The Normal Review

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Contributors’ Notes
How to Submit

1. Only undergraduate and graduate students at Montclair State University are eligible to submit.

2. The work must be the original creative work of the attributed author or artist.

Specific submission guidelines and other information:

montclair.edu/chss/thenormalreview

Questions, comments, concerns? Ask the editors.
We are always reachable through our emails:
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tnrprose@gmail.com
tnrpoetry@gmail.com
tnrart@gmail.com
“I’d like it if you’d love me
but I’d loathe to love you back.”
Thus speak your dewy
senseless eyes in their
cavernous folds,
faulty auburn magnets;
repelling when they ought to
attract.
Rearranged,
the words that follow could
form an outline
of the heart’s holy text,
but as is,
marched single file,
echo only wayward faith
like crusades upon the soul.
Hidden Beauty
Mia Rico
Oil on Canvas
I am the monster that lurks beneath your bed
a silent phantom of almost delights,
of sorrowed mornings,
sleepless nights.

My cries ooze gray through battered skin
and swim though smog to
burn the sky

I've murdered my memories
and nestled my heart between the
parting glass of your imagination and
my almost reality

yet, as I am, a demon in shade,
I fear even myself
for there is no art in living like I do.

while stars set sight alight
I'm constantly crushed by the haunting silence
which withers through my mind.

up is down and low is high
when the bridge that separates my being from yours
is colored, cursed, confused with insecurities
and difference

so I am here
lost under your mattress.
afraid of the bedbugs and dust mites
that cower from my gaze.
afraid of those that fear me the same
and who's to blame?
The sun.
The light that has exposed me to myself,
to satan’s arithmetic, to heart ache, to mind break
to the cruel fragility of love

and as night falls and suffocates my being
I am lost,
trapped for breath. for focus.
for the explosions that rattle the world outside

I’m a crumpled paper plane
forgotten after class,
left for dust
for late night custodian cleanup.

I’m an unheard scream for mercy
that yearns to learn her histories
and revel in the mysteries of time

but lost evidence leaves me cowered,
like a wilted, weathered flower
beneath your bed
while starless nights ensue.

please. I beg.
help me find somewhere progressive
somewhere orange, green, purple,
and blue where light is true
and spirals so brightly through the darkness
that even monster me can
be free from the shadows
under your bed.
Some Probably Really Cool Dude
Jamming Because it Seems Like That’s
What Cool Dudes Do I Guess
Sean Fineran
Digital
I paid witness to sunbursts and weddings on purple planets. Literature dreams about me in the day time and I read pulp in my down time.

*I wonder how many eyes Jupiter has.*

*If he is the tom-bowler then does he have thousands of eyes or is he blind?*

I’ve never written a crop circle but I’ve made wheat angels. There have been lightning tags started by the thunder and pollen ball fights with the bumblebees.

*The summer is a wonderful time for space travel. Children’s bikes will topple over as they watch you leave the atmosphere.*

I was born in space.

I opened my eyes first to the lacy frays of the Milky Way and I come in peace. This is a dream I had for the past two hundred years and now I’m waking up.

*And dreams come true sometimes. They were written down in constellations two minutes before the deadline of a tabloid paper. And everyone scrambles to find their ancestors via the line of connect-the-dot origin stories. Orion enters the house of Venus and Aquarius needs to pick themselves up and just have fun with it.*

I wish I could swim through corn fields. Breach, and land in a bed of yellow fluff.
And watch the bumblebees.

Listen to them.

It's not a buzzing or a whirring
but like a humming.
EXT. VILLAGE – DAY

Smoke rises from some shattered walls of small buildings in a village. It is quiet and calm but there is evidence everywhere of recent chaos.

A young-ish PURJA looks down at her hands and sees black unnatural blood. She lowers her hands to see the grotesque face and body of a monster. Her face is somewhat confused. She is wearing a raggedy tunic.

From within the arms of the monster, a CHILD crawls out, disoriented but unharmed. A WOMAN runs to embrace the child. Purja's attention is snapped back to the world.

A small CHEERING crowd emerges from within, between, and past the buildings. They parade toward Purja.

MAN #1
WE'RE ALIVE!

MAN #2
SHE DID IT! SHE SAVED US!

Purja looks at all the people she saved with a look of wonder. The child pushes away from the woman and stands before Purja. The crowd surrounds them, still cheering and celebrating.

The child hugs Purja and gives her a small, wooden carved fish. It’s a salmon. Purja pauses before grasping her back. She looks at the thing in her hand, makes a fist around it, and smiles.

EXT. BEACH – NIGHT

A bit older Purja stumbles from a body of water onto the shore. The
sky, water, and sand are all black. There are no stars but there is a red hue on the horizon in all directions. It is the hell of the fantasy world our characters reside in.

Purja wears finely made armor. It looks really fabulous but it’s all beat up and there are pieces missing. She now has some real definition in her muscles and looks like she could do some damage to you if she wanted.

She stands proudly but wearily before a larger dark figure.

THE WARDEN towers over the flat landscape. She dons armor of menacing obsidian. Her cloak underneath is so long and flowy that it gets lost in the blackness near the ground. Only her dark mouth is uncovered. Her pose is regal and unmoving. She is lit with an ambient blue light that seems to have no source.

CRACKLING fire, RAIN, SCREAMS, and BLASTS of thunder can be heard but the source is indiscernible.

WARDEN
Your arrival here is premature, if not undeserved. Why are you here?

PURJA
I have much to atone for. I must pay whatever toll now and continue on to hell.

WARDEN
You have no toll.

PURJA
I do. I cannot stand by my actions or leave them unpunished. You must receive me.
WARDEN
I have seen you. Your actions are pure.
You are wrath to those who are evil.

MONTAGE – VARIOUS

1. Purja is seen in the same attire as scene 1, she beats the scene 1 monster with her fists.

WARDEN (V.O.)
Did you not smite Moloch the idol?
Did you not overcome Xaphan's fire?

2. Purja holds the wooden salmon close, now on a chain. She runs through an inferno with a shield and bashes a demon with it. She has a bit more armor on.

WARDEN (V.O.)
Did you not lay waste to the devil's Legion? Not even the beastly Alastor stands before you. Monsters quake in your presence.

3. Purja, with more armor, fights mercilessly in a large crowd of demons. Taking on a whole army by her lonesome.

4. Purja, now in some shiny armor, gives a pretty nice kick to the face of a demon and it blows his head off as he bursts into ashes.

5. Purja stabs a real good looking sword through the head of a giant snake monster with arms and wings.

WARDEN (V.O.)
Even the Leviathan falls to your light.

6. Purja rides atop a gryphon. She brandishes the cool sword, is decked out in some sweet gear, some mad swag, and swoops down
on a Leviathan. Which in this case looks more or less like a giant dragon. She still has the wooden fish.

END MONTAGE

EXT. BEACH – NIGHT

Purja grasps the wooden fish again and has a strained and conflicted look. She looks back to The Warden with anger.

PURJA
I know. I hoped I could continue such heroism, but you don't understand. I've done more than that. I've murdered.

EXT. TOWN – AFTERNOON

Purja is confronted by four challengers. They are clad in armor and armed. Their backs are turned toward an alley with Purja facing them modestly.

The sun is bright but low in the sky. They stand in the aftermath of a battlefield within a town.

PURJA (V.O.)
They made accusations. Accusations that I did not belong in the company of heroes. That my accomplishments were fraudulent or inconsequential.

The challengers laugh and spit at Purja. She stands still but as the prodding continues, her body subtly begins to coil. One of the challengers shoves her. She takes it like a champ and just sorta basks in anger for a second.

PURJA (V.O.)
I was a monster to them.
One of them makes a grasp at the trinket around her neck. Suddenly, all her anger is released and she rushes at the challengers. Cut to next scene before we actually see anything.

**EXT. BEACH – NIGHT**

Purja is on her knees before The Warden in guilt.

**PURJA**
I became what I was so determined to destroy. I killed a person. It wasn't a monster but a PERSON. I was the monster!

**WARDEN**
You are a champion of justice. Those usurpers wanted nothing more than glory and power. They were envious and evil. Their malice did not start nor would it have ended with you.

**PURJA**
Stand aside. THIS is justice.

Purja walks past The Warden and seemingly has a clear path to hell.

**WARDEN**
This is foolery.

A black feathered wing unfolds from the cloak and blocks Purja's path. It's like 20 feet long. Purja turns and they stare at each other for a second.

Purja grabs the wing and swings the angel away. In midair, the other wing bursts out. Before hitting the ground the angel gives a big flap. She rockets back toward Purja. The angel grasps Purja's head with one palm and slams her into the ground.
Purja grabs the hand on her face. Coming up from the ground, she kicks the angel off her and into the air. Still grabbing the hand, Purja pulls her back down. She slams into the ground. With the same hand, Purja breaks the grip and elbows The Warden in the face. The black helm she wears breaks to reveal one blazing white eye.

Purja gets up and stands at The Warden’s feet. The Warden then straightens her wings backward, doing like a backwards pushup with her wings all the way to a standing position.

The Warden grabs Purja by the neck. She lifts her effortlessly.

WARDEN
My judgment is resolute.

Purja lifts herself from the grasp and wraps her legs around The Warden's arm. She twists into a cross arm bar.

The Warden, with Purja on her arm, flies into the air. Then she plummets down into the ground to do an iron man fist slam. Purja realizes this, so in midair she adjusts her legs and pulls a black widow thing to swing around The Warden’s neck and pile-drive her into the ground instead.

Dust and sand fills the air but as Purja backs away, The Warden rises from the dark mess unharmed and expressionless, once again standing between Purja and her path to hell.

PURJA
Fine! I will take it upon myself.

Purja plunges the knife toward her belly. Just before piercing her skin, it stops, shaking violently. Purja is clearly still forcing it in but The Warden’s invisible angel powers are stopping it. She is seen with her hand raised toward Purja.
WARDEN

STOP!

The scene is filled with a bright white light and a SCREECHING coming from all the angel magic and stuff.

EXT. BEACH – MORNING

Purja opens her eyes to see a blue sky with bulbous clouds floating past. The beach she lies on is the same as the one she was previously located at but the sand is beige, the water blue, and the land behind lush with greenery. In other words, back on earth with the fish in her hand.

The body of water is seen to be a flowing river and salmon can be seen jumping out of the water.
Of Grace
Annalyce D’Agostino
Photography
Pluck

Life-bent
sprat-legged muse,
i be you.

Rouse the skull-fog god
who mails the sun on Mondays.

He spools thought-owls seething;
we pick them clean
and cart word burials budding;

home in the soul sum,
trawling logophobia.
Flesh flashing with invention,
his love ripples.

Tome fools jump us in.
Mutes writhing skyward,
we mine breath downed in ether.

Fat on loaves of language,
we sip history
and wrap hunger.
Untitled
Samantha Smith
Colored Pencil
I will arise and go now, and go to the sixth of January.  
Entwined chain links of innocence  
On a day of developmental daze.

We are a dizygotic duo,  
Buds for one thousand and forty weeks with  
Cultivation and double digging in an eternal growing season.

A corresponding pair of partridge berry flowers,  
With roots proffering from a family tree.  
Disquietude weaved by a Jack loom of threaded molecules split in two.

Precocious newborns in consolidation.  
Subsisting soloing souls on a clock with infant hands  
As a cyclical advance in essence.
Fairy Lights
Sarah Carney
Acrylic
11/2

Dear Journal,

I’ve been having disturbing nightmares. Not disturbing as in I’m fucking my brother or stringing peoples’ organs up on a clothes-line. Disturbing in a different way.

I’m walking around my life only to find that I have done something horrible, but am not privy to what. My parents cry when they look at me and my friends spit in my face; their betrayal feels like a hand clenching around my heart. I go through this dream desperately trying to discover what I did. Did I kill someone? Hurt someone? In my dream, I keep going farther. I blow with the wind towards hyperborean villages in the North, green steppes of Eurasia, rice fields and bustling farmer markets and castles, trying to find a single soul who will tell me what exactly I did.

But though nobody will tell me, I begin noticing a beautiful boy with long brown hair amidst each scene in the background—just across the street, walking away, getting on a bus, turning a corner. He has big headphones and wears a tracksuit jacket. In my dream, I suddenly realize this boy is the key to my salvation. He must know. He does. But right before I decide to follow him, I feel the lift of my subconscious dragging me back to a bleary morning.

~Madeline

11/6

Dear Journal,

Okay day. My boss gave me a stern talking to about the wet floors at the ice cream parlor. I told him that I didn’t touch the mop today. A mother’s child had slipped and she threatened to sue. I felt guilty for the rest of the shift. Isn’t it bad to feel guilty about something you didn’t do?

However, I bought muffin mix so my friend and roommate Molly and I could talk about disappointing sexual experiences. We haven’t had time to hang out in a while. She says I should stick up for myself more, and I will. Plus, haven’t had those dreams lately.

~Madeline
11/16

Badder day. That’s not a word, I know, but it should be.

Molly wants me to let me know that she’s leaving at the end of our lease in a month and I need to find another roommate. She’s moving in with her boyfriend. I’m not a fan of him. He makes the bathroom smell like a communal trash can and flicks my head when he walks by sometimes. Molly won’t hear a word of it. What a surprise.

My philosophy professor was unhappy when I gave a blunt answer to her question. She asked me why Homer’s *Odyssey* is so enduring. Still pissed about my housing situation, I told her that it features a boring male protagonist and monsters so it was bound to entertain anyone who’s ever seen an action film.

11/18

Something is definitely going on, something unnatural.

I’ve been trying to find a roommate with no luck. All of my friends live at home, and I don’t want a stranger. I’m failing philosophy. Right now I hear Molly having sex with her boyfriend in the other room. Ever since he’s come around she’s been blaming me for eating her cereal. Except I bought those boxes of cereal.

I tried talking to my therapist, but she moved someone else’s appointment up over mine and I wasn’t able to get an explanation. It was like she just deleted me from her calendar.

I called my best friend Gerard, crying my eyes out. He was silent for most of the call, then coldly told me that I was just adding more strife in his hectic life. He’d never spoken to me like that. He said I had caused him “anguish and heartbreak”. I’m so confused, journal. Because he had a crush on me in the 8th grade? That’s my guess.

Why is everything turning to shit? What did I do?

11/21

Today was the worst day of my life. But I’m not sure if this is my life anymore. Actually, I don’t think this is life, period.

My boss fired me today. I can’t believe it. He accused me of things that weren’t even possible for me to have done. He called to let
me know I needed to pick up my last paycheck and turn in my apron. He spoke over my protests. I’m not sure what to do. It’s a family-owned business so there’s no union I can complain to.

I tried to go to my philosophy class today but someone closed the door in my face. I went to the registrar to complain but the moment I walked in, the receptionist told me that they were closed. There were four other students in line who just watched me as I left the office. I had a panic attack in the hallway and texted every single one of my friends.

June: Madeline, I told you not to contact me after we talked. I’m blocking you now.

Gerard: Fuck off

Justin: I can’t believe you have the fucking nerve to text me after what happened. Jesus Christ, just leave us all alone...

(3 minutes later)

…you’ve caused us enough strife. Catie is upset, please just stop

Called and texted every single person’s number I have, even people I never talk to, with no response. Several times I was blocked, even by my brother. I ran to the student services building where mediators and therapists gave sessions. After being rejected by all of the therapists who suddenly found themselves on their lunch breaks, I pleaded with one of them to help me get to a mental health center because I must be having a psychotic breakdown. I was shut down swiftly when three of them threatened to call the campus police if I didn’t leave immediately.

When I got back to the apartment, Molly jumped up, demanding why I’d trashed the kitchen. It was a complete mess, like a thief had tried to find something while I was gone. I screamed that it was her boyfriend, and while I was running up the stairs, she called me an ugly, freeloading slut. When she said it, it didn’t even sound like her voice.

I’ve been thinking and thinking about everything. I’ve been thinking that maybe I need to find that boy. The boy with the long brown hair. Maybe he goes to this school. Maybe I’ve seen him on campus before and only my subconscious knows.

Please let this be a game. I want this to be a game.
11/24

I haven't slept. I did something very strange today in the bathroom. I took a pair of scissors and cut off a foot of my hair. Then I stared at myself for another three minutes before finding myself shaving my head completely. I left the mess there—if Molly was going to blame me for something, it ought to be something I actually did.

I went to a little beauty store downtown and bought myself a pink wig. When the cashier asked why I was doing this, I told her that I wanted people to think I was someone else so they would treat me better. I left feeling less sane than I ever have felt and it was deeply unsettling.

I went on campus to find the boy. My hair did nothing to disguise me. In fact, a guy asked me if the carpet matches the drapes and I told them to fuck off. Then he and his buddies immediately smashed me into the building beside us and pummeled me into the bushes. They took my wig. I asked them what I did while they were tearing me apart, and they just continued, as if they hadn't heard me, even when I apologized over and over

I need that boy. I need him to save my life

11/26

no sign of him. i’ve gone all around campus looking. i went to the boy’s lockers in the gym trying to find him but someone called the police and i was escorted off campus. when i laughed in their faces, they began screaming at me about respect or something and threatened to put me in jail. they said they were tired of throwing me off campus and i began sobbing that i never meant any harm, that i was sorry even though i didn’t know why. they said i’m a no good insane drug addled slut but I’ve never done drugs once in my life, one time i had wine in church but jesus tastes like shit

i asked them what i did, was it something i said? was it something i did, did i hurt someone?

did i harm another innocent creature? is it because i don’t believe in god? i’m so sorry. i’m so sorry for whatever i did. i’m so sorry, i would do anything to prove it

i don’t know where to find the boy, i’m losing myself
i’m sorry for what i did god, i’m sorry, have mercy

11/28
the boy, i saw the boy, boy spotted, he exists, just like in the dream
he had long auburn hair and he had a red and blue track jacket. he had big headphones
he’s beautiful, god please let this boy save me

11/28
The strangest thing that has ever happened in my life just happened.
I was walking to class and this bald girl came up to me, dressed in all black. Her eyes were bloodshot, nose smeared with dried snot. She looked like she was having a psychotic episode. She asked me if I knew what she’d done and I said no. She stood there for a while with a face like a mask. Then she began to cry and tried to embrace me, saying, “You’re the only one in the world.”
Before I could respond, two custodians, seemingly from the building we were in front of, grabbed her from behind and began to drag her away. She was screaming. I asked them what was going on, and one said, “You can’t trust this one. We all know her around here. She’s a nightmare,” and when I asked what she did, they ignored me.
While they dragged her away, she screamed out for me to remember her, that her name was Madeline. She screamed out that I was the key to her salvation. I even asked a local policeman about her, and he said that she had done terrible things in the past, but couldn’t tell me what they were. Couldn’t, or wouldn’t? Creepy.

12/02
Something strange is going on. I’ve been having dreams ever since I met that girl Madeline. In these dreams, I’m hated by everyone, my family and friends and peers. Everyone hates me, even strangers. And when I go up to them and ask why, they won’t tell me, only saying that what I’ve done can never be forgiven. But that girl is always in the background, just out of earshot, just out of reach, where I can’t call out to her.
I need to find her again. I need to tell her that she isn’t crazy, because people are treating me differently now. My brother just accused me of sleeping with his girlfriend—impossible, I’ve never even met her. My boss screamed at me in front of customers for something I didn’t even do. My professor failed me on a paper that she proofread as brilliant just the week before when she read my draft. Something isn’t adding up.

I need to find Madeline. I need to find her and tell her that neither of us are guilty.

—Max
Poe’s Pendulum
Allison Daly
Charcoal and Marker
i hope you understand

i. first draft

no one understands
the raging war
that lies inside my heart
my mind

there isn’t much i can tell you
my talent does not suffice,
but i want someone
to know why i am this way

i haven’t shown emotion
in such a long, long time
i cry, oh yes i cry
and i scream, oh how i scream

but when i cry i’d rather die
when i scream, i wish to kill
when i smile i want to fly
…but i can’t

no one understands
how much i want to leave,
feel the grass graze my fingertips,
the breeze upon my cheek

i remember a time,
at least i think i do,
when we were merry
and i was warm

and yet when i think of it
i am so, so cold
and my heart is shattered
my soul not very far behind

i know this does not make sense
it’s hard to understand
no one does, after all
but you need to see

i am so, so alone
my world is duller than monochrome
and that war i mentioned
rages on inside
as i continue to fade away

my answer does not lie here
in this world
it never has
and it never will

shh, it’s alright
it’s not what it sounds like
trust me, after all, like i said
no one understands

ii. second draft

bleak and gray,
the sky is dull
and it is cold
or is that me?

my chest aches still
like a cold you just can’t shake,
an itch you just can’t reach,
a good cry you never quite get around to

i need to leave
i need to disappear,
to run far, far, far away,
leave not a single trace

to the mountains i’ll go
with their grandeur,
or maybe the sea
with its boundless possibilities

but i beg and plead and cry
to you and i
please let me go

iii. final

i love you so
but with deep regret
my parting words,

why do i want to run away?
because it’s like dying
without the promise
of permanence
Watching the War Pass
Patrick Okrasinski
Digital
Friends with Benefits

Adriana Tapia

Love me only in the dark.
Where our bodies exist in the flesh and in shadows casted on the walls.
Obscure dark dancers mirroring our movements—sketches of human beings role-playing romance.

Love me only where the light can’t find us.
Where the untruths and unanswered questions are put to bed;
Do you love me?
I love your skin against mine; the way the goose bumps come to life beneath my fingers.

When the covers are pulled back and the darkness enfoils us, we communicate in a language that’s different.
This is a Morse code relayed by a series of breaths.
Breathe harder if I’m doing all of the right things.

Do you love me?

Exhale—

Moan my name so I remember that I’m here, that this is real.
This moment, my body, hold it in your hands.
It pulsates to the beat of the night; the moonlight soaks our flesh in bleach.
In this Egyptian cotton microcosm, we are cleansed, we are born again, we are freed.

Love me only until the sun comes up.
Until the first hint of dawn peers through the blinds and paints stripes on our backs.
Rat’s nest hair and whiskey breath.
My body ticks at the anticipation and I rise like clockwork, avoiding eyes and embracing the fresh air, praying, please, please, please don’t love me.
River Otter
Mia Rico
Acrylic
Abuelita

The sadness is seen in her eyes
The questions linger in her mind
Hands trembling, unsteady grip
Legs no longer able to support
She knows, she tries, she cries
Mushroom:
1. An umbrella that drinks rain.
2. Ghost-shapes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Earthworm:
1. Coils of cartilage, shrugging in instinctual unison.
2. Five- to nine-inch nails screwed through dirt-depths.

Bed of Zinnias:
A box of Crayola crayons, standing tall in spine-straight array.
Heads protrude from their wrappings:
Venetian Red, Maximum Yellow, and Royal Purple.

Lichen:
1. Grandmother’s lace-work, framed by bark and hung for hiker.
2. Misshapen mole marked by a scalloped edge, likely to metastasize. Ever-hungry for lick of fresh flesh.

Acorn:
1. Bombs of the Blitzkrieg—Dropped from Lufthansa heights, bursting sharp shrapnel and sound, spilling pulp on impact, interrupting reverie, routine, or rhythm of lovemaking.
2. Clear cheek, pointed chin, hairless chemo skull kept warm by a tight-fitting ski cap.

Fern:
A canopy shading fairy populations, preserving Queen Mab’s alabaster complexion.
Ant: 1. C.I.A. agent, suited in severest black. He trespasses in your home, scouting intelligence and bread crumb. Wired with antenna, he’ll know the secrets of your kitchen and bedroom before you know he exists.

2. Serf, sworn to serve a face never seen. Married to the land in sweat and slow time, he harvests ripened grain, feeding the feckless in the faraway palace.

Birch: A rolled paper cigarette, pallid and flaking. Smeared into the hard horizon of an ashtray.

Honeysuckle: Golden throats, swallowing light and dew-jewel and the tipsy aphid, looking for his next drink—thirsty for pearlescent beads of beckoning nectar.

Moss: Frazzled patch of fuzz, sprouting from Grandpa’s veined head, a newborn’s warm dome, or Daddy’s still-firm cheek.
Chewers
Tiffany Case
Mixed Media
Newlywed

Shakeema Edwards

I hate Manhattan.

No moral judgement
on those who choose
to live in this disaster film,
but why I let you lure me here
from West Milford is baffling.

You’re away on business,
fly first-class to Suva or Seychelles,
while I take the A train home to Hell’s Kitchen.

Love is a bottle of Balkan vodka,
but I’m drinking Tanqueray gin,
so why’d I take that pay cut for your promotion,
or surrender my isolation for yours?

I’m already plotting our divorce.
I’d murder you, Lyle, but then
I’d have to plan the memorial.
She likes your slicked back hair, clicked in cuff links,  
Pressed pants—sharp crease—and shined up shoes.  
You smirk at the mirror looking at your  
Muscles tightening through your thin shirt,  
To pull secure a Half Windsor knot.  

Let the lady lead, hold the door as she passes.  
Study the slim of her waist before  
She turns and her hair breathes lotus and iris.  
It’s exotic, and it’s feminine.  
Her scent simmers at the exact moment,  
Her heels tip the marble.  

Slip the bartender a Hamilton on the first round, Jackson when she buys,  
Because money heavies her scotch-ridden hand.  

Toast your drink ice-cold.  
The glass jingles like  
Keys fumbling in your hands,  
Stumbling in your doorway later.  

Your lady would like a menthol.  
Light hers, then yours, and wait,  
She’ll talk, you’ll listen, and pause.  
You’ll smile, she’ll giggle, then leave.  

The moonlight breaks up the darkness,  
As she deciphers her dressings from the Persian.  
In her hurry she pauses at the doorway,  
She looks, you’re still, the door quietly clicks closed,  
And then you can stop pretending to be asleep.
Octo-Tree
Lindsey Filo
Pencil and Ink
This face-stealer behind walls
must take snapshots of my visage
without my knowing
and steep them in silver sap
to preserve me as a prehistoric centipede.

I meet my goblin daily with a forced politeness
before bowing my head to the sink in prayer.
The mug-mugger saves the newest copy
for my eyes alone,
the morning news plastered over my eyes,
as it cackles and runs away
like some ill-mannered paper boy
leaving the day’s headlines to crash onto my doorstep.

I feed the vampire with the morning/night morsels,
the scraps of pubescent craters
and charcoal-rimmed stares no one else wants.
It thinks it’s getting a prime cut.
Yet every day I am forced to stare into iris wells
collapsing like dying stars.
Crueler than Lake Erie,
it catches my reflection without sending the rain to take it away.
It demands the ransom of a fairer face.
I let the faucet run.
I forget the face is mine.
Russian Nesting Dolls
Allison Daly
Oil
In the kitchen there was a fruit bowl, 
a dream bowl, cradling every digestible whim
a moon-shaped ceramic orb with chipped lip, 
piled with peelable treasures. Brimming
nucleus of a living kitchen-organism, 
feeding bellies with
bananas in unzippable jackets, 
stickered sweets carted on trains from Chile
bruisy-purple pomegranates and dimpled pear, 
wanton orange with belly-button aimed to the air,
grapes arranged like blue drops of caviar 
around a serpentine vine—pluckable, snatchable
by locust-hand and glutton-horde of child, 
sating the stomach-pocket until scrape of dinner dish,
until the miracle bowl of honey and pulp, 
the magic bowl screamed bare.

In the kitchen there is a fruit bowl, 
a dust bowl, a gaping mouth emptied of teeth
a once-beauty faded, naked of pearl and gold.
Wall Street sputtered cold—Daddies stopped winning wages,
and the waif-children waited for fruit to fill rim, 
gorgeous rainbow-fruit to fall from the sky, as it always had,
with questioning gun-eye pointed at Dad, 
and God.
Morning Light
Mia Rico
Digital
In the center of urban motion sits an oasis in a valley of skyscrapers.

I have come across the watering hole for the animals of the concrete jungle. As the sun begins to rise, colorful birds stand with saxophones and open cases, stone-faced jaguars prowl in suits, and gazelles quietly graze, holding their coffee cups and breakfast sandwiches.

I sit, stopping for a while in the midst of exploring, holding a notepad.

Outwardly, it is not quiet. The hum of traffic bores through the trees and the wind rushes through the leaves, while people clamber in and out of taxis. They all demand to be heard. The sound is slowly seeping into the space around me, demanding my attention.

However, the green giants that surround me keep the metallic noise at bay, challenging their steel relatives. Nature and urban development create a symphony that is too enchanting to completely tune out. The trees move like whispering violins and the city noise provides this orchestra with its brass line.

I find that I can breathe easily here—I am taken away to an alternate universe, away from the stress of life and away from the city noise I love, but sometimes cannot bear. Surrounded by chaos that is controlled by grids and street numbers, where I sit is the nucleus of a captivating disaster.

There is never a moment of complete silence; a constant reminder that I don’t have to feel alone in a sea of people. When my thoughts scatter, the distant hum of movement fills my ears like an old friend welcoming me in my loneliness. I’ve grown accustomed to the sounds of cars cutting through the air and rustling leaves and I long after them when silence becomes deafening.

I must continue my expedition so I stand, clutching the oil pastels and Pitt pens that lay strewn across my lap. The ground gathers me, holding me by my ankles as the images I want to sketch and places I want to write about cloud my field of vision.

Inspired by the floating melodies of street musicians and au-
umn’s color palette, I leave the park, immediately greeted by a wave of excitement. This is a different type of life, unlike the slow, steady trees. I’m searching for a place with a calm air so my ideas go undisturbed as they fill the space around me.

I exhale, slowly scattering my ideas as I begin to make my journey through the busy streets. I am ready to begin my exploration once again.
Pitstop
Moses Maiello
Digital
How can you win a game when the rules are ever changing?
And the scale you are graded upon has nothing to do with you
and everything to do with what you are not.
You are always on the losing side.

Your genetics become you.
You are your uterus.
Your bra size.
“36-24-36”
You are never a person
You are a mannequin,
dressed and undressed by the ideals of others.

Add the make-up,
Subtract the clothes,
Divide by the crowd,
Multiply by the standard.
Your personality is not an element of this equation.

You will learn what you want does not matter.
You will learn what does is a tyranny of shoulds.
“You should smile more”
“You should take it as a compliment”
You should consider others’ feelings before your own.
You should make sure what you need to feel safe doesn’t make others uncomfortable.

Cross your legs when you sit.
Lose weight.
Do not build outwards,
Instead, implode inwards.
“Do not take up space you don’t deserve”

“Men don’t like women who curse”
“Men don’t like dark lipstick”
“Men don’t like love handles”
Women don’t like being killed for saying “no.”
This Day Daddy Died

Shakeema Edwards

It’s a meatless Friday in Hoboken,
nothing but bone, and I’m buying
a breakfast Stromboli from Sbarro,
listening to Adele on the radio.
Not the radio, no one but you listens
to the radio. Seth calls at 12:03 to say you’re gone.
“Gone?
Where does a recluse go?”
“To the grave.”
I leave work before the lunch hour,
walk Sinatra to see the Hudson,
think about swimming,
think about drowning,
think about your body being somewhere
in Secaucus, a blunt burnt to the stub
between your index and thumb,
waiting for your final drag.
The Seeker
Sullisey G. Gutiérrez
Photography
The overhead light glared off the glass coffee table, marred only by the scratches and spots of coagulated food crumbs and pill powders that had appeared of late. My vision faltered beneath it, the world spinning and prismatic spots dancing across the living room. It couldn’t have been that empty fifth of Jack, lying at the table’s edge. Nor that translucent orange vial whose contents filled the void left by evanescent memories. No. Just the damn light.

I stumbled forward to flip the switch. The glow from the television, looping Shankman’s *A Walk to Remember*, would suffice. But the dark, hardwood floor moved on me. Why wouldn’t it just fucking stay still? I held my gaze beneath me, trudging across the room and leaning against the sheetrock like a newborn might taking his first steps. My hand slid across its cool surface, dislodging picture frames from their hangings. THUMP. Our first date atop the Empire State Building after dancing at that club down on West 47th met the floor. CRASH. That day we spent apple picking out in Chester was similarly introduced. CRACK. Our honeymoon trip to Disney shattered, the glass splaying out in all directions. CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH. It didn’t matter anymore. She was gone.

FLICK. The room plummeted into velvety blackness. I staggered back to my seat. The floor listed and swayed like a brigantine beneath a dangerous tide. Without the luxury of my handhold, I fell. Hard. But the wood felt comfortable, its touch cool against my fevered cheeks. I sank in, welcoming the darkness that enveloped sluggish limbs and drooping eyelids. Three breaths and… oblivion.

We waltzed across the effervescent night; leisurely at first, slowly, like a long fuse ignited by the final flare of the setting sun. The pace quickened as the detonating cord climbed its way over treetops and mountain peaks, becoming more of a vigorous salsa while gravity and stifling atmosphere slid away. Faster now, wilder, like a jazzy Lindy Hop as spark chased the exact point where exosphere meets eternity. A burgeoning crescendo as it raced those final inches to beat the looming sunrise, and, as spark and blasting cap collided, a blinding brilliance in an explosion of stars. We rested then, smil-
ingly, watching the sun’s light grace the east coast from high above. I turned, facing the final frontier, heartened I no longer had to explore it alone. With her, I could—

Scott? A voice materialized at the periphery of my consciousness, trickling down through the remnants of alcoholic haze. It was a woman’s voice, accompanied by light footsteps up the staircase and into the apartment. Must be Jamie. I hoped she would climb back in bed with me. As the footsteps drew nearer, I turned to face my wife.

Jesus Christ.

No. Not Jamie. The condescending intonations infecting those words could never belong to my wife. They belied a much darker presence. I forced heavy eyelids open, and amidst the daylight slicing through naked windows, I glimpsed the spindly outline of my sister, silhouetted like a descending condor.

Deanne was the fair-weather type. After my engagement to Jamie, she had resurfaced after five years of having evaded my company and ignored my existence. The only real pleasure she experienced in life derived from a bottle of wine and the assassination of another’s character. Jamie had welcomed her with open arms, and I had begrudgingly obliged. It had made her happy. For three years, Deanne kept the act of doting sister, assisting Jamie with the wedding plans and moving us into our apartment. It appeared the farce was finally over.

What? I replied, forcing myself over. My head pounded with the ferocity of a cornered man’s fists. My eyelids closed again. I hadn’t had this feeling in years.

Are you kidding me? Look at yourself! I thought we were done with this shit.

No response. I fell upright.

Get your shit together and be downstairs in five minutes or I’m leaving without you.

Where are we going?

Jesus, Scott. I can’t deal with this right now.

She stomped down the stairs, and memories flooded through gray-washed consciousness: walking in from work and finding Jamie on the floor; running red lights and stop signs on the way to the hospital, holding her limp hand and crying her name; the doctor’s two
hushed words forcing me to my knees. A void crept in and settled near the center of my chest, aching like the ghost of an amputated limb.

I stood, the floor still listing, but now under lethargic waves of a sad sea. I hastened as fast as my jelly legs would allow; Deanne really would leave without me. Donned the ceremonious black suit and tie hanging in the back of the bedroom closet, stubbed my toe on the black box beneath her shoe rack, unearthed the fifth from beneath the bed, filled the flask I had bought the night before, washed down four bars with the leftovers, walked past the mirror, down the stairs, and into the glaring afternoon.

There was a certain irony of cloudless skies and gentle sunlight on days like that. I couldn’t figure out if the universe was taunting me or honoring her. I looked straight up at the endless expanse of blue.

Fuck you, I said. I was supposed to go first. You hear me? It was supposed to be me.

I closed the car door behind me, sealing myself in with Deanne’s contempt and cloying air freshener.

You’re a fucking mess, she said.

Ignoring the disdainful look, I stared out the window. The whiskey’s warm embrace was starting to take me, seeping through intestinal linings and racing to fill that cold void in the center of my chest. I watched as the apartment receded in the sideview.

No music, no words, just the soft hum of tires hurtling across asphalt as we headed down the Parkway. Faces of the other drivers floated by like trash on the Jersey shoreline, contorted in concern at the state of their mundane lives. One woman chatted animatedly on her cell phone, probably bitching to a friend of her husband’s negligence with gesticulating hand motions. Another man screamed violently into his, likely all worked up about the job he hadn’t even arrived at yet. The world carried on, its appalling lack of gratitude and indifference to all outside the realm of self fueling its endless rotations.

The bars started to kick as we pulled up to the church. It was a large church, its shadow swallowing the entirety of the grounds in a bluish haze. Despite the sun, now nearing its apex in the smog.
sky, my vision began to dim. Xanax and alcohol are like that. Taken separately in copious quantities they function like a water filter over
the cortex: only the purest memories leak through. Taken concomi-
tantly, even in small doses, however, it’s like the aftermath of a power
station failure: instant blackout. The silky bliss of oblivion descended
upon me like a dealer does a white boy hanging around the corner of
175th and Broadway too long; eagerly welcomed.

I came to under the covers of night. A slice of faint moon-
light trickled in through the naked window, stretching across a cold,
hardwood floor and illuminating an empty space next to me. The
black comforter and ghostly scent of Hanae Mori perfume seemed
familiar. I turned on the bedside lamp and was greeted by a picture
of Jamie and myself ice skating up at Bear Mountain last December.
A vase of wilting orchids and a battered copy of Romeo and Juliette
lay on either side. Her side. I turned back over to mine. The bedside
alarm clock read 3:45.

Fuck.

I jammed my hands into my pockets. Nothing but a pair of
keys. My sister’s keys. Shit. I ripped off my jacket, alcohol and mas-
cara stains gleaming in the moonlight, and upended its contents:
pack of cigarettes, crack lighter, empty flask, and, finally, my phone.
It sprang to life. Thirty missed calls. Eighteen new text messages. I
opened my inbox.

**My New Brother:** Dude where are you? Everyone’s freaking out.
You good?

**Mother:** Scott… wherever you are, you better get your ass back here.

**Deanne:** Scott if this is a cry for help it’s fucking pathetic. Stop mak-
ing everything about you and get your ass back here.

**Deanne:** YOU STOLE ME FUCKING CAR?! If there’s a
single scratch on it I’ll kill you. Pick up your phone… NOW.

**Mother:** Scott… Do not show your face at my house again. We had
enough of this the first time. This time you’ve gone too far.

**My New Mom:** Scott, I hope you are okay. I know how this
is for you. But please, go get help. We don’t want this for you.
Jamie wouldn’t want this.

**Deanne:** I’m filing a police report. I WILL make sure you end up
in jail. You’re not getting off the hook this time. Have a nice
Jamie’s Pops: Scott, if this is how you repay us for all that we have given you, then you are no longer a part of this family. I do not want a response to this. Goodbye.

Deanne: Still no response? Grow a pair. I hope you I reared back and wailed the phone into the wall. Fuck them. All of them. If they wanted to canter out on their self-righteous high horses, so be it. If they wanted me to disappear from their lives, I would gladly oblige them.

I walked over to the closet, knelt down, and pulled out a black metal safe from beneath Jamie’s shoe rack. I spun the lock’s dial, stopping at 10, 31, and 10 again: the day I had met her. She had never known the significance of that day. I had tried to show her through gestures both simple and extravagant: in coming home with flowers for no other reason than they made her happy, in asking her to marry me atop the Rockefeller building so the whole world would see, in forsaking my old life so we could perhaps live and grow old together.

There was nothing stopping me now from resuming that hell-bound path I inexorably returned to like a lobotomized schizo. CLICK. The lock opened, and I lifted the lid with faltering fingers. A single object laid there, its sleek, silver surface dulled in the soft lamp-light by a thin veil of dust. Jamie had never known the content of the safe. It was better that way.

I pulled out my .357 and wiped the dust with my sleeve. It almost looked the same as I had left it two years ago: a worn, wooden handle and long, silver barrel lightly scratched on the left side where it had fallen from my belt and skidded across the asphalt on 175th. But tonight, its vigilant luster had been replaced by a sardonic gleam. I popped out the cylinder to inspect the six chambers.

Five rounds. In the sixth, where the last bullet should have been smiling back at me, was a rolled-up cylinder of what looked like paper. I dug it out and smoothed its curling edges. A large, loopy script greeted me: her handwriting. I moved back to the bed and sat on the edge: my side. I sat the pistol in my lap and read:

My love,

Yes, I know what’s in the safe. And no, I’m not mad. I know why you’re
holding onto this. Your concern for me has always been the thing I’ve loved about you most. You’ve protected me like nobody else has. I hope you know I would do the same.

If you’re reading this, something bad has probably happened. I don’t know what it is, but it probably has something to do with me. As touched as I am, please think about what you’re going to do. You’re worth so much more than this, my love. You have something wonderful to offer this world, and you can’t do it dead or behind bars. I know you don’t really want either of those things. And you know I certainly don’t either.

Please remember that I love you now with all of my heart and so much more. I always will, Scotty. For as much as you say I saved you, I don’t think you know how much you’ve saved me. You’ve given me love. You’ve given me purpose. You’ve given me hope. Please never forget that. I don’t know what I would do without you.

I love you Scotty,
Jamie

I swallowed hard. The gun might as well have gone off.

How am I supposed to go on without you?

Tears rolled down my cheeks and dropped onto the trembling page, blotting the words as I read and reread the last paragraph. The world spun beneath my feet, the crescent moon and shining stars sliding across the waning night. The burning in my throat faded. The weight in my chest lessened. My eyes began to dry.

Under the weight of such colossal emotional mantle, a resolve had hardened and crystallized. I knew what I needed to do. For her. Always for her.

I opened my eyes and stared. Not at the instrument of death still sitting in my lap, nor at the shattered glass that littered the floor near my feet. Not at the sun that was peeking over the horizon, nor at the lights clicking on across the street. No. I looked over at the bedside table. Her side. The picture from Bear Mountain, the vase of orchids, the book she never stopped reading. I inhaled deeply, faint traces of Hanae Mori perfume suffusing my lungs with the vestiges of her earthly presence and smiled. She would never have to know.

I picked up the gun, spun the cylinder RHEEEE, flipped it
back in, rested the barrel tasting bitter and urgent like blood on my tongue, pulled the hammer back CLICK, and closed my eyes. I pulled the trigger and... nothing.
You Said “I Love You” Here
Annalyce D’Agostino
Mixed Media
i.
Look up at the sky, my darling,
and taste the stars.
Press them to your lips—never mind
the burn—and feel how clean they are.

ii.
Why stop at the stars, sweetheart?
You are brighter than their long-gone light.
Take the sun, so you can know
what you are on the inside.

iii.
Will you claim the cosmos for me, lover?
And come back, triumphant,
trailing stardust from your palms
and nebulae from your mouth.

iv.
Love me in the language of space.
Let me taste the Milky Way on your tongue,
carve constellations into me with your kisses,
trace the trajectory of us with comets.
Untitled
Samantha Smith
Watercolor and Ink
his shadow had been silently looming
behind me while i stood in the sand
and forced my gaze
onward.

i could see the ocean sparkling in the distance;
you were a frothy mix of
salt diamonds and
whispering waves and
sapphire incandescence.

*come forward.*

i took my steps and his shadow sunk
lower and lower
until he slipped away from me.
(i didn't need a shadow when i had an ocean.)

as i approached the water,
the sun coaxed your reflection into
my eyes.
i did not care about
those clear little shards
scattered before the coast.

they were magnifying glasses for the sand.

you pulled me in closer and your crashes
sighed lullabies to me.
i'd never been sung to before.
i lowered my head and the water
kissed my feet, gentle like
the soliloquys of the moon.
i knew how to swim.
i wanted to swim.

but then i noticed the broken bottle bits surrounding my feet,
tiny windows branded onto torn skin
and murky blood.

the water would only sting a little bit.

i inhaled the sea salt and stepped into your waves.
burning, burning, burning—
i exhaled the pain and reveled in your kinesis.

good things never last, of course.

there was another girl
nestled in the waves ahead of me.
she was further in than i was
and she was humming your song.
toxic, alluring, precarious.
my mind swirled like
a maelstrom tango
while you nudged me
out onto the shore.

high noon was reserved for two.

i crawled through the sand,
sizzling cuts and
aching bones and
broken heart
and all.
i was alone.
i needed to find his shadow again.

i needed to hear him cry,

*come back.*

come back.
night-hours wrap the slump of human form,
day-burdened eyelids ripple, flirt—finally kiss.
mind’s home is conquered without siege or sword,
fingers and toes are summed and muted in honeyed armistice,
seduced by clean whispers of freedom through sleep-promise.

a miniature messenger runs mail to the brain,
winding down cerebral corridor,
tiptoeing wide spools of skull-thread and mystery-yarn,
announcing the news to every fooled sense, and clamoring day’s defeat.

a nocturnal landscape is born within bones—owl and marrow mingle.
neurons bend in the strange fog of semi-consciousness,
trawling for smudge of familiar face, feature, fragment
to assemble a mosaic of puzzled association.

sprat wriggle to the surface of mismatched thought,
jump and splash in silver-bottomed pools of distant-present memory,
scaled hieroglyphics to be harvested and deciphered by candlelight.

the table is set with Fishermen’s pride: loaves and delicious dreams,
brain’s bounty to be tasted before dawn
His Majesty
Annalyce D’Agostino
Mixed Media
#Iftheygunmedown

Shakeema Edwards

When you find my body sprawled
on the corner of Broughton
and Broad, gunned down in the dark
without advocate or judge,
bury me

next to Trayvon and Mike,
next to Freddie and Eric,
next to Sandra and Samuel,

next to Emmett
—fourteen—
and Tamir
—twelve—
whose adolescent bodies
cast men-sized silhouettes
over the covered eyes of Justice,

next to Martin and Marcus and Malcolm,
next to McKay’s “If We Must Die,”

next to Barack’s
hope,
next to his
change,

and on my stone etch
Langston’s eternal question,
“How many Native Africans does it take
to make a poem?”
Silence surrounded seventeen swamis sitting serenely. Suddenly, something sounded suspicious.

Staring, Swami Sammy saw several small schoolchildren scrambling southward. Sammy screamed superlatives, straggling sideways, searching space, stalking scrambling schoolchildren superbly.

Sensing severed silence, Supreme Swami Santini silently stood, significantly scribing something. Santini shook Sammy’s shoulder. Sammy seemed shocked, seeing Santini’s scroll: *Sorry, Swami Sammy, silent swamis shouldn’t speak, so summarily, Sammy shall serve seven seasons shackled.*

Since sinfully speaking several strong sentences, Sammy stayed silent. Seated, shackled, starving, surviving seemed suffice.

Soon Santini started strolling, silently sneaking, slowly, somewhat somnambulant, sorrowfully seeking Sammy. Swami Santini sought Sammy’s smile, saw subconscious signs, seemingly saying: *Speak Swami Santini! Speak!*

Suddenly seeing Supreme Swami Santini, Sammy sat surprised. “Stand, Swami Sammy!” Santini said, softly separating Sammy’s shackles, “should speaking swamis seem shamed? Should some self sacrifice? Shall sound successfully sever sworn silence?”

Swami Sammy smiled, saying, “Surely, Swami Santini, speaking seems simple.”
Patrick Okrasinski is currently a sophomore in the illustration depart- ment.

Annalyce D’Agostino is a junior pursuing a major in family and child studies and a minor in communication studies. She fancies the artsy things in life, like digitally manipulating her photographs on free iPad apps. Other hobbies include spontaneous dancing, reading journal articles, impromptu singing, and identifying cloud formations on social outings. Cheers!

Sullisey G. Gutiérrez- Hi! I am Sullisey. I am currently a junior at Montclair State University aspiring to be a Spanish professor. I am very passionate when it comes to my hobbies which are: writing poetry, photography, and reading. I ALWAYS carry around my journal just in case inspiration hits me. I consider my camera my best friend since it captures those special moments that will live on and on...

Mia Rico- Despite my name, I am not “Missing In Action.” I am currently a freshman majoring in animation/illustration. Art has been my passion ever since I was little. A lot of my inspiration comes from various video games and animated movies. Some of my favorite video games include: Pokemon, Ni No Kuni, and Okami. Some of my favorite animated movies include: The Lion King, Children Who Chase Lost Voices, and Big Hero 6. If I’m not doing art, playing video games, or watching my favorite movie, you can catch me making horrible puns that I think are really entertaining (don’t actually go catch me please, I’m not a Pokemon). I also have an undying love for SpongeBob references. Besides proving mayonnaise to be an instrument, it is my dream to someday work for an animation studio like Disney, Pixar, DreamWorks, or Studio Ghibli.

Shakeema Edwards is in her final semester at Montclair State and would like to thank her creative writing professors for their guidance and The Normal Review for publishing her work.
Kristy Lim is a sophomore English major who is applying to the teacher education program in the upcoming spring semester. Now that she has gotten the standard information out, she can commence with writing a slightly more personal biography. Back in the good ol’ days, Kristy enjoyed reading *Harry Potter*, writing stories about her alter ego Super Cat, and drawing. Not much has changed except for the fact that Kristy’s bookshelf has expanded to include many other young adult book series and random solo novels. She has also abandoned Super Cat and has taken up writing poetry instead. Furthermore, she no longer draws, but (sometimes) takes (somewhat) cool pictures instead. So, basically, Kristy has changed. Like Michael Scott, she often starts sentences without knowing where they will go. Actually, that is not really true. She would just like to use it as an excuse for writing a contradicting biography. And to include a reference to *The Office*. kthxbye

Adriana Tapia is a Hispanic, curly-headed, awkward mermaid. Master of few things; slightly proficient at many; hopes to one day get paid to write things—still hasn’t quit her day job; can probably be found thinking of a master plan or sleeping.

Elizabeth Aviles- I am a part-time adult student and I am proud to attend MSU. I am an English major and a proud senior this year! I enjoy writing poems. I find myself writing when a moment or a feeling moves me. I am a teacher by day and student by night. I love all sports, but football and soccer are my favorites. I have a daughter who I am very proud of and I take honor in showing her that no
matter what age you are, you can do anything you want. I volunteered at the Montclair Food Pantry over the summer and I participated in the Avon39 Walk for Breast Cancer in New York. I hope to someday be able to participate in oceanic animal rescues and cleaning up the ocean, our most precious gift from Mother Nature.

Giselle Perdomo is a senior English major. On all of the wanted posters, she can be seen cloaking herself in the ruddy robes of a prose writer. Following her escape from quarantine, she’s been trying to pass herself off to the public as a poet (and does a poor job of it, if I might add). Yet she swears she has the blood type. What that actually means is she won’t bother trying to explain to you (which is why she hired me for the job, though it hardly pays enough). Her past offenses against law-abiding citizens include frequent retreats from the buzz of the world, daydreaming, and other assorted criminality that I dare not mention for the sake of the reader’s sanity. The total reward sum for her capture is still being processed (but it’s probably not all that much anyway).

Stephanie Smith is a junior at Montclair State University studying English and creative writing. Life goals include having infinite time to watch Netflix in bed with her two dogs while still somehow managing to support herself financially and emotionally. She believes that binge-watching The Office, Parks and Recreation, and excessively dramatic independent movies will create a false sense of fulfillment disguised by a computer screen that has the capability to illuminate a room she doesn’t pay rent for at her mother’s house.

Ashley Altieri is a sophomore at Montclair State University and she has many aspirations in life, which is why her major has been stuck in the land of, “The Undeclared.” She has many hobbies, which include: writing, drinking dangerous amounts of caffeine, making 8tracks mixes, and going on adventures with her friends. Her ultimate goal in life is to be a well-known author, but she dabbles in poetry every now and then. She is so excited to be included in this amazing magazine and wants to give a big shout-out to The Normal Review for giving her this opportunity. Thank you so much!
Frances McGrew is a junior at Montclair State. She is an English major and creative writing minor. In her spare time, she binge-watches crime dramas and takes way too many pictures of her dog.

Sean Fineran is a senior at Montclair State University with a BFA in animation and illustration. He is a cool dude that makes comics and cartoons and is gonna be doing that for a living which is a pretty rad gig. Currently, he is producing an animated short, “A Cold Western,” which is a western cartoon, taking place during the cold winter time. Keep an eye out for it. Sean likes apples and would like to thank Greeb for his continued support.

Sarah Carney is a senior illustration major who paints with watercolor and acrylic paints. She loves faeries and elves and mermaids and hates writing artists bios.

Moses Maiello is an animator and illustrator. He thinks drawing is fun and could one day make all the angry people in the world less angry. You can contact him at momaiello@yahoo.com.

Allison Daly - A devout Gryffindor, Allison Daly spends most of her time thinking about The Legend of Zelda and the next time she can get her greedy hands on a Cinnabon. An avid reader and constant doodler, she is insistent of the fact that fantasy is far superior to any sort of reality.

Tiffany Case has been a practitioner of tiny bird whispering for twenty years. She has experience talking to tiny birds and listening to their tiny bird problems. If you know a tiny bird that is struggling or just wants to sit on someone’s shoulder, contact 1-800-TNYBIRD and make an appointment today.

Robert Conklin sincerely suggests submitting several short stories.

Brygida Dabek- I like thinking about the universe, talking to my plants, and making art.