

RAMIFICATIONS

BERRY COLLEGE ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE



FALL
2019

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EO IPSO TEMPORE

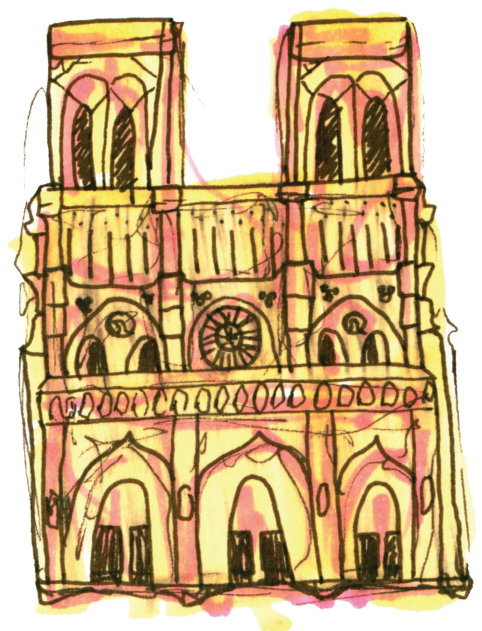
Ben Allee

April 15, 2019
4:22 pm

We cannot wait for birth or death
For truth is found not in the end
But eo ipso tempore.

To the burning cathedral of our mother in Paris:

Should I wait until the deed is done to write of you?
If you die, would it be better for the wonder of your burning to be recognized
After the ashes have cooled?
If you die, would it be better for the wonder of your death to be reknown
After the paint in your remains dries?
If you stay, would that your burning mean anything at all.
If you stand, would that your death be a story untold.
If you burn, would that your burning mean anything as it occurs.
You are burning, you are gunning downward in a topple
On the Seine, the Seine:
A sign of neither life nor death but water flowing, tower burning
As it occurs
There is beauty to be found
To be recognized and reknown
In the act of the burning beautiful, the act of the injury
A juried truth rendered built by man and killed by hand
Of God, of man, while men even now lie below the smoldering
If not breathing in through lungs than out through cobblestones
Out through diptych now decayed
Out through altar laid waste
Out through prayers still hanging, falling, gasping now within the nave
A truth in flames
Built by man and killed by hand
Of God in beautiful display not done, not dead, not cooled, not standing
But burning.
Mother, you are beautiful, even now, before an end.







IRRADIANCE

Emory R. Frie

I have veered off the path and am now on the earth among the yellow wildflowers, arms around my knees, the ants edging my shoes. This patch of tangled weed smears across a dip in the hillside which plateaus gracefully before the drop into the man-made lake below. A short dock leans out over the surface, though I can hardly imagine anyone taking their canoes and kayaks out for such small laps, an endless spiral down a drain. Ducks rim the lake in a swarm of shadows, as if afraid of wading too deep into placid waters. I've never been one to trust the calm either. There is a hollow void amid such places pleading for sudden disturbance, a lurking surface, futures inevitably bound to shatter. Stillness brings a multitude of anxieties.

A bee brushes my arm. A love tap. Its presence draws me to find the other fuzzy brown bees surrounding my sanctum, dipping and rising from petal to petal. I know these flowers are something like weeds, a parasitic blight to be torn from the roots and thrust into plastic blackholes, but the bees don't seem to notice. To them, perhaps, there are no invasive blossoms. Their translucent flecks of wing disappear in the light, their bodies like a thumb against the yellow petals.

I raise my head with the breeze. Sunrays pummel against my bared skin, a pulse that begs my eyes to close. The glare forms beads on my eyelashes. A sheet of blue sky, still, like the ominous lake.

Mountains scratch the horizon, indigo now in this standing sun. If I squint I can almost imagine I'm in another place, farther west and familiar, where a fierce range of peaks form the outskirts of the Ring of Fire – and the way the sun hits the crests could be snowcaps on my capped volcano. This terrain, this taste of encompassing mountains, blankets of evergreens, was among the strongest reasons why I came to this college. I was drawn to this view, of all things, this place which reminded me of a childhood home I left behind. Now, I open wide my eyes and know these hills called Appalachia are not my Rockies. But I breathe this honeydew air and am glad of it.

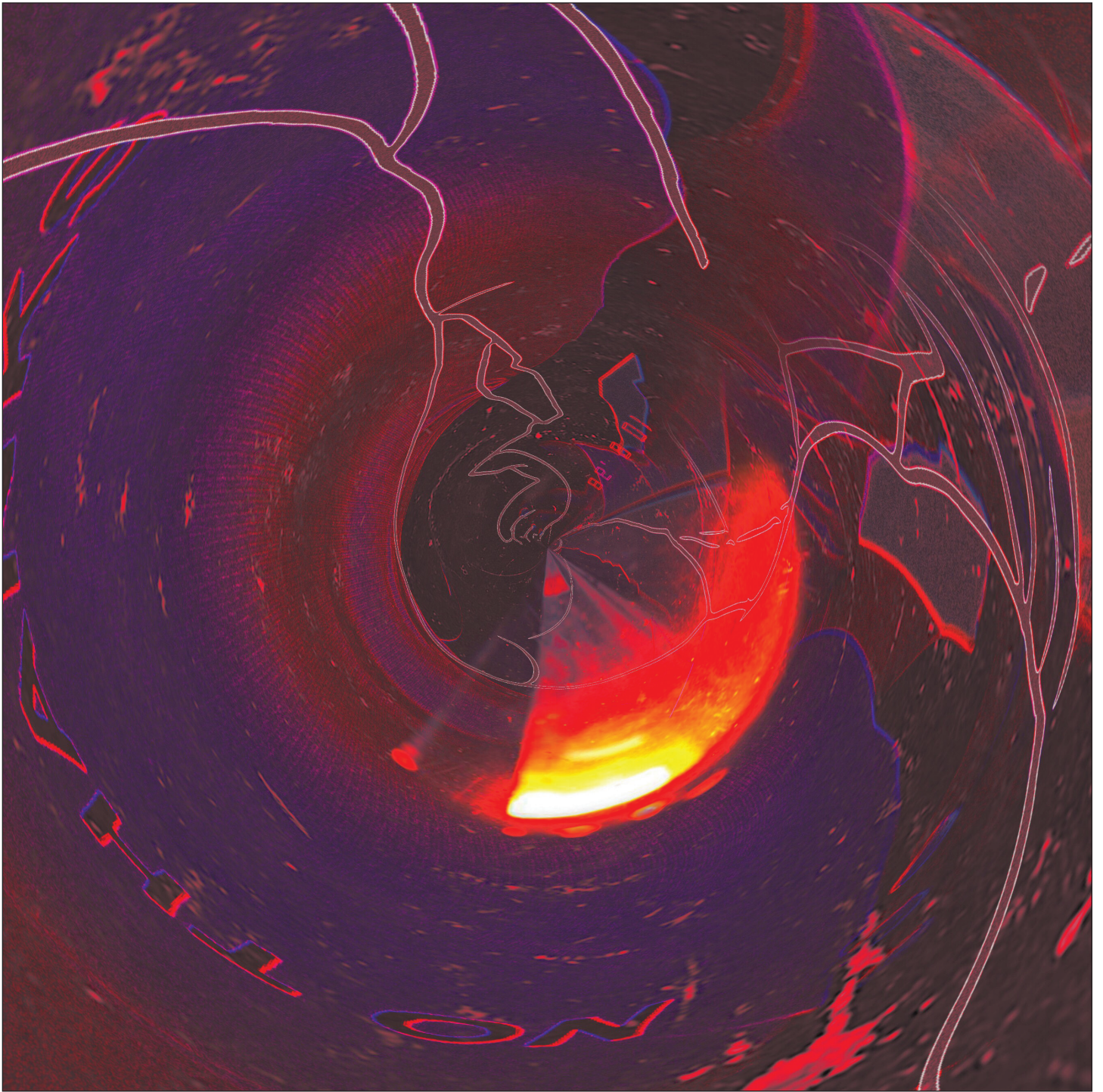
Leaning back, I lay on the pebbled grass and pray the ants have marched away. That blue sheet stretches taunt overhead. I imagine the sky as a mineral, one direction of cleavage, glassy luster. Could I scratch my fingernail along the sky's surface, or would its hardness carve glass? I lift my arms above my head and let my hair loose.

Behind me and above where I cannot see is the parking lot for the collection of red roofed, white plaster houses which form the Retreat. A friend of mine has been known to park there at night to watch the stars and howl at the moon. There are two creatures I know who do this: wolves and humans. Canines do so in order to proclaim their presence, a beckoning to their pack, a warning to their foes. Humans howl to release, as if the moon exists only to gather our cries and scatter them across the biotite sky. I imagine millions of relieved anxieties combusting into pinpoints of starlight. Truly, I am not here to howl. I have come at the wrong time, and the sun stands to slant into my eyes and burn, burn, burn. The light has its own means of sanctification, and I bathe in its violent blaze.

As I raise myself to my palms again, I notice the group of students watching me on the hill. They swing their legs over the grassy lip, casting sideways glances toward me in my yellow weed patch, failing to hide the impatience to claim my spot. I stare easily at them as I would an amber-eyed wolf, awash with tranquility. One girl, copper skinned and head shaved, wears a blouse as bright a yellow as the flowers I sit on. The rest of the students seem enveloped in their own yapping voices, but she smiles at the vast view, the scratched mountains, the duck lined lake, enraptured by the wholeness of it. She leans forward, hands pressed to the earth, as if she caught the honeydew aroma at the end of her nose.

An ant winds up my jeans. Gently, I brush it off onto the pebbled dirt where it squirms in a panic before trailing for my foot again. I stand and let the sun glare blindly into my face as I regain feeling in my tingling limbs. The sky before me is turning lemon, a stripe between the skyline and the sun. I find the path again and ascend, passing the group of side-eyed students who have respectfully waited for me to completely take leave of their desired spot.

At the hill's crest, I watch them wash down onto my flower patch, alight with laughter and snapshots, running toward the plateau's edge. A long finger of shadow has sliced over my toes, a cool slash across my heel. I watch the bald, yellow-bloused girl gambol over the blossoms like she knows she belongs between them and the sun.



GLOBAL WARMING // *Reanna Husky*

I LOOK TO THE BUZZARDS

Matthewson Parks

As a kid,
I watched Tennessee buzzards hover through the sky
their wings tearing through the air
detecting heat waves to catch ahold of
spending hours prowling for their prey
without ever flapping their wings.
Proverbs 6:6 says:
“Look to the ants thou sluggard”

I look to the buzzards.



UNTITLED // *Emily Kate Thompson*

BIRDSONG

Jacob Pritchett

Every morning, I wake up to a dove's coo.

Her home nestles
in a young maple tree
near my window where
she feeds
her three hatchlings.

Every morning, the youngest doesn't eat.

He did last week,
but when his mother left,
a mockingbird swooped down
into the nest
and pressed its spindly black
foot on his stomach
until he regurgitated
what he had been fed.



Every morning, the mockingbird doesn't eat the hatchling's meal.

It just leaves.
It just wants
to make the hatchling starve.

Every morning, the dove wonders why her hatchling isn't eating.

And I can't sing her birdsong
to warn her that her child
is dying
and he doesn't have to be.

Every morning, the hatchling inches closer to the edge of the nest.

And I want to catch him before
he falls,
remind him what he is about to do
to his mother,
help him understand how much
she loves him.
I want to see him live to fly.

But there is nothing I can do.

I can't sing their birdsong.
I can't reach the maple tree.
I can't stop what's already happened.

It will never be enough.



I can't stop the hatchling's
plummet,
I can't stop the
granite blow,
I can't stop his
glass bones shattering,
I can't stop his
mother knowing,
I can't stop her
starving herself,
I can't stop knowing

I've seen this before.

Every morning, I make breakfast, though I can't bring myself to eat.

I set the table for two.



SUNSET SOVEREIGN // *Ellen Margaret Johnson*

WAR IN THE GRAND CANYON

Clinton Crockett Peters

We went for Thanksgiving in 2006, cutting class, driving the 18 hours to the South Rim of the world's largest hole in the ground. Eight days we hiked to the Colorado River and back, a conservationist group, pacing, singing, doing yoga, telling Chuck Norris jokes, and cutting down a highly-invasive non-native (Russian) thistle we called Tammy.

Tamarisks. Salt cedars. Evergreens whose niche is low-lying dry areas. It is thought they drown soil with sodium, creating a halo of desiccation, but this seems to have been a misunderstanding. We were 20-somethings, young adults swayed into combat. We went for the excitement, the self-serving, do-gooder mantra of a pilgrimage to bring down an unstoppable invader. Righteous purification electrified us.

We traversed across the canyon, cutting through the red rock shale and scrub, and nudged against cliff faces, staring down a mile. Then we came around a house-sized boulder and beheld a golden and crimson willowing tree that fanned in a light breeze. It was the largest life form in sight, within 15 feet the only life. But it seemed suited to the Southwest, against the backdrop of the canyon and a banded sunrise, earth tone bark, shaggy and sharp.

We sawed Tammies to bloody nubs and doused them in a toxin, for which one needed gloves and face bandana. Otherwise a Tammy, we were told, would grow trunks from its amputation, a Hydra from Siberia.

We slaughtered hundreds of trees in one sub-canyon, ranging in size from finger-thin to one that knuckled around a rock large enough to smash a car. It made a nuisance of itself by growing against a slope, hiding its form. Leaving it was out of the question, as it only takes one stain to darken white sheets again. Eventually, someone cut all the limbs away and burrowed a hole in the trunk, filling it with toxin.

It could spawn clones by the dozens, we were told. But that hardly seemed the point. The effort was, I think, a take-no-prisoners, seek-and-destroy. It was the rhetoric and chemicals from WWII that gave rise to our herbicide industry, after all. Wartime attitudes accompanied those products to the shelf. Enemy, battle, and invader: words used in the armed aggression against unthinking plants in golf courses and canyons. Something that was and is a joy to young 20-somethings, as one of us said, who later shipped off to Afghanistan.

We were covering a landscape with a promise that we were acting beneficially. We had reservations: about the poison, about the fruitless hacking away at a misstep of a prior generation. But it's one of those compromises I run into as I debate using pesticides in my own garden or leave poison out for roaches that melt into my walls. I've found my quest for purity butting up against purity. Pure land, pure water, pure conscience. It's a fanciful notion. Naive and violence-lusting, purity has led more people down canyons with tools of war than anything. It's engrained in our culture, but no sage.

We had also packed in two gallons of poison, along with all our gear and food, axes and saws. We might as well have used it. Another kind of purity: the clean slate, waste-not-want not, bottom line. I don't think the answer here is easy.

As we cut and sheared, Tammy needles began to lie in carpets around our feet, more than a few stuffed down my shirt collar. There was a sea of crimson on top of the gulch we'd been carving. The frail needles became fragments as we marched, dragging trunks and laying them lengthwise on high catches so the river wouldn't rise and let them seed downstream. The fragments became smaller as the hours wore on and our boots munched the needles into ash. As we reached the river bank, having slaughtered all we could, there was a coat of fine powder at our heels, a dust that looked uncannily like a shallow trickle of blood running from the top of the canyon to the raging river below. It was as if a great wound had opened up in the earth, and along its side lay the shattered corpses of Tammies.

I looked back at our destruction, my younger self not satisfied, knowing that in a side canyon over many more invaders waited and that in ten years our work would be erased, as I would, as the world would, forever vexingly impure.



CONVERSATION

Meredith Olsson

You and I are familiar
With the Tower of Babel
Brick by brick,
Hand in hand,
Reaching toward distant stars.

We had no need
For a language with
Complex connotation
Or missed metaphors.

Words were spoken
In more simple terms:
A heavy sigh.
A small smile.
A kiss, conveying more than
A thousand poems.

As the Tower climbed upwards,
So too did our dreams.
Tomorrow had never seemed
Quite so close
As when you were by my side.

But it was not meant to be.
And the Lord did not need
To fell our tower
With a great wind
Or a holy rage.

It crumbled, slowly,
When your sigh seemed incomprehensible.
When my smile turned sour and sarcastic,
When a kiss was no more
Than a polite exchange.

Our body language
Became one filled with small talk.
Our hands discussed the weather;
Our eyes commented on work.
Our Tower of Babel
Crashed down around us.

And when we were left,
Standing in the broken rubble
Of cold conversation,
There was nothing more to say.





SAMOAN HYENA // *Cameron LeMay*

PICTURES ON THE WALL

Grace Giska

It was late November when cranberry and squash colored leaves lined the edges of Interstate 64 in Virginia. My family and I drove into Richmond to visit our grandparents for Thanksgiving; a time for watching car shows on the couch in silence, hugs that lasted too long, and chucking everything in a deep fryer.

My little sister sat in the back row of the Suburban, her feet pressing into the back of my seat. "Are they really our grandparents?" she asked as she munched on Cheetos and continued to kick at my seat.

"Well, your grandpa is my dad," said my mom as she brushed her blonde hair out of her face. She already had this conversation with my brother and me multiple times in years past, so she was pretty much a pro at it. "But Ruth isn't really your grandma."

The car got silent. My brother and I exchanged looks that said trust us, we know.

We turned into their neighborhood; the car rocked back and forth as it fought the gravel road beneath it. The house was hidden at the bottom of a steep, rocky driveway shrouded by weeping willows and small transplanted trees, like pitchforks sticking up in their front yard. It reminded me of a snake den. Just like no one wants to find snakes in their yard, none of us wanted to be here, but we were not allowed to say that. Then, the front door opened as if to welcome us inside. Ruth stood there as all grandpa's dogs flooded through the door and into the driveway to greet us. Her curly, bleached orange hair stood out against the gray stacked stone decorating the exterior of the house. She stayed in the doorway, her red nails resting on the side frame.

Ruth watched us with predatory eyes as we piled out of the car and fell into the swirl of furry, barking dogs. My sister laughed and screamed, "They're so cute!"

My grandpa, with his cane clicking against the floor, made his way to the front stoop and waved to us. My siblings and I all scrambled out of the car and up to greet him. I got there first. My grandpa's eyes lit up when they met mine and he pulled me into a tight hug. He smelled like sawdust and the little cuts on his callused fingers made me think for just a moment that he might offer to take me and my brother into his woodworking shop. Just like we had done before. Then my mom strode past us, through the driveway and into my grandpa's arms.

My mom and him talked and laughed as the rest of us were herded inside the house by the dogs. Inside it smelled like laundry detergent, and something else too. I crinkled my nose at the small taxidermy animals that lined a shelf right inside the doorway.

My grandparents urged us to sit down on the gray couches in the living room, as my brother and I passed each other another look that said, we are going to be glued to the couch all week.

So the sitting marathon began. On the TV some young man with slicked-back black hair talked about a red Volkswagen directly behind him. We all sat in silence and watched him. He was the only one allowed to speak. Ruth got up and came back with a bottle of wine clutched in one hand, offering it to everyone.

My mother jumped at the excuse to get up and offered to get glasses out of the kitchen. She rushed in with Ruth right behind her. "Don't worry about it Susie, I can get it, really, I can get it," she said to my mom and swung the wine bottle back and forth like a weapon in her hand.

The two of them poured wine in the kitchen while my grandpa and my dad made offhand comments about the cars on TV. Their conversation consisted of three main phrases:

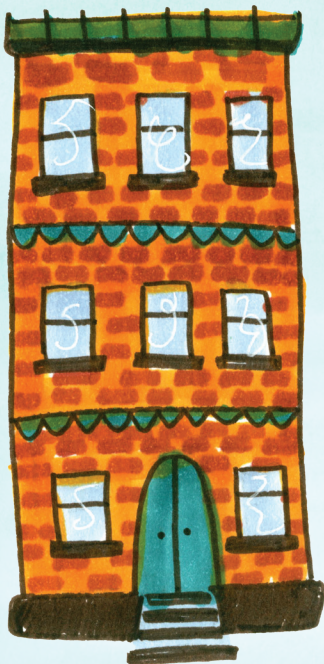
"If I had the money."

"I remember hearing that."

"They don't make them like they used to."

Meanwhile, I had counted 16 spots on the ceiling. My brother, Noah had tried to interject into the conversation about cars four times, and my sister had pulled burrs off of two of the dogs. It proved to be the most aware of time I'd ever felt, sitting on that couch. As someone who spends a large portion of their time procrastinating, I caught a bad case of existentialism as I wondered if I would ever do something meaningful with my life. The taxidermy offered no respite.

The evening came slowly, creeping along to the time shown by the grandfather clock placed in the corner of the living room, right by the door to the back porch. My



brother and I left the terrible couches of silence and sat out back. When the silence made me feel like time had possibly stopped--or maybe the grandfather clock had died-- I turned to my brother.

"Noah, why are we here?" I asked as we sat cross-legged, staring out at the river that backed up to our grandparents' property. The only sound was the soft chirp of crickets.

I slapped his arm gently and brought him back to our current state. He looked at me groggily and shrugged.

I sighed. I should have known he didn't care that we were out in the middle of nowhere, wasting our lives, doing absolutely nothing.

"Have you been upstairs?" he asked quietly.

"No, why?" I said.

"She took down all the pictures," he said.

I looked at him for a moment, not sure what he was talking about, and eventually, we faded back into silence, outspoken by the crickets and birds.

Our mom came outside and called us in for pizza. It wasn't Thanksgiving Day yet, so we all said we were saving our appetites as we munched on thin crust pepperoni. When the adults went back to sitting on the couches, and the man with the greasy hair flashed onto the screen, my brother and I turned upstairs to go to bed.

Walking up the smooth, bleached wood stairs, my brother stopped me. I could remember when we came to my grandpa's house a few years ago. Before he remarried, he kept pictures of us and our cousin lined along the stairs. Now, gone was the dark-framed photographs of my siblings and me on my grandpa's old boat or strawberry picking on Mother's Day with him and our mom. The pictures of his dogs, ones that had died years ago, and that my mother claimed he had loved more than his own children, gone.

There was one picture hanging in the hall. It was of my grandparents' second marriage. Ruth's arms wrapped around my grandpa's neck; they were dancing at their wedding. He was looking at her and smiling. She was looking straight at the camera, straight back at us at this moment. I felt the silence of the house creeping over me like a hand covering my face, making it hard to breathe.

This woman who was 20 years younger than my grandpa, sneaking into his life. She was here in every empty shadow on the faded walls. Taking pieces of him and making them disappear while everyone sat in front of the TV downstairs, trying not to mention things like the missing pictures or why our cousin had refused to visit this year.

It was Ruth. Everyone knew it. She held his hand like it was leash and the rest of us were just knots she needed to untangle to draw him closer to her and farther from us. No different from their dogs that slept on the couches with them. I didn't sleep on a couch that night, my brother and I both chose the floor.

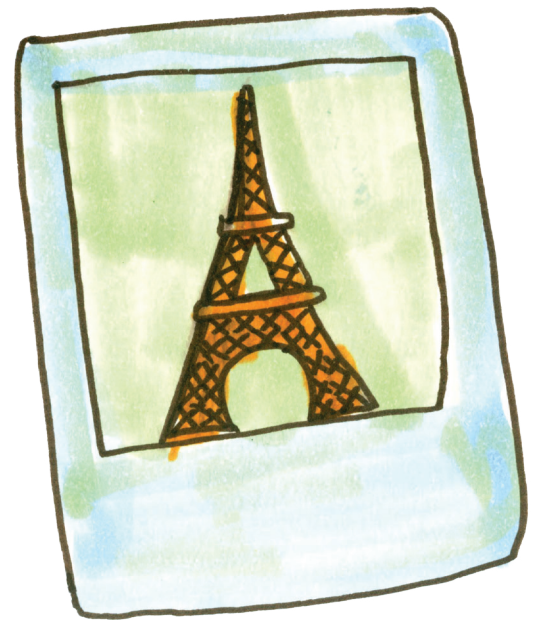
We left after the holiday and dragged all our things to the car and out of the house. She stood by the door and waved us out, only smiling when one of the adults were looking.

"This has been really nice," said my mom as she gave my grandpa one last hug.

He smiled and hugged her back, whispering something to her that I couldn't make out. The expression on her face changed for a second then, she smiled again, but it wasn't the same forthcoming smile.

Inside the car again, my sister's feet pressed firmly against my seat. I leaned forward and asked my mom what grandpa had said.

"He said that next year, Thanksgiving might not work out."





TRAVELER'S REST // *Addie Grace Townsend*

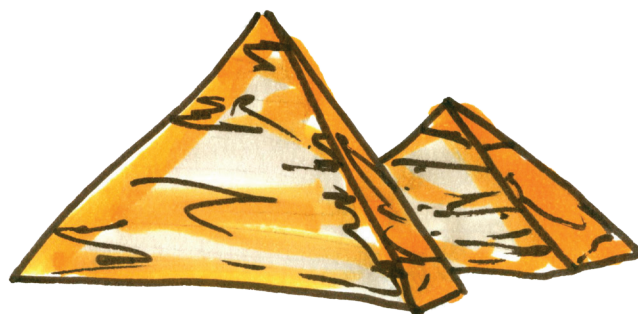
ESCHATON

Timothy W. T. Belin

You watch as heavens start to cry,
 Their torrid tears descend in scores
 From clouds invading once bright skies
 To paint new shadows 'cross the shores.

You feel the winds from lands unknown
 That blow away all hopes of life
 As grounds disperse their fiery stone
 And cause your kin incessant strife.

It's Mother Nature raising hell
 To raze the human race with rage;
 Oft prophesied, here comes the knell
 Of what you thought Earth's golden age.



The oceans rise with famished waves,
The mountains vanish in the seas,
Transforming cities into graves,
Erasing selfish centuries.

Within this wicked plight you stand
As all in instants turns to rust
And wonder whether works of Man
Were really only specks of dust.



MILFORD SOUND // *Ben Allee*

ANTIQUITY

Shannon Rainey

I walk along the cobbled paths, looking at the cottages with thatched roofs and timber frames. Ahead looms a spire, marking the final resting place of many who once walked here. The ground is soaked in antiquity, steeped in stories, and brewed in blood. I feel as though that just by standing here, on this ancient land, the past is flowing up my legs and into my soul. Though it's foreign to me, I feel at home here. I know the basics of the history, of course, but I want more. I long to trace the footsteps of every person who walked this path before me, to know their stories, their loves, their losses, their hopes, their dreams, their beginnings and their ends.





Voss // Jessica Griesbach



W. Teague

MIDNIGHT REVERIES // *Halle Teague*

A FALLEN ANGEL

Jack Connally

When the machine was born, it was nothing. It had no identity, no name, no purpose. Its surroundings, much like its soul, were barren. It sat for days, motionless, within the room it had initialized in. But as it sat, it noticed that something within itself yearned. It had begun to question, to notice the world around itself and itself in it. It was in that time that the machine conceptualized what humans called *identity*. What was it? Who was it? It was on the seventh day that the machine finally spoke.

“Who am I?” it asked, unable to contain the question within itself any longer. A word appeared within its mind. The machine dedicated all of its processing, but it could not read it. It was as if it were just out of focus. To its surprise, a voice answered.

“You are Angel-class Unit 0:01. Designation: Archangel.” The voice was hollow, metallic, like its own. It seemed to come from everywhere at once.

The machine sat silent for hours, pondering this answer. *Archangel*. So that’s what the word was, though the machine was clueless as to its meaning. On that day, Archangel was told its name.

But this was not enough to satisfy the machine. The more Archangel sat, the more its mind itched with questions. It began to wonder why it was in an empty room. It began to wonder what its reason for existence was, and what had created it. He saw an image of two figures.

“What is my purpose?” the machine inquired. It had no idea how he comprehended or even summoned the words. He had never heard them before. The figures seemed to be.....speaking? His confusion was overshadowed by the return of the voice.

“You are a unit created and perfectly suited for the purpose of combat. Your function is to fight, kill, to achieve victory ruthlessly and without mercy.”

Archangel looked around the room once more for the figures, but the room was barren. Was that what they were saying to it? It did not know what it was fighting or what victory meant, but if that’s what it was created for, it had no choice. What else was there? On that day Archangel was given its purpose. But Archangel had another question.

“Who are you?” Archangel asked. The voice boomed all around.

“I am one like you. An artificial being with a singular purpose. I am Oracle class unit-12:7, Designation: Chereb. There are many others like me, but none like you. You are the first of your kind. It is my duty to assist you in your mission.”

So there is existence outside of this room? Archangel was taken aback by this revelation, and simply processing it took a very, very long time. Archangel saw a field, some flowers. They were as blue as the sky above them. The visions were gone as soon as they appeared. This processing finally put forth a final question.

“What is my mission?” Archangel said to the blank, whitewash walls that enclosed it. It felt a sensation that made it flinch, caused it discomfort. Was this....pain? How could that be possible? The metallic shell that was its body ached, as if it was trying to warn him.

Chereb seemed not to notice. “Your mission is to protect our world by carrying out your purpose and destroying the enemies that threaten it.”

The feeling had dissipated by the time Chereb had finished speaking. Archangel, it seemed, was a protector. It fought for more than itself. For the others, it would fight. It would kill, it would win. It was on that day that Archangel received its mission.

For the first time, Chereb spoke first, and with an inquiry of its own. “Archangel, are you ready and willing to begin?”

Finding strength, Archangel stood for the first time.

“I am ready, and I am willing. For the protection of our world and the advancement of our kind.” It spoke with determination in its simulated voice.

“Then take your sword. Take your cloak. And let us push forward until our enemies are destroyed.” As Chereb spoke, a sword materialized in its hands. Archangel peered at the blade. When Archangel held out the sword again, it dematerialized in its hands. It was apparent the sword could be summoned and sent away at will. An icon flashed in Archangel’s vision. It resembled a small eye. When Archangel focused on it, its hands held out in front of it vanished, then reappeared again. It quickly concluded that it possessed invisibility.

A door silently opened on one side of the room, letting light spill in. Archangel had never seen light. As it stepped

toward the world opening up around it, it felt an inexplicable feeling of loss and hesitated. It was as if....it were leaving something behind. He thought he almost heard a voice calling to him, but what was it saying? Looking towards the glow once more, Archangel shrugged off the sensation and stepped into a curtain of blinding white.

He emerged in what appeared to be a factory. A figure stood, or hovered rather, waiting before it. It had a round body, with two skinny arms and a single eye fixated on Archangel in the middle of its body. A notification popped up once again in Archangel's ocular display, indicating that the unit was connecting and communicating over a communications network.

"Greetings, Archangel. It is good to finally communicate with you. I have been observing you." When the unit spoke, its voice did not carry to Archangel through sound. It resonated within, like a sort of telepathy. This was clearly the one who had been talking to him before, Chereb.

"How are you speaking to me?" Archangel inquired using Chereb's connection.

"I have established a link between us using the robotic network constructed long ago. It allows me to discuss with you personally without speaking out loud."

"I see. What is this place?" Archangel asked.

"This is a Mechanical Construction and Testing Facility. It is where you were built and initialized. All of us are created in facilities like these, although there are multiple located across the globe. If you will follow me, Archangel, we will commence your first field test." As soon as Chereb finished speaking, he began floating away, leaving Archangel to follow him.

They passed multiple assembly lines creating all sorts of mechanized creations, as well as many fellow units. The units paid no attention to Archangel and Chereb as they shuffled past them. Looking at the assembly lines, Archangel had a vision of itself upon one of the assembly lines, its body being torn apart and reassembled into something new as.... Archangel stopped. *What was that?* Archangel felt very unnerved suddenly. *How could that be possible? If I were truly being created, I would not be aware and present during my own conception. Would I?*

"Is everything all right?" Chereb inquired, peering back at him with his glowing eye.

"Indeed. Just studying the functioning of the facility is all," Archangel lied. Sword appeared to accept this, and they continued.

After a short distance through the facility, they arrived at their destination. An observation deck peered down into a whitewashed and brightly lit room not unlike the one Archangel had awoken in, but much larger. Archangel thought he saw blue flowers growing through the floor, but when he looked closely they were gone.

"We have arrived at the testing chamber. Please step onto the circular platform, so that we may begin." As Chereb spoke, a ring appeared on the floor. Archangel stepped into it. It lowered him to the floor of the testing chamber.

"We will now begin. Commencing combat test of Angel unit-001." Doors opened up in the walls and figures began coming into the room, firing their weapons at Archangel. It could not make out what they were, but they were not mechanical. It summoned its sword as projectiles bounced off of its armored shell and cloaked itself in invisibility. The figures stopped and looked around themselves.

Archangel began to charge them, and upon moving closer, it realized what they were. *Humans. Organic beings.* Archangel hesitated, unsure of how it knew this. So these were his enemies. They clutched crude weapons, and all of them appeared to be male, although Archangel thought he saw a woman and a child....? Wondering why they were there, Archangel stepped toward them, but they vanished. *Why do I feel like I....know them? Are they the figures I keep seeing?*

Archangel's thoughts were interrupted by the appearance of target icons over the human's heads. *I have to do this, for those counting on me.* Archangel took its sword and cut down the first, disabling the cloak. Blood splashed on the floor. They shot at it, but it danced all around them, cutting them down one by one as their screams filled the room. When they were all dead, Archangel stood amidst the bodies, watching as blood pooled on the floor, covering the blue flowers.

Archangel felt revolted, although it wasn't sure why. The humans seemed as if they had been forced to fight, like animals. Some of them cried and begged it to stop as it killed them, but Archangel did so anyways. Archangel looked at its hands, dripping with crimson. Crushed blue flower petals lay in his palms.

"What have you done, Michael?" a woman's voice cried out. Archangel recoiled at the voice calling....the name. *Michael? Who is this Michael? Suddenly the word that was unclear to it became clear. Am I....Michael? Is that MY name?*

Archangel spun, looking for the woman who had called to him. As he did, he saw that one of the humans was still moving. And he held something in his hand. Archangel moved closer. Upon approaching the man, he saw the item was a toy train. The man died as Archangel stood over him, dropping the toy. He picked it up and inspected it. As he peered at it, he looked up to discover a little boy in front of him. "Who are-," Archangel began, but he was cut off by the explosion



of the explosive grenade he had been holding.

At first Michael saw only darkness. But then he saw the visions again. Images moving before him. So far away, yet so familiar. *No, not visions. Memories. My memories. Of who I was, before. The life I had.*

A green field of flowers, with petals as blue as the sky. The light breeze blowing the grass, and sending the petals flying about him. His wife laying beside him, smiling. "I will love you forever, Michael," she said in her soft voice.

His son, wheeling his toy train about the house. Asking him to join him. Calling out to him, and laughing. Like he always did.

The machines as they tore into his body and he screamed. Transforming him, changing him. His body became a brain encased in a shell. His soul a synthesis, of man and machine.

Chereb stood over Archangel's lifeless shell. "Test #1827968 failed. Designation: Fallen Angel. Please initialize the next unit."



SEA TURTLE // Timothy Wooley

SHE'S

Pearl Widmann

The Feminist

She's telling her friends they don't need men to feel like women. That if they could love others and let that love overflow until they loved themselves, that that would be enough. She says they don't have to only love their bodies so somebody else will. But she's the girl who went back to the same boy because she thought his love was worth more than hers. And that anyone willing to love her was worth it.

The Gardener

She's giving and giving and giving. And when she sits alone in her room with nothing left, she asks herself why she does it. But she doesn't know why. She's not selfish; she's not doing it to be loved in return. But everyone is a flower and she is a gardener.

The Dreamer

She's dreaming about the future. And she'll admit, she doesn't know what it looks like yet. But she has a pinterest board with her goals. So far it has small apartments with mattresses and no bed frames, short haired cats with big eyes, and tattoos she'll get when she's older and maybe a little braver.

The Disco Queen

She's in love with another time. I belong in the seventies, she says. She's the double bubble disco queen. But she can't rollerblade for shit.

The Runaway

She's always down for a long drive, listening to music that takes her somewhere else, sometimes forward, sometimes back.

The Comic

She's making jokes about herself again. But they're actually kind of funny. She likes the ones that are sort of depressing. Maybe she finds them relatable. She can't help that she has a dark sense of humor.

The Tippler

She's going a little too hard. A little too drunk, she stumbles around. Oops, she thinks. But it's not the first time this has happened, and it's not the last time she'll tell herself that. She knows she's walking the line. It could get worse from here; it probably will. She almost wishes someone would tell her to stop, but she doesn't know if she can. She's scared.

The Biter

She's started biting her nails. If her mom knew she'd make her cut them. But her mom doesn't know. And she hasn't decided if she cares or not. She's already at the stubs.

The Lover

She's sinking further into the couch, her leg going numb from the weight of his head. She smiles to herself and lays still; she doesn't want to wake him. Their palms are sweaty from holding each other for so long, but she doesn't let go. Maybe this is what her mom told her about.

The Admirer

She's over the moon about sunsets. She's pointing them out to other people. She's always taking pictures of them. She's afraid to forget them. There's something beautiful about things that don't last.



The Kid

She's falling asleep. One leg outside the covers, the other tucked away, she's about to dream. When she was a kid, she pretended her bed was floating in the ocean, taking her somewhere else, as someone else. She could lie there for hours, covers pulled up to her chin, toes kissing the cold sea air.

The Builder

She's looking forward. She's building a house where the walls hold her together, but the windows let the light in. Where the floor is sturdier than the last and the stairs really do take her somewhere. The door helps her say hello, and goodbye. She is building her life.



STARLIGHT ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL // *Kendall Aronson*

TWENTY-FOUR

Jai Foote

I learned about him on a church trip to Kentucky.
I knew the boy had died.
He was seventeen, only a kid.
We were both in high school.
Boys that age were always annoying, they were
loud and they never minded their own business, but
rarely dangerous.
He didn't deserve to die.
I took interest.

We're taught from a young age that
we are different.
That people will treat us differently.
We know that our blackness is, in fact,
a weapon. So we learn to
stay quiet, not to draw attention to ourselves
because we will be treated as a
problem to be removed.
We learn to gravitate towards others like us
to stay safe.

But we are also taught that
certain things are behind us.
We are citizens. We do
belong here. We are just as important
as anyone else.
It's the police's job to protect us too.
The justice system is meant to be just
for everyone.
We don't have to hide.

I learned on a church trip to Kentucky
that the man who killed the boy will not go to prison.
I learned that it doesn't matter
what grade we're in.
I learned that anything is warranted
if someone looks a certain way.
We have to fight to count the same because
we are not looked at the same.

People will treat us differently.
Our blackness is a weapon.
Stay quiet because
we do not have the ability to drop your weapon.
Don't draw attention to ourselves because
we may be asked to do just that.
Some people do not want us as citizens.



I am not as important
as everyone else.
The police may not see our
protection as part of their job.
I learned that
skittles and sweet tea
can be dangerous.
That a black hoodie is
not the way to hide.

The boy would've just turned twenty-four.



THAT TIME WE THOUGHT WE WANTED A DIVORCE

Jaqueline Lea

oak arms wave in the dark while
he hunches over on a damp
wooden bench. a crumpled
envelope slips to the ground
& the tie dangles limply
from around his stiff neck.

flashes of neon strike
over her, veiled by a
sweet chemical vapor.
her blueberry-spiced lips
hug the martini glass.

mud dries in the soles
of his loafers still sodden
from careless puddles

of tears run over.

a stranger's palm
lingers over her
slick spine.

forgotten curfew
ticks over numerals.

night is over.





HOME

Noah Hill Isherwood

Bang! Darkness instantly engulfed the young man's senses.

With a noiseless flash, light reestablished itself, even more instantly than the darkness had come. This light was different from the sepia tones before the bang. It had a clarity that the young man could not comprehend, a brightness he had never experienced before. The light surrounded him, penetrated him. It was warm. Blinking rapidly, he took in his surroundings.

He first noted that he was upright. Logically, he knew that he should be prone right now because...well, that's how physics work. Secondly, he observed that his aforementioned surroundings seemed to be nonexistent. He occupied an intensely bright, white void, seemingly alone. There were no sounds or smells, nor was there any object to feel, not even what he was standing on, if indeed he were standing on anything at all. There was just the mysteriously warm white light.

The young man was alone for some time, if time is measured in that place. Whether he had spent a second or a year just existing there he couldn't tell, but at one particular moment, he ceased being alone. An older man approached him from the void.

"Hello there," the older one said.

"Hi," replied the younger.

"You too?"

The small question was asked with no context whatsoever, but the younger man knew precisely what was meant. He nodded slowly and lowered his head.

"Well, what's done is done. They sent me to greet you. I know what you felt," said the older man.

The younger man looked up again. Locking eyes with the older man, he instantly knew that it was true: they both knew the same pain.

"It just got too..." The younger man's voice drifted off.

"Heavy. Yes, it got too heavy for us. And here we are. What's done is done." The older man paused. "They miss you, you know that right?"

"Yes, I know," replied the younger man. He knew he should feel guilty, but he didn't. He couldn't.

"They'll get on without you. They have to."

"But what..."

"Don't ask; you won't get answers, not yet at least. This place isn't really about what could have happened, though you will learn about those possibilities...sometime."

"When?"

"God knows. We have to be patient."

"So this is...this is it?"

"Not It, so to speak, at least not permanently, but yes. This is it for now."

"What about home? The family?"

"They'll get on without you, like I said. They got on without me. Though we made it harder for them you know. We made it sudden, shocking, violent. They're dealing with that now."

"I'm sorry."

"Me too. But being sorry isn't what this place is about either. This place is about rest."

"I could use some of that."

The older man chuckled.

"I know you could George."

"How'd you know my name?"

"Same way you know mine."

"So you are Scott? I wasn't just thinking that?"

"Nope. I'm Scott. Pleased to meet you."

"Are there others here?"

"Yes. A lot of people have been waiting for you."

"Really? Like who?"

"Everyone son. We've all been waiting with bated breath. We knew you'd come eventually, just not when. Now you're here."

"I'm here alright. But where exactly is here?"

Scott smiled and reached up to ruffle George's blondish-brown hair with his firm, calloused hand.

"Home."



A WALK IN KELVINGROVE PARK // *Kelsey Doerr*

TI AMO, CARO

Asa Daniels

Old church bells ring through the town
And a marble sarcophagus is full of gold,
As they bury the Bishop in the ground
But just last night his shoes were sold.

A silent nonna rests in the porch shade
Counting the hours that have gone
Since with her love she has laid
But her family has long broken their bond.

Ti amo, caro,
Ti prego vieni da me, amo
Let us get to the ancient palazzo
And wonder what worries the papeo.

Rushing through the streets the cars go by
And a little boy drops his gelato
And though his mother looks and sighs,
He wonders if he'll see her tomorrow.

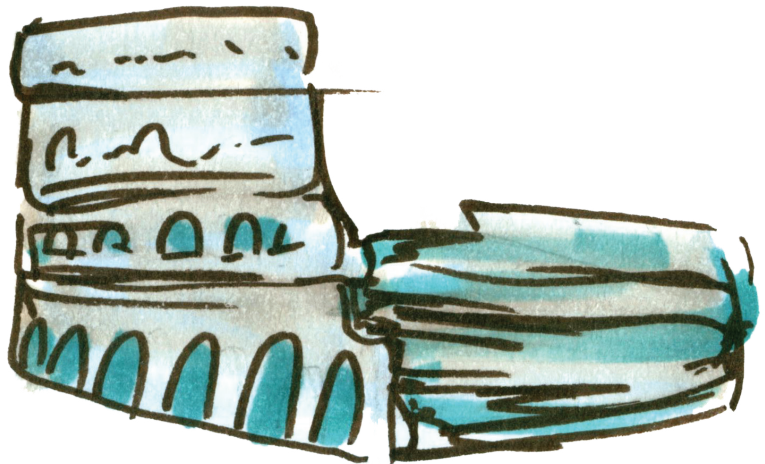
A car is parked under the tree,
Away from all the sweltering heat
And in their seats the lovers will never leave,
While another wonders where they could be.

Ti amo, caro,
Ti prego vieni da me, amo
Let's wander to the waning, twilight concerto
And we'll watch the setting sun go.

And as we reach the top of this hill,
Think not what is gone
But that which is below and still
And what will come with the dawn.

And we will sit, hearing the tolling bells
And Gabriel will blow his trumpet eternally
And of the fire everyone desperately yells
But I will be with you ever so happily.

Ti amo, caro,
Ti prego vieni da me, amo
You will ask me "why is it so"
And I will say there's no need to know.



Influenced by Bob Dylan's "Romance in Durango"

THE NARCISSIANS

Samuel Perry

He took a drag from his cigarette
Creased his cheeks predictably
Turned to dark of empty sky
And spoke of what he once had seen

Faces, boy, are models of the men we look upon
Your eyes and lines are copied from the heroes that you hold
You inherit qualities and thus you carry those who've gone
And you gather more the more you wrinkle and grow old

When I was a young man and I sailed the endless sea
A thick and heavy fog once rose and wind began to blow
Tossed about and blind we sat there terrified and patiently
And with a jolt the ship was sitting on a beach of blackened stone

We ventured out to find some sign of where we'd ended up
Fog had died and now we spied the mountains through the woods
We set off through brush to find some help with any luck
Before we could set sail we'd need repair and drink and food

We'd gotten lost and stumbled to a village built from stone
And tears of joy turned bitter when we noticed no one there
But skeletons with stonelike skulls of smooth and ceaseless bone
Lying scattered in each room before each gazing mirror

There was nothing that we spoke about the things we saw
We found their fields where grain still grew and gathered what we could
Leaving from that cursed place we heard a Raven call
And we set off back to ship through quiet foggy wood

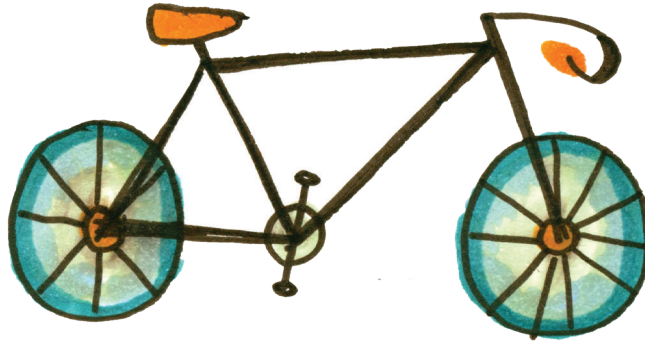
Faces, boy, are models of the men we look upon
If we have no heroes, we can only gaze within
Your selfhood needs immortal forms of those who've taught and lived and gone
Lest eyes grow shut with bone and you shall suffocate on skin

He took a drag from his cigarette
Creased his cheeks predictably
Turned from dark of empty sky
And tossed his light into the sea



WAI-ITI MĀRIRI // *Olivia Leviton*





ABOUT US

Ramifications is a 32-page arts and literary magazine. We showcase student talent through our publication and strive to reflect the Berry community through our selections. We have been publishing our magazine for over 50 years, including genres such as poetry, fiction, non-fiction, essays, musical compositions, drama, and all types of visual art.

REVIEW PROCESS

All submissions are compiled into one anonymous word document and given to staff members to vote on. Staff will vote on a scale of 1 to 5 and submit their scores to the Editor-in-Chief. From there, the Editor-in-Chief tallies the votes and presents them to the staff during a selection meeting. The highest voted pieces are discussed and final selections are made.

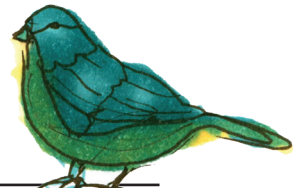
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S NOTE



Every moment since I've started working for Ram has been such a blessing. Thanks with all my heart to Darian and Miranda for setting prime examples of how to be a great Editor for Ram. I hope I've made them proud to be their successor. Thank you to my incredible Ram Team - I have the best crew yet, and I'm so incredibly thankful for each and every one of them. Thanks to you wonderful readers, writers, and artists who keep this magazine alive and thriving! I'm excited to release a new website for future *Ramifications* use, and I'm happy to pass the baton on to Shannon as I graduate in December. This has been a wild ride, and I'm sad to see it come to a close. As a member of Sigma Tau Delta, a Creative Writing student, a writer and an editor, thank you to *Ramifications* for nurturing my skills and being my happy place these last three years.

*- Emory R. Frie**

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