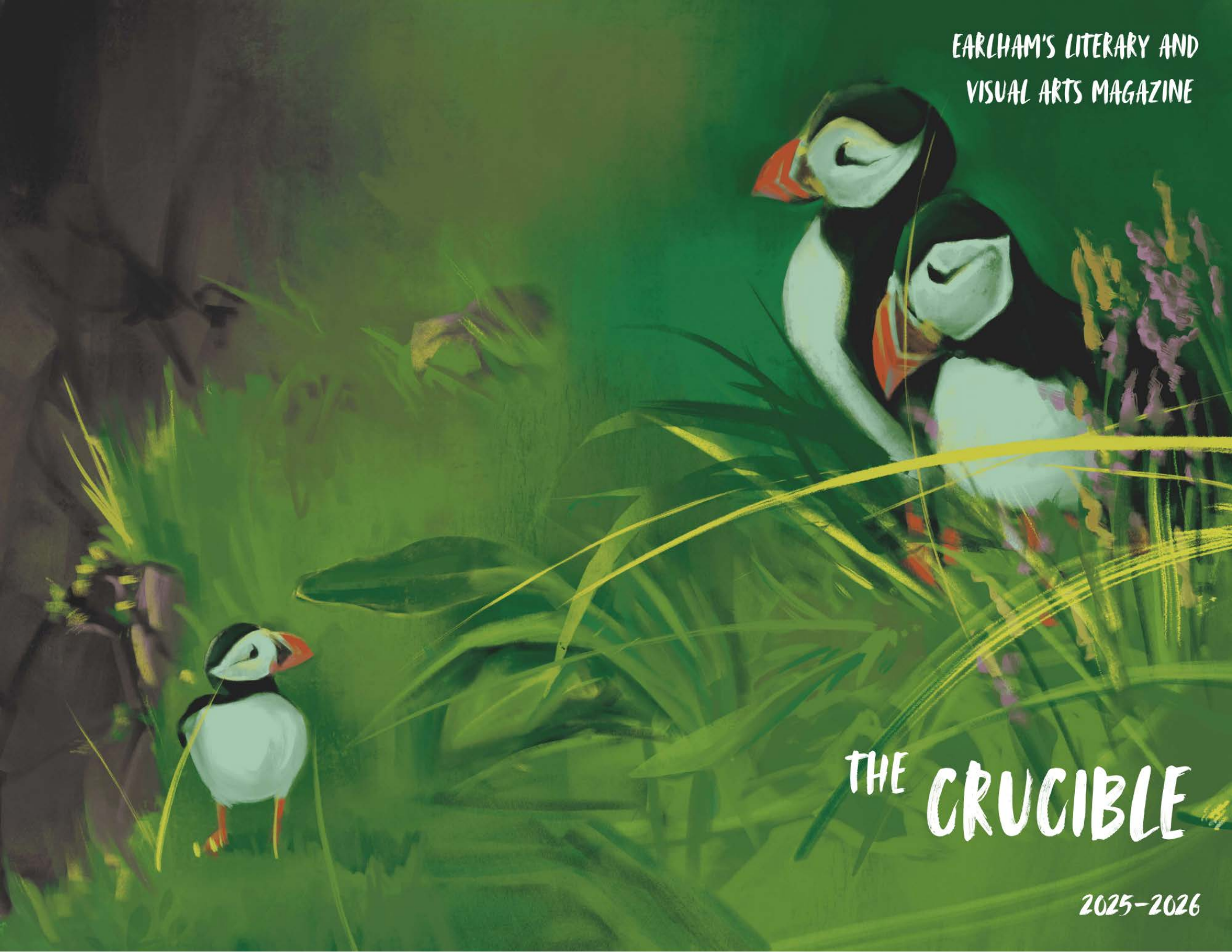


EARLHAM'S LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS MAGAZINE

THE CRUCIBLE

2025-2026

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Please visit our website to read past editions of *The Crucible:*
https://www.earlham.edu/the-crucible/

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Please join us in a moment of silence.

Thank you.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Dear friends,

We understand this has been a challenging year for all those involved. We at the Crucible, as well as much of the wider world, have been in a state of heavy transition, which has been reflected in many of the pieces presented to you here. Between Earlham's restructuring and fears around governmental accountability, it's easy to feel anxious. Many faculty members have lost their jobs, classes have been removed from the college's offerings, and it is difficult for many students to feel secure.

However, there's plenty of joy to be found as well. Art, especially in difficult times, can be a means to bring both relief and catharsis, and the Crucible has aimed to compile a magazine to offer both. Even in this difficult moment, many wonderfully talented Earlham students have sent in their work, and we are deeply grateful for each and every one. We hope you enjoy the magazine

Sincerely yours,

The Crucible Team

Meri
Samuel Stassen

Come on, Meri! Grow up!
It's time you learned how to share

Learn what others will share with you
It's a good thing that they want to be your friend

They want to be your friend because they see a good thing
in you, Meri, don't throw them away

When they come to you hurt don't throw them away
Help them no matter what you gain

No matter what you gain it's not enough
for you is it Meri? Eating all this

hate Richie's been cooking isn't good for you, is it Meri?
Where's your sense of direction?

I sense you're going in the prison camp direction
Come on, Meri! Grow up!

Threads of Flute

Devabrat Das

Krishna's flute slips through mango leaves,
a thin silver tremor the river receives.
Cows lower their breath into the grass—
even the earth leans inward as he passes.

Peacock eyes loosen in puddles of light,
mirrors unmaking themselves into sight.
Where he steps, the soil darkens and yields,
ink becoming music across the fields.

Velvet hems wander; fingers follow the gleam,
laughter unwinds like a half-remembered dream.
Shadows soften, then gather, then fall—
the wind bends closer, listening through it all.

Moonlight unfastens along his skin,
a quiet spill the night gathers in;
sparks rise, hesitate, almost remain—
small, bright hesitations speaking his name.

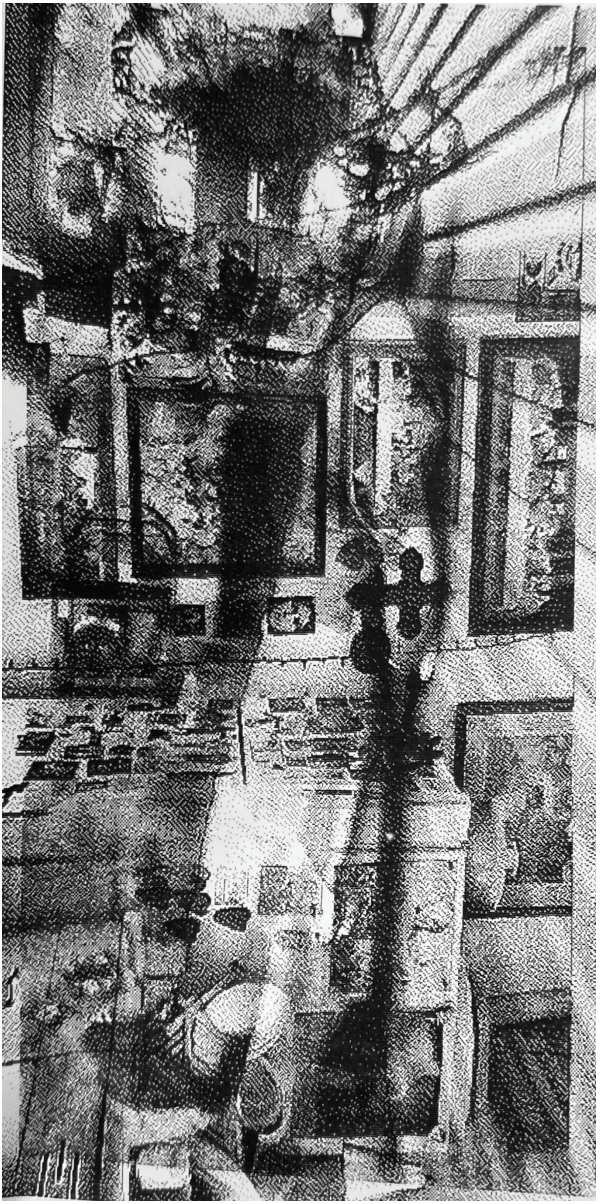
In the grove, breath forgets how to part,
sighs circling slow at the edge of the heart.
Notes loosen, ascend, dissolve into rhyme—
his laughter stitching the edges of time.

Bones

Gavin Kissling

I find you under your stone,
shovel high on my shoulder,
mist weaving around my feet
like an old cat
under a new moon.
I bend down and smell your perfume;
formaldehyde, acrid, sharp.
I open the door and slide into a bed made for one,
wrapping my arms around you.
Be gentle, you say,
as I crack your skull to eat of the meat within.
Be gentle, as I pull your ribs to the side to feel the hollow inside.
Be gentle, as I run my tongue over your teeth,
feeling the looseness,
feeling the dryness of your mouth.
I love you, I whisper,
and you shift in our claustrophobia,
awkwardly turning out from under me to envelope me in your arms.
You pull me into your newly hollow places,
my head resting against your heart,
your fingers tangled in my hair
as your other hand rises to pull the door shut.
I hear the gentle patter of rain.

Untitled
Dorian Campbell
Digital thermal print



Papilio Mortem

Eliza Karnopp

Yesterday evening, I died.

It was far less climactic than I had been expecting, really. From everything I'd heard, I had anticipated adrenaline-- visions of the dead and imperceivable that might have been hallucinations. I expected the butterfly to descend, to alight on my forehead or my chest and for my body to come alive one last time, making me hyperaware of every extremity and the fabric resting on my skin, for my ears to pick up on every minute sound for just a heartbeat before everything fades.

The only thing I'd gotten right was the butterfly. Wings painted in red and metallic silver, body a shade darker than black, feathery antennae gentle against my skin even as its legs pricked at my skin like needles. A wave of soft calm cascaded through my body, and my eyes fluttered shut.

I stood, slowly, carefully. The sunlight filtered green through the trees above me, just a shade below overwhelming-- still, it was bright enough to make me sneeze. The world felt... gentler, somehow, than I had anticipated. Light, unburdened... neither words I had expected to describe the otherwood. The trees towered over me but didn't crowd, sheltering but not claustrophobic, turning the sunlight green-gold. The underbrush was flush with ferns and ivy, the former brushing their light-yet-vibrant green fronds across my calves, soft and warm. The latter twisted elegantly around the tree trunks, heart-shaped emerald leaves standing out against the chestnut bark. Some vines even bridged the gaps between trees, moss hanging off of them and undoubtedly providing the woodland animals some very convenient paths. If there were even animals in the otherwood to begin with; the abundance of butterflies I had expected were absent, the air stirred by the flapping of birds' wings and the rustle of foliage.

Or, no-- when I looked again, blinking the afterimages of the sun from my eyes, I could see them. One clung to the underside of an ivy leaf, wings spread flat, showing off the gleaming beetle-green and pearlescent blue. The one that had come for me, I recalled, had been red and silver-- was I misremembering? Was there more than one Death?

No. I frowned at the fern that brushed my leg, and the blue-green butterfly that rested serenely at its tip. Impulsively, I crouched, holding out a finger-- I was already dead, what was the danger of touching Death again?

To my slight surprise, the insect accepted my implicit offer, climbing on and swaying its feathery antennae slightly. Its legs didn't prickle at my skin the way I remembered. Truthfully, if I weren't looking directly at it, I might not have felt its presence at all. Its wings flapped gently as I lifted it closer to my face, and I raised an eyebrow. *Was that...?*

On closer inspection, yes. I held it up at eye level, fascinated by the

contrast between the soothing blue and green top of the wing and the ominous red and silver of the underside.

Fascinating. What, exactly, warranted that dichotomy? It wasn't like they had any predators, and why else would they hide? Although their green and blue patterning wouldn't really camouflage with anything, now that I thought about it. Both colors were far too vibrant, one beetle-green and the other a light blue that seemed to shimmer in the sunlight.

It was soothing, though. Unlike the red and silver side, which evoked a primal sort of fear in my gut, screaming to run and not look back. Was that the point?

But then, why would Death care about the feelings of mere mortals like that? As far as I knew, the love of humans didn't affect It at all...

...

...there was something in the air.

I froze, suddenly acutely aware of how little I knew of my surroundings. The hair on the back of my neck prickled, something like a cold gaze looking past my skin, to the soft, squishy flesh underneath. I'd frozen by reflex, but now I was torn--I wanted to turn, to try and see whatever it was that saw through me like glass, but some primal instinct told me that I was prey here, that if I looked, something would happen. *Something...*

After a few long, dragging moments, my need to know outweighed my paralysis and I slowly turned my head, trying to catch a glimpse in my peripheral vision. I only caught the edge of what could only be a massive butterfly wing before it slid out of sight, but that seemed to break whatever spell kept me frozen in place and I staggered, gasping for breath even as I spun to get a better view.

Butterfly, was my first thought when I looked at It. At first glance, the wings just looked like scaled-up replicas of the butterflies I'd just been admiring, but something was off... Not to mention that these wings seemed to be attached to a *person.*

The harder I looked, the more I noticed. It had twig-thin legs just a touch too long to be human, and what I could see of Its hair glimmered oddly in the light. I couldn't even tell if It was wearing any clothes--Its body looked only like a void, a humanoid shape cut out of the fabric of reality and given "life". It drew me in and repelled me at the same time, my eyes drifting to the un-presence and then retreating as they began to sting. I focused my gaze on the forest immediately to the side, hoping...

Oh. Oh, but the forest around It seemed to warp and twist, as though the very land was trying to avoid Its touch. The effect was subtle, but once I noticed it I couldn't not. Its wings should be colliding with branches where they swayed but the air rippled around them, space seeming to fold in on itself to allow It passage.



12

Lotuses (The Greatest Power)
8x16.5cm
Porcelain, Cobalt Oxide

Polished Motifs
Lina Ying
Ceramics



Frogs, Lillies, Grey Heron
7x17cm
Porcelain, Cobalt Oxide

It wasn't moving.

It was still but for the gentle swaying of its wings, shut behind it.

When did it stop moving?

Belatedly, I realized what exactly was different about the wings. For one, with them being as large as they were, I could actually see the individual scales across its surface, which lent them an oddly textured appearance. More importantly, though, bubbles of something roiled just beneath the surface, swelling and falling only to be overtaken by another. For a moment, I lost myself in the swirling movement, watching whatever it was swell and bloom under the scales, rising and falling and twisting, flowing, serene. Sometimes I caught what looked like a flash of light, making me think about galaxies shifting, and bioluminescent waves crashing on the beach at midnight.

"What life must they hold?" I breathe, tearing my eyes away. It's a nonsensical question-- this is Death, and Death cannot harbor life within Its being.

Who are you to dictate what laws It follows? Something whispers in the back of my mind. I shudder, ever so slightly. I should turn away. I should turn away and forget this whole encounter. That would be better for me, I think.

But I can't bring myself to turn around, walk away. I can only watch, feeling increasingly distant, as I begin to wonder what that ephemeral sea might look like from up close. I find myself beginning to move, stepping towards It.

The panic in my rational mind feels miles away, insignificant as an ant.

Something takes hold of me then, like a frigid but gentle hand, and I see It has turned Its head to look directly at me. I am picked up and turned away, a soft but stern voice speaks, sending a lance of pain through my skull.

DON'T.

Untitled
Dorian Campbell
Multimedia



From Outside the Hotel

Samuel Stassen

Winter, 1978,
Louis ville,
Ken tucky,
the worst
storm in
years. There
are not
enough
snow ploughs.

***

School is
closed for
three weeks;
a month in
the rural areas.

16 School children from the time might remember the storm fondly; might repeat, "A month! A month!" when they tell the story. It is bad enough that the next winter, the city has bought more snow ploughs. Enough to handle the winter of 1978. But the snowfall was average that year. And the next, and the next. Officials question: "Why are we paying for all these snowploughs?" Soon it's not a question, it is a problem that must be solved. Government is a business, if it's not then it should be. Each year the city sells the snowploughs, one by one, until Winter, 1994, Louisville, Kentucky, the worst storm in years, there are not enough snow ploughs. So pick up your own shovel, teach your own kids, clear your own roadways.

Who to Blame[1]

Miyu Enomoto

Lying down
Turning to the right
Pulling the futon over me

Left hand grips bed sheet, right hand grips futon
Feel nauseated
Gradually, darkness envelopes me
Strongly but surely, the right hand gets tense
Then my left hand
Its power grew gradually and progressively stronger
As if it reached the limit, both arms tremble

A fever rises in the inner corners of my eyes
At the same time, a drop of water rushes up
Losing my voice
Could only sob
Not even a bawl
Never becomes a wail

How much easier it would be
If I could blame someone

ICE cracking down on immigrants unnecessarily
Something is controlling them and making them violent

God says, "Love even your enemies."
Would yapping at them do anything?

I cannot find room for this rage

Where did the guy selling Sonoran hot dogs go?
Will the host family's relatives be okay?

People say, "It is what it is. Because they have no papers."

NO PAPER
NO PAPER
NO PAPER

1 This is a poem that I wrote through the mental struggles I have been having during the Border studies.

There is a reason why they cannot get a paper
A world where the color of skin determines whether you can get the paper

Who can I blame on?
The officer who doesn't hand the paper?
The one discriminating the people of color?
The society that thinks this is okay?

Or
The world infested with colonialism, where the power you have
Changes depending on where you were born?
Or
The capitalist society where a few powerful people
Exploit the rest of the population
Which cannot hold without colonialism?

How much easier would it be, if I could blame on someone
No, it is colonialism and capitalism that have been established in this way

No one can be blamed
I just cannot.

Only pain remains
In my right hand, and then my left hand
On my eyelids

Only tiredness remains
On both arms
All over my body

And I fall asleep

Finally, I feel at ease —

Ka-mo-shi-re-nai.[2]

2「かもしれない」Pronounced, "Ka-mo-shi-re-nai" means "maybe," but with more of a pessimistic nuance in this context, I wanted to use Japanese here to leave this nuance since I have not found the right word in English.

Cindy Sherman Series
Mali Cloeter
Gelatin silver print from film



Summertown, Tennessee
Gavin Kissling

"It's," the man sang quietly, in an exaggerated folksy accent, "fare thee well to ole Kentucky, I ne'er expect to see you 'gain." A mandolin sat in the seat next to him, still in its scuffed black case, next to a leather bag. Prospective passengers in thick coats with scarves bundled tight around their faces scurried past him, not looking. The man continued to hum as he stretched and straightened, grabbing his own coat– long, dark and dusty– off the back of the bench. He tucked it under one arm and slung his mandolin's strap over the other before lifting his bag and stepping up to the platform. The shrill whistle of the incoming train rattled through the winter air, and he whistled with it.

The train stopped with a screech, and a uniformed woman began her walk, punching tickets and directing luggage. The man passed his coat to his right arm and went fishing in his pocket, pushing past the lighter and the photograph to grab the rumpled ticket that had slipped to the very bottom. He grinned as he passed it over, and the woman gave him a carefully neutral stare while she punched it. He began to sing again as he boarded, with what words he could remember. "For, I'm bound to ride that Northern railroad. Perhaps I'll die aboard this train."

The man settled into a stiff wooden seat in coach next to a window and settled his bag between his knees. He set the mandolin case upright in his lap so that it laid across his shoulder. A fat man in a tan coat sat directly across from him, glancing outside as the train lurched to life. Small beads of sweat gathered at the fat man's temples as his fingers gripped the armrest.

"Relax," the man murmured.

The train stopped at three little townships before the man found one that felt right. He stayed on when they called for passengers to Ethridge, though his companion left, and to Brace, and might have waited past Summertown too if the next stop hadn't been getting far too close to Nashville. He got off, his belongings bundled in his arms, and slipped out of the station. A blue sign welcomed visitors to Summertown, and below that, "Where the living is easy," and below that, hanging off the bottom, "Home of the Eagles." The man stared up at the cloudy sky and leafless trees.

"I'm only goin'," he murmured as he followed the street, "over Jordan. I'm only goin' over home." Another sign, painted the same blue as the welcome, designated a building on the right as Tanya's Market. The man shrugged and pushed the glass door open with his shoulder. His boots clomped against the concrete flooring as the bell these places hang above the door announced his entry.

"Be with you in a second," a voice yelled from further in.

The walls of the place were covered in shelves and vending machines, stocking everything from soda to socks. A register sat on a counter to the left of

the door, currently abandoned. In the center of the room, a handful of tables sat with wooden chairs scattered haphazardly around them. A very old couple played a game of checkers in the corner. The man picked out a twenty-pack of cigarettes and waited for Tanya, as he'd already begun calling the voice he'd heard, to come around.

"Sorry about that," she said as she popped out of an Employees Only door. The man caught a glimpse of a dimly lit kitchen behind her as the door swung closed. "Welcome to Tanya's Market, best place in town for shopping and dining. What can I do for you today?"

The woman was younger than he was, but not by much. He wouldn't have called her beautiful, not with her wide nose and her slightly crooked teeth, but there was something attractive in her solidity, her thick arms and broad smile. The man slid his cigarettes on the counter and she grinned at him, blond hair haloing around her face.

"Those things'll kill you, y'know."

"I know. I've got a few packs left, and then I'll quit."

"Sure you will. I've been saying the same thing all my life. What's your name?" The man smoothed a balled-up ten dollar bill on the counter. "Harry. You?"

"Elise." The man shouldn't have felt so disappointed. "What are you doing here in town?" she continued.

"Not sure yet. Maybe I'll just grab a meal and move on. What day is it?"

"Saturday."

"Maybe I'll hang around for the church service, then. You have one of those?"

The woman laughed. "We're small, not dead. We've got two. You Baptist?"

"No."

"Church of Christ, then. Follow the road. Turn left at the Mexican place, El Azteca Summertown."

"Thanks."

She glanced at the mandolin on his shoulder. "You play?"

"Sometimes. Not so much anymore."

"That's a shame. Music's what makes life worth living."

"Is it, now?"

"Yeah, it is." The woman put her hands on her hips.

"Do I get change for these?" The man rattled the cigarettes.

"Oh, shit! Yeah, give me a second. That'll be a dollar eighty-two back in your wallet."

"Good deal on those."

"Want to grab some dinner while you're here?"

"Sure. What's good?"

"I've never heard anyone complain about our tenderloin. Biscuits aren't bad, if you're vegetarian."

"Tenderloin is fine."

"We have a lot of those, you know. Vegans."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. There's a place called The Farm up the road. It's super hippie, all about nonviolence and plants and such. Good midwives, though."

The man shifted uncomfortably. "Well, I like to have some meat every now and then."

"I'll have it fired up for you in a minute. Anything to drink with that?"

"Coke if you've got it."

"Pepsi fine?"

"It'll do."

The man sat down at a lacquered table and settled his bag under his seat, resting the mandolin case on top of it. He shifted, shrugging off his coat and tossing it over the back of his chair. His tenderloin came out, fat glistening, green beans nestled against it. He thanked Elise and ate, hunched low over his food, asking for a refill on his Pepsi twice before he finished, pushing the plate off to the side. He carefully wiped his fingers, paper rubbing away the grease and dirt from around his close-cropped nails and ran his tongue over his lips, catching the last of the meat's juice. He nodded to Elise, who was talking with another customer, and slipped away into the winter cold.

Down the street, the woman had said, and left at the Mexican place. It only took him fifteen minutes until he saw the steeple in the air. He wasn't sure if the pastor would still be in, but sure enough, when he knocked, a tall man in a black suit answered.

"How can I help you?"

"Just passing through town. Needed somewhere to sleep, if you can lend a hand."

"Well, you know what they say. Knock, and it shall be opened to you." The man moved to go in, and the pastor stopped him. "Hold on. You do drugs?"

"No."

"You fight?"

"Sometimes. If I have to."

"You drink? Smoke?"

The man shrugged. "Yeah."

The pastor's lips twitched upwards. "So do I. Mind if I bum a cigarette?"

The loft was dusty, lit only by a single bare bulb. The floorboards creaked as the man measured out the space, pacing from one end to the next. Spiders scuttled deeper into their corners as he set his mandolin against the wall and plopped his bag in the middle of the room. He emptied his pockets, arranging his cigarette box, lighter, pocketknife, and wallet next to his instrument. His fingers lingered on the cigarette box, and he opened it twice before finally putting it down for the night. He slipped the photo in his pocket under his bag. He removed his coat, setting it aside, and folded up his shirt and jeans, tucking

Cindy Sherman Series

Mali Cloeter

Gelatin silver print from film



them into his bag under his other two outfits. He laid down on the floorboards, head resting on his pack, drew his coat over him and slept.

His dreams, as always, were unsettling and blurred. He dreamed of snow and music and blonde hair and of zipping up a black concert dress, a face turning towards him and placing a kiss on the stubble on his chin. He dreamed of a white room, a constant beeping, and then a droning he couldn't get out of his head. He dreamed of sitting in a rented car in a rented black suit, staring at iron gates, unable to make himself open the door. He dreamed of the first train ride.

The next morning at five, the man dressed slowly and quietly and slipped out of the church loft and into the darkened street, carrying his bag in one hand. Normally, he'd been told, the town would be abuzz, or as abuzz as it ever got by five-thirty, but today was Sunday and people slept in until seven, when the service started. He slid his hand in his jacket pocket and fished out a cigarette. Sixteen left. He pinched it between his lips and shifted his bag to the other side to get to the lighter in his left pocket and paused beneath a streetlight to flick the flame on and raise it to his mouth. That essential task done, the man put the lighter away, returned his bag to his left hand, and started walking south along the railroad tracks.

He sang a little, like always, while he walked. "Well, there's just one kind-a favor I'll be askin' you, just one kind-a favor I'll be askin' you, there's just one kind-a favor I'll be askin' you." He broke off abruptly and walked in silence.

There were two or three inches of snow on the ground, or at least, the man felt like it. He wandered down beside the train tracks, going nowhere in particular and waiting for the sun to rise. Twice he drew a new cigarette from his pocket and practiced the lighting maneuver.

Three times he switched his bag over just to reach his hand in his pocket and stroke the photograph. It likely had worn away by now, the image gone. No more dress, no more smile. If whoever found him wouldn't have anything to reveal his past except a pack of fourteen cigarettes, a well-worn lighter, a pocketknife with a screw loose, a wallet with six dollars eighty-two, and a leather bag containing two changes of clothes, a woman's necklace, a beat-up deck of cards, some sheet music by the composer Mrs. Caroline, to my Harry with all my love, and a small wooden box filled to the brim with train ticket stubs, well, that was alright by him.

He pursed his lips to whistle, but no sound came out. Too cold, or too tired, or both. Maybe I'll just rest here for a moment, he thought, and maybe I'll play a little when I get up, and maybe that train'll come down and let me on, before collapsing in the snow beside the tracks while the sun reached its blazing fingertips over the horizon like threads of blond hair, his bag flopped open on the ground.

Untitled
Dorian Campbell
Fiber arts



XV
Jasper Huneycutt

: Evil fatality,
All perish from this world
Myself among them

weakness,
Body and mind civilized
What am I to do?

pettiness,
Weight of wasted years
Where am I to go?

blindness.
Weight of my woes
I know not what I do
I wish it could be true

Ode to Sporus
Jasper Huneycutt

Sporus, oh Sporus,
left broken and afraid
beside Nero's grave
We'll remember you
long after the fiddler

Sporus, lonely Sporus,
you lived life as a not-man,
crushed under your cruel husband's hand
How impotent you must have felt
when they called you empress.

Sporus, battered Sporus
taken as Persephone
In life, you knew no better;
perhaps a thorn is gentle
if you've never felt petals

Sporus, tortured Sporus
We mourn you still today
Born and died a slave
to men who knew nothing
and took everything



28

Water Lily, Water Hyacinth, Goldfish
8x17.5cm
Porcelain, Cobalt Oxide

Polished Motifs
Lina Ying
Ceramics



Mountains, Birds
9x14.5cm
Porcelain, Cobalt Oxide

When Words Went Missing

Tebutare Rukundo

We noticed a change and couldn't name it.
Not yet. Just misplacing words.
Our brick home slid off its frame, like the stick house in 'The Three Little Pigs'.
His thoughts reached air and couldn't hold shape.
How could we have known?

He was the head of our table, the steady hand on our wheel,
a pediatrician with a Ph.D., steady as the North Star,
translating fevers into comfort, questions into answers.
Our smartest man began to misplace the door to speech.

We did not understand, so we grew angry.
Anger left a bitter taste, then came the shame, the guilt, the grief.
We snapped at the silence, called it stubbornness.
How could we have known a shadow was learning his name?

2020. The word arrives:
Diagnosis. We called it stubborn when it was fear,
called it pride when it was fog.
Confusion coiled in his throat, a knot he could not swallow.

Months, then years.
I lost the calendar, pages fell like leaves, and still it worsened.
He reached for words and brought up blurs;
he reached for faces and pulled up static.
He forgot, then forgot he'd forgotten.

Mummy took the wheel: bills, pills, appointments,
two wings working alone.
I carry a suitcase of guilt to college,
leaving Mummy to lift the hours we used to share.
I phone home; she keeps it sunny, tells me to study.
She's carrying so much.

I was the last born, small in a huge situation,
sent back to therapy because my eyes kept raining.
Bronwyn listens and gives me coping skills,
but the pain keeps its own calendar,
a constant pulse of pain in my chest,
brainwaves running 80-88, like Vory sings.

Like Khamari sings, I need another shot of dopamine.
Some days I accept it; then the hurt returns,
a tide that remembers the shore better than I do.

Hospital light is a kind of ocean.
In 2024, twice the tide tried to take him.
Blood drummed in my ribs as his body seized.
I screamed. I cried. I prayed with my teeth.
Oh Aphasia, you nasty beast.
you thief of keys, you moth in the curtain,
you rust on the hinge of his mouth.

I am mourning a man who is still breathing.
Grief with no funeral, love with no language.
I nursed him. Me. His baby. Soap in my palm,
learning the weight of his helplessness
by the way his head rested on my chest,
by the way his wrist settled into my hand.

Sometimes I'm jealous of my siblings. I'll say it.
They had his road maps, scholarship letters,
his money, his long mentorship,
the steady hand on the wheel across their whole sea.
I had it too, for a while, then the wheel slipped.
I got a father cut short, a dictionary without nouns.
I'm learning envy and love can sit at the same table
and not look each other in the eye.

Oh Aphasia, you nasty beast.
You cannot eat the whole of him, but you've eaten enough
to change the taste of every day.

And if there must be a last line tonight, let it be plain:
I am still his child. He is still my father.
We are both still here, and it still hurts.
From this dorm with the thin walls,
I'll carry the day with our picture on my lock screen,
and a whispered prayer.

Ringlets
Mali Cloeter
Twive-exposed gelatin silver print from film



To Father From Son

Blaise Andrew Rzeszut

I know you'll die before you see. 'Fore you can see your sad son. We'll all be down by the
stricken creek, Waiting for him to baptize me.
I can give it to you,
You manage to always shove that
blunt stake through.
And in the sunset bleeding over you,
I will hush my words til the paint seeps through.
Its not so personal, no;
That he walked, til he walked too far.
He told you no to go, too--
But you came and stopped that car.
I can never know how your love, Brings me to cut that big oak down. Shape it into a stake, make
my body break,
Mold me into the word you see.
What is the pain that I will feel, Driving it through my body? How is that weight becoming you
Just as it falls to meet me?
Crush your fingertips
Against the wall,
See how long it takes
For the oak to fall.
I can feel them now--
Splinters all around:
I spin an infinity,
Falling gracelessly down.

Tell Your Dog I Miss Her

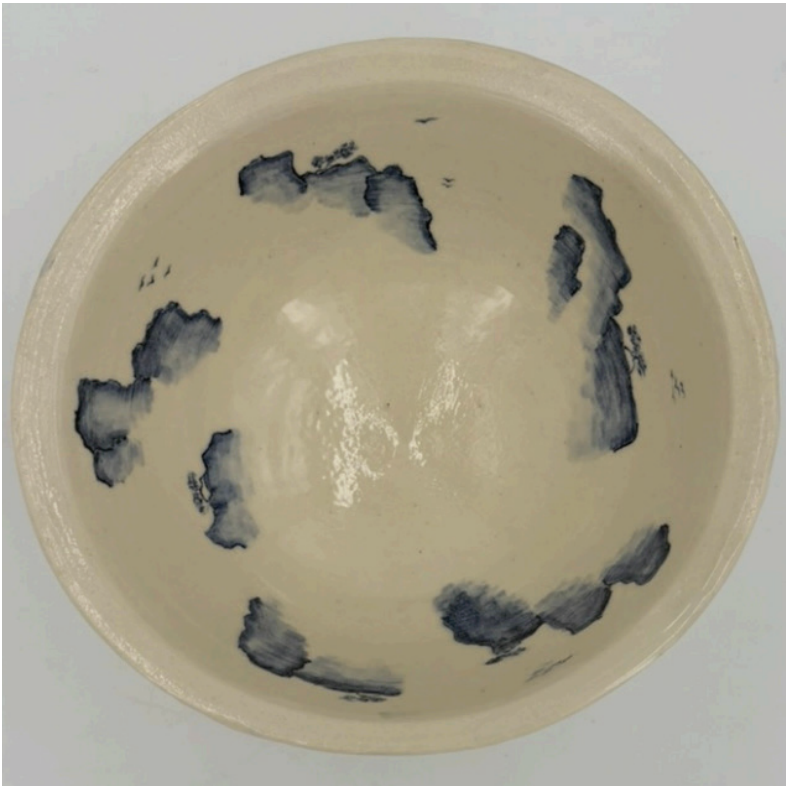
Maddie Martin

And tell your grandma I said hello
And yesterday I ate french toast and thought of you
And isn't your birthday coming up soon? If it is, then happy birthday
(And if it isn't then I'm sorry that I forgot)
And be sure to pet your dog for me
And ask your mom if she still buys our favorite popsicles
(The good ones, cherry-flavored and summer-sweet)
And the next time we're both in town we should get breakfast someplace nice
And do you remember the summer when we went canoeing?
And we nearly drowned in salty tears of laughter?
And I still can't wrap my head around your brother learning to drive
And oh, you got a new dog?
Well, tell that one he's a good dog too
And that someday I'd love to meet him
And send me a text about your college graduation;
I'll do my best to make it
And don't forget to wish on dandelions, shooting stars, four-leaf clovers,
And on those birthday candles that you probably had
And on the rare chance I forgot to mention it before, tell your dog
I love her.

Polished Motifs
Lina Ying
Ceramics



Japanese Maple Branch
8.5x14.5cm
Porcelain, Cobalt Oxide



36

Mountains, Birds
8x17cm
Porcelain, Cobalt Oxide

Fiske's River
Jude Rea-Hendrick

One morning in midsummer, after two weeks with no rain, the Rose River stood still. Days later, its level had lowered alarmingly. We sent a message with a traveling postman up to the Great House, to ask Squire Fiske to open the dam, an odd contraption with wooden doors that can be opened or closed against the flow of lake water from his vast estate. Neither that postman, nor any other, returned with a reply. After waiting some time, we concluded that our message had been lost, that the Squire's family had vacated their home, or that, having received our message, the Squire had decided to deny us.

The old folk of course began reviving their fanciful version of the Squire's tale: that during the great hunger he had lost his wits, devoured the flesh of his wife and children to satisfy his unbearable hunger, and drunk their blood to slake his unquenchable thirst. I am not accustomed to encouraging the circulation of such trivial nonsense, but in my post as constable of St. Steven's Glen it is my duty to protect the villagers from the evils of the forest. If gruesome tales discourage the more adventurous among us from leaving the walls that protect our village, I am satisfied to leave them unchallenged.

I was sure that the Squire had abandoned his property, or had simply chosen, out of jealousy for his own water supply, to disregard St. Steven's need and keep the dam closed. Naturally we would not stand for this, nor could we spare any time awaiting a reply that might never arrive. With a small band of men – Thomas the candlemaker (an oily man but quick on his feet), the carpenter Stuart Haxby, and my half-brother Nathaniel, I struck out beyond the walls one stifling morning, to find the dam and free our water's flow. We took every precaution: a blessing from Father Clare and Sister Augustine, the Testaments bound tightly with a scarlet string to a chalice of holy water, and what few weapons we were able to muster.

I have myself in the course of my duties left the safety of our walls and ventured into the forest more times than prudence would typically allow. When Anna the seamstress and Lucia the midwife's apprentice were surprised in unseemly embrace, it was I who apprehended that their immodesty must have been the work of some potion or spell gone awry. Since neither would confess, I took both beyond the wall, bound them to adjoining trees, and left them there for their people, or the wolves, to claim them. When my own sister's little one proved by the babbling speech of her slack mouth and the slit, dull eyes creasing her full-moon face that she was a changeling, I took the creature in my arms and carried it deep into the forest, far enough from the path to prevent it finding its way back. In my seven years as constable, I have removed no less than twenty intruders beyond our walls. The walls prevent the forest's evils from entering St. Steven's, and I prevent any taint that does manage to

permeate our defenses from taking root. For this journey, I was careful to select companions who had not yet ventured outside the walls; too many trips beyond can encourage familiarity with the forest.

We arrived at the dam near midday, our journey a tedious and trying one, filled with wrong turns, undergrowth that seized at and twisted the ankles, and the ceaseless whine of an ever-increasing swarm of midges. With perspiration flowing freely down our chests and faces, we thanked Heaven for the stinging splash that flew up from where the water roiled at the dam's frame. Thomas, who had grown increasingly uneasy the deeper we ventured into the forest, was almost frantic to finish our task. I instructed him sternly to keep patience and hold his tongue, then set Stuart and Nathaniel to make an inspection of the area. Though the dam lay far from the great house, in the past, Fiske had guarded his water jealously, and I feared the lurking presence of guardsman armed with muskets or pikes. The search was fruitless, and after making a brief survey of my own, I instructed Thomas to descend the riverbank and removed the wedges of wood that held the dam's door in place. This he did; and although grudgingly performed, his work was swift and neat.

As Stuart and my brother aided Thomas in dragging his sodden weight back onto the grass and I stood approvingly watching the new gush of water flowing toward St. Steven's Glen, I heard a rasping noise in the undergrowth at my back. I would have taken it for the snarl of a dog, but the timber was wrong, and somehow familiar. It sounded like a man coughing out his life through a wounded throat, gasping and choking as he tried to form words. I spun around, gazing intently toward the low bushes, fearing to find some unfortunate wanderer savaged by wolves or set upon by guards. I saw nothing, though I once again paced the perimeter of the clearing, peering into every bush and copse. At last I yielded, attributing the eerie sound to some wild creature a distance away, and resumed my station facing the river, where my companions were now all three rollicking in the riverbed, no doubt turning up mud and fishbones that the wives of St. Steven's would have to sift from their water buckets. As I stepped forward to put a stop to their foolishness, I felt an immense force strike the back of my legs, which sent me instantly and painfully to the ground with a powerful weight against my back pressing me into the scorching earth.

Almost at once the weight lifted, and I raised my head from where it had struck the ground, expecting to see whatever creature had been snarling at me earlier from the bushes. Yet I would gladly swear on the Testaments still bound beneath my jacket, that what crouched before me was a man, with pale, filthy skin and a matted coat of shaggy hair. He crouched with his knees bent beneath him, and his long arms hanging down to the ground. In the brief glimpse of him I caught before he bounded away into the undergrowth, never straightening his legs or lifting his hands from where they dragged at the earth, I could not tell through his blanket of hair whether his face or occiput was turned toward me. I called out to my companions, still blissfully enjoying themselves

in the cool water. In my panic, I am afraid my call was shrill, more a frantic plea for assistance than a command for their attention.

My news was nothing to them, for they had already seen the apparition as it threw itself back into the shadowy undergrowth.

"A dog," Nathaniel confidently asserted. "Probably one of Fiske's gone wild."

Stuart agreed with him easily as did Thomas, though his acquiescence appeared to be born more from fear than true convincement. In light of their reassurance, I concluded, albeit reluctantly, that my own vision had been mistaken, a trick of the mind played upon me by my spinning head's abrupt meeting with the hard ground. Fiske had indeed kept dogs, many of them, and if the family had removed from the great house, it was likely that they had left some dogs, along with workman and guards, to watch their home and keep it from disrepair. It was this renewed suspicion that men as well as animals might be nearby that spurred us on our homeward journey. I felt shaken to my core after my fall and the strange sight I had witnessed, and the walk back was even more arduous than our journey that morning. My legs trembled and rivulets of sweat coursed down my back, cooling as evening approached near the end of our trek, so that I shivered uncontrollably. It was not until we had posted a bill informing the townspeople that the dam was open and I was shut into my own rooms for the night, that I realized there was blood mingled with the sweat on my back. It had spread itself, rust-like, across my shirt and jacket and formed shining black clots where it met the waist of my trousers. In one of these clots was held a small strip of torn skin, in another a long, coarse hair.

I felt immediately at my back where the dog had struck me, then twisted myself around in the looking-glass to seek out whatever damage could have given rise to this heavy flow, for I was in no great pain. I saw only five shallow scratches, in semi-circular formation, near the top of my left shoulder. A stinging press upon them with a clean handkerchief proved to me that they were not bleeding and possibly had not bled at all. Surmising that the dog had killed or mauled some other animal before its assault upon me, I struggled out of the soiled garments and began, with the cake of lye and rough stone I kept for such purposes, to scrub them in the washbasin. Three times the water turned scarlet and putrid and three times I lifted fabric from it marked with no less blood than before its first dousing. I gave up at last, blamed the ineffectual scrubbing on my exhausted and shaken mind and body, hung the clothes in the yard to dry before a second charge in the morning, and retired to my bed.

I slept first with my face buried in the pillow to prevent any pain to my shoulder. In the floating space between wakefulness and slumber, I arose with a violent jolt. I had felt again the sudden weight of the dog on my back, yet the pain of the blow, this time, was sharper, more cutting. I clutched once again at my wounded shoulder, yet upon waking the pain subsided to the dull throb I had felt all evening, and no fresh blood came away on my fingers. I turned

Prospective Plunge

Gavin Kissling

Photography



onto my back, nestling the ache into downy goosefeathers, and once again shut my eyes. I believe I truly slept now, at least for a moment, for I seemed to sink immediately back onto the forest floor where I had lain only hours before. Gazing at the canopy of trees above me, I became aware of a familiar gurgling sound, cut through with a wet hiss. Casting my eyes immediately to the underbrush before me, I saw hurtling through it the same figure I had seen in the forest. It came on low to the ground, long fingers dragging the earth, with its hanks of dark hair so closely matted around its head that I could not distinguish a face beneath. In an instant, the creature was upon me, striking this time at my chest, a blow that once again caused a pain more intense by far than that which I felt in the day. Notwithstanding this, I did not wake. The creature stayed crouched upon my chest, the ridged nails of its emaciated hands pressing five points of agony into my skin. I gazed up, to where its face ought to have been, and it lowered its head toward mine. The scratch of its snarled mane as it touched my face jolted me into waking, crying out with fear and disgust.

I rose from my bed, lit the lamp on the table at my side, then crawled back beneath the quilt, bundling it around me with my back to the wall and my face to the light. Once again, my sleep was broken by the creature's pounce. As it grappled this time with my side, I heard, in my sleep, the sound of my own flesh tearing, and the nauseating pain of it woke me. I did not try to sleep again that night, but remained huddled within the safety of the bedclothes, keeping my eyes fixed on the lamp, willing its oil not to run down and leave me in darkness.

When morning at last arrived, I threw open my curtain, tying it back to let as much light as possible into my room. When I made to wash my face and hands in the basin, I found it still bore a small scum of blood from the previous night's scrubbing. Struck with disgust at the sight of it, I took my pat of lye to the rusty spots and scrubbed vigorously enough to leave deep scratches in the porcelain. My basin and myself clean, I looked over my clothes from the previous day, and was pleased to find them as spotless as my repeated assaults with soap and stone ought to have made them. I supposed the appearance of bloodstains on them in the night must have been caused by the dim lighting of my room, casting deceptive shadows against spots of water. I dressed myself gratefully, relishing the soft sensation of cleanliness.

The day passed well. While the heat had increased even from its heavy oppression of the day before, St. Steven's Glen could afford at last to scoff at its attempts to scorch us, reveling in the taste and touch of icy water. Children lay on the splashing banks to feel the spray on their faces. Grown men and women drew up buckets and doused their heads and shoulders, delighting in their excess. Near evening, I took myself down to the banks to join them, in my enthusiasm moving with more rapidity than deportment. As I trotted towards the lapping coolness, neighbors reached out to shake my hand or clap me on the back, thanking me and thanking me again for the previous day's venture beyond

the walls. On reaching the water, I took up a pail left on the ground by one of the revelers, filled it to the brim, closed my eyes, and upended a torrent of relief over my brow and shoulders. With icy trickles down my back that thwarted the sun's beaming overhead, I stood content, until one little girl, Emily, whose mother had the year before been removed for liaising with a cursed stallion, pointed a trembling finger towards me and uttered a fulsome cry of alarm. Her aunt Sarah Miller, who had cared for Emily since her mother's removal, came quickly to quiet her and stopped short upon seeing me, her face draining of color as she placed a protective arm before her niece.
"Constable," she said in a low voice, coaxing and wary, the way one would speak to an injured dog, "Are you alright?"

Miss Miller's eyes were fixed upon my face, but I followed little Emily's gaze to the sodden ground where I stood. My boots, sunk I had thought, into mud churned up by many feet and the repeated baptism of waterbuckets, were caked above the ankle in scarlet earth. Where my boot-tops met my trousers, streams of red issued. I reached my hand, as I had done countless times the night before, to my back, and it came away dripping with the same hue. Not streams of water, but icy blood had been pouring down my back, cooling me as I stood on the banks.

Murmuring some feeble excuse about a tumble in the forest on the way back from the dam, I removed myself from the staring eyes on the bank, and returned, even more quickly than I had left, to the solitude of my apartments. Bolting the door securely, I flung my garments from me, in my frenzy to remove my soiled boots, sending droplets of blood flying in every direction, where they clung to the walls and spattered my bedclothes. I seized my shirt from the floor where it had fallen, twisting the fabric in my hands until I found the source of the renewed soaking. As I had feared, the torrents of blood that streaked down the back of my shirt, over my trousers, and down to my boots, began just below the seam at my left shoulder. I did not try to scrub them. I rinsed the blood from my back and legs, donned my other suit, and threw the dirtied rags onto the rubbish heap in the yard.

I passed the rest of the day in my chamber, occupying myself with letter writing and tidying my bureau, moving rapidly from one task to the next to keep myself from excessive contemplation. I was aware that my absence from the town's eye after my disturbing appearance on the riverbank was liable to arouse concern. Still, I could not bring myself to appear before my neighbors' eyes and feel the concern or suspicion emanating from them. I retired early, exhausted from the prior evening's sleeplessness.

No sooner had I shut my eyes than I lay once again upon the forest floor, claws tearing at my back. I tried again and again that night to seek some peace in slumber, and each time I was awoken violently by the weight upon my back, by the pain of the creature's claws, by the scratch of its matted hair against my face or the scruff of my neck. Again, I passed the night huddled in

the bedclothes, comforted only by the small barrier of light my bedside lamp offered against the darkness of the room.

When morning came, my exhaustion was greater even than that of the previous day. I dragged myself from my bed and into my clean suit and made my way slowly to the courthouse to carry on the work I had neglected the evening prior. A sizeable and rapidly growing crowd milled outside, looks of intense concern on every face. I climbed the courthouse steps, called for order, and asked the crowd for what purpose they had gathered. The answer came from Jeremiah, an aging carpenter who lived near the eastern wall.

"The river has stopped flowing."

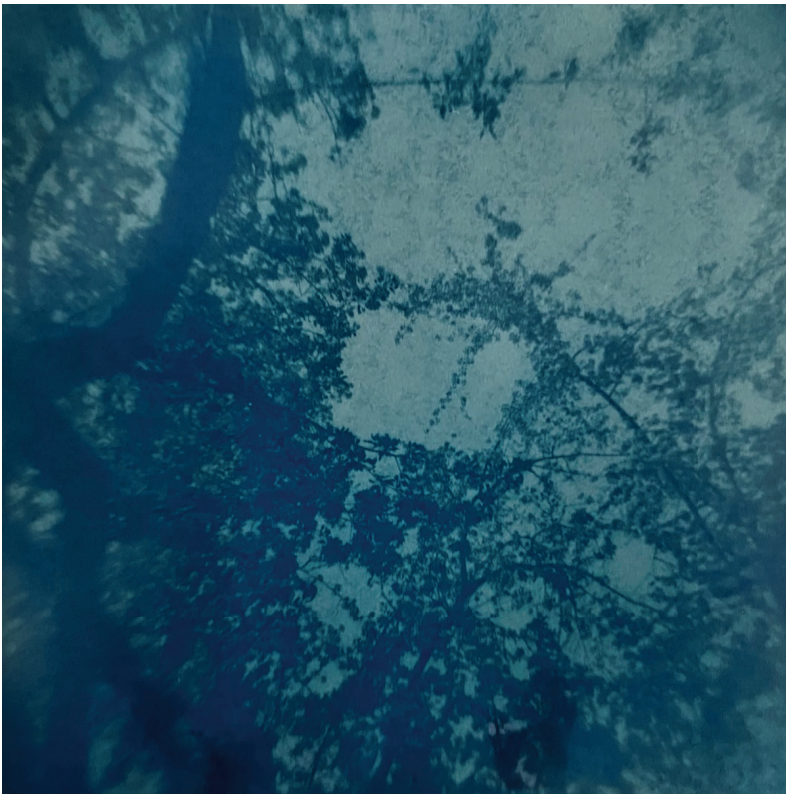
Although the crowd shouted their agreement with his words, I could not believe him. I made my way rapidly to the banks, flanked by a goodly portion of the crowd. Not only had the river ceased to flow, but the standing water between banks had sunk to mere puddles sporadically pooling along the river's bed. Large rocks that the day before had been submerged stood bare and baking in the sun. The bodies of fish that had followed the current down from Fiske's lake lay putrefying in pools too shallow to cover them. The villagers were on the brink of panic, but I calmed them as best I could. Perhaps Thomas the candlemaker had imperfectly performed his task, and the doors of the dam had been swept close by the night wind, or by the rush of water. Perhaps Fiske himself had ordered the dam shut up again.

I ordered three men in the crowd to go and see what had occurred, and to reopen the dam if indeed it had been shut. I would have gone myself, but it is understood in St. Steven's that none but a fool would tempt fate by entering the forest more than once in a fortnight. With a deal more apprehension than my little party had expressed before their own journey, my selected men set out, taking with them the various weapons, relics, and blessings that would protect them from the forest's wiles. I ordered them to return with news to the courthouse, returned thence myself, and sat upon the front steps determined not to move from my post until water once again flowed in the village.

Near midday, in the baking sun, my sweat-drenched shirt clinging to my back and lulled by the droning of bees and the whirring of crickets, I drifted into sleep. In the light of day, no creature assailed my sleep, nor did I dream myself back upon the forest floor. Indeed, my rest was devoid of dreams entirely, and I slumbered more soundly, it seemed than ever before in my life. I awoke with a start near dusk, chilled as the sun began its descent. My party, it would seem, had not yet returned. I rose to go inside, reaching back to peel the cold, drenched fabric of my shirt from my skin. My hand came away dripping red.

I did not attempt this time to wash the blood away. I threw my coat over my shoulders to conceal the stains and kept my vigil at the courthouse. I did not wait long, for just after dark the men returned. The dam, they said, had indeed been shut up again. Not only that, but a chain of iron had been locked around its doors. One of the men, Charles, a tinsmith and deft with his hands,

Spring
Mali Cloeter
Indigo-toned gelatin silver print from Holga film camera



had picked the lock. The men had reopened the dam, and water was again flowing to St. Steven's Glen. I thanked each profusely for his assistance and sent them off to receive a second blessing from Father Clare.

I made my way down to the riverbank, to see for myself the flowing water. The sound of the current, and the sight of the banks once again filled to bursting raised my spirits immensely. I found I did not want to leave the river, and taking the past two nights as precedent concluded that returning to my chambers to sleep would likely prove futile. I remained on the bank throughout the night, sometimes pacing up and down, sometimes merely sitting and watching the water, counting the fish that swam by, wondering idly where our river stopped, if it flowed through other villages, and if they too had the foresight to erect walls between themselves and the forest.

As I heard the courthouse bell strike one that morning, I was crouched on the bank, my face almost touching the water as I examined the intricacies of a small yellow leaf that had washed up against the rocks. A few feet away, a short, pale stick was washed along in the same direction and lodged itself against the rocks alongside my leaf. Bending my face even closer to inspect it in the darkness, I found myself inches away from a slim human finger, chalk white and shriveled with water. Upon it rested a ring, a golden band set with a round opal, the same ring that had adorned the hand of the seamstress Anna when I set her beyond the walls five years before. I leapt back from the banks with a cry of horror, stumbling over brush and stones as I sought purchase for my trembling legs. Huddled on the bank, I watched the finger bob against the rocks for a few moments, then turned my eyes upstream. Toward me there came flowing a pair of spectacles, cobwebbed with a pattern of cracks that I myself had set when I struck Owen Hobson across the face before turning him out beyond the walls. Next, a swirl of auburn curls which, though snagged with twigs and streaked with mud I would have known anywhere: these were the locks of my little niece, which had toned with the carpet of fallen leaves on the autumn day I carried her far off the forest path. Holding them together, a bloody chunk of scalp revolved slowly in the current.

I sat immobile on the banks, watching a parade of parts and articles flow past me. More fingers, an ear, fragments of a tattered shawl, a mangled boot, the foot inside it wrinkled and bloated with river water. I knew I should sound the alarm, bring the villagers down to the banks, knock on every door and tell them that the forest was at war with us. Instead, I sat, watching every wickedness I had removed beyond our walls flow piece by piece back to me. The onslaught continued throughout the night. As the sun rose, the flow began to subside, and by the time light had fully arrived, the last of the horrors had flowed away, past the grating of the western wall. I kept my seat on the banks, and when the wives of St. Steven's came with buckets to collect water for their tea, their morning porridge, and their children's baths, I did not stop them. I remained by the river all that day, feeling when the sun reached its zenith the now familiar sweat-like

trickle of blood from my shoulder staining my garments once more, smelling the odor of old blood rising from me. Nothing that should not have been there flowed past me all that day, and the villagers that came to collect water cast me frightened looks and kept their distance.

When the sun went down and the river was once again deserted by all but myself, the river's offerings, as I had been sure they would, again began to flow. An eye, a soiled handkerchief, a cracked jawbone. I could not tear my eyes away, though they became heavy and glazed with exhaustion. A number of times, my head drooped to my chest and sleep began to overtake me. At once, each time, I felt claws against my shoulder, hot breath and hair against my neck, and I woke with a start to watch the ceaseless tide of trophies flow by me.

I have passed four days in this fashion now, and the river has not dried up. In the daylight the water runs clear, and I sleep when I can on the banks, wrapped in the bloody garments I have ceased to consider it worth the trouble of cleaning. Each night, I prowl the riverbanks and watch those I have offered to the forest flow by me. The change in me has not gone unnoticed of course, and the people of St. Steven's avoid my eye when they come to draw their water, pass by without greeting, and do not venture near the river at night when I begin my vigil. Before long, I do not doubt, they will conclude that my many sojourns into the forest have tainted me. Some afternoon, I will be woken from my fitful sleep on the banks, stood on the courthouse block in my bloody garb, and led into the forest as I have led so many. Once I am beyond the wall, I will find the river and follow it to its source.

Hillcrest

Gavin Kissling

Photography



People pass by my window

Jasper Huneycutt

Record-breaking high today
nose running like I have a cold

a big stinking truck
taking out the trash
and some man
taking out his laundry

a woman in a showercap
with her little unleashed dog
strolling behind the bushes

2 Inches Snow expected
still sweating like a pig

a tall brunette and
a blonde couple
walking together past the cherry tree
and a smiling man
whispering to the breeze

Tomorrow's high To tie record

Contributors

BLAISE ANDREW RZESZUT

DEVABRAT DAS

DORIAN CAMPBELL HIMES is a senior Studio Art and Sociology/ Anthropology major from Dayton, Ohio. Dorian loves local music, her Honda Civic, and collecting vintage Polly Pockets. Art Instagram: @ dorianvalentiine

ELIZA KARNOPP is a senior Creative Writing major who loves dragons and explorations of our own mortality.

GAVIN KISSLING is a sophomore English and Creative Writing major with a wide range of interests, including radio, improvisational theatre, and judo.

JASPER HUNEYCUTT

JUDE REA-HENDRICK is a third year majoring in English Literature and minoring in History. In a perfect world, he would spend every waking minute back campus.

LINA YING " 丽娜盈 Lina Ying - I attempt to bring my culture, which seems so far away, closer to home. Working with wheel-thrown clay allows me to create simple, utilitarian forms. The process of throwing provides me with satisfaction in repetition. The surface work is inspired by common motifs found on blue-and-white Chinese pottery, Chinese myths from my childhood, and imagery from my own life in America.

MALI CLOETER is a sophomore at Earlham. They are a multi-disciplinary artist and creative person who uses art to explore identity and the emotions of being human. They are fascinated by gender, vintage photographs, and the textures of nature.

MIYU ENOMOTO: "This is Miyu from Kumamoto, Japan! Class of 2026, Peace and Global Studies Major, and Creative Writing Minor as well :) I love expressing myself freely through writing, dancing, and drumming. (Sometimes drawing.) I love to feel each of the words' nuance and how they become present in different languages. There are so many words that cannot be translated into English from Japanese, and vice versa. Being able to feel the word as a second language speaker is so beautiful that I fell in love with <3 My favorite writers are Minato Kanae, Nagira Yu, and Aoyama Michiko; please take a look at their literature!"

REETI JOSHI: "currently a junior who went on the Iceland EPIC trip last summer and who saw some puffins."

SAMUEL STASSEN

TEBUTARE RUKUNDO is a writer who uses poetry to process grief, illness and family care. Her work often examines what it means to love someone as they change, especially when language and memory begin to fail. "When Words Went Missing" is drawn directly from her experience caring for her father after his aphasia diagnosis.