her love for stories goes back as far as anyone can remember but she only recently rediscovered the joy of writing her own.

Richard Sebastian-Coleman

Richard is an alumnus of School of Mines and served as Co-Editor-in-Chief of *High Grade* with Frances Richardson from 2015-2016. He now works as an Environmental Engineer but has continued artistic pursuits after graduation. He is honored to have his work be part of *High Grade* once again and hopes you enjoy this edition of the journal and artistic expression of the Mines community in general.

Alyssa Schwarz

Alyssa Schwarz is a master's student in Geological Engineering at CSM, is a proud native of Golden, Colorado, and an award-winning artist. She enjoys painting and drawing the beauty found in nature through precise detail and realism in order to best capture the subject, combining the precision of engineering with the creative expressing of art. Alyssa has displayed her artwork throughout the Denver metro area in numerous exhibitions, has provided artwork for multiple professional societies, and will be exhibiting her current portfolio in the newly renovated Marriott Hotel in Denver, CO. She believes art should gently tug at your edges, motivating you to think, do, create, explore, love, smile... If it even causes you to linger for one extra second, it has served a purpose.

Chad Smith

As of Spring 2017 I am a freshman in mechanical engineering from Colorado Springs, Colorado. My passions include chess, calligraphy, shooting, music, ballroom dance, and sleep. I joined the ballroom dance club during my first semester having never had any dancing experience. I can now dance waltz and swing and am in the process of learning Tango, it’s been one of my best experiences here at Mines. I am also a proud member of the Nucleus themed learning community; we do not really have a purpose but we enjoy not having a purpose, so all is well. The highlight of my year so far was commenting “DROP TOP,” on the “Raindrop 2” problem in Physics 2. I got over 80 likes, I think that might be a record for a LONCAPA comment and I was very pleased with myself.

James Studholme

Jim Studholme is an adjunct instructor in LAIS. He has two children, one dog and one cat. He lives in Boulder with his wife, Rae.
Kasra Taghikhani

He is from Tehran, Iran. His prime interest is doing research in his field (solid mechanics) and this interest initiated when he was 10. His father had a head-on collision, but the body shop managed to put the wrecked car back into its original form without replacing any original part!! It was astonishing to him how a metal structure could be so vulnerable, and yet so flexible, malleable, and strong at the same time. Long story short, he ended up here at Mines, as a graduate student in mechanical engineering department.

He believes that creativity is the key to making life more amusing, and sees photography as a proper exercise to develop an interest in seeing things differently.

In his spare time, he enjoys playing soccer (Rossoneri), watching football (Green and Gold), listening to rock music (Anathema, Pink Floyd, Mark Knopfler), reading books (Dostoyevsky, Dumas, Jamalza-deh), hiking, and of course photography.

Mai Thi La

Mai Thi La is a senior in chemical engineering, minoring in computer science. She admits this is a weird combination, but she wanted to learn how to code for fun. In her spare time, Mai Thi likes to cut up socks and make them into stuffed animals, take long walks not near a beach, and eat grapes only when they are peeled. Fun fact, her small size allows her to sometimes shop in the kids section and thus, maximize her savings. Furthermore, Mai Thi has a bad habit of hoarding dresses, hence her “Áo Dái” poem. Mai Thi believes that if you aren’t happy everyday, you’re doing something wrong.

Nhan Tran

From hunting bugs, wrestling with Python, to exploring new technological territories, Nhan aka “Megatran” had quite a journey of solving problems and picking up things quickly. You can find out how far he has come along at trannhan.com.

Samuel Vaughn-Clark

I am a senior in mechanical engineering from Arkansas, and I love painting, playing guitar and drawing. I have been drawing all of my life and up until this last year, 99% of my art has been squeezed between notes and on scraps of paper that I’ve thrown into a disorganized pile on my desk, but I finally made the jump to bigger and better things with actual canvases.

Vy Duong

Vy is an directionless wanderer who hopes to one day find a path, which incorporates her love for art and humanitarian work into her tentative occupation as a civil engineer.
J. West

I graduated in May 2016 from Colorado School of Mines and now live in Denver. I primarily write fiction stories, but also co-wrote a short play that was performed by Mines Little Theater this past summer. Fortunately, I have been able to remain part of the Mines writing community by helping out with Creative Writing Club, which is often the highlight of my week. I’m very excited to be part of High Grade again this year. My piece, “Leaks,” was written to show the effects of Alzheimer’s disease and to follow the emotional journey of lost memory from a new angle.

Connor Weddle

Connor is a sophomore who has not yet decided on a major. Check back next year to see if he has his life together. We doubt it.

Mason Woish

Mason Woish is a Colorado native from Monument, Colorado who graduated the Colorado School of Mines in December of 2016 with his BS in Metallurgical and Materials Engineering. While at CSM, he participated in a number of academic pursuits including internships at Rawlings Sporting Goods, Dow Chemical, and Chevron. Additionally, Mason was the project lead on the Nanostructured Materials Research Team studying innovative padding systems for sports and military applications. Outside of school, Mason received a scholarship to play football at the Colorado School of Mines. In his free time, he enjoy playing sports and watching movies. He is currently employed at Lockheed Martin as a Materials Engineer.