COLLAGE
A JOURNAL OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION
FALL 2023
As the physical world slowly shifts into a virtual reality, we must not let go of the charge to create. What is precious and valuable is becoming translucent and can no longer be measured by weight in pounds or by flipping a page. As you peruse the many facets of Collage’s first digital issue, I implore that you never forget the smell of freshly printed ink or the sensation of holding a book in your hands. But as change engulfs us in every season, though our appearance may differ, we will continue to persevere, create, and exist.

As the Editor-in-chief of Collage, I extend my gratitude to all who have continued to pour their energies and time into the formation of this magazine. To the staff, the students, the faculty, and the alumni who continue to support us in our efforts—thank you for your willingness and generosity. The wealth of talent, experience, and humanity that is contained within this journal only further reflects the diversity of a global campus. We would not be able to display such rich culture and art without your help.

From the time when I first became part of Collage staff in the Fall of 2020, I have received constant streams of knowledge and perspective, compromise and firm beliefs, late nights and coffee breaks, and journeys into the subliminal minds of hundreds of students. The impact has shaken me to my core, leaving me in awe and forever changed. Looking to the future may be daunting, especially with the state of the world and the conflicts that seem to endure. Nevertheless, may Collage become a creative symbol of solidarity, diversity, and a representation of peace. While visiting Hiroshima, I will never forget what my Japanese friend, Mayako, said to me, “Peace isn’t something we can give; it’s created. Except we all want it, so we all feel the same. We are the same, all human, but peace looks different to everyone. What does your peace look like?” I am still searching for that answer, but I pray that the peace that we all seek will also be something that, like Collage, together we can create.

With gratitude,

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COLLEGE

50 years
1973–2023

Fall 2023

Fall 2023
Spray of milk
from Hera’s breast
ripping free
from suckling lips
of Heracles,
The Milky Way
spins into an intergalactic space,
the space between and beyond you and me
formed from centuries
of gas and dust finding and coming
together, almost synthesis.
A black hole maintains the invention
force of gravity pulling the world together—
foundation to the pillars of a home,
as two galaxies clash into constellations.
An outer-reaching band,
Orion nestled in-between Sagittarius and Perseus,
where we reside,
bodies and hands and hearts intertwined, our
Earth orbits around a lone star,
alone but not quite
its perspective in dust and time:
creation, graphic and redolent newness
present outweighing past,
future almost non-existent,
impending but not yet reaching us—
marriage and baby-carriages and divorce in its vessel,
she asked if I had ever loved before
and I told her,
I have loved a million times.
I told her
once a stranger held the door,
and I swore I would’ve married him
if he hadn’t had a wife.
I told her I steal glances at the women on the streets, I catch their eyes,
and wait for them to call to me,
but the call never comes.
we’re in the park with my favorite view of the city and we’ve both forgotten it’s
meant to be a date. we’d gotten coffee earlier,
the best cupp’a joe she’d ever had.
she drank it all and got another,
and then drank that one, too.
I told her,
I have loved a million times,
loved a million people.
I told her I gave them each a part of me,
they may never know,
but they have me all the same.
I told her,
that I am a puzzle then most of my pieces are
missing,
that I am a backwards beggar on the street,
giving my soul to every stranger that I meet.
yes, I give and give and ache to receive,
but I told her,
do not pity me.
I’m tired of feeling sorry for myself.
I used to build castle walls out of sand
as if they would save me from the woes of the world, but the sea came and
washed them away.
I know
and she knows
that she will not be the one to love me,
and I know
and she knows
that that’s okay;
good coffee,
sandcastles,
some things aren’t meant to last.
The Labyrinth

if I die first, you can still bear my bones.

—Ariadne’s Letter to Theseus, Ovid’s Heroides, translated by A.S. Kline

The prison smells like mildew, water seeping somewhere it shouldn’t be— wet and stale above the linger of death, the crackle of Thanatos’s chains still ringing in the dark.

The prison holds sacrifices, mortals seeping somewhere they shouldn’t be—bronze and chitons, bodies long decomposed to the fungal-filled space, to gnawed bones.

Walls and columns create rooms within rooms—bending and meandering, curling and curving, turning and twisting, twining and winding, galleries always shifting but never crossing.

Stillling, the darkness crowds around its visitors, ever-constricting and ever-suffocating for a swifter death, only if you were lucky.

The labyrinth now betrayed, abandoned, still living and breathing, waiting, always waiting. I am a thing to be discovered, to be used—ruins in columns and pillars cracking and tumbling with each new tremble in each new age, spilled blood still staining the bowels of Crete—still staining me, still waiting, always waiting.

Bear in a Chair Reading a Book

MCKENZIE ANDERSON

THE LABYRINTH

ANGELA BENNINGHOF

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Bear in a Chair Reading a Book

MCKENZIE ANDERSON
Long grass seeded with wildflowers towers over the side of the bank, waterlogged, with the rippling water disturbed only by the waterfowls—the graceful creatures bathe, delighted by the blush of the day’s drawing. An emerald marsh, a river of grass—one of the flock, a pen, plucks at the delicate fringe of her wings, troubled by a blade sitting snug in the gaps between her soiled feathers. She shudders in the sun’s gentle rays, a spasm that has her thrashing, writhing, against her wings, as if she has forgotten her feet or relinquished her control of them. A faint whistle exhales with her final breath as she plunges into the shallow water—a cry for help mistaken for a caterpillar. The mud-soaked reeds murmur along to the swan, for nature honors her more than noble and good men. She coos her haunting melody, alone, spreading her pallid wings in the quiet morning air—a grand gesture of her life before taking a final bow.

**Swan Song**

BrynLee Wolfe

Blown pupils gawk at the sight below her: hidden deep within the bowels of earth, a sunless kingdom sits at a river’s bank, crossed only by a ferryman cloaked in drab. His pockets jingle with a fresh toll. It is the afterworld, she knows, and the croon of the river Styx calls to her as if it is beckoning her home. The limb of her neck breaches the surface, a gulp of air swirling, expanding in her lungs and she gazes to the sky, reaches for the sun—for her consecrator, Apollo, in faith. Devotion. The fingers of her impending fate play at the edges of her vision, and her heart throbs against the confines of her chest—it knows, only wishing for her mind to catch up. The sun-god plucks at the strings of his lyre: a tortoise shell embellished with two arms reminiscent of a bull’s horns, well worn. A somber track trembles in the air—nightingales sing their midnight music, under the cloak of darkness, for sorrow, but swans sing only once, at the dawn of their death, a tune meant for a funeral.

**Glass Pumpkin**

Elizabeth Kowalczyk

The mud-soaked reeds murmur along to the swan, for nature honors her more than noble and good men. She coos her haunting melody, alone, spreading her pallid wings in the quiet morning air—a grand gesture of her life before taking a final bow.
A Beetle, A Spider, and A Nightingale

A small black beetle crawls its way up the trunk of the tallest tree. The Queen of the Night at her celestial throne. The Goddess sits on her icy throne, inspecting her kingdom below with her bow and arrow resting by her side. A crescent moon necklace her throat. Her hunting dogs, Syrius and Phocion, bit by her feet.

A Rat

The house rests in silence, but the nighttime creatures will enter the house; not under the canopies munching on the English ivy; not the tree frogs crawling their way from rotten log to rotten log. Restless from the long night, Syrius and Phocion race the wolves by the mountain side. Alpha male wrestles. The cubs yip in excitement. Diana shuffles forward.

A Dream

A Descent into Darkness

The shadow floats right above the boy. Places chin. And he sleeps.

The Paths of Apollo and Diana

The ice-cold light reaches into the forest. The rays consume the house. Warm it up for the next day. Apollo demands attention. The rays force her further into her receding darkness. The Goddess is impatient to shine. His colors encompass the grove of evergreens; reflect in the lake; create shadow shapes of all sizes. The cicadas’ tymbals flex and click as the mating songs echo into the night. Shadows of all shapes and sizes. The goddess gathers her belongings. Her silver bow and arrow cross the room. Diana’s chin. And he sleeps.

Sunrise

Sunrise.

But the weight lifts. He still lays in the bed beside his father. His rays push any memory of Diana away. Shoves her presence off the celestial throne. His light forces her further into her receding darkness. The sun is impatient to shine. The sun, the rays, the goddesses, are coming soon, her descent into darkness. The horizon in the west, Diana knows her time has come. Her duty is complete. William, her brother, would not take another step. Syrius snaps at it with his startling white teeth. Phocion sits guard next to the sleeping babe. The rat scuttles back toward the hole from whence it came to no avail. A silver arrow blocked its path. Up above, Diana’s bow is empty in her hand, the other arrow is hers. Her gaze is tired and exhausted and swipes at the horde. Her greatest mistake. The rat seizes as the doggish arrow twirls in its mouth. Phocion and Syrius sink to the crack of the baby.”
A Fey-ted Meeting

Opposites

EVE BENNETT

HANS RÖNNMÅR
If I were a mayfly on the Mississippi, I’d fill all my joys and pleasures in one single day. I’d have the chance at a rare childhood. A nine-year-old nymph eating algae not knowing or fearing the future and living under rocks in clear river water. Only when I was ready would I fill my tiny lungs with air and become a delicate, perfectly ugly creature of evolution with wings of glass and compound, ultraviolet eyes. There would be no question about my purpose, just millions of years’ worth of evolutionary expertise. Loneliness would be a foreign word to me, and each decade-long hour would have a defined meaning. I’d dance and swarm alongside my three-thousand siblings, and by the blessing of animal instinct, I’d finally get laid. I would float on the wind of the summer air living literally every second to its fullest, being blissfully unaware of what it means to be alive. And when I die, I’d relish the twin sunrises of my birth with no one to miss me and no ability to care.
two souls, hundreds of thousands of cranes for each, carrying breaths of charred shadows standing side by side next to the one-legged torii. Two cities,
the sky, ladder rungs and low-born haze touching nothing but a silhouette. I wonder if the stone-stair man and the lookout met at the top of nirvana, their eyes
and baby fat. The human shapes blur tirelessly into shades upon the stone
branding on blackened shoulders, clinging to memories of morning dew
Enma? Running crazed and naked with skinless feet, kimono
is my mother? My father? Where am I? Is this the shadow of the abyss, held
deceptive glance. There are no fortunes here. Where are my children? Where
of those still open, thousands never to close. The contortion of steel, iron,
Pus and pieces, strewn, torn, infected, pin-drop calm in the desperate eyes
steed of apocalypse, brandishing the poison-laced lance.
Out from Revelation, black rain rides swift on the
pleas to their neighbor, still as stone. Alas, the foreign powers have bribed the
Ōkami
flames. Rags of sagging skin ebb and flow in a dance, frantic maws open,
—cool your hearth and quiet the raging tempest of
churn endlessly in the mires of
Ōta
chessboard blister, the paint bubbles and simmers. Forges of flesh and blood
nowhere to withhold their bounty. Out from Revelation, black rain rides swift on the
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Boy, crouching low, Fat Man, falling fast, while helpless hands watch the
e4, knight to f3—B-29, the siren blows, tuck your heads, take shelter. Little
the torrents of nausea and sorrow, muted by the Sicilian opening: pawn to
overexcited stars exploding in the city center. Let us not abandon all hope, drifting
sinew taut and straining. Through everlasting darkness may our souls trudge
between nimbus forms, outstretched hands suspended on stardust tails, every

I resent the clouds that cleared that day. My words, plinking
against the bars of a familiar sunset. Uranium twilight twinkles and glows in
the fluorescence of an x-ray and dangers every physician’s brow. Another
hibiscus, another stigma, born stone, unwrapping into the wombs of arrows and
pity. A curse without the pentagram, etched with invisible ink into memories
hibakusha, another stigma, born alone, unknowing into the world of sneers and
kōjin
Tame your fires,
—cool your hearth and quiet the raging tempest of
...
Anti-Alchemist

JeSSicA Pruitt

I am the anecdote to the riddle of his longing. The story of his plight, forever unfolding. He does not know this power, that I’m in debt to carry. Clutching tightly to the grief, enduring, trying hard to bury. For I took on his pain as my own, forced it deep beneath my skin. Tough, translucent barriers of time with secret layers. I dare not look in. Even just a glance will bleed, indeed, profusely.

Powdered with profound pain and clotted knots of cobwebbed, anchors of shame— Thinking I could carry the weight, pass it on, shake and turn. I even birthed a star for him while he was secretly slaying my name. But he lives in a world of self-induced weary, barely lifting eyelids, so gloomy on his pillow. And dreams in half-false memories of satisfying, nostalgic accusations— Hugs onto stories he’s convinced as truth to feed and quench his delusions. I thought my strength could save him from his own afflictions. But his mind turns gold into deceit.

From Death

MITZI CROSSLER

If I could I would saw you out of me. I would call the surgeons in to lay me wet on white sheets and bleed you from me slowly, filling porcelain bowls, until they over-flowed and spewed from the table. I would mix you deep into me like paints, swirled into a new color.
The Cyclical Tradition

AngeLina BoFenkamp

People always say, “write what you know.” What people typically know best is the culture they grew up in, knowledge related to the experiences they have had, and the history of the place they live (or know best is the culture they grew up in, knowledge related to the history of the place they live or grew up). However, even though Dr. Philip Mathis is not Native American, he has worked tirelessly over the years in writing various essays, guides, books, and manuals related to his field. So, it might come as a surprise to find out this individual with a doctorate of science is writing poems about Native American life and traditions. People are born from the Earth and end in the Earth. It is a migration over the seasons and eventually end up back where they started. People have lived, for those who have grown up in multiple places. However, even though Dr. Mathis is not Native American, he does a wonderful job of expressing Native American culture so familiarly through his many lyrical poems.

Mathis conveys his respect is through circles and an acknowledgment of nature as a source of wisdom,” (Mathis 15). The two main ways that Mathis communicates his respect is through circles and an acknowledgment of history. Circles have always been an important part of Native American tradition and belief. They are sacred symbols because they represent the patterns of time and life. For instance, the seasons change from winter to spring to summer to fall and back to winter. The animals migrate over the seasons and eventually end up back where they started. People are born from the Earth and end in the Earth. It is a beautiful way to view life and it reflects this in his poems by showing the world through the lens of a Native American. The whole book is actually a cyclical pattern with the book starting in the past with the first section “Remembrance,” and ending full circle with a reflection on how America has placed Native Americans in the present in the section “Progress and Paradox” (Mathis 17-28, 73-83).

Through his poems, Mathis not only shows Native American life and beliefs, though that alone is captivating, but also his deep respect for Native American traditions, beliefs, and lifestyles. Throughout the book, readers get a sense of nostalgia and grief for the past, for what colonists took away and destroyed. He mourns over what his ancestors have done to a beautiful way of life. It is not just his own sorrow he communicates; he shows Native Americans’ grief for a lost culture. Through his poem “We Remember,” Mathis, from the perspective of a Native American, crafts a memorial to those who have died at the hands of white colonizers:

This poem shows that even as nature continues, even as the sun sets and the moon rises, the lives of those under the sun and moon disappear, the dances to be forgotten, and for their culture to become buried in the dirt. Although this poem is full of remorse for what’s been lost, there are many others that are full of pride for what has not been lost. Some of the best poems are from section two “Living in Circles” (Mathis 29-50). Many of these reflect the spiritual and emotional connection between nature and humans, the harmony that is central to people who are a couple of miles from his home. Mathis’s writing style gives an appreciation for Native American traditions, beliefs, and lifestyles. Throughout the book, readers get a sense of nostalgia and grief for the past, for what colonists have done to a beautiful way of life. It is not just his own sorrow he communicates; he shows Native Americans’ grief for a lost culture.
It’s December 26th, BrynLee WoLfe and the house is quiet: dust settles in the far corners of the hall, the fireplace glows with last night’s embers, and the pillows rest against the arm of the couch. Bits of wrapping paper litter the floors, leftover from the previous day’s festivities. The door to the guest bedroom is shut and no one is waiting on the other side. Steam rises out of the cup, curling up into the air beneath my nose. The aroma of peppermint bark coffee leaves a sour taste in my mouth. I pour it down the drain. The blinds are sealed and yet stubborn rays of early morning sunlight leak between their thin cracks, igniting the wood floor in a rosy hue. My sister prefers them open. It won’t matter. The beam of her taillights tinted the siding of the house in cherry red hours ago.

The Jilted Lover: An Archaeological Display
BrynLee WoLfe
It was a midnight drive. My forehead pressed against the cool glass of the window, eyes chasing the full moon through the pine trees. You hummed an unfamiliar tune under your breath. The trees became sparse, and the car cleared a path through them. You rolled to a stop in a clearing. The engine cut off. We bumped shoulders as we walked—a thin blanket in my arms, a cassette player in yours. I laid beside you in the clearing and nestled my head in the crook of your shoulder. Our bellies turned to the sky. Your fingertips reached for the flickering stars, tracing the outline of Orion. I told you about the constellations—how the belt points to “the dog star.” You finished my sentence. My pointer finger wavered. You swore we’d never grow out of this. I swore I could stay here forever. (And stay there forever, I did.)

The cushion of your shoulder retreats. My head lands with a thump. You turn to your side, first, before you sit up, gather your cassette player, and eject the tape. The blanket tugs beneath my weight, and you abandon it with an unfamiliar impatience. The hum of a different tune starts, then fades, and fades, until there is only quiet. (And stay there forever, you didn’t.)

The bulk of my body fuses with the thin blanket and burrowed into the sunken earth. Thick clusters of prairie grass bloomed between my wrinkled fingertips. My belly is still turned to that starry night sky. When the archaeologists stumble upon me, they carve a careful outline. I am lifted from the crumbling ground without protest. They stuff me in a clear case, atop that bed of dirt. The body is preserved just as it was found. My limbs—the bones—are half-buried. The skull—my forehead—presses against the cool glass. The sockets of my eyes are hollow under the shine of fluorescent lights; I imagine Orion among the fly carcasses trapped in the cover of the light fixture. The bone of my finger points to the belt. (I can’t grow out of it.)

E.O.T. JUNNA ANDERSON

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E.O.T. JUNNA ANDERSON
As I stare into the flames, I return to the past again, wondering if I could have done something to save them...my people, my family, my Deran lai. They were my home among many and my refuge, my only place to belong. Everyone has lost a heaven, a Deran lai, and mine was within the tribe. I miss them terribly, but I dare not dwell too long on their faces. I grimace as the memories begin to twist in pain, the warning signal of the madness that turned many into the Ravier.

Shaking the images from my mind, I begin my ritual chants. "Violet drops of glow and warmth of a roaring flame. I opened my mouth and the chant naturally fell from my lips, "Violet drops of glow and warmth of a roaring flame."

I leave the stones within my mind, the dreaming, the hallucinations, behind, as I state with a final laugh, returning my attention to my meal. Once the last drop of light escapes my body, I allow the orbs to recede into my eyes. "Some can last, Lotus bind," I whisper, and the lights twirled themselves once more to my soul. Closing my eyes, I feel another hole form as one more consciousness disappears. This emptiness, once unbearable, has become my normal. My eyes return to their normal hazy blue, and I look into the darkness..."
Dad and I are still baking cookies in the kitchen—
Tollhouse Chocolate Chip Lovers slice ‘n bake—
and arranging them on the old pizza stone.
There’s only three of us, but we bake six,
and he sneaks me a chunk of raw dough
when my mother isn’t looking.

He watches football on the big screen,
and I sit in his warm lap reading a book,
watching the clock tick,
rolling my eyes as he teases me.
His bald head is just a sign of age,
His bruises are just another hard day’s work.

When the smell of sugar and warmth hits,
I leap out of the leather recliner
and pour two big glasses of milk.
We eat them too hot, falling apart
like we’re afraid of running out of time,
and he wipes the chocolate from my nose.
The flowers are so vibrant. There’s so much happiness in the bright orange chrysanthemums, the pink Roses that sway in the wind, the Pippies and Chrysanthemums. The baby-blue Forget-Me-Not peaking out of the corner that hold too many memories, not forgotten no matter how she wants to forget them. She looks out the kitchen window at them now. The view is slightly distorted because the window is cracked. Every time the wind blows through, it whistles. She looks at the UV lights that give her beloved Garden artificial sunlight. She watches how they stretch toward the light. So obviously alive, it’s comforting to see her heart’s desire. She wants to water them. Her fingers turn white as she grapples the counter tightly. The daily water supply is never enough. They always want more and more and more, barely any water left for her and her daughter. She glances at the sky, as if the cloud-like smoke blocking the sun will ever produce rain. She takes a deep sigh, she misses the rain, can barely remember what it felt like on her skin. All she remembers is being annoyed at being wet, she remembers the coolness, the sound.

She’s not thinking about the rain. She’s not thinking about anything. She’s thinking of the dead. The death of her husband. It’s been so long ago. All her loved ones rot under her feet along with people she doesn’t even know. Roots twisting with bones. This garden is her family. Her Mother is the Daffodils with their soft petals. Her daughter doesn’t know that though. Not under all these flowers of death. She doesn’t know she’s stepping on decomposed bodies. She doesn’t understand why her Mother sometimes goes out the door. She takes a deep breath before following. The smell hits her as soon as she walks through the door. The flowers smell like corpses. Her garden has become a graveyard because all the graveyards became full a long time ago. Her loved ones rot under her feet along with people she doesn’t even know. Roots twisting with bones. This garden is her family. Her Mother is the Daffodils with their soft petals. Her daughter doesn’t know that though. She wishes that they never had to go in the Garden. Never had to bury him, the rest of the Garden looked like it could use some nutrients soon as she walks through the door. She takes a deep breath before following. The smell hits her as soon as she walks through the door. The flowers smell like corpses. Her garden has become a graveyard because all the graveyards became full a long time ago. Her loved ones rot under her feet along with people she doesn’t even know. Roots twisting with bones. This garden is her family. Her Mother is the Daffodils with their soft petals. Her daughter doesn’t know that though. She wishes that they never had to go in the Garden. Never had to bury him, the rest of the Garden looked like it could use some nutrients.

"You need to take this seriously, Shiyanah, our Garden is the only reason we’re still alive today. Do you think that the government will care about us if faced with either preserving the human race or letting it die? This isn’t a game. They will not have you walk into the death knell as a punishment and as a way to preserve the balance. You see that line down the middle of the Garden? She’s not yelling, but every word is punctuated by her anger and fear toward that Garden. Her prison and her salvation and her grief all rolled into a beautiful garden. Her fingers dig into her daughter’s thin shoulders. Shiyanah’s eyes are wide with fear. She looks toward the Garden and nods.

“That line indicates our lives. The right side is mine and the left is yours.” She doesn’t mention the third line section. The dead section. She doesn’t have to. "When you were conceived, I gave your Gardener the plants you see to store in the Earth. Those plants take all your carbon dioxide and turn it into oxygen, without those plants, you wouldn’t be able to exist at all. So yes, it’s time already because we need enough people don’t you agree?"

“I miss Dad,” Shiyanah whispers, looking down over the ground. The Dead section seems to glare at her, yellow and brown, withered. Dead or whatever disease that ravaged her husband’s plants. At the first sign of disease, when one brown leaf became two became three became whole plants. He went out the door. She takes a deep breath before following. The smell hits her as soon as she walks through the door. The flowers smell like corpses. Her garden has become a graveyard because all the graveyards became full a long time ago. Her loved ones rot under her feet along with people she doesn’t even know. Roots twisting with bones. This garden is her family. Her Mother is the Daffodils with their soft petals. Her daughter doesn’t know that though. She wishes that they never had to go in the Garden. Never had to bury him, the rest of the Garden looked like it could use some nutrients.

"I know, I don’t like the smell either, but at some point you’ll have to do this yourself.” She wishes that they never had to go in the Garden. Never had to bury him, the rest of the Garden looked like it could use some nutrients.

She shrugs, “Fine.” She lifts the jug gently from her Mom’s hands and heads out the door. She takes a deep breath before following. The smell hits her as soon as she walks through the door. The flowers smell like corpses. Her garden has become a graveyard because all the graveyards became full a long time ago. Her loved ones rot under her feet along with people she doesn’t even know. Roots twisting with bones. This garden is her family. Her Mother is the Daffodils with their soft petals. Her daughter doesn’t know that though. She wishes that they never had to go in the Garden. Never had to bury him, the rest of the Garden looked like it could use some nutrients.

Shiyanah sits in the kitchen. The flowers smell like corpses. Her garden has become a graveyard because all the graveyards became full a long time ago. Her loved ones rot under her feet along with people she doesn’t even know. Roots twisting with bones. This garden is her family. Her Mother is the Daffodils with their soft petals. Her daughter doesn’t know that though. She wishes that they never had to go in the Garden. Never had to bury him, the rest of the Garden looked like it could use some nutrients.

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"Where’s your car?" Her daughter asks as she plucks the needles out of her arms. "Nowhere you want to go. She grabs the jug she held placed beneath the nozzle. "You want to help water? We’re watering your side today.” Shiyanah winces at her mother’s tone. “Yes."

"I don’t, I like the smell either, but at some point you’ll have to do this yourself.” She wishes that they never had to go in the Garden. Never had to bury him, the rest of the Garden looked like it could use some nutrients.

Shiyanah watches her mother. “Where did you go?” Her daughter asks as she plucks the needles out of their arms. “Nowhere you want to go.” Shiyanah winces at her mother’s tone. "Yes."

"I don’t, I like the smell either, but at some point you’ll have to do this yourself.” She wishes that they never had to go in the Garden. Never had to bury him, the rest of the Garden looked like it could use some nutrients. She remembers that it was calming, the rhythm, but what that rhythm was she can’t remember. The feeling too, is missing, she can’t remember how it felt to have individual droplets hitting her skin. She can’t remember what it felt like to have her hair plastered to her skin, nor what it tasted like on her tongue. Her memories are so vibrant. There’s so much happiness in the bright orange chrysanthemums, the pink Roses that sway in the wind, the Pippies and Chrysanthemums. The baby-blue Forget-Me-Not peaking out of the corner that hold too many memories, not forgotten no matter how she wants to forget them. She looks out the kitchen window at them now. The view is slightly distorted because the window is cracked. Every time the wind blows through, it whistles. She looks at the UV lights that give her beloved Garden artificial sunlight. She watches how they stretch toward the light. So obviously alive, it’s comforting to see her heart’s desire. She wants to water them. Her fingers turn white as she grapples the counter tightly. The daily water supply is never enough. They always want more and more and more, barely any water left for her and her daughter. She glances at the sky, as if the cloud-like smoke blocking the sun will ever produce rain. She takes a deep sigh, she misses the rain, can barely remember what it felt like on her skin. All she remembers is being annoyed at being wet, she remembers the coolness, the sound.

She’s not thinking about the rain. She’s not thinking about anything. She’s thinking of the dead. The death of her husband. It’s been so long ago. All her loved ones rot under her feet along with people she doesn’t even know. Roots twisting with bones. This garden is her family. Her Mother is the Daffodils with their soft petals. Her daughter doesn’t know that though. She wishes that they never had to go in the Garden. Never had to bury him, the rest of the Garden looked like it could use some nutrients.
Fate once told me I was his bride: a marriage between guidance of gods and galaxies to proceedings of justice; the pucker of his lips, Eros brings even gods to their knees. 

Gods bow to the will of Fate; wholly bound to slaughter of desire— as their king becomes me. the wisp of Dikē in abject affair to titans wisdom. tender touch and candied conversations and slight swell of stomach— a piece of him in a piece of me, maternal pouch beneath tapping tips, pads massaging an ebbing child— almost human.

The forces of sempiternity in sour Necessity; gods do not suffer miscarriages: a baby or two always born— for all the gods but me. deepening kisses and hushed stresses, arms held with nightly remarks— names, Narcissus and Dionysus pulling and tugging in lollipop licked whispers, mouths and bodies and pillowcases.

Then, a basin of blood, familiar ichor dripping and slipping down my thighs in rivers and streams of sticky ominous power, a twist in my stomach— something snapping, something wringing—
i could not bear the life of Fate. and I hear him whisper: my sweet Justice, you must know there are things even we cannot control.
Serenade No. 1, “Mon Écho”

In early December, 1870, newborn Bastien Remon Couvreu was found on the doorstep of Aix Saint-Sauveur Cathedral, in Aix-en-Provence, France. The exact date and place of his birth remains unknown. A note was found on his blankets, presumably authored by his mother, stating that he was the result of an adulterous affair and couldn’t be looked after. By the age of five, he had gained a wildly troublesome personality, where even the Sister who named him believed that Couvreu was possessed by some demonic evil and refused to nurture him further. He was then sent to Madame Devereux’s Foundling Home in Paris, where he spent the remainder of his mischievous childhood, often running away and getting into conflicts with law enforcement. Couvreu, although later confirmed to be intellectually blessed, never excelled in academia. He was renowned for getting into altercations and blacking out in front of the Opéra Garnier. There, he would happen to meet master composer Albertus Rémy and the rest is history. Couvreu, in recent years, has been earmarked as the composer Bach could only dream of becoming, writing five symphonies, twelve concertos, twenty sonatas, seven adantes, and one ballet, Mon Écho, all resounding with euphonious genius. He never married and lived out his 52 years alone, upon his countryside estate in Aix.

Serenade No. 1, “Mon Écho” was performed posthumously by Couvreu’s sole friend, Albertus Rémy, where he found the original draft in Couvreu’s safe after acquiring it from his final Will and Testament. The identity of the young woman, who presumably inspired the piece Mon Écho, remains unknown.

You declared: plump lips in a half heart, head lulled on my chest and eyes dipped in ivory,
That you would reincarnate as a music note, to feel in abstraction, without limits of flesh,
Mon Écho, I named you, for you had to always follow lead, blissful of my seclusions run,
A wayward outcast in the Foundling Home, and as Misery dictates, your company was desired.
Alope stones walls, on shadowed corners, in dim alleyways you waltzed as a feline of Paris,
If not for me, your iridescent soul would’ve never tasted the ambrosia of defiance.
Most brand us in blasphemy, rarely whispered, but a perfect discordance wove the tale of our youth,
And oh, Mon Écho, I bled out for you, pillaged bare as bone, and spat my first prayers to God: Amen.

Hallowed, a reflection of the nightly chasm, Morningstars illuminated and left the heavens vile,
I sought to fill myself whole again, with frenetic matches and crystalline liquors—gnite remembrance.
Saving graces are chance encounters, happenstances that takes form of either gift or curse,
My redemption came not from a deity, as told, over exalted majesty, but of humanity’s melodic genesis.
Days disguised as eternity seemed to pass, when I received your tattered Will in the Post,
My whip cracked as lightning against the steads, barreling to your venue, at last known.
I saw you, lying there, little fingers at ease, still shackled to the Brothel’s dilapidated bed;
Caustic tempests couldn’t compare how I wept, Death unable to steal your ethereal form.
Holding you, Mon Écho, in the same manner as I once did, head lulled on my chest and now idle eyes,
I promised you reincarnation, within my stories of harmonia, the final note, everlasting, of you.

Composed by Bastien Couvreu and performed by Albertus Rémy.
they say

grief

is a process

but i say

it’s much like the ocean with
its ebb and flow

my grief is a tide

so tied to the moon

much like me and you

sometimes

i am low tide

full of life

and pools

and in those moments

i live

but much like the tide

my grief rises

and drowns me

and i am caught in it

a year later

it still sweeps me off my feet

these tides of grief

honor the fallen

NATE TUESCO

I didn’t know how to feel

when talking to my childhood friends

i asked

if we were creatures

from legend and myth what would we each be you see

i did that thing

where i felt one way

and wanted the reassurance

i thought myself a selkie

a beautiful woman

whose skin belonged to herself

a foundation of trust

yet i found myself nowhere near that vampire

they said

seventeen years of friendship culminated then

at first

i was lost

how could i

squeamish, clumsy, less than eternal me

be that

but i realized

i too crave the warmth

i miss the sun

relegated to shadows craving the pulse

of those i should be in many origins.

vampires never turn willingly

but it marks them for life

no longer human, but more and less

and i felt seen.

i too live in the in-between and maybe

if i were a vampire

i would have the strength

not to be afraid

of you.

honorable mention

NAYISH MESSIER
Freckles
JULIAN DeGRIE

in the absence of the dog

I watch her stretch out over your favorite blanket, her white fur the same light, creamy shade, the soft chenille stitches the velvet of her ears. She’s purring again, her belly catching the sunlight, napping in the bed, cold and unmoved, gray-yellow fur I can’t wash away on the afghan she knew was yours six weeks ago.

Katze
ELIZABETH KOVALCYK

re-creation myth
JAIDE WILSON

Change is the new, improved word for god
-Wendy Videlock

once
surely so long ago,
I was crafted, exquisitely
(limbs woven from soft shadow, heart molded from the space between spaces, face—a mask of memories long forgotten, whichever Being built this body (I know her well, I know her well) made me to be Phantom, made me to be Doppelgänger, made me to be Skinchanger, this body which was made for me.

and then,
in blinding light,
I was unmade, exquisitely
(limbs held in soft embrace, heart caressed by loving words, face—a face and nothing more, whichever Being broke this body (I love her so, I love her so) left me Wanted, left me Cared, left me Known.

once
not so long ago,
I was used, exquisitely
(limbs which are tools of creation, heart which seeks only to fill what is empty, face—a mask and yet aching to be removed, whichever Being built this body (I know her well, I know her well) made me to be Creator, made me to be Lover, made me to be Desirer, this body which was made for me.

once
surely so long ago,
I was crafted, exquisitely
(limbs woven from soft shadow, heart molded from the space between spaces, face—a mask of memories long forgotten, whichever Being built this body (I know her well, I know her well) made me to be Phantom, made me to be Doppelgänger, made me to be Skinchanger, this body which was made for me.
CREATIVE EXPRESSION AWARDS

Each semester, six submissions receive Creative Expression Awards, one from each major category: art, photography, poetry, prose, video, and audio. The winner from each category receives a $75 award.

ART
Nipticking
ANSLEIGH BRAIN

PHOTOGRAPHY
Reaching Majeska
CADEE HAVARD

POETRY
Swan Song
BRONLEE WILIE

PROSE
Atomic Regium
RACHEL BOOHER

AUDIO
No Surprises
CASSIE SISTO

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Collage accepts submissions year-round. Online submissions may be made through our website, mtsu.edu/collage/submit.php. Creative work, such as art, photography, design, short stories, creative nonfiction, short plays, song lyrics, poetry, videos/movies, and audio, may be submitted online or at the Collage office, Honors 224, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Production
Technology
Adobe Illustrator CC
Adobe InDesign CC

Typography
Filmotype Maxwell
Poppins

Columbia Scholastic Press Association Awards

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