

IMPRESSIONS

Literary and Art Magazine

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ABOUT *IMPRESSIONS*

In print since 1974, *Impressions* is an annual publication created by and for the students of Maryville College and members of the surrounding eastern Tennessee community. *Impressions* aims to present the best of art, poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and other creative works submitted by the Maryville College community and the Appalachian region. Online editions of *Impressions* can be viewed at impressionsmc.org.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Chloe Hamlett, Editor-in-Chief

Like most works produced in the past year, the significance of the 2020-2021 edition of *Impressions* Literary Magazine has to be understood in the context of the global pandemic. In one of the most unusual years any of us have lived through, Maryville College made art, and we made *good* art. The ability to create is a powerful piece of who we are. Maryville College is a community of writers, poets, artists, photographers, and so much more, and we use these aspects of ourselves to cope with and respond to frustration, fear, and division. Like every year, the *Impressions* staff set out to collect the best poetry, prose, and art from Maryville College and our community. We were also able to modify our usual events like the Halloween bonfire and our submission drives to be COVID-safe, and we formed a new partnership with the students of Hancock County High School. Thank you to everyone who contributed to our publication, and please enjoy the 47th edition of *Impressions* Literary Magazine.

COVER ARTIST'S NOTE

Sophia Cardone, Cover Artist

"Incongruous" was the first painting I started and finished during the lockdown last year. While it's simple in concept and technique, it's one of my favorite pieces I've made in the past few years. In a year full of hardships, this painting represents a silver lining. Though lockdown was hard in one way or another for everyone, including myself, it gave me the time and space to work on new and different art pieces. I encourage everyone to look for these silver linings.

CONTENTS

ABOUT <i>IMPRESSIONS</i>	2
STAFF	3
EDITOR'S NOTE	4
COVER ARTIST'S NOTE	4
CONTENTS	5
<i>Part I, Prose</i>	
Jordan 'Bunny' Stafford	
<i>*Gradations</i>	12
Amanda Clarke	
<i>The Snow Woman</i>	15
Sarah McFalls	
<i>Light and Dark Shadows</i>	23
Katie Leming	
<i>Cutting Curves</i>	26
Jordan Kamikawa	
<i>The Angelic Warriors: The Beginnings</i>	28
K. G. Mathews	
<i>Moth to a Flame</i>	34
<i>Part II, Art</i>	
Jacob Simpson	
<i>Clouds in Mountains</i>	38
Claire Willenbrink	
<i>I Heart You Berry Much</i>	39
<i>Jellyfish Dance</i>	40
<i>Alligator Reflecting</i>	41
<i>Dewy Leaf</i>	42
<i>Lake Ripples</i>	43

Impressions

Jamie Yoder	
<i>Big Red</i>	44
<i>Mr. Blue</i>	45
<i>Cutie</i>	46
<i>Moth</i>	47
<i>Sun Smiles</i>	48
<i>Great Surprise</i>	49
Myndalynn Word	
<i>Surprise!</i>	50
<i>Ohio in the Morning</i>	51
<i>Secret Hiding Spot</i>	52
<i>Indian Lake in the Summer</i>	53
<i>Spontaneity</i>	54
<i>Silhouettes in the Backyard</i>	55
Meredith Webb	
<i>Mother Nature</i>	56
<i>Festive Flower Crown</i>	57
<i>A Whale's Bubble</i>	58
<i>The Night of a Full Moon</i>	59
Martina Junod	
<i>Euphoria Photoshoot</i>	60
<i>summer 2018 in Philly</i>	61
<i>April 18th</i>	62
Kier Hull	
<i>Self Portrait</i>	63
<i>Burger</i>	64
<i>French Onion Dip</i>	65
<i>Olivia</i>	66
<i>Collin Olivia</i>	67
<i>India Ink</i>	68
Rain Larsen	
<i>Lemon Surf</i>	69
<i>Mili and Lulu</i>	70

Contents

<i>*Lady Luck</i>	71
<i>Tunnel Vision</i>	72
<i>Bus Stop</i>	73
Sophia Cardone	
<i>Fragonard's A Young Girl Reading</i>	74
<i>collage no. 1</i>	75
<i>Incongruous</i>	76
<i>Portrait of Audrey Hepburn</i>	77
Chloe Melton	
<i>Black girl magic (or flower princess)</i>	78
<i>Black lives matter</i>	79
<i>Aristst's birthday flowers</i>	80
<i>Cobalt</i>	81
<i>Memento mori</i>	82
<i>Men Cry</i>	83
Nataly Bennett	
<i>St. Louis Cathedral</i>	84
<i>Memphis Trolley</i>	85
<i>Yellow Cabs</i>	86
Part III, Poetry	
Brandon Spurlock	
<i>*2020 — A Reflection</i>	88
<i>Waiting for the End</i>	89
<i>Tom Bogart</i>	90
Becca Lesley	
<i>white walls</i>	91
<i>the music box</i>	93
Jonathan Stewart	
<i>Concerning Birds During Winter</i>	95
<i>We can be so many things</i>	96
<i>On peut avoir de nombreuses des choses</i>	97

Impressions

Justin Strong	
<i>Demon-Haunted Mind</i>	98
Elisabeth Jackson	
<i>Our Playlist</i>	99
<i>Skin and Bone</i>	100
Albrianna Jenkins	
<i>Just the Way I Am</i>	101
Chloe Hamlett	
<i>With the Bees</i>	101
<i>The Salon</i>	103
<i>In This Green Plenty</i>	104
<i>Goodbye, Man in the Moon</i>	105
Rain Larsen	
<i>A House Divided</i>	106
<i>Patchwork People</i>	107
<i>Moon's Blessing</i>	108
Sarah McFalls	
<i>Love of Vague Eloquence</i>	110
Nancy Clarke	
<i>A Mother's Tears</i>	111
Myndalynn Word	
<i>Temporary Inspiration</i>	112
<i>A New Perspective</i>	114
K. G. Mathews	
<i>A Scene of Backseat Enlightenment</i>	115
<i>A Hymn to Good Mistakes</i>	116
<i>Tempting</i>	118
<i>This is for Them</i>	119
Anonymous	
<i>Self-Loathing</i>	121

Contents

Angelo Letizia	
<i>Wasting October</i>	122
<i>The taste of revolt</i>	123
Katlyn Bogle	
<i>Illuminating Brain Storms</i>	124
<i>Rewritten</i>	125
<i>Hero's Tale</i>	126
<i>Inspired by Oh my god by (G)I-DLE</i>	127
KB Ballentine	
<i>Thin as Air</i>	128
<i>The Comfort of Solitude</i>	129
<i>If we just listen, we can hear ghosts</i>	130
<i>Between Soft Shadows</i>	131
Landry Hazzard	
<i>Weeds in My Mind</i>	132
<i>The Valley</i>	134
<i>Pebble</i>	135
Matthew Graham	
<i>Clash of [Internal] Civilizations</i>	140
<i>Il Gato</i>	141
<i>The Brain</i>	142
<i>Part IV, Impressions of Home in Appalachia</i>	
Sarah Johnson	
<i>The Homestead: A Perspectives Place</i>	147
William Kip Collins	
<i>The People of Hancock County</i>	151
Devon Blevins	
<i>The Beautiful Essence of Sneedville</i>	154
Kylie Mullins	
<i>Hancock County: Best Home Place of All</i>	157

Impressions

Lexie Wilder	
<i>Mountain People: You Will Either Never</i>	
<i>Want to Leave or You Will Never</i>	
<i>Want to Come Back</i>	159
Skylar Ramsey	
<i>Deeply Rooted: Beauty, Love, Simplicity</i>	162
Haley Greene	
<i>What, Where, Who is Appalachia?</i>	166
Gabriel Turner	
<i>Appalachia: More than Just a Name</i>	170
Hannah Cinnamon	
<i>Appalachia: The Undefinable Region</i>	174
CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES	178
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	185

*indicates award winners

Part I

Prose

Jordan 'Bunny' Stafford

Gradations

*Impressions Academic Award Winner: Prose

"The eye to this day gives me a cold shudder, but when I think of the fine known gradations, my reason tells me I ought to conquer the cold shudder." - Charles Darwin, 1860.

Cassandra arrived at Puerto Mazátlan at low tide, watching as bird guano mixed with the sandy ocean waves, and ruddy-faced men swam through the reef breakers. Her friends' warnings about returning to *Mexico* tumbled in her brain like cerebral pinball, but Cassandra wasn't afraid of back alleys or crowded streets. She was numb, the kind of woman who could sleep through hurricanes and eat during dissections.

"*Mexico is a pit of thieves,*" her American boyfriend had said, when she told him she was writing a piece about Mazátlan for the travel magazine. All poor people were the same to him. "*Aren't you afraid of being robbed?*"

"*I have nothing worth stealing,*" she'd said. She had wondered briefly what he would do if he knew she was born in Mexico.

Cassandra wandered along Mazátlan's beach, taking notes on her worn legal pad and feeling more like a specter than a spectator. She was hollow inside, a scarecrow with no Dorothy. Still, she counted the fishermen's black teeth, and the holes in the childrens' shoes, and the number of sunblock-caked tourists. Anything readers would find *gritty*.

Further up the beach a group of boys kicked a soccer ball around and fought over an American candy

bar. At one time, so long ago now that it felt like a past life, she had been just like them; rail-thin, waifish, angry at the world, digging through dumpsters and begging for scraps. She'd been poor and passionate, but passion didn't fill an empty stomach.

"¿Necesitas direcciones?" asked a middle-aged man with a gray beard and a mouth set in defeated lines, when she paused near his seaside trinket shop. He was selling imitations of Mexican cultural treasures like Mayan masks and talavera ceramics for *20 Pesos*. Cassandra watched as a tourist held up a particularly beautiful red mask and left Cheeto fingerprints on the wood.

"*Si, al pub,*" she said. She used to hate men like him who ran trinket shops, men that sold history for a meal and culture for a coin. *Traidores*, her mother had called them. *Better to starve than sell your soul*. But her mother had been naive. Hunger and weariness corroded the strongest of convictions.

The man pointed a finger at the road into town. "*Por allí.*"

Cassandra thanked him and followed the road until Mazátlan's buildings were towering above her, stacked up like concrete Legos. Some were short and squat and others tall and shiny, a bizarre fusion of history and modernity. The sound of her footsteps on the hot asphalt echoed like the word *trai-dor-e*. She needed whiskey.

Mama is too dead to be disappointed, Cassandra reasoned with herself. *You crossed the border to survive*. And yet she couldn't shake the image of her mother starving on the side of the road while Cassandra wrote *unfortunate increase in the female homeless population* on a yellow legal pad.

Finally, she spotted the open door of the pub up ahead, the entrance dark like a mouth or a cavern, and her hands itched to hold a shot glass. Her gaze was locked on

the familiar flashing of a neon sign, already imagining the burn of alcohol in her throat, and then... there was a child blocking the door. He stood there like a ghost, his dirty hands clutching at her skirt.

“*Let go,*” she said.

Cassandra tried to shake him off, but he only held on tighter, his thin arms shaking. Almost against her will her eyes slid to the window glass, a horror overtaking her numbness, and at the very moment that her eyes locked with his, their reflections seemed to swirl together, her snow-white blouse against his black rags, and the wind rushed in her ears and sang *traidore* in her mother’s voice.

Something inarticulable passed between them then. He had a look in his eyes that would haunt her, an infinite afterimage of his gaunt, sand-scored face, his irises glassy with hunger.

Cassandra gave a cold shudder. Then he was gone.

Spanish:

Necesitas direcciones - Do you need directions

Si, al pub - Yes, to the pub.

Traidores - Traitors.

Por allí - Over there.

Amanda Clarke
The Snow Woman

It was hard to see her against the harsh blare of the snow. A crisp, white robe was pulled around her body and a large hood hung over her eyes. The only sign of her against the intense white snow was the crimson color that had been painted across the woman's lips. I wondered if she could even be there. In that weather, there's no way anyone could be there, and yet, she called out to me again.

"I'm so cold..." the woman whimpered. A brush of translucent mist gusted from her lips as she held her boney arms around herself. The skin revealed hardly differed in color from the snow billowing around her.

My hand stiffened on the knob. Was it okay to let a stranger in? Ordinarily, the answer would have been no, but it was well below zero degrees and if the woman stayed outside much longer, she would die from exposure. I gasped as the well-below-negative air reached the depths of my lungs. How had she even gotten this far in the weather?

Her hood slipped away as she approached revealing slick black hair that had been tied into knots beneath her slim coverings.

"Please, let me in... It's so cold out here... You don't want me to die, do you?"

"No..." I said. Her eyes met mine begging as they met for a short moment. "Come in and warm yourself up..."

I moved out of the way letting the woman through as her bare feet left a wet trail along the linoleum of my kitchen.

"I'll get you some dry clothes... and blankets..."

"Hm, there's no need for that," she said. There was a laughing tone to her voice as the woman lumbered

inside quickly looking over my place. "I'll just borrow your bath and be on my way. No need to trouble yourself..."

What was she saying now? After begging me to let her in... It hit me all at once as I yelped nearly grabbing the woman before realizing what I was doing.

"You shouldn't do that, ma'am," I said. I pushed my hands in front of myself putting my defensive gesture between me and the other woman. "You've been outside for a long time, and if you jump into hot water just like that... You don't want to stop your heart."

With a gentle tug of the woman's robe, I led the woman to the other room, my family room.

"We'll warm you up nice and slow. It might be hard to tell at the moment, but when I'm not snowed in, I'm a doctor in the next town over," I said. I looked toward the window watching as the snow continued to fall in large flakes. "If it ever stops snowing, we should go and get you checked out there."

"Well, you're a nice one, aren't you?" she asked. Her robe fell from her body slowly as the moist cloth peeled from her skin falling to a heap on the floor. The clothes that had been beneath her robe clung tight to her skin from the extreme weather she had been forced to endure. "I'm glad people like you exist."

"I don't know anyone who could've left a woman outside to freeze to death," I said. I gave my jacket to the woman. "I'll get you something warm to drink."

She was settled on my couch with my clothes covering her narrow skeletal structure. I watched the woman warily from the corners of my eyes. She held the mug of herbal tea between her knobby fingers almost awkwardly. Did she not like it? Should I make her something else? Finally, she seemed to sip carefully on the beverage after blowing at it several times. Something about the woman was still unsettling. Something like

seeing fire underwater. Something impossible. I pressed myself closer to the arm of the couch holding a gasp in my throat as not to alert the woman of my fear. The woman placed her mug on the short, cherry coffee table as a whisp of steam rose from it in the shape of a phantom. Her lips were still perfectly red as her tongue clicked audibly against the roof of her mouth. She turned to me with a smile starting at her lips.

"Something the matter?" I asked. I shivered as the words stuttered out of my mouth. The hair rose along my arms as I tried to smooth the palms of my hands along them. "Have you started to warm up yet?"

I could've easily reached out to the woman and answered that for myself, but I didn't dare. Just what might happen if I touched her?

"I'm still so cold," she said. The woman pulled the blanket around herself tighter as though hiding something from me. "But there is something else."

What else could she possibly want?

"Yes," I said. My shoulders tightened as even the cadence of her voice started to spook me. Perhaps my hospitality had gotten the better of me this time... "What's the matter?"

Did I even want to know?

"Hmm, just a little request," she said. "Nothing you can't handle, I'm sure. You seem like a capable enough woman."

Suddenly I felt the intuition to leave that house and the woman and hope for the best. And hope that I make it to the next town before the elements had their way with me.

"What's with that face?" the woman asked. The blanket slipped down ever so slightly revealing the brightness of her thighs as she crawled toward me. "I'm not going to suggest anything offensive. I'm just a woman grateful to a sweet doctor's kindness and I want to thank her... oh, so... properly. I can do that, right?"

"What is it?" I asked. My tone was firm as I pressed myself tighter against the auburn fabric. I couldn't let her touch me. "What do you want?"

The woman only smirked to herself, almost chuckling.

"Hmm, never mind..." she replied. "I'll leave that for later."

She returned to her side of the couch furling and unfurling her fingers as though fighting back a wild temper.

As the evening hours set in the storms inside and out increased their intensities. At this rate, the roof was likely to cave in and it's not like I could easily keep up with the blast, not to mention leaving this stranger in my house without a watchful eye... I gave a soft sigh as the blinds dropped to the windowsill before returning to the main room to place an additional log on the flames. She was right. It was still cold. Was it this cold in the house earlier?

I wished the woman would leave me to some piece, but she kept going. Was it normal for strangers to talk this much?

"How do you spend the winter like this?" she asked. The woman's mess of hair was hidden by the blanket that she'd drawn over her head. I quickly looked at her again. When had she reapplied her lipstick? Her once ruby-colored lips were now a bright blue akin to the shade that nature would paint a poisonous frog.

"I know what I'm doing," I said. "I've been doing it long enough at this point." The coffee table kept a safe space between the two of us. "And, what of you? How were you out there? How could you be out there for so long without freezing to death?"

I was starting to almost feel suspicious of the woman.

The woman hummed satisfyingly as though she enjoyed where the conversation was going. She leaned closer to me as her eyes worked me over once again.

"I'm quite tolerant of the cold," she said. Her eyes were far away as her eyes gazed out the window opposite

her. "I've been out there so long now..."

She looked at me again, suddenly serious.

"Why didn't you notice me sooner? You seem more than observant enough," she said. The house shook as though it too could feel the tension in the air. I could only stare at her silently as I felt the unease rise within myself. "Ha, you're a touchy one, aren't you?"

I swallowed, my body still tense.

"There's no way a person could survive out there for long..." I said. My eyes gave a quick jerk to the harsh storm outside. "You keep going on about how cold you are..."

"Yes, yes," the woman said. She closed her eyes as she rested against the back of the couch. "It isn't often that I get this much attention, so won't you let me take advantage of it?"

"Just..." I said. I wanted her gone, but I couldn't do that. How could I send her back out into the cold? Surely, if someone found the body, they would know that I... "Just stay here until the storm holds up..."

"You are so kind," the woman said. She smiled, blowing on her cup once again as she looked over the brim of her mug at me. I returned to the kitchen to pace the time away. "I do wonder if the storm will ever stop."

I pulled up the blinds once more.

"Nothing lasts forever," I said. By this point, I was more trying to convince myself than the woman in the other room. All I could see of the outside world was obscured by a sheet of white. "It'll all be over by morning."

Yeah, morning... It felt so far away...

As I trailed back to my bedroom to retrieve a set of clothes, she followed.

"What're you up to?" the woman asked. She blocked my doorway pretending not to notice as I kept my eyes away from her.

"Just taking a shower," I said. She stepped back a

little as though the notion needed more consideration. It felt as though I was the guest seeking her permission. "I won't be long."

She turned her back to me not answering for a moment as she headed back to the family room. Her arms were held limp at her sides as she moved gracefully as though encased in a bubble of water.

"I'm sure you won't."

Once I was safely within the space of my bathroom, I locked the door and took a deep breath. A mock sense of security. It was only a fragile wooden barrier. It couldn't protect me from much. I seemed to forget this as the warm, almost hot, water flowed over my skin and through my hair. It was so comforting. It was so refreshing. A chance to regain myself outside the presence of that woman. Everything about her was too much. She was much too collected for someone who had just been caught out in a blizzard. Anyone would be frazzled after finding themselves stuck in such a storm. Anyone human that is. What was I even suggesting? If she wasn't human, then what could she be? Maybe the heat was getting to me... This all sounded more like a fever dream than reality.

I could hear her slow breaths from the other side of the door as I hung the damp towel from my neck. My hair hung over my face in moist spikes as I checked that the door was still locked. With a touch of the knob, a burning cold throbbed through my body. A sheet of ice-encased the brassy knob. I gasped and recoiled. I blinked thrice as the ice shrank away. Had it even been there in the first place? I was just on edge because of that woman. Nothing more. I shook my head as I went straight to drying my hair.

"You should stay put," I said. Much to my surprise, the woman was still perched upon my couch in the other room, but something seemed off. She pulled the blanket tighter around herself as she looked at me sharply.

“Never mind... I think I’m tired today...”

Was she hiding something?

“Did you see something?” she asked. The woman grinned unable to hold herself back any longer. “You never know what kind of troublesome things you’ll let in living alone. I should know. I’ve seen it time and time again.”

“What’re you going on about? What am I going to let in this time of year?” I asked. The floor was cold against my bare feet as I stepped along its hard surface. “We’re safe in this house. Nothing’s going to get us.”

I was beginning to wonder if I had let something in that I shouldn’t have.

“The winter is the most dangerous time.” She said. Her hair had dried into a large mass that resembled a grand storm cloud. “There’s a lot of creatures that love the cold and love consuming those with generosity like yours... So sweet...”

She chuckled to herself as she brushed the blanket from her arms.

“Humans are so pitiful... so wonderful... Hah... I am so cold...”

I walked to the woman taking calculated steps.

“Is there anything that would warm you up?” I asked. She only kept smiling, making a face that dared me to come closer. “I can get you another warm drink... Yes, I also have a hot water bottle around here...”

“Are you that dense?” the woman asked. I turned around ignoring her call as I headed back for the kitchen. The house gave a weary groan as another inch of snow piled itself upon the roof.

“I’ve been giving you clues all evening; you know?” she said. The water was still nearly hot from earlier. “I can’t say I’m not impressed though. You did everything to please your guest. I just can’t wait to return the favor this time.”

“I’m not dense,” I said. I poured the water into

a fresh mug. "I wouldn't bring someone into my house without watching them closely, be them in trouble or not."

The woman seemed to float before me as she paused at the gap between the family room and kitchen.

"Why are you doing this? I helped you more than enough," I said.

She hissed her skin almost translucent as she stared at me seemingly trying to decide how much of a danger I was.

"You wouldn't understand! How could you understand something as old as the snow itself?" the woman asked. Her hands turned electric blue as she tried to back me into a corner. "You're right... No one could survive out in my storm for long. I'm downright lucky I came across this place when I did."

Despite my calm disposition, the fear was working its way through my body to the tips of my fingers.

"I'm afraid today isn't your lucky day. I think I said it quite well earlier... Nothing lasts forever... Although I do wonder how many other people you've done this to... Taking advantage of human kindness is something that I just can't abide by. It's so rare sometimes... Yet you want to keep it all to yourself... I can last forever if I want. I just need you."

My back hit the wall as the woman drew her hand along my face leaving a faint black mark in her wake.

"Say what you will, but you can't stop me. Don't feel too bad no one before you has come so close... I'll make sure to savor you properly."

"I don't think so, not today," I said. The mug in my hand tilted forward causing the water to soak where the woman's heart would've been had she been human. A hole was left in her chest as her body started to melt away like an icicle in the spring.

"You..." she said. Her hand latched to my throat perhaps a bit too late as the rest of the woman's body started to liquefy. "I'm... so cold..."

Sarah McFalls
Light and Dark Shadows

James Ellis (Jae El.) had dreamed a lot of dreams from a young age. He wanted to be a doctor like his dad who was tired but always so happy, and he wanted to be everything like his mom who never seemed to settle down. His mom was beautiful and fast. She hugged and kissed James every morning and every night, from the first time that she held him. She tried all types of jobs just to pass the time. His mom was a nurse, a boxer, a dog walker, a babysitter, and most recently a stall owner at the local flea market. James remembered thinking, of course she must have been the best nurse because she always knew what to do. His mom could have been the best boxer because she never left him alone after one of their dumb fights when he was upset about acne and new deodorants. She had to have been one of the best dog walkers because there was no one else on earth who was more determined to have an evening stroll. His mom must have been the best babysitter because she got so much joy from sharing snacks, making small talk, and hearing children's laughter. Finally, her stall would have been successful because she was his mom and everything that she decided to do she did with all of her energy.

Jae El. always remembered his mom living her busy busy life with her beautiful ebony skin that never had the chance to develop deep wrinkles. He could imagine her beautiful face in shock right before the bright speeding lights destroyed what he knew. The shock, oh to whatever god that Jae El. could no longer trust- the shock. The shock wouldn't let him sleep. The lights flashed in his eyes when he tried to rest. The lights flashed in his eyes when he tried to play. The lights flashed by him when he rode passenger of his dad's new car. Lights would be enough

to make him pray he was blind. However, he saw mom too, and she looked the same as she always did, just out of reach and too far to smell.

At first he wished he could feel sad when they buried mom, but days went by, and he didn't feel sad yet. Jae El.'s deep brown eyes sat on top of the same dark circles his dad had always had. A few months went by, and Jae El. had been sad, but he wanted to live a busy busy life just like mom. When he was sixteen, he hung out with his best friends Ethan and Dallas, he went to every class, and he painted in what he considered his personal time.

Jae El. was turning seventeen in two weeks, and in two months, it would be a year since mom was taken away so quickly. As he sat at the end of his driveway with Ethan and Dallas, he noticed that in the sticky summer heat all that he could see around them was light. The light sat in Ethan's blond curls and even on the thin layer of dirt that somehow reached all the way past Dallas' knees. In that moment, Jae El. joined his friends in laughter as they talked about a few more plans for the summer days before they went back for their senior year of high school. He was beautiful like his mother and light on his ebony skin glowed like a light stick that seemed to crack a little brighter with his laughter that rose into the sky louder and longer than either friend. In those magical moments, anyone would agree that Jae El. was nothing less than a beautiful light.

He painted in his paint-spotted pajamas while standing in his bedroom. Sometimes he just wanted to throw colors together and coat the canvas with a new layer of messy paint. Today, after his friends had left, he felt like a dark shadow washed over his shoulders and sunk deep into his stomach. He would paint a dark shadow that fit the shape of a rounded man in the middle of his used canvas that now had a base layer of dull grey lavender oil. His dad never made it home for dinner and left as soon as

Jae El. woke up for school, so he followed his routine and ate a large bowl of sugary cereal.

As soon as senior year started, Jae El. realized he was tired. After classes, he slept until dinner and on his favorite days Ethan and Dallas came over to eat and, under the excuse of homework, played video games for a few hours. On all of the other days, Jae El. ate his cereal and stood in his bedroom adding to his dark shadow. The dark shadow seemed to develop a type of character. Jae El. had jokingly started calling his masterpiece “dad” when Dallas asked who it was supposed to be. Dad always saw Jae El. leave for school, and dad always saw Jae El. go to bed. Dad never ever got tired. Jae El. spent less and less time with dad. At Christmas, he painted some green onto the used canvas that was starting to look like it was 3D thanks to the layers that it had collected. Jae El. was still a beautiful light, he got accepted to the state school along with Ethan and Dallas. The three left this August, two years after mom. Everyone thought it was a lot less sudden. The boys grew like weeds and lived quickly like the seasons.

Dad was left behind. He looks around while the boy is gone in the same way he did before the light left. Sometimes we see him through the window, but he doesn’t talk. The dark shadow has filled the tired space, alone.

Katie Leming
Cutting Curves
Trigger Warning: self-harm

On the cusp of her fourteenth birthday, after trying on the two new outfits she received as presents from her mother, she sat unclothed and sweaty on her bed in her square bedroom. The dusty-rose corduroy pants, at least a size too small, lay inside out on her carpet. She wondered if they were as sad about not fitting her as she was about not fitting them.

Even in the obscurity lingering from the nighttime, she could clearly see her ugly body in all its glory. She stared at the fat blob of pretend femininity in her dresser's spotted mirror and wanted to smash the reflection to pieces. It wanted to do the same to her.

She looked down at her red painted toenails surrounded by extra roundness, up to her cankles, then her pancaked thighs. She lifted one leg up off the bed, seeing how skinny she could make it look when the cellulite wasn't flattened out. She skipped over feeling the piles of blubber in the middle, but grabbed the underside of the top of her arm, filling her fist with loose chicken wing weight. She tugged gently at first, then gradually harder, just to see if her other flabby arm was strong enough to tear the tissue beneath all the skin. When she had no luck, she let go, and drug her french-tipped fingernails along the stripes that had recently mutated themselves into her shoulders... and armpits... and belly...and chest. The marks were indented along every nook of her like inverse braille, and she could never decipher exactly what they read.

For a long second, she turned her puffy face away from herself, towards the poster of Marilyn Monroe that hung perfectly straight above her bed's headboard. She

looked at the tiny curves of Marilyn's hips and calves and chest and shoulders. She whiplashed back to the mirror. Why were her curves in all the wrong places?

She counted the misshapen and misplaced curves she found all over her body: five of her stomach, four for her thunder thighs, four for each chubby cheek, and at least a baker's dozen more. The numbers were a way to keep score against herself, another tally to measure her worth. She knew she was a hundred pounds too heavy, seven BMI points too obese, forty carbs over in her diet plan, and dozens of curves too lumpy.

But so were a lot of women, and what did they do? Well, they just told the doctors what they dreamed of looking like and paid them enough to make it come true. With barely more than twenty dollars to her name, she stood up and went to her neat desk, rolled out the top drawer, and pulled out her hand-me-down fabric scissors. They were discolored white with pink lilies around the handles, a birthday gift from her grandmother, who had been teaching her to sew her own clothes. They would work fine. She had thought about it many times before, but right now, someone inside her was bellowing silently through her whole body, filling her up with the decision to finally take control of her appearance.

Her thick, shaking fingers spread apart the slightly rusted old scissors, and, thankfully, they weren't shiny enough to carry her reflection.

Jordan Kamikawa
The Angelic Warriors
The Beginnings

Location: Angel City, Kingdom of the Angels

Date: August 19, 2016

“Stay away from him!!” screamed a 4-year-old angel girl. The girl was attempting to keep the Demon King from harming her younger, 2-month-old brother but was soon blasted with a dark blast, causing her to start turning evil.

“Foolish Angel...” said the Demon King. The girl attempted to get up, but she found herself too weak to move.

“I am impressed, child; you have quite a bit of spirit...” said the king. The girl did not respond but looked up at the demon lord, feeling the evil spreading further through her.

“Now then...come with me...” said the demon.

“N-Never...” the girl stammered out.

“Very well...then perhaps this will convince you!” said the king, firing another blast at her.

“Tell me, child...How does that evil feel?” asked the king, as the girl struggled to get back up from the 2nd blast.

“It feels...good,” the girl said, feeling the warmth from the darkness.

“Very well...then come with me, child...and I will help you master it,” said the king.

“Yes...M-Master...” said the girl, getting up as the demon opened a portal to the underworld.

“By the way, child...What is your name?” asked the demon king.

“Amy, Master...” she replied.

“Very well, then let’s go, Amy,” he said.

She stared at her brother, then kissed him on his forehead and said, “Goodbye, brother...I will see you again...” before vanishing into the portal with the demon king.

Time passed, and eventually, three weeks had gone by. The king had adopted Amy as his own, and now it was time for her first day at her new school.

Amy walked slowly with the king towards the school, nervous about her first day at a demon elementary school. Despite the fact she was a fallen angel, she was nervous about how the other students would react to and treat her.

“Father, do I have to go to school? I’m scared about how they may treat me if they find out what I am...” said Amy.

“It will be ok, child...You won’t have anything to worry about,” replied the king.

Meanwhile in Mrs. Wright’s class...

“Ok class! We have a new student joining us today, as well as an unexpected visit from our King Himself!!!” The class was surprised by this, as they had never had a visit from their king before, especially not during school.

“Hello, everyone. I’m glad to see you’re all well and continuing your studies,” said the king as they entered.

“Hello, Your Majesty! What brings you here?” said Mrs. Wright.

“This is my daughter Amy, she will be transferring to your class,” replied the king.

“Hi...” stammered Amy.

“Well...That’s all, Mrs. Wright; take care of my daughter please,” the king said.

“Ok, Sire! Amy, you can take the empty seat next

to Abby,” said Mrs. Wright as Amy sat down, and the king exited.

“Ok, class! Back to work!” said Mrs. Wright as the class continued.

Later in the day as Abby and her friend Lisa walked outside, Lisa said, “Hey. Isn’t that Amy?”

“You’re right, and it looks like Josh and his friends have found her,” said Abby, as Josh and his group moved in toward Amy.

“Well, well... We’ve got ourselves a new friend to play with boys!” said Josh as he and his group started beating up Amy.

“Lisa, something’s going on... Amy is sparking some...” Abby stuttered out.

“You’re right,” said Lisa, uneasily.

“Leave me alone...” said Amy, becoming more and more irritated.

“Oh yeah? Who’s gonna make us? You?” said Josh, taunting her. Suddenly, Amy’s sparks grew even larger, as her eyes turned to a dark black shade.

“WHAT IN THE WORLD!?” screamed Josh as Amy got up.

“...I said to leave me alone... But since you seem to enjoy playing with fire, let’s see how you enjoy getting burned!” said Amy. She then proceeded to beat the bullies up badly.

“Wow... Pathetic... I’ve seen Angel children fight tougher than you. Now scram!”

Abby and Lisa watched in shock as Josh and his gang of bullies fled from Amy in complete fear, and then as Amy collapsed on the ground.

“Amy!!! Are you ok!?” asked Abby as she ran over.

“Ugh ...I think so... What happened...?” she asked.

“I don’t know; it was like you were a different

person.” Abby replied.

“Really? I don’t remember it...But on a different note, do you guys want to come over to my place?” said Amy.

“Sure!” Lisa and Abby said. They were really impressed and being friends with someone who could beat up their bullies was a nice bonus. And with that, a long friendship was formed, and the stage was set for an epic saga!

Chapter 1: Awakening

17 Years Later...

Demon Realm, August 10th, 2033.

Amy’s POV

“Amy! Wake up! You’re going to be late for your try-outs!” a voice called from outside.

What...Wait...8 A.M.....I’M LATE!

“OH NO! WHY DIDN’T YOU GUYS WAKE ME UP SOONER!” I shouted, as I scrambled to get prepared.

“We were trying to, but you’re a sound sleeper!” Lisa yelled.

“You can say that again,” Abby added.

“Not my fault I don’t get much rest!” I yelled as I raced outside.

“It wouldn’t be an issue if you stopped hanging out at the training course!” Lisa said.

“Let’s go!” Abby yelled.

These are my friends Lisa and Abby, I met them when I first arrived, and they are now my best friends down here.

“Let’s move it, or we’re going to be late!” Abby yelled.

As we left, Lisa asked, “So Amy, why do you want

to try out for the army? Wouldn't be a nurse or something suit you more?"

"Come on Lisa, you know Amy is a tomboy; she'd rather be dead than treat wounds." Abby joked.

"Not dead, but I'd just as likely kill someone as treat them," I said.

"Right...whatever you say..." Lisa said. Later, after leaving Abby and Lisa at the nursing academy for their graduation, I made my way to the demon royal army corps, where...

"Go away lass, we don't take women in combat roles!" the recruiter yelled. No matter how I argued, he refused to let me in, but as I left, I heard something.

"RUN! THE ANGELS BROKE THROUGH THE PORTAL!" someone screamed. Angels!? Here!?

I ran towards the portal, only to find a horde of angels cleaving their way through the Royal Army like they were nothing. Instinctively, I grabbed the sword of the nearest soldier and began attacking the Angels, trying to buy time for the civilians to escape. But the angels quickly overpowered me, and one prepared to kill me.

"I recognize her! She's the daughter of the King!" one of their men said.

"Well then, LET'S SEND HIM A PRESENT!" another yelled.

Just before the sword could hit me, my locket, a present I received shortly after I arrived, began to glow so brightly, that the soldier was blinded.

I heard a voice, and then screamed: "DEMON PRINCESS POWER, TRANSFORM!" My clothes then transformed into a tomboyish uniform.

When the light cleared, I was not only transformed in appearance, but I was enraged. I grabbed the soldier's sword, and before he knew what was happening, thrust it through him.

"GAH!" he cried out.

Before the others reacted, I slashed at them, and before they knew it, many of them fell over dead or injured. I turned to the last soldier, who was slightly younger than me, and was now on the ground, staring at me in terror.

“P-PLEASE, I DON’T WANT TO DIE!” he yelled in fear.

“I won’t kill you, for I have a much better purpose for you...” I said. A dark cloud surrounded the poor soldier, and when it dissolved, the soldier was now corrupted like I was.

“W-What... You spared me...but I’m like you?” he stuttered out.

“Yes, I could always have use for a loyal soldier...” I said, pleased with my work.

The soldier then got on his knee and bowed to me.

“T-Thank you, master! I am forever grateful!” he yelled.

“No need to call me master, just call me Amy,” I said.

“O-Ok, Amy...” he said.

I looked back, and most of the angels were still slaughtering the people nearby.

“Soldier, which of them is the commander?”

“My name is Jacob, and that one with the shoulder guards is our commander,” The soldier said.

“Good...” I said, before throwing the sword right through the commander.

“GAH!” he yelled as he fell off his horse, now dead. With the commander dead, the angels began to panic and retreated through the portal.

“AHAH! RUN YOU COWARDS!” I yelled after them.

Suddenly, the Demon army appeared, and I quickly teleported us to my house, where I collapsed...

TO BE CONTINUED!

K. G. Mathews
Moth to a Flame

You have loved many girls. You have loved many boys. Boys more regretfully so. Girls have always been easier, closer to home, softer. Boys have shown you a worrying knack for ignorance, manipulation, and plain rudeness even when they don't mean to. They have a penchant for cruelty that you have never understood – when you were young you watched as boy you liked caught a moth in your backyard. He showed you as he ripped its wings off one by one as if it would impress you. You decided then and there that you didn't like him anymore. It is an inclination that has made you more comfortable around men when you hold a key between each knuckle, one that makes your eyes jump around for a door when an argument breaks out.

But not with him.

His voice is so soft that, even if for just a moment, it makes you forget every cruel thing a boy has ever done to you. When he smiles with that dorky gap in his teeth, a light flickers on inside you – one you thought had shorted out long ago. When he runs his hands through his hair, you can't help but wish it was your hands there instead. And god forbid he make eye contact.

It's so stupid, the way a single look can make your heart trip over its own feet. Once, his knee bumped yours under the table and you thought you would implode, vanish entirely from existence. And when it happened a second time your mind reeled like a drunk on a three-week bender. When he talks about dense science fiction novels or old black and white movies, you hang onto every word even if you don't understand. Even if you don't want to.

He has offered to drive you home from the party - your friend left early, and you promised her you would find another ride. You can't tell if the prospect of being alone in a car with him is thrilling or terrifying. Either way you feel like you're going to puke - then again that could just be the five or six beers you've had tonight. He is leading you carefully to the door because the buzz is wearing off now as adrenaline invades your veins, but you are still a little wobbly on your feet. Both of you call goodbye to everyone in the living room, and they shout back wishing you a safe trip home. You take one step onto the front porch and cold breeze tangles in your hair taking with it some of the residual courage the alcohol had given you. You shiver.

He closes the screen door behind him, but you are trying very hard not to look at his hands. Instead, you focus on the porch light flaring above you. A few fuzzy gray moths bump their heads against the glass, shake themselves off, and bounce uselessly off the light again. He is saying something about a game he has been playing, but he stops. He must have seen you staring at the light.

You try to blink, shake your head, and pretend you were paying attention, but you find he is staring at the light too. You ask him to repeat the question, but he says nothing, just reaches up to the porch light and lays a slender finger on the glass. After a moment's hesitation, one of the moths alights on his finger, crawling with spindly, delicate legs onto his knuckle. Gently, he brings his hand back down to you.

There, cupped in his palm, the little bug sits and flutters its wings. It looks almost sleepy. He flicks his eyes up to yours as you both lean over his hand. He grins, gap teeth and all, like he is telling you every secret he has ever heard. You have forgotten how to breathe.

You are worried for an instant that he will hurt

it, but he nods to you and presents the moth nestled in his hands. With a single finger shaking from booze and heartache, you pat the tiny creature on its head. It buzzes once, hops, but does not fly away. He smiles at you again, sending another bolt of weakness into your bones. He lifts his palm level to his mouth and blows softly. The moth does not seem frightened, but its wings flap and it lifts into the air.

It circles once between your head and his, before flying into the night.

Part II

Art



Clouds in Mountains by Jacob Simpson



I Heart You Berry Much by Claire Willenbrink



Jellyfish Dance by Claire Willenbrink



Alligator Reflecting by Claire Willenbrink



Dewy Leaf by Claire Willenbrink



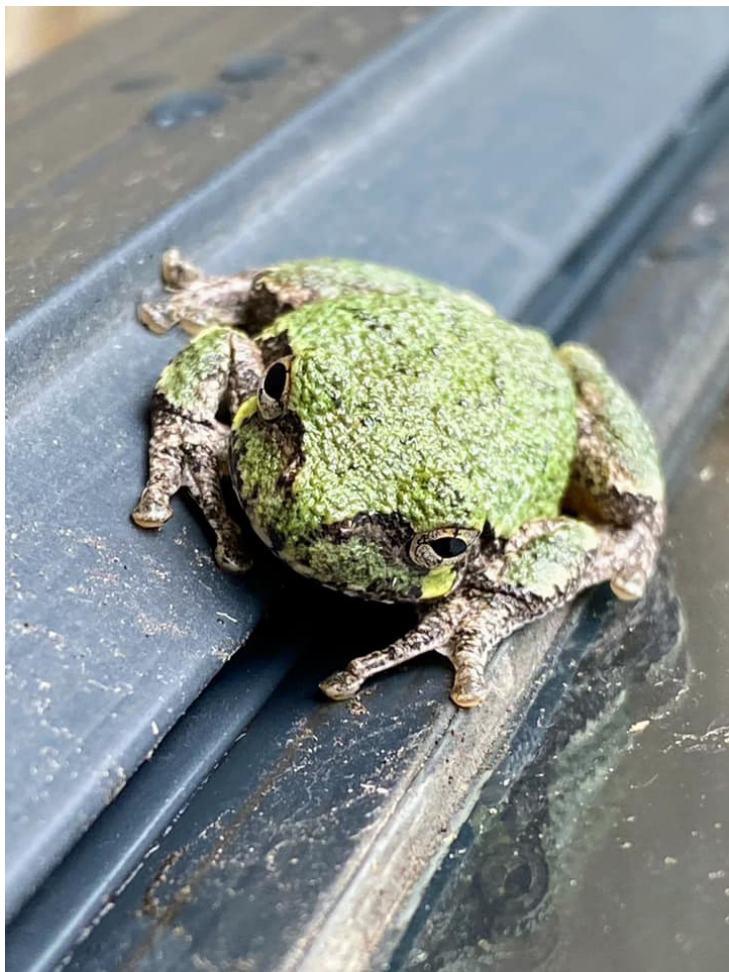
Lake Ripples by Claire Willenbrink



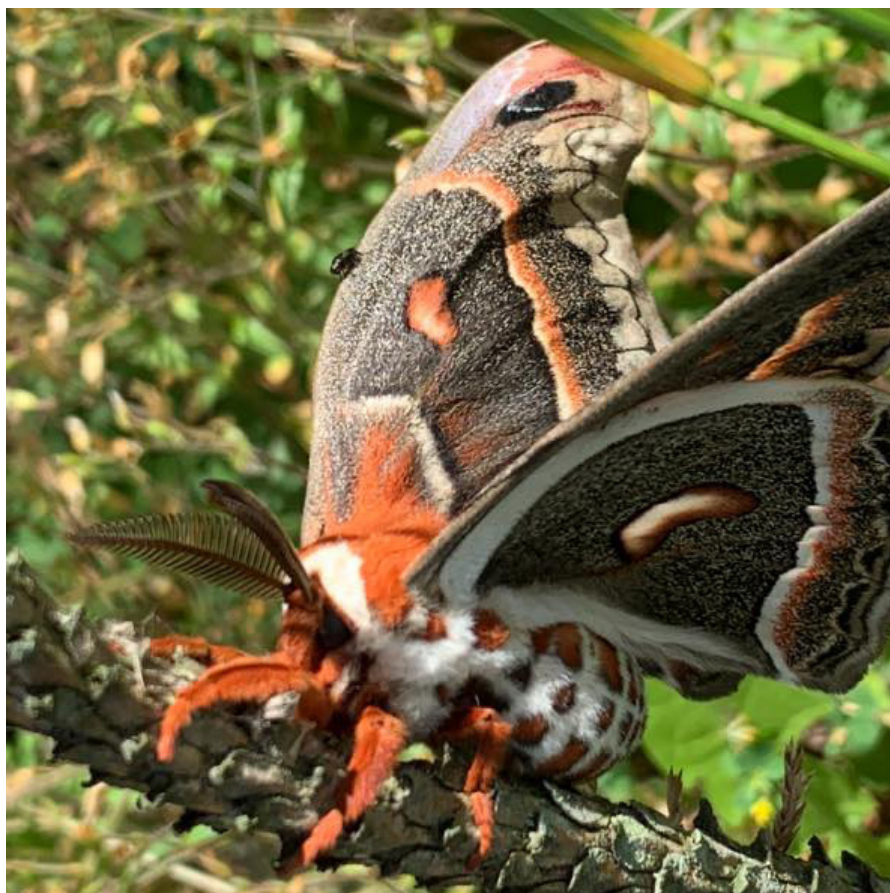
Big Red by Jamie Yoder



Mr. Blue by Jamie Yoder



Cutie by Jamie Yoder



Moth by Jamie Yoder



Sun Smiles by Jamie Yoder



Great Surprise by Jamie Yoder



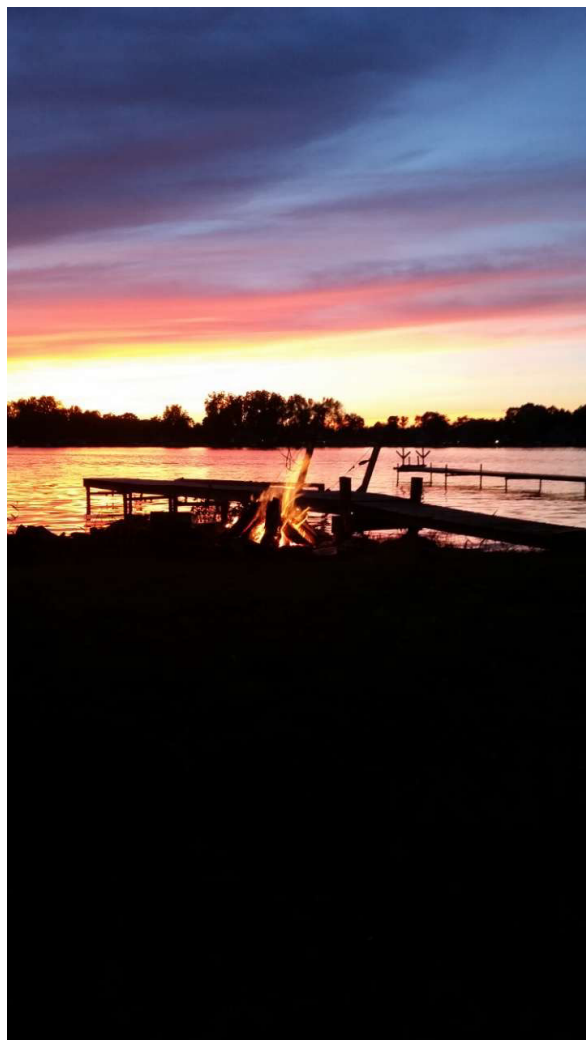
Surprise! by Myndalynn Word



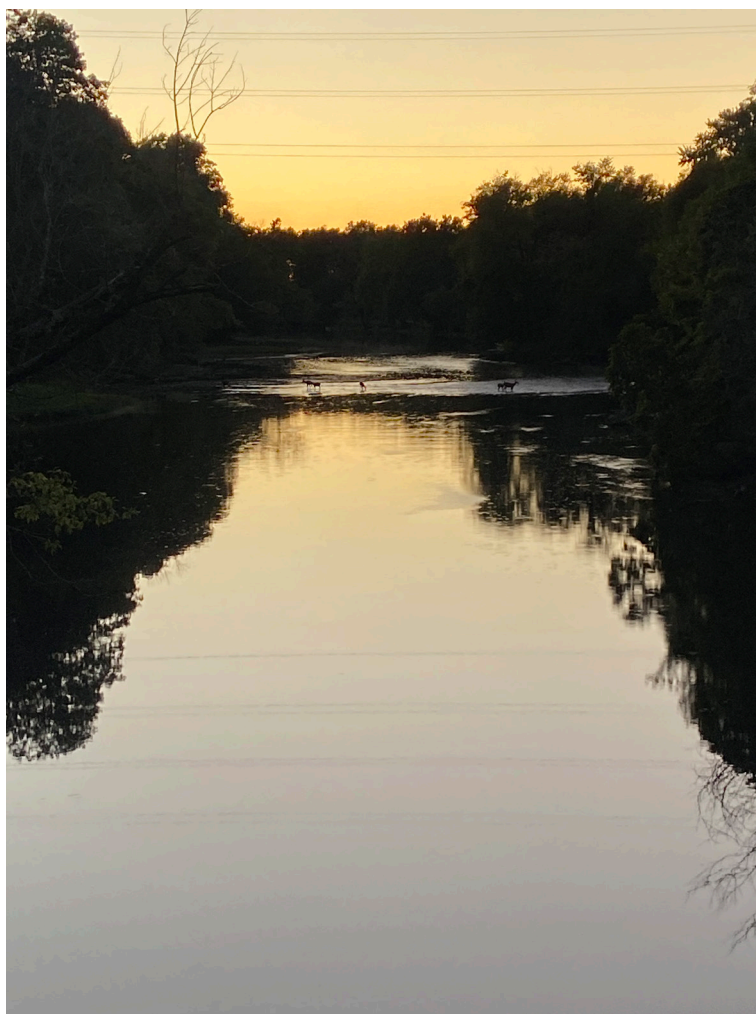
Ohio in the Morning by Myndalynn Word



Secret Hiding Spot by Myndalynn Word



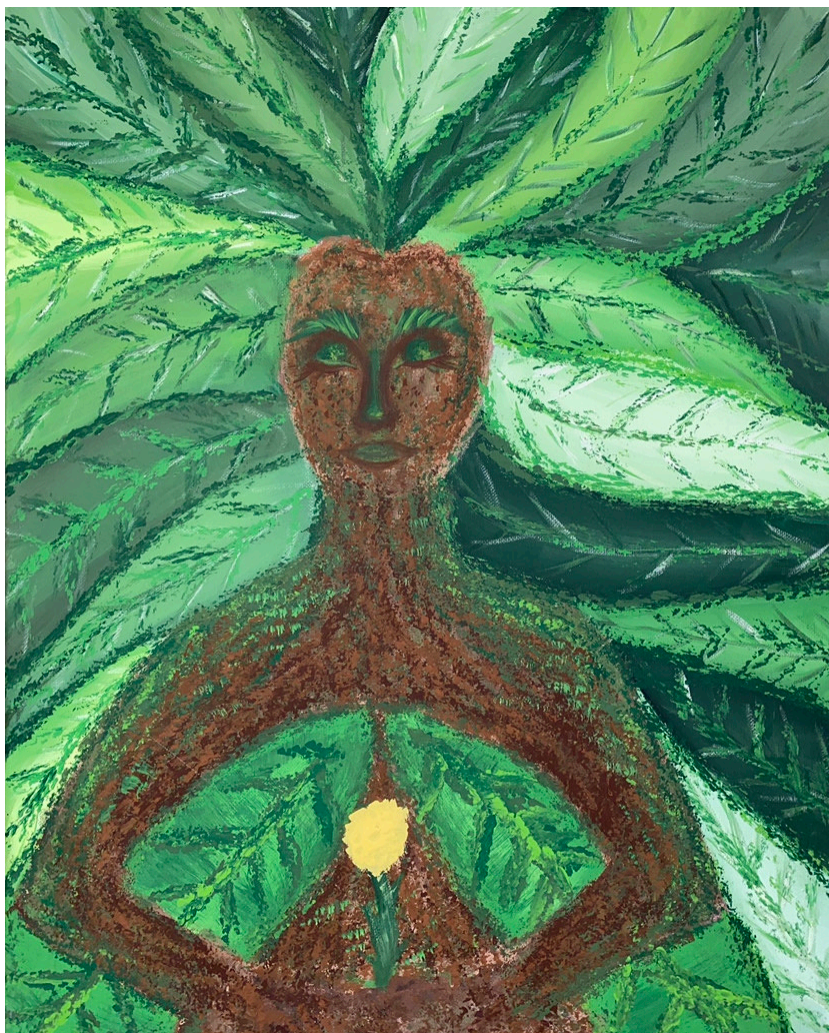
Indian Lake in the Summer by Myndalynn Word



Spontaneity by Myndalynn Word



Silhouettes in the Backyard by Myndalynn Word



Mother Nature by Meredith Webb



Festive Flower Crown by Meredith Webb



A Whale's Bubble by Meredith Webb



The Night of a Full Moon by Meredith Webb



Euphoria Photoshoot by Martina Junod



summer 2018 in Philly by Martina Junod



April 18th by Martina Junod



Self Portrait by Kier Hull



Burger by Kier Hull



French Onion Dip by Kier Hull



Olivia by Kier Hull



Collin Olivia by Kier Hull

Impressions



India Ink by Kier Hull



Lemon Surf by Rain Larsen



Mili and Lulu by Rain Larsen



Lady Luck by Rain Larsen

*Impressions Academic Award Winner: Art



Tunnel Vision by Rain Larsen



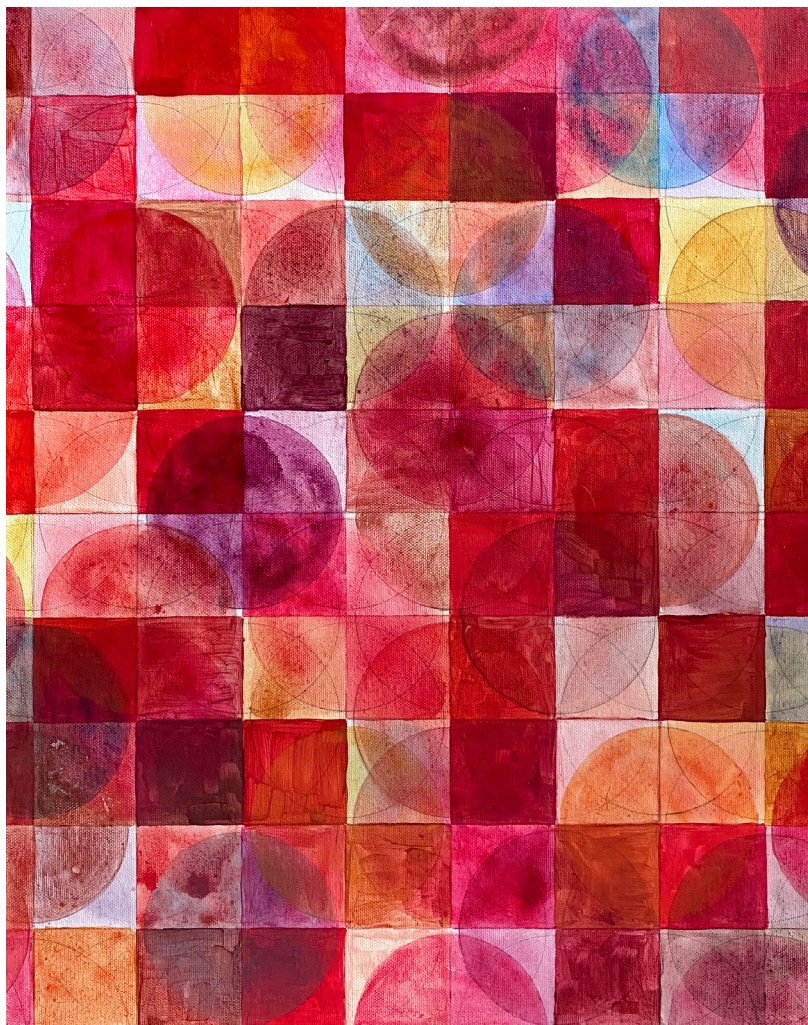
Bus Stop by Rain Larsen



Fragonard's A Young Girl Reading by Sophia Cardone



collage no. 1 by Sophia Cardone



Incongruous by Sophia Cardone
(original piece for cover art)



Portrait of Audrey Hepburn by Sophia Cardone



Black girl magic (or flower princess) by Chloe Melton
(acrylic on canvas)



Black lives matter by Chloe Melton
(acrylic on canvas)



Artist's birthday flowers by Chloe Melton
(acrylic on canvas)



Cobalt by Chloe Melton
(acrylic on canvas)



Memento mori by Chloe Melton
(acrylic on canvas)



Men Cry by Chloe Melton
(mixed media)



St. Louis Cathedral by Nataly Bennett



Memphis Trolley by Nataly Bennett



Yellow Cabs by Nataly Bennett

Part III

Poetry

Brandon Spurlock
2020 — A Reflection

*Impressions Academic Award Winner: Poetry

In this time of days most uncertain
We must pull back the burgundy curtain.
Normalcy is not returning now,
I can't see when, where or how
Life might return to what it was
Bustling streets, city abuzz.

This pandemic has been draining
And no one seems to be refraining
From taking risks that breed infection.
Pure insanity, mine own reflection.
If only I could make an impression,
Instead of a final defeated concession.

And then you've got this mad election
Between geriatrics in need of correction.
Why can't we get some good candidates
That we're proud to hand our delegates?
I know the founding fathers get praise,
But I'd love a single party system these days.

This Russian shill, *dictator* in the Oval
Smells to the high heavens of offal
But we can't do anything in attack
Because Moscow Mitch has his back.
In the mud those two keep rootin'.
All hail our leader's leader, Vladamir Putin.

Brandon Spurlock
Waiting for the End

“Noble, grand, and true”
Beneath a sky so blue.
We try to keep things distant
During this global pandemic.

We cannot stand six foot and sing
The distance must be a greater swing.
I long for the return of normal things
The stuff a new semester usually brings.

Concerts and meetings,
New friends and singings,
COVID is leaving us hanging
While society is beating and banging.

I guess for a while it's time to sit,
All I can do is wait for it.

Brandon Spurlock

Tom Bogart

At orientation you held the door for me,
And introduced me to the history.
My love for this college was founded
In the words upon the stage you spouted.
I couldn't hold back the tears of amazement,
Wonder rising and swelling from your appraisalment.

I feel sad for you.

A big decision was yours to make:
Send us home for COVID or let us stay.
"I know I'm not the worst president in history,
I've never closed the college down." You'd say.

But in the end, you did what you had to
To make sure we all were going to make it through.

You did the thing you feared most. Thank you.

Becca Lesley
white walls

9:00pm
the white walls are visible
at all hours of the night.
they are so bright that
even in the dark you can see them.

11:00pm
the white walls hold an immense amount of power.
they are covered in invisible ink only i can see.
written on them are words put together to
taunt me and bring out my insecurities.
hello friend.
i knew you'd be back sooner or later.

2:00am
the white walls are so powerful
you can hear them even after you close your eyes.
oh, you think you're going to be able to sleep?
that's funny.

3:00am
there's a knock on the door.
it's the caretaker with a glass of water and a pill.
'this should help you fall asleep'.
she has to come check on you throughout the night
because she doesn't trust you.
how pathetic.

Impressions

4:00am

i close my eyes to get some sleep,
but as soon as i do i hear the white walls
screaming at me from all directions.
this place was made for the insane.
just like you.

6:00am

i finally start dozing off
until all of a sudden i sit straight up in bed.
trying to catch my breath.
the invisible ink on the white walls is radiating brighter.
stop being dramatic.
that's how you ended up here in the first place.

7:00am

i can see the white walls closing in on me.
i extend my arms out in all directions
trying to stop them from devouring me.
you will never escape.

9:00am

when the lights turn on
the white walls are so bright, they're blinding.
the white walls are so loud, they're deafening.
it's as if they're begging to be seen.
it's as if they're begging to be heard.

do the white walls know how much power they hold?
or do they think that their 4am screams are right on
schedule?

Becca Lesley
the music box

[those who dance through
life have a different view
than those who don't]

the music box sits on the vanity, untouched.
the people in the house rarely think about it
but they know it's there.

when the music box opens, a dancer appears.
long brown hair, soft brown eyes.
her only job is to dance when the music box is opened.

she adds purpose to the music box.
why would the music box play music
if there was nobody there to dance?

she stands tall and confident.
unbothered by what others say about her beauty
because she's so secure in her own skin.
she has the ability to shine light
into the darkest of corners.
and the ability to bring something positive
into every negative situation.
even her own.

she has a gentle kindness about her.
she invites everyone who walks by
to come dance with her.

Impressions

she has an unending compassion
for the people around her.
she is there to cry with you
if you want her to be.

if you need her
all you have to do is open the music box.
she's ready to listen to anything you want to say to her.
ready to hold any secret.

and when the music box closes
it sometimes leaves her shaken.
but she chooses to keep dancing
even though nobody is watching.

because everyday the world tries to stop her from dancing.
but she refuses to listen.

i want to be like her.

Jonathan Stewart
Concerning Birds During Winter
and What They Think of Themselves
While in the Bare Oak

we're holding on
and now the others are gone
those summery things
like arms that work but never
accomplish anything
now our arms are the arms
we rustle like they did
and we talk
this thing we're holding on to
abandons itself in winter
it slows and becomes still
and as all things still
it shrinks closer and closer to the earth
we don't do that
when our arms work we accomplish
things like none of the others
so we let go
and we work
and we talk
and that thing which we were holding on to
now has no arms, neither ours' nor its
perhaps it is because the others hold
with their arms that they are not free
that they must cling to the earth
in winter

Jonathan Stewart
We can be so many things:

I once decided to count
all the things I can be
I thought there might be something
interesting to see

I can be cold
hungry
and afraid

Like Jonah I can hide in the sea and the
shade

I can be hot
wrong
and ashamed

Like King David I lift up a heart that is
maimed

And I can be anxious
in need
but asleep

Like Abram my faith is between two
halves of sheep

I once decided to count
all the things I could be
I never expected to have
anything

So I can be still
humble
and amazed

Like Moses when Your glory brightly
blazed

Jonathan Stewart

On peut avoir de nombreuses des choses:

J'ai décidé, une fois, de compter
toutes les choses que je pouvais avoir
J'ai pensé qu'il y aurait quelque chose
d'intéressé à voir

Je peux avoir froid
faim
et peur

Comme Jonas je peux fuir à les ombres et
à la mer

Je peux avoir chaud
tort
et honte

Comme le roi David je Te mes péchés
raconte

Et je peux avoir hâte
besoin
et sommeil

Comme Abram qui a dormi en Foi entre
les moitiés d'une bélière

J'ai décidé, une fois, de compter
toutes les choses que je pourrais avoir
Je n'ai jamais revê d'être
plus que moi

Alors je peux avoir le calme
l'humilité
et le émerveillement

Comme Moïse quand Ta gloire a
flambé en éblouissement

Justin Strong
Demon-Haunted Mind

Sometimes
when the streetlight pours through the window
like morning
when my jaw has swollen shut, my teeth ground to
dust
when the rocky currents guide my body to the
place where sleep and wake intersect
I can hear the angels chant "Elohim, Elohim"
I can see new colors
and in the space between alive and dead
I see every life I didn't live and every story I haven't
told
floating, phantasmic, illusory
like a gallery of ghosts haunting a locked room in
my mind
mocking my silence, teasing my inaction
until I wake up empty-headed, bleary-eyed,
demon-haunted and exhausted,
left trying to make a mirror
out of a few broken pieces of glass

Elisabeth Jackson
Our Playlist

I listen to our playlist and get flashbacks of our midnight
mountain drives
I can breathe without fear for the very first time
The scent of rain and pine trees linger in the air
Our hands intertwined, we walk through the woods as a
pair
You carry the depth of oceans, a blue that decorates your
eyes
I, the freedom of the oak trees, a bird soaring the skies
My soul reflecting yours in the most beautiful way
A duet that will never fade

Elisabeth Jackson
Skin and Bone

How is it that one person can mean so much
So much that you lie awake at night missing their touch
It's something so innocent that a simple hug can cure the
restlessness
But the mind will still yearn for that happiness
We walk through life skin to bone
Man was not meant to be alone
Our Heavenly Father fills that hole we all feel in our chest
But sometimes we need to be held to calm the mess
That we are inside, we see a mirror and there's nothing to
hide behind
Tell me then, why is silence louder than screaming?
I've never understood my mind, its wild thoughts
gleaming
A fire that wants to be put out
A peace of mind, if you will, that cannot do without
That one person that calms the storms
One touch and the silence is silenced by peace
A counter attack
From someone who never wanted to be touched back
From someone who only longs to be held
To feel a sense of pressure against that skin and bone.

Albrianna Jenkins
Just the Way I Am

I complained that I was cold,
and I was told to “put some meat on those bones”
as if I could control that number on the scale that never
rose – but sometimes fell.
And now, years later, maybe you think I don’t notice how
your eyes stick to my fuller size,
have trouble s l i d i n g across my thicker thighs, and you
think I don’t hear your woeful sighs
about how maybe I’ve just let myself go. Hell no!
The scale does not scare me but rather you, passing judge-
ment, exchanging glances,
before pasting on smiles and telling me how you love me
just the way I am,
but that maybe if I tried or cared a bit more then I could
find someone to love me *just the way I am.*
Not too fat. Not too thin. Just toned enough to fit in. Well,
good to know that after all these years,
I grew thicker and thoughtful and found within myself
someone who truly loves me
just the way I am.

Chloe Hamlett
With the Bees

We might suffocate today,
here in my tenth-grade math class,
because the worst thing in the world
is to be looked at in Algebra 2 Trig.

I have never met anyone else
who carries a jar of bees
through the halls of their high school
and the walls of their home,

But when I was born,
God put the bees in my hands,
and the world did not like the buzz,
so I put the bees in a jar,

and together we smothered.

Chloe Hamlett

The Salon

*beauty school dropout,
no graduation day for you.
-grease*

on a kitchen stool in the bathroom
with a towel around my neck
my mother cuts my hair
with the age-blunted scissors
I use for pinterest crafts
and I cover her roots with
dark chocolate box dye
that makes her head itch
and me laugh
and we both look alright.

Chloe Hamlett
In This Green Plenty

I believe in vaccines and Vicks VapoRub
On your chest and the bottoms of your feet
Under old socks for a cough.

I believe in the Holy Ghost and the regular ghosts
From the cursed burial ground
Under this subdivision.

(I believe in moving too.)

I think poetry is the efficiency of language
And sometimes you have to give it space to breathe
Under the weight of all your expectations.

I think it's better to be rude than to be kidnapped
But maybe he really did have a lost dog
Under the floorboards of his house somewhere.

(But I don't aim to find out.)

I don't think there were witches in Salem.
I think there were women with souls
Under a world that wanted them to have husbands.

I don't think we're lazier than we used to be either.
I think we're softer, like kind green moss
Under shade trees.

(Beautiful.)

Chloe Hamlett
Goodbye, Man in the Moon

Suppose one day a meteor hit the moon
And it cracked and splintered
Into blue cheese and stories
Of a rabbit who loved his friend

And the tides fell so far
That the seashells stayed on the beach forever
With no little girls picking them up
To string on necklaces

And the earth tilted into burning summers
All hot pavement and no ice cream truck
And tornadoes that will not take us anywhere better
No matter how much we want to kill the witch

Suppose the stars were so terribly bright
Alone in that night sky but I
Couldn't look away from you
Too afraid I'd miss the last moment

Rain Larsen
A House Divided

The meek sky gazed upon
the House of Fire, the House of Water.
The two formed a House of Clouds,
a Cloudscape of their own.
They keep each other in check;
the fire set forth the steam,
The water washes away the ashes.
But the water drew too close.
The water doused its friend's flames
and shrunk back like the shoreline after seeing the
 damage;
so formed a House of Smoke.
The walls evaporated around them,
the foundation was never there.
Nothing to hold them back.
They traverse in opposite directions,
one giving warmth
and the other giving life.
They continued to grow,
grow more powerful,
grow more beautiful,
grow more apart.
Where were the clouds
that the sky so missed?
They were bound to meet again,
should they continue the way they were,
eventually becoming the others' destruction.
One gave coldness,
the other gave death.
All the sky could give was space.
The space filled the air around the water
And the distance among the fire
And they became the Earth and the Sun,
but still a House Divided.

Rain Larsen
Patchwork People

Newly sewn but getting worn over time
We cover up our tears,
Integrate new fabric to cover it
Frayed ends moving every which way
Being snipped and resewn

People notice the difference
No one wants their vulnerability shown
But different patterns on each patch,
the different feel of the textile
Prove that we all cover our cashmere scars

We change as people,
we change our patchwork
For better or for worse,
we become less like people
and more like the clothing we wear

Rain Larsen
Moon's Blessing

I am blessed by the moon
as it guides my hand
as it has for sailor and beast alike,
unbound by the tethers of time
nor the mere quarrels of people.
An ageless being
that watches over the night,
sewing stars into the sky,
and cradles all walks of life
until their wake.
Swathing them in sheer moonbeam
as delicate as silk
and reflective as silver,
Humble though it may be.
Holding the Earth as its child,
wrapping it in its presence
and inspiring the distant lights
that gleam in correspondence
in the indeterminate distance.
It accepts all concepts placed upon it
yet is free of them simultaneously,
a gentle wisp
carrying its kinder through to the morn,
until its companion the sun
takes its work and allows the moon to rest.
The moon shines the pride of
its other half upon its surface,
for the sun is far too intense on its own
for anyone but the moon
to fully understand
or appreciate.

It wears its love on its cratered face
for everyone to look upon it directly,
the delicate spark that the sun
can only exude to the moon,
for the moon.

While the blaze beyond
raises pure life among the ground,
and the life upon Earth
Is the sun's gift to the moon.

Mutable,
Waxing,
Waning,
still complete,
even when its form has altered
in mortal eye.
Even vanishing when sees fit,
not from shame of itself
or its ardent counterpart,
but for the sake of vanishing.
Yet in constant state of being.

Sarah McFalls
Love of Vague Eloquence

I will live a better and longer life because of what you have
said to me.

Your hurtful words sting me as they pour out of your
mouth like acid, making me a part of your
turning and hate filled delusion.

I refuse to let your sickness infect me and make me
breathe heavily leaving my chest empty.
There is something about your company, your lack of fear,
or maybe your bad sense of humor
that manages to come across to everyone as golden.

I have never been inspired by glittering gold, but I have
always been inspired by the sea.
Air by the sea holds the single minded elation of dozens,
thousands, no, ten millions of beautiful
glowing smiles that have begged for a vacation.

I will live a better and longer life because I have been
baptized by the fair waves of the sea.
Her promise of opportunity soothes my exhausted soul,
that has begged for a small comfort,
with kind and friendly whispers of reconciliation.

Nancy Clarke

A Mother's Tears

Written in honor of my love for my children

The first kick of a baby's foot from inside her womb

A mother sheds a tear

The first touch of a newborns hand

A mother sheds a tear

The first step her toddler takes

A mother sheds a tear

The first skinned knee she tenderly kisses

A mother sheds a tear

The first day of Kindergarten as she turns and walks away

A mother sheds a tear

The first time her child faces disappointment

A mother sheds a tear

When their first love breaks their heart

A mother sheds a tear

The day her child graduates high school

A mother sheds a tear

The day her child leaves for college

A mother sheds a tear

The day her child moves out

A mother sheds a tear

The day her child marries their true love

A mother sheds a tear

The day her child has a child of their own

A mother sheds a tear

The first time a mother holds her grandchild

A mother sheds a tear

When a mother takes her final breath

Her children shed a tear

Myndalynn Word
Temporary Inspiration

Here, I am inspired.
Inspired to write about the river.
How it sparkles in the sun,
With the slightly tinted orange leaves sprouting out
around the bank.

I'm inspired to write about my husband
And, the look on his face when he's finally caught a fish
after days of trying-
Even though it is smaller than what he initially expected.
Looking down at the dock,
I see him smiling up at me with a bass gripped to his
thumb.

I'm inspired by how calm it is.
How the sound of a leaf blower in the background isn't
even distracting.
And, the bugs don't bother me with their noise,
but instead make me want to write about them,
the different chirping and buzzing sounding like a
symphony.

It's a chilly sixty-four here, feeling even colder in the
shade.
When the wind blows, it feels bitter, almost like winter.
But I like the way it feels,
Different from what I'm used to, feeling like I can actually
breathe here.
While it is welcomed, it still isn't home.

Maybe what makes this place so peaceful is because it's
away,

Away from distractions,
Away from responsibilities,
And away from worries.

I will enjoy my peace here while it lasts,
However, I'm still anticipating the voice of my GPS saying,
 "Welcome to Tennessee,"
Where I will be inspired to write in a different way.

Myndalynn Word
A New Perspective

Poetry is...

Explorative,

Inventive,

Expressive,

Demonstrative,

Revealing,

Self-conscious,

Heartwarming,

I do what I want without consequence

I'm scared, but I'm also happy,

However, I'm also angry.

You get what I'm saying, right?

When I don't know what to say,

How to act,

Or what to think,

I write poetry.

Ruthless,

Shattering,

Calming,

Truthful,

Justified

Creative,

Safe,

Whatever I want, poetry is...

K. G. Mathews
A Scene of Backseat Enlightenment

Suddenly the roof of your car is the most interesting thing
in eternity
Just the most perfect shade of beige there's ever been

Interspersed with a galaxy of stains
Unknowable in origin

I could lay here until the heat death of the universe
Warmed from soul to fingertips

By the shitty heating unit in the front seat
Which is likely microwaving our last few braincells

As Billy Joel serenades us
Crackling over the stereo

As I am sprawled across the backseat
In every single reality

Soaking up the seconds
I swear if I squinted hard enough

I could see every constellation behind the carpeted ceiling
Of this old hunk of junk

I could read the secrets of the universe
On the palm of God's hand

"What's God's love line look like?" you ask
"Exactly like this" I reply

K. G. Mathews
A Hymn to Good Mistakes

I believe in the sweet, evil burn
Of my first ever shot of bourbon whiskey
And I believe in the warm, stiff embrace
Of the entire state of Kentucky
As the liquor slid all the way down
And I slid all the way home

I believe that salvation is kept
In the glass-shard, cat-scratch, wasp-sting
Of a tattoo needle on blank skin,
And I believe that our bodies are temples
But that temples are always better
When they're full of stained glass and black ink

I believe in the off-key lullaby prayer
Of my plastered roommates scream-singing ABBA
At the tops of their lungs at 2am on a weeknight,
And I believe that broken hearts are healed
Through the miracles of ice cream and mild property
damage

I believe that the short walk from my second-floor
apartment
Down to my best friend's idling car in the parking lot
At exactly seventeen minutes past midnight
Should count as a religious pilgrimage

I believe that cutting and dyeing and
Bleaching and shaving off all your hair
Is a kind of rebirth, a baptism in technicolor,
There should be parades in the street whenever it is done,
Complete with floats and confetti

I believe stretchmarks and scars and broken pieces
Should be lauded like trophies because they mean
You're alive, you made it to here and now
And I believe that we deserve
To be kissed on the forehead
Until the sun dies

K. G. Mathews
Tempting

I think (*in this metaphor*)
You are Eden
And I (*somehow*)
Am the snake.
I don't think I'm supposed to be here.
But here I am anyway.
Because you beckon
And I always come
When you call.

Would you (*in this analogy*)
Call for me again?
Lay my fallen limbs
On hallowed ground.
I'm not certain (*not really*)
That these cold scales could even take it.
But here I am anyway.
Beckon again?
(*please?*)

If you ask,
I'll slither there.

(*If you ask,*
I'll crawl.)

K. G. Mathews
This is for Them

36.2081° N, 86.2911° W

This is for my favorite blue hoodie
That a boy yanked the frayed strings out of
While he sat behind me in a 6th grade assembly

And this is for the hot pink lunchbox
That I hit him square in the nose with promptly after,
Like a morning star on a chain, ragged and battle worn
I never regretted the day and a half suspension
Nor the three or four drops of blood on his prim pink polo

And this is for being seated next to him an
eternity later
Where he caught my eye and grinned like a salute, a
greeting
I could almost see the old blood stain
Wiped away but still hanging on, a trophy and a relic

And this is for the neon red of the bowling alley
sign
On prom night, bathing my dress in cherry wine
Staining our laughing teeth strawberry

And this is because they aren't around much
anymore,
That round table of tuxedo and sequin-decked
knights-errant
But I can see them gathering again
Under the saccharine, blinking lights of "Pro Bowl West"

Impressions

And this is for my final geometry class
And the girl who never spoke a word above a whisper
But I knew her voice was syrup-covered storm clouds

And this is for seeing her once more
Ages after I forgot what her name had been
Hanging half her body out a car window
Under the streetlamps and a charbroiled sky

And this is for the way she cheered into the
whirlwind
A giddy banshee in a Toyota Camry chariot
Rough box-dye purple hair whipping like a banner
I swear I could feel it tickle under my nose, across my
eyelids
As I blinked her gone into the changing traffic lights

Anonymous
Self-Loathing

I am trapped in my mind with the very person I hate.
She is loud, impulsive, and dare I say a little overweight.

I have done what I thought best to put this woman to rest.
I have silenced her thoughts that use to flow from her
mouth so earnest.
I have hung humility over what I thought was vanity, but
where self-pride once flourished.
I have starved her soul of joy until it fit the lady's standard
of malnourished.

I have been so focused on making such a large personality
fit into a small margin of socially acceptable standards.
How can I be so kind to others, but when it comes to
myself, I forget all my manors?
I often wondered if I met myself in real life would I like
me?
Would I think I was funny, and if I were beautiful would I
be able to see?

I am trapped in my mind with someone who demands
perfection.
But these things I cannot change do not deserve my
attention.

Angelo Letizia
Wasting October

I see maps
In the veins of leaves
But still
I get lost
An old barn built
In a field
Becomes a compass of sorts
A compass in memory
But it cannot tell me
Where to go
A breeze wafts through the grass
And playfully touches every blade
And the blades wave back
But they do not wave to me
I do not know their secret
The secret of October
The barn, grass and leaves
Will not tell me

Angelo Letizia
The taste of revolt

hot darkness
nosebone guide
gliding over
the chasm
hidden from your daily life

I am not ashamed
I wear your deviance like a shirt
necessary in this society
but we must revolt
even in our one-acre universes

Katlyn Bogle
Illuminating Brain Storms

I write by the glow of the TV
flashing like the lightning
that woke me up from my dreams
by blazing through the 2 am dark.

Commercials cast shadows
from my hand onto the page,
revealing the words born
in the quiet of the world.

The rain pounding away keeps me awake
because it's louder than my thoughts,
drumming away at the tin roof and my anxieties
giving them a new rhythm to beat by.

It's the thunder that's the worst,
not because it's loud,
but because I am too,
and the sounds strike together in my head.

The quiet that follows
is what frightens me the most:
the emptiness of sound
stretching out through the darkness.

So I hold my breath
when lightning strikes,
and wait for silence to pass
between flashes.

Katlyn Bogle
Rewritten

Our anxiety has ruined ancient societies
drove them to disperse
while we drove the hearse
to collect their decaying bodies
where they lie in their ruined homes
and we rejoice that we have built
our monuments over their bones.
We stole their lullabies
right out of their throats
and faked our alibis
until they choked.
After all, the ones who write history
are the victors of the war
and we keep telling those stories
until we forgot who we fought
and what we were fighting for.

Katlyn Bogle
Hero's Tale

Since you couldn't write you own story,
You decided to become one yourself.
You wanted to live forever—
To cheat death with every repeated tale.

You thought yourself the hero,
The one who saved the day,
But could never image being the dragon
That someone else had to slay.

You wanted someone to tell your story,
To preserve you as you are,
But never thought the ones who remembered you
Are the ones you chose to scar.

You heart was more fickle
Than the gold you believed it to be,
And when you took your final breath,
Those around you were finally able to breathe.

You really thought you were the hero
Who would inspire after you fell,
But the only thought we'll spare you now
Is when we pray you're burning in hell.

Katlyn Bogle

Inspired by Oh my god by (G)I-DLE

she collected stars for me to see
she pulled the sun closer when I complained of the breeze
she painted the clouds so I could gaze
she created thunderstorms when I was away

she watched me from the surface of the moon
she matched its phases to my every mood
she smoothed the seas so I could swim
she always catered to my whim

she whispered to the wind to brush against my face
she hid her blush every time I showed her my waist
she held my hand like it was a key
she rocked with me like the waves in the sea

i drew away when I found something new
and when I left, she disappeared too
now I regret leaving her behind
now I regret that I never called her mine

KB Ballentine

Thin as Air
Dingle, Ireland

Memory weights this place, this island,
with images of you: Atlantic flooding
the shingled beach as you race the tide,
twilight crouching behind the Three Sisters
where you and wind cling to the cliffs.
Día dhuit and *Día is Muire* dhuit in the pub –
sláinte and laughter before anger rends the air
and glass shatters, shards the smooth-planked floor.

How do I go back again? Hay meadows
just beginning to bud with buttercups,
hares hiding in timothy and quaking grass.
Green hills, fields still tumbling into the ocean,
shearwaters skating its rumpled surface.
Mist rising, erasing you bit by bit.

KB Ballentine
The Comfort of Solitude

Night lingers.
A silver-spotted skipper skims the window
where my lamp beckons – a tiny sun.
Moth moon cradles the cedars,
branches stroking dawn's purple skirt.
The crickets' cadence, the dove's sad song wane,
pink fingers spreading the sky –
light discovers a fawn, a splintered swing.
Morning's heartbeat a mystery,
Unfolding as stars dissolve,
a mockingbird flirting with fallen figs...

KB Ballentine

If we just listen, we can hear ghosts

in the fog as it ribbons the fields waiting for dawn,
in rain as it splashes oak leaves,
even in shadows that hide the detritus of the day:
tote bag, mail, crumpled clothes.

These ghosts are the friendly ones,
the ones who grin when we flinch
at them peeking from the gloom.
The others (the ones inside our minds) –
those are the ones to dread.

They emerge at odd times and places,
stamp a memory across the Now
and expect a seat at Joyce's table*
(whether we want them there or not).
What if we don't want to listen?

What if we can't hear anything else?

*James Joyce, "The Dead"

KB Ballentine
Between Soft Shadows

Mist as thin as faerie wings
slips over my skin, day wrapping
itself in cotton-fog. Yesterday's muzzy sun
lured us with its summer warmth —
just enough blue to make a pair of pants,
and an ocean kissed with salt and sand.
But a cold wind drifted in,
now spider lace trembles with wet worlds.

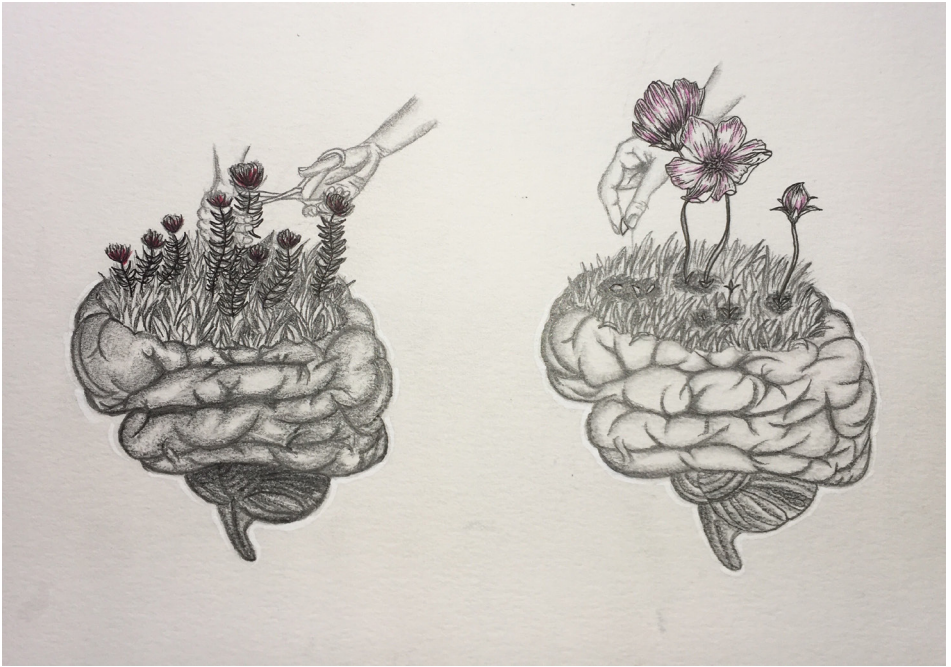
A damselfly hums somewhere.
Trust the faeries to share their grace
as I walk into this day unknowing.
Let water leap and curl the shore.
Let gray blur scatter
into specks of breath — a faerie brushing by.

Landry Hazzard
Weeds in My Mind

When you speak to me
You plant weeds
My mind is a landfill of your words
I find myself in the middle of hurt
Not knowing where to begin
or if it'll ever end
I don't want to hear what is growing
This is a battle I keep losing

When He speaks to me
He plants seeds
I can feel the relief of your disease
and I am free
My mind is now bloomed with beauty
Growing and showing
what I am without you

Landry Hazzard
Weeds in My Mind
(companion piece)



Landry Hazzard
The Valley

I've sat in the valley all my life.
Gazing at the mountain
In awe of its beauty.
Observing the birds make their nest.
Craving to run through its wildflowers.
In wander lust of what the top holds
Peeking through the clouds.
To look upon the endless world.

I will climb.
I will watch my valley grow dim
To the sight of my adventure
I will stand on the top and stare.
Stare at the beauty of God.
Holding daisies in my hand
And nothing more to my possession.
Panting and falling on the steep rocks.

I will push.
I am determined.
I will not wait anymore
And I will get there.
I won't forget where I came from.
I will not forget the despair of my past.
I will praise you. I will.
I will dance below your throne captivated by you, God.

And if this mountain I conquered
crumbles to the depths of my valley.
If my accomplishments roll in thunder
If my hopes and joy avalanche down.
You are still good.

And if not...
My God, you are still good.

Landry Hazzard
Pebble

Past:

When I saw you
I was not a girl anymore
No, I became a million butterflies swarming around you
Bright blue to reflect the change of luck I felt when you
looked at me

The kind of luck as if all of the sleepless nights where my
pillow became a beautiful
work of art painted elegantly with the strokes of my
mascara coated eyelashes

As if
Those nights
never happened

The kind of luck where the cuts displayed on my body
began to open at the growth of blooming flowers on
display

As you walk by
And painfully pick one out of me
smell it and smile

The kind of luck where
All of the negativity that was shoved inside of my head
was lured out by the words that
rolled off your tongue and flowed fluently down my skin
like the tainted water from
spring rain as I stood there in embrace

You made me feel so alive like I was flying high
only I wasn't
I was flying low
close to you
flaunting my happiness

Impressions

And I never really understand what it was like
to be engulfed by a beautiful love like this

The others just made me nervous from fear
But you made me nervous from happiness- like I would
 somehow end up flying too far
away from you
Eventually you couldn't keep up with every butterfly
So you would pluck one out of the sky
Keep me in a jar
Forget to poke a hole in the top
And watch me suffocate
As my wings danced for you one more time.
You were a taker
I was a giver
But knowing this
I would still have given my life for you

Present:

I hear from your shadow you don't like my butterflies
You said that they are loud and obnoxious
That the sound of my wings cloud
your mind
that instead of hearing the symphony of my love
you hear a cacophony
You say you can't think
You say that I kept you on edge
cause it is hard to see the girl you love when I swarm
 around you
But I am swooned
I don't notice the glowing smile you have on your face
is when you see her face through the small clearings that
 are quick to
change
I don't notice you have fallen for someone
Maybe I don't notice because I am trying so hard to

impress you
That I am oblivious to the love notes you pass in class are
to the beauty
behind me
maybe I shouldn't mention she never gets them
because I think they are for me
If I told you those sweet poems you write for her are taped
to my wall, you
might find me pathetic
Because now I'm the reason you aren't happy
And you are the reason I stopped flying and started falling

Most nights I try so hard to go to sleep right as I lay down
I know if I lay there for a while that you find it as an
invitation to flood my
mind of the things, I don't have with you

Because I am restless thinking of what
I don't have with you

I can feel your hands tugging and pulling at pieces of my
heart because it
can't be broken only ripped apart
I guess God made it that way so that when I fall for a man
who doesn't
deserve me, I can feel the torment of loving

Future:

I will move on from you
Not because I have to in order to function
But because the hole I dug for myself
Has become flooded with my sorrowful tears that I am on
the surface
I had forgotten the warmth of the sun
I had forgotten this beautiful place

Impressions

All was the cost of you
What I thought was a beautiful love
Was in all reality keeping me from reality
Your smile was not a gift
But poison
You were smart enough to know that it was the best way
to kill me
Through kindness

I will find a new lover
Although I have my doubts that I deserve one
I know what I can offer to him
I offer the things you put on display for every girl to
swoon at but never have
I actually keep my offers in a locked box
And only the right one can open it
I thought you had the key
But that was just another one of your tricks

I will be happy
Whether it's with a man
Let's clarify -Man
Not a boy much like you
Whether it's with a man or myself
I have a life to live
You had the option of living life together, but you so
brutally declined
Life is too short to waste my expensive mascara on tears
from your torment
Life is too beautiful to be spent with anyone other than my
Creator
Although you think otherwise, you are no God

I will grow old
And you will be but an old memory that was plucked from
my mind long ago
Much like dead flowers are and replaced with new lively

ones
I will have kids
and they will not know your name
or even that you were one of the few people I held so dear
and close to me
They will never find out what my mind had to make out of
clues you left behind only to find It was mistaken.

You are not what I need to survive
You are nothing like air or water or even the things in an
emergency kit
You can't be the needle and thread that stitches up hearts
when you are the one tearing them apart
You are just a boy
In a sea of boys
And I will not be defined by that sea
But by the reckless persistent love of Yahweh
So, I guess
Thank you for showing me how I don't deserve you
Especially since you think I am unworthy
I will now start a life that does not revolve around you
Because you are not a sun
You are a pebble with an ego of the sun

Matthew Graham
Clash of [Internal] Civilizations

What sits on the surface of the
globe's Red zones?
What sun beams its light through their
misty bliss?
On labor-filled mornings my sun
burns my eyes,
But there the sun's soft and their work
is peaceful

But I'm not naïve, I know their
men have greed
And more so than here their greed can
abuse me;
Not just from the top, but from each
man above
Even no love can trickle down-
ward to me

I can't be convinced that man is
capable
Of making one contract to right
every wrong
But still I imagine it's bet-
ter to try
Than it is to go on with no
plan in place

Don't try to tell me we've beat the
leviathan
You know just as I, we have not
even tried.
If ever I claim to have fig-
ured it out
You'll know that I've lost in my
quest for truth

Matthew Graham

Il Gatto

Your head rests in space
Suspended with no support from beneath;
No God above reaches down
To hold your little crown.

Yet there your head stably sits,
Like a guilty party's defense;
Just as their words linger in air
So your skull hangs tenderly there.

But unlike those words which idle
awkwardly,
Your presence is strong and observed
reverentially;
Your countenance is easy when defying
gravity
In your tiny head is a key to life's
mystery.

For while you sleep and dream majestically
We humans stagnate in our depravity.
I call out, *il gatto*, let me hold you
That I might learn the scent of your truth.

Impressions

Matthew Graham
The Brain

I use my learning to
Inform my search for truth.

I scrutinize my phrase.
I'm picky with my praise.

Efficient practice is
The river to success.

Be skeptical through all.
Complacence is a fault

Your God has naught to do
He ought to sit and pore.

Hark! The Prophet Knowledge!
He shares life's constant facts.

Poetry

I rush to find the beauty of
a skyscraper lullaby
to lay my head on
concrete paisleys
and have dreams of
trashtown fuckos

I slide along a moonbeam
racetrack which ends
when those sweet
Ghanaian beats bring
me back and my
soul float-bounces
all the way returned
to my head

A powerade bottle rocking
side to side and
thick clear liquid
moving straight
to my liver steam
powers me to life

How fully my head fills the
space between
my ears; the space
between my ears?
or space inside the
world?

You spend hours in study
never breaking to
view the wonder of
an intricate scope
of your mind's
own creation

Look at the honor within
a steel beam
that smooths its
strength and performs
so serenely its
purpose to hold
on its shining
shoulders all of
my creation

Part IV
Impressions of
Home in
Appalachia

About This Section

This semester, *Impressions* staff paired with students in Danita Dodson's 12th grade class at Hancock County High School in a collaborative, creative, editorial partnership. Each of the following pieces was written by a Hancock County student and received feedback from our staff before final publication. Special thanks to Fit.Green.Happy.® and Mountain Challenge for sponsoring the project in order to promote mental health and happiness through awareness of our places in Appalachia.

“ In *Appalachian Values*, Loyal Jones argues that Appalachians are anchored in ‘our homeplace,’ which he says is one of our strongest values. During the fall semester, the eleven students in my 12th-grade English class at Hancock County High School began to ponder this idea of ‘our homeplace’ in the hills of a remote East Tennessee county. This contemplation ultimately led them to create a series of dedicated writings about the place where they live. These budding writers began with narrative-description pieces, attempting to bring remote readers to their homeplace through sensory-rich words. Then in exemplification essays, they developed vivid examples of how their natural surroundings in Hancock County have helped them cultivate a sense of well-being and happiness—an exercise during the pandemic that proved to be especially heartening. They also produced extended-definition essays about what being an ‘Appalachian’ means to them. Inspired by the partnership between our class and the *Impressions* staff, these young authors found ways to fashion bridges between their rural community and a more distant and urban one; encouraged by the generous and artistic feedback from the Maryville College students, they realized that their words had fallen upon receptive ears and that their voices mattered to others outside their homeplace. Immensely grateful for our collaboration with Fit.Green.Happy. and Mountain Challenge, who kindly sponsored our project, we have discovered that this creative process gives a lovely new meaning to the idea of ‘remote learning.’ ”

-Danita Dodson, editor of *Teachers Teaching Nonviolence*

Sarah Johnson
The Homestead: A Perspectives Place

Growing up, one has always heard the saying “home is where the heart is,” but is there really a correlation? Hancock County--a small, mesmerizing, and alluring town with radiant mountains that appear to stretch across the skyline--is the place where I grew up. Home creates a simplicity in one’s heart that will travel with someone forever. The place where one grew up will always be “home” to him or her. A homestead is also known as the place where life stories are told. Home is a place to relax and feel assured. Stories from one’s life can be shared with the world through something as simple as someone’s personality. It is a place where one’s perspective takes off, and he or she realizes where they belong. The memories shared there will forever be known. A homestead can influence value, culture, and perspective towards one’s lifestyle.

Every Sunday morning my dad would take me to the little, white church at the top of the hill. Walking in I would hear the slow, yet immense, thumps, shouts, and vibrations that create a sound of joy almost immediately. Little did I realize that Dad would be the only lasting parent figure left in my life. Growing older, I had grasped how important having him there was to me. He had given me something to believe in--the value of faith, trust, and a little place to worship in. There were a delicate and enchanting feeling brought in from church that is so amazing, yet indescribable, flawless, and exquisite. Loyal Jones states, “We are oriented around place. Our place is close to our minds...sense of place is one of the unifying values of the mountain people.” This, from my knowledge, would mean that our lives are “oriented” upon where we are from, and

it makes us who we are today. Home is what our hearts long for. Our home is where our hearts belong. The sweet memories, stories, and songs tell the story of what the “place” means to us. The place gave us the tranquility and belonging that it shares with our home values.

As I was growing up, I realized things all around me were changing. Technology of today might have majorly changed the way others work and view things, but the culture shared here is just the same as the many generations before us. Growing up in the mountains one knows that people always view the “mountain people” differently. People in today’s time do not get to enjoy family as we do; everyone is always too busy on mobile devices to notice that the ones who love him or her are right in front of their eyes. As a small-town girl, I have always been the one to hop up on a tractor, or help Dad yearly plant a large, providing garden. Each year the beautiful garden is made up of long, winding rows upon rows of fresh, shiny, and vibrant colored fruits and vegetables. The lined rows were filled with juicy red, yellow, and green vegetables such as tomatoes, okra, and corn. The fresh, delicious corn used to stand taller than me, after it got fully grown. When we would pick the corn off, for I would have to leap far off the ground. It was the impeccable smell of freshness that could stretch for miles. It always provides my family with healthy eating habits and with astounding memories that will last a lifetime.

Still yet, every year when the time rolls around, he leaps up onto his tractor, that echoes across the field, and plows at what I see as a recollection of shared laughs and smiles that made me who I am. The home was filled with mirth that echoed upon the old, memory filled walls. The home was filled with not only happiness, but with tears and heartache also. A sweet smell of happiness exploded into our small town. These simple things have

made a huge difference in my soul. People may see this a stereotypical thing, but to me, it shares the immense culture Hancock County still has. You simply cannot understand or make a judgement unless you have experienced it yourself. If you base it off a stereotype, do you truly know for sure?

It was not until I grew older, did I realize how much of an impact it had on me and my perspective of life. The amazing and kind people from home made me who I am as a person today. Their kindness showed even in something as simple as their kind, yet enthusiastic waves. It was the type of happiness that brought a bright, joyful light into those dark, and dull days. Now that I think back and imagining the sweet memories of the cool, breathtaking, and immaculate waters that shattered over and against the large rocks we climbed on. The dainty, unusual, and sweet taste of the spring freshness would leap into your mouth. The rocks would slowly sink into the organic, moist, and grainy textured soil throughout the years. This type of feeling that created focus and positivity in your life. I sit and think of the strong and compelling smell of gasoline from the small gas station at the end of my long, winding, and dusty hollow that the community would share after church. The appreciation of the people around me allowed my perspective to happily grow. Sunday afternoon, the dear smiles of the workers would welcome one in as he or she would scramble to get a tasty snack, and just from the way they spoke you knew you were part of their family. For some, it may seem a simple everyday thing, but to me it transformed my perspective on life. The memories always reminded me that one should always stay positive and enjoy life. The thought of being able to listen to the songs your county shared on Friday nights over the loudspeaker at a football game truly makes you think about your special little hometown. A

human being's perspective on the world can be influenced by something as easy as the "roots" he or she are from.

All these stupendous memories from my hometown have majorly impacted my lifestyle. Someone's values can be discovered by simply sharing a story of what a "place" means to himself or herself. The perspective of life is viewed in many ways based on what we experience or learned. Whether you believe there is an association or not, everyone has assets and opinions of life; some just know and believe it comes from the "roots" he or she endures.

William Kip Collins
The People of Hancock County

The mountains are calling my name! Small towns are often disregarded or held in contempt, but they are actually great places for escape and restoration. Set within the northeast corner of East Tennessee, my small town of Sneedville has been brushed aside and ridiculed for years. However, to me, it is a very accepting, friendly, and all-around beautiful place. To understand this homeplace, one must first become acquainted with the green countryside, which exudes great beauty. However, perhaps the most rooted and essential knowledge of this natural landscape is familiarity with its people, the lifeblood that makes Sneedville and Hancock County truly special.

All the beautiful views, waterfalls, and historical sites that surround Hancock County help make it so beautiful and homey. The Clinch River, for example, is one of the cleanest rivers in the country, sustaining the life of endangered mussels. It also provides respite, and folks here float down it in kayaks in the summer, enjoying the feeling of nature and getting to see all the marine life that live in the cool water. We are mesmerized at the big blue catfish and the huge turtles that swim at the very, very bottom. If we are lucky enough on a clear day, we get the chance to see bald eagles fly along the Clinch River and hunt for fish, symbolizing the freedom that this homeplace and its people have from the more modern world.

It is here all along this mighty river that the people of Hancock County live, breathe, and communicate. One of the outstanding features of our character is the way that we talk. In fact, you might say that we have our own language and unique sayings. If you were to visit, you might clearly recognize that the residents speak words

totally different from you, even if you come from another part of East Tennessee, but that is how we were raised. It's called "Appalachian Talk." Some phrases commonly used are: "over yonder," or "put it a poke." A lot of people from bigger cities and other states have moved to Hancock County and tried to correct the words and grammar that the "Mountain People" use. Though they will accept help with any farm labor and daily chores that need to be done, people from Hancock County don't accept help with words and phrases but will accept help with any farm labor or daily chores that need to be done.

In addition to being mesmerized by the folksy language here, those who visit small towns like Sneedville just fall in love with the hospitality and the feeling of love and care that these small-town people give when they welcome guests. Many of us derive this unique cultural heritage from a very interesting and distinct race of people called Melungeons. With dark hair, dark skin, and light-colored eyes, they are found in Northeast Tennessee or Southern Virginia and Kentucky, but their most noted cultural home is Hancock County. They worked hard and did not cause trouble, and they have been a part of Hancock County's legacy and culture for many years. In fact, many of my family members are Melungeons or have Melungeon traits. Just like their Melungeon forebears, the people of Hancock County are receptive to any visitor who decides to stay, work hard, and keep away from trouble. They will treat you like a blood-related family member and will have your back in anything you do. This small-town friendliness extends to everybody who is new to the county or just a guest with respect. In fact, many visitors find it curious when they drive to town because they see many different people throw up a finger or a hand to wave as they drive by, but this is not a mean gesture, nor does it have a bad meaning; it's just that everybody in Hancock

County waves as they pass to say, "Hey." And hopefully they make somebody's day by showing a friendly vibe. Also, this kindness extends to the practical; people here will give the shirt off their backs if you ask for it. If they see you stuck on the side of the road, they will stop and fix the problem or take you to their house and offer you some sweet tea or coffee and offer to make you some soup beans and fried potatoes with the corn bread that was made earlier that morning. They will even ask if you want to join them at church because religion is a big thing in Hancock County; Sundays are church, family time, and rest from all the work they accomplished the past week.

Hancock County is very special to me because it is where my ancestors and I were raised. I share a close relationship with this homeplace. The small-town life has taught me that, in order to be great, you must stay focused and humble yourself to be the best, no matter what path you choose in life or how rich or poor you are. Like the people of Hancock County, I have come to believe that life is best spent by having a good time with family and friends. So, come join us: take a vacation, turn on some country music, load up the car, and be stress free. Let nature and the small-town cure all your problems. I promise that you will visit again.

Devon Blevins
The Beautiful Essence of Sneedville

A homeplace could be a variety of things; personally, my homeplace happens to be the breathtaking blue mountains in the deep roots of East Tennessee. East Tennessee is supplied with some of the most preserved nature in the world. Gaping over the mountains, at its peak you can just feel the touch of nature's life itself. Hancock County, Tennessee, is one of the best places to call home. Hancock County is often looked at as a worthless and trashy place to many people, but you would have a very different outlook if you looked a little deeper. The breathtaking view, the unique people, and the remarkable variety of wildlife and nature deep in the mountains are what makes Sneedville a remarkable homeplace.

Waking up on a Saturday morning, drinking a cup of fresh coffee, glancing over the endless blue sky, just feeling your worries drift away as the fog rises—that's when you truly know how much of a blessing it is to call the mountains your home. There are so many unique attributes that are hidden in the deep, majestic valleys of Hancock County. If you truly take your time to see the value of nature's beauty, you would see the mountains as something more than a boring 'holler' with nothing to offer. Staring into the endless stars with no big city lights to interfere is truly breathtaking. Watching the sunrise gleam off the fresh running waters of the Clinch River will make you realize that there's something greater than this life. As the evening sun sinks past the mountains, you will hear the crickets chirp, which will bring you to peace. It is truly astonishing to see all the nature in Hancock County.

In addition to the alluring mountains, the people who call Sneedville their home are some of the most

endearing and unique people alive. The accent of the local people is defined uniquely as one of a kind. A few examples of this unique language are *fixin*, *y'all*, *ol*, and *winder*. If you sat down on an old wooden rocking chair and talked to a local, you would learn there are so many gentle spirits in this little county who will bestow a helping hand for nothing in exchange. However, to many Sneedville is considered aged, perhaps because of its use of archaic words, which makes it seem quaint. However, I think that's precisely what makes it so superior. It's not always about the expensive, popular, or approved things that makes something special; often, the finer things, true roots, and offbeat things are what makes something true to the core. I am tremendously fortunate to call the immeasurable mountains my one and only homeplace.

The nature and thriving wildlife in Sneedville, Tennessee make it one of the rarest places around. There are so many different species of animals that roam the mountains and the vast valleys that surround the county, and there are also so many mysterious fish that swim in the river. If you were to cast a pole into the fresh morning waters of the Clinch River, or hook a smallmouth bass just to have the fight of your life as it swiftly drifts through the water, that's when you have to take the time and realize how vital the smaller things to life can be. It's crazy to contemplate that there are animals that have never been in connection with a human. From listening to the bird's chirp to hearing a turkey gobble, it can be interesting listening to the way animals communicate. Watching a deer graze across a field will just show you the honesty of the succeeding wildlife in Sneedville.

A homeplace is where we feel at home with the heart. I am thankful to say that I attach to the mountains of East Tennessee. My homeplace is extremely special to me, and I believe that its extraordinary itself. No matter

where life may lead me, I will always know that Hancock County is my home at heart. At the end of the day, I can say that living in East Tennessee is a feeling like no other; the mountains are truly one of the most engaging, heavenly places on earth.

Kylie Mullins

Hancock County: Best Home Place of All

A home place can be a lot of different things according to who you are asking. Some people see it as where you live or where you are from. It can be a person, place, smell, or taste. It can also be a lot more than that. If you ask me what my home place is, I would say it is the people I've had the privilege to meet and grow with here. Loyal Jones was right when he said in his book *Appalachian Values* that "We are oriented around place. Our place is close to our minds. Our songs tell of our regard for the land where we were born. Sense of place is one of the unifying values of mountain people." Hancock County is a home place. The simplicity of this little town and all the culture people have gained from being here will always be carried with them, but I think the people from Hancock County can all say we are anchored by more than just the scenery and landmarks.

The peaceful sounds of the river flowing in Kyle's Ford and the smell of the freshwater are the very first things that pop up in my mind when talking about my own home place. I dig a little deeper, and my memory is flooded by the thought of the leaves crunching the dry-land and the twigs snapping while walking miles across the mountain behind my house going dry land fish hunting with my family. In fact, I have many memories from being here. A favorite childhood memory of mine is wade fishing in the Clinch River with my grandpa and standing on the slippery rocks while feeling the rapids flow swiftly against me. Walking through the creek below my house barefoot, feeling the soft sand between my toes, will be another memory that will inundate my thoughts often. I dig even deeper, and I realize that Hancock County has so much more to offer than just its natural beauty.

Hancock County does have a lot of natural beauty, and it definitely deserves the credit for being so beautiful. I have been to a few places across the United States, and not one single place I have visited has the same type of people that Hancock has. By far, Hancock County has some of the most kind-hearted, generous, and loving people I have ever met. The people I have encountered here when I was in need have always been more than willing to help me in any way possible. This small town has been built on neighborliness and love. Our community has come together in every tragedy and hardship this town has faced. We have had so many losses in such a short amount of time, and every single person in this town comes together to support the families that were affected. One of the young lives lost happened to be someone very close to me. It was my best friend's brother. A year or so before that, one of my classmate's brothers died also, and it was an immense pain for all of us to experience at such a young age. However, everyone in the community was so supportive. The school had counselors for us to talk to during this time of grief. However, it was the teachers of Hancock County who were the most supportive, taking their time to make all of us as comfortable as they could, showing us that their jobs involve so much more than just teaching us. These are examples of the caliber of spirit that lies inside the hearts of Hancock County folks.

Hancock County is so much more than just a beautiful, simple town. It is home. It is where all our roots are planted and where we gained all the morals and values we have today to carry and spread to wherever we may land next. It is the place where we have grown as the people we are today. Our stories, our friends, and our experiences are what makes us who we are and what makes our home place what it is. That is the amazing part of Hancock County being my home place.

Lexie Wilder
*Mountain People: You Will Either
Never Want to Leave or You Will Never
Want to Come Back*

I have lived amid vast mountains all my life. No matter where I go here, I am surrounded by hills, trees, creeks, and fields of wildflowers. Though I have traveled all over the East Coast to crowded cities, gorgeous beaches, large forests, and everywhere in between, something always manages to bring me right back to this little valley that I call home. One thing I find in Hancock County, Tennessee, that I do not find in those faraway places is a sense of peace and calm. As I lie in bed at night, I hear crickets outside singing their nightly song. When I wake up in the morning, I hear birds chirping away at the sight of the fresh daylight. This familiarity is a great part of what brings me peace and calm. I have lived in this little valley all my life and have seen all this place has to offer, but I do not plan on going anywhere else any time soon.

Growing up in a place like Hancock County puts an invisible “Kick Me” sign on the backs of its natives. Others assume that someone from a small, poor town—like Sneedville—is inferior, uneducated, and incapable. People from surrounding counties constantly ask me, “Oh, you’re from Hancock County?” Although they mean it as an insult, my answer will always be filled with pride: “Yes. Yes, I am from Hancock County.” Not only can I say that I have come in contact with some of the finest teachers, fellow classmates, and overall authentic human beings, but I can genuinely say that I have learned so much more throughout the years than just what meets the requirements of a basic education. I distinctively remember a time in middle school when I was riding the bus home and silently thought to myself, “How lucky am I to be a part of such a small community where everyone on this

bus knows each other on a first name basis, where all of us are practically best-friends and where all of us can laugh and catch up until the minute it is time to get off?” Nearly five years later, I have an answer to this question that I asked my thirteen-year-old self: I believe I might just indeed be one of the luckiest people on the planet. I do not know what it is like to go to school and live in a community with a much greater number of kids. I am unsure if kids in larger places with more students share the same type of bond as we do here, but I know that my small town will always have that bond.

In addition to providing me a nurturing education, Hancock County has shown me more than just the meaning of family in a community; it has shown me an undying love for all things natural. As I previously stated, I have traveled to many places that are much different from the usual scenery of Hancock County. I frequently visit different beaches on summer vacations, and I often visit family in larger cities. I always enjoy a brief scenery change; however, after a few relaxing days of being gone, I find myself getting eager to come home. The buzzing sounds of traffic and the loud airplanes overhead cannot perforate the sounds of the crickets and the birds. The loud, busy highways do not amount to the quiet, lonely backroads. One substantial difference that sticks out to me over everything else is how much easier it is just to breathe when I am home. Visiting those congested cities means encountering much more pollution and simply being around a greater amount of people. When I am home, surrounded by trees and plants in my own solitude, I can walk outside for a breath of fresh air at any time and know that it is exactly what I needed to put my body and mind at ease. The weight of the world is lifted almost immediately by the pureness of the air around me.

The pureness of air is always something that I noticed at the River Place in Kyles Ford, Tennessee, where

I am employed after school in the AmeriCorps program. I am blessed to get to work somewhere so secluded yet still right on the Clinch River. A few days ago, while at work, I met some customers who were working a construction job in Sneedville but who were originally from Louisiana. They were sharing with me some things they did while they were here and asking about what all our small town has to offer. They asked questions like, "Is there a bowling alley?" and "Where is the closest Taco Bell?" They were, of course, upset to hear that we do not have a bowling alley and that the closest Taco Bell is at least thirty minutes in any direction. Then one of the men said he went to Elrod Falls, and I did not think much about it until he said it was the first time that he had ever seen a waterfall. I was in disbelief. How can a person go a whole lifetime without seeing one single waterfall—one of God's most beautiful creations? This man's words gave me a whole new perspective on my own home place. He made me realize how lucky I am to live in a town surrounded by some of the most beautiful places and most perfect creations in all of East Tennessee. I hope I never take any of these sights for granted because I never really noticed how much they have had an impact on my life until now.

As I have previously stated, I love my hometown more than any other place on this Earth. Nonetheless, my plan is to go travel the world and to go see what all the big cities and other small towns have to offer. I want to share the Appalachian culture I have learned here with other people, and I want to take parts of other cultures with me as I travel. However, I assure you when I am finished, you will find me back here again. The saying goes, "faith moves mountains," but living in the mountains has taught me something else: that these mountains have moved my faith. My faith rests in the valleys of these mountains where I was raised and, no doubt, where I will reside until I take my very last breath.

Skylar Ramsey

Deeply Rooted: Beauty, Love, Simplicity

Greasy Rock, Overhome, Sneedville, Sneed Vegas, Hancock County—no matter what you choose to call it, the most cherished name is home. In his book *Appalachian Values*, Loyal Jones argues that Appalachians are anchored in “our homeplace,” which he says is one of our strongest values: “We are oriented around place. Our place is close on our minds. Our songs tell of our regard for the land where we were born. Sense of place is one of the unifying values of mountain people.” I would have to agree completely with Loyal Jones’ wonderful statement; my “homeplace” is definitely one of my most outstanding assets. It is not only an amazing Appalachian homeplace rooted in strong values and morals, but it is also one of the greatest blessings, and a priceless hidden treasure some never know they have. Growing up surrounded by unspoiled wilderness and natural beauty, faithful and loving culture, with solitude and simplicity, I have attained what I see as my most prized possessions, my values.

Unspoiled wilderness and natural beauty are extremely scarce in the times we live in, but it is incredible the realization brought by beauty untouched. Nature is one of the most mind-blowing things in this world; finding beauty in it constantly can shape people for a lifetime, allowing them to find beauty in the simplest forms. Hancock County is rich beyond measure with incredible landscape; it is best seen every morning on Newman’s Ridge. The ever-going view of the mountains appear to emerge from a sea of fog, all while the sunrise just starting to float on top will make eyes water, even after seeing it time and time again. Natural beauty makes someone want to know the God who made it. It is hard not to think of

the county's beautiful views and appreciation for how they were formed, and not relate it to the vast spiritual connection with the maker of it all. In fact, beautiful landscapes help the people to realize how blessed and precious life is, to not only enjoy the manmade attractions but to step outside and participate in the activities found here most often. Growing up surrounded by so many eye watering views, memorable hikes, and unique bodies of water it is easy to find yourself wanting to discover all the out-of-this-world places possible. Trying to discover new natural beauty that surrounds does not only help people appreciate the world, but it also helps them value the importance and magnificence of their home.

In addition to the natural beauty, the faithful and loving culture is the most important thing that has formed my identity and morals. The saying "you are who you surround yourself with" is used very often, and it is hard to imagine a place with better people to be surrounded by. First, I was born into an incredible family, the majority of whom were born and raised in East Tennessee, and who constantly support me in anything and everything I do. They are so loving and have installed a foundation of good lasting morals to me at a very young age. Next, I grew up in a community that is sewn tightly together with love, one which grows even closer during times of tragedy and need. Faith is always near, and seeds of love are planted often; it is hard to go anywhere without passing a church or running into someone you know that wants to share a kind word. The love and faith are most seen and felt on a Sunday morning in a small country church. Tears fill every eye, and heart to heart fellowship is shared, while a choir softly sings out of an old hymnal in the background. Lastly, my home allows me to make some of the closest lifelong friends. In a town so small, it is not easy to make new friends, but it is easy to make good friends. Family,

community, and friends that are all deeply rooted in faithful and loving culture make it hard not to follow along in generous and hospitable ways.

Though I consider the hospitality of the culture vital to this homeplace, an equally important and unique trait is the simplicity of the solitude of Hancock County. For example, tucked away in a valley and having to cross a mountain to get to almost any “big city,” it often feels like you are detached from a chaotic world allowing a feeling of shelter and security. Traffic moves almost as slowly as the people talk, and the red-light changes even more slowly. In addition to the unhurried pace, mainstream trends seem to arrive here last, allowing for more simplicity. Many people still do not have cell phones or access to the internet, leading to extremely simple, disconnected, and traditional lives. The simplest of people often spend the clear summer nights around a bonfire or on a porch; where they swat away mosquitoes, listen to the loud chirping of crickets, and gather with loved ones. In addition to being disconnected, many people still garden and farm for all of their food, and they want nothing more. The acres of green crops can be seen for miles in the summer, turning into corn mazes for friendly fun in the fall. The commonly forgotten traits of self-reliance and sustainability are not forgotten here and are passed on to younger generations. When life seems too complicated and overwhelming, it is a great reminder to have simple roots that can be visited often.

Strong roots can be formed anywhere; however, no matter where they are formed, they are almost impossible to break away from. First, growing up surrounded by untouched scenery helps to see beauty anywhere, in the simplest forms. Next, being surrounded by the faithful and loving culture of Appalachian people applies strong morals at a very young age. Finally, seeing simplicity and solitude

allows roots of peace even in overwhelming times. A home place filled with great values that plants precious roots that will continue growing for generations is a gift that keeps on giving, and it keeps even the furthest traveler rooted.

Haley Greene
What, Where, Who Is Appalachia?

What do you think of when you hear the word “Appalachia?” You might think that it is simply a geographical place on the map that extends from southern New York to the southern part of Alabama. Many people refer to this area as the “Appalachian Mountains.” These enormous, beautiful mountains have been around for years, and they are home to many unique individuals. Some people might say that there are no ways to define Appalachia because the area is so unique, but others would claim that there are many ways to uniquely define the region. Many people have diverse views on the definition of *Appalachia* or *an Appalachian*; for some, it could be a person, place, or thing.

What is Appalachia? Appalachia is a peaceful community full of love and blessings. In the article “Finding Home in the Mountains of Appalachia,” the author states, “This has been a journey of joy, sadness, laughter and tears. I learned from them that in times of great difficulty, compassion helps the sun come over the mountain the next day. These people of the coal fields touched my heart with their care of each other... They have showed me the face of God. They still do” (Limber). This article is a vivid example of the generous hospitality that is shown all throughout the communities that live in the Appalachian area. People who reside in these areas have many ways of displaying their love. For example, some people show love by lending a helping hand to people in the community, and others show love by giving money, food, and clothes. In the small town of Hancock County, we have things known as “blessing boxes.” These boxes are a way of giving back to the community. In these boxes, there are food

items, personal hygiene items, and many other objects. Another manner in which Appalachians share love and blessings is through its musical history, deriving from the early 19th century and still around even today in some Appalachian areas. This type of music, often referred to as “Mountain Music,” is the heart and soul of an area. It is what gives the Appalachian people life, and it can show their true colors. This lyrical culture is so unique that people do not fully understand it sometimes. It is dismissed because it is considered just one more of the many things that Appalachian people do so differently that other people in the United States would consider crazy. The spirit of song is infused into the simple way that the Appalachian people live. They are not scared to get their hands dirty, go fishing whenever, and simply have a good time without caring what anyone thinks of them.

Where is Appalachia? Appalachia is a place that is surrounded by beautiful mountains and many small, country counties. If an individual is looking from a far distance, these amazingly tall mountains can look like they are in the clouds. This gives Appalachia a sense of closure and helps to make up the wonderful scenery. If a person meets an “outsider” and asks what brought him/her to an Appalachian region, nine times out of ten he/she will say it was the view. The view is one of the most common things Appalachia is known for, and everyone falls in love with it instantly. Appalachia is my home place. A home place is a place that a person will cherish forever; mine is Hancock County and all its glory. Hancock County is a small area that is basically in the middle of nowhere on a map. This place is full of lively people and beautiful scenery. Hancock County has many scenic routes an individual can take if he/she is wanting to view nature and get a sense of what it is like living in an “Appalachian” county. There is open land for miles and miles that adds to the

view of the county. This land is often used for hunting to help bring food in for an individual's family. Although Appalachia can be a physical place, it can also be somewhere that a person cannot point out physically, but he/she can feel it in his/her soul.

Who is Appalachia? Appalachia can be defined as the farmers of the land. Farmers have been a main source of food and income for many of the Appalachian people through the years; farming was a crucial part to everyday survival years ago. Even today, farmers are a small part of the main things that make up the Appalachian area today. Without them, there would not be any fresh crops or produce for the people to eat or live off the land with. Wendell Berry is a famous farmer who comes to my mind when considering "Who is Appalachia?" He was born August 5, 1934, living through the old Appalachian times. Berry is an extraordinary farmer who has won several awards during his lifetime. One of his most famous accomplishments was being inducted in the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame. Being a farmer for many years, he is a strong advocate for Appalachian values and farmland. He also refers to the Bible a lot when he talks about his love for farming. This is a great movement because a lot of Appalachian people believe in thanking God for providing their food. In the article "The Wisdom of 'The Farm': Sabbath Theology and Wendell Berry's Pastoralism," the author states, "Berry turns squarely toward the Bible for its application to farming and responsible land use" (Nosaman 1). This quote is a good example because people in this area do not believe in letting the land go to waste without farming or hunting on it.

An individual must look at many things if he/she is trying to define the word "Appalachia." It is more than just an area on the map that falls in between states. A person cannot simply define a place by only looking at

one little thing; he/she must look at all its characteristics. Appalachia is someone's homeplace, someone's culture, and possibly even someone's mentor or family member.

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Gabriel Turner

Appalachia: More than Just a Name

There are many misconceptions about what *Appalachia* really is. For many, it is nothing more than a mountain range or a place in the “South.” To others, it is a people who live within the Appalachian Mountains. These superficialities and misapprehensions hide everything that is true about the place. Appalachia is more than just a location or people; the true definition must include its insurmountable beauty, its impressive way of life, and the incredible heart in its people.

The most noticeable feature defining Appalachia is its overwhelming beauty. This beauty stretches for miles upon miles along the East Coast. Ridges dominate the area with valleys scattered in between. There are amazing views only seen at the top of the mountains. Valleys dip and spiral below the peaks, and the sun brings out the vibrant green of trees and grass. Gorgeous rivers and streams run down the mountain faces into the valleys and form lively ponds and small lakes. Lush, thick forests coat Appalachia. Trees tower over each other and create shade for large areas. The exuberant forests are full of wonderful and beautiful wildlife. Squirrels run around the treetops as deer trot along a trail towards a river. Birds flutter from branch to branch in search of food or a place to nest. An eagle glides overhead letting out a loud caw. The sun sets stunningly over a distant mountain top. The entire sky turns a vivid orange with hints of purple or blue painted across faint clouds. As the sunset dims to a dark sky with a big bright moon surrounded by stars, the sound of crickets fills the cool night air. While my images of Appalachia are impacted by my life in the remote hills of Hancock County, it still should be noted that the immense natural beauty that

defines Appalachia is diverse, encompassing large, modern cities like Atlanta and Nashville. Even when modernity makes its marks on the landscape, such as the existence of Starbucks adjacent to farms, the pristine scenery of Appalachia is indelible.

Although beauty is a large part of Appalachia, the way people live here is an incredibly important attribute too. One of these lifeways is hunting, which is not only a part of life but also a great source of pride. Hunters provide ample food for their families. Any food left over from hunts is often given away to relatives or sold to neighbors. Appalachians also are defined by the folkway of farming, which not only helps families bring in some money but also is a constant food source. Many of the farms in Appalachia are hidden in valleys, isolated from the world. Tall, steep ridges often surround rural towns like Sneedville, Tennessee, offering protection from elements outside the valley. Shockley states this about the Appalachian lifestyle:

When it comes to sustainable living, there is no better example than the Appalachian people. These wise hillbilly folk don't just live in the mountains; they live with the mountains... Living off Mother Nature's bounty, locals learned to hone their skills and survive... Trees provided wood and springs supplied fresh water on the mountain. The terrain offered wild berries, herbs, roots and ample hunting.

Appalachia harbors a way of life that ensures it will live on for a very long time. The people are not only sustainable but also very close with the others around them, working together to survive together.

The unique lifestyle of Appalachia is an important part of what defines it, but the heart of the people is what really brings Appalachia together and makes it

whole. The big hearts of the people are very accepting to many who come into the community. They will help newcomers in any way possible and will have very hospitable attitudes. The article "Quilters' Warm Hearts Help Give Warmth to Others" from *PR Newswire* states this about a group of Appalachians: "A quilting group in the foothills of Appalachia link community, tradition and art stitch-by-stitch. Members of the Tellico Village Quilters Guild make and donate quilts to veterans, cancer patients and charity organizations. Since 2004 when the club started counting quilts made for the community, they have donated around 5,000 pieces." The people of Appalachia really care about those around them; for example, they will pick up groceries and chop firewood for older neighbors or those that are unable to do so. Appalachians also care deeply for the land and take care of it, taking only what they need from nature. Most of the forests are untouched and left to grow and prosper. The people of Appalachia are proud, too. They are immune to stereotypes and negative comments about who they are. Being a part of Appalachia is who they are, and no one can take that away. Though my images of Appalachians are defined by my experience in the quiet remoteness of Hancock County, those who inhabit the region are very diverse, forming the core of Appalachia: the heart of its people.

Many consider *Appalachia* to be nothing but a word, a people, or a place; however, it is so much more. The gorgeous views and stunning landscapes are some of the most easily noticeable defining features. Appalachia's way of life is a supporting structure and ensures that Appalachia will be around for a long time. The heart of the people is the main and most important factor of this geographical place. Appalachia is many things, but it is truly defined by its captivating nature, its especial lifestyle, and the amazing heart of its people.

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Hannah Cinnamon

Appalachia: The Undefinable Region

What comes to your mind when you hear the word *Appalachia*? The Appalachian region is over 200,000 square miles and expands through thirteen states. With a region this far-stretching, no set definition can perfectly describe what Appalachia truly means. Many people have attempted to define the region; however, some of these definitions are full of bias and are based on inaccurate stereotypes or assumptions. When most people think of the word *Appalachia*, they think of poverty, hillbillies, and shacks. Contrary to these preconceived notions, the region is actually very diverse with a wide variety of cultures and races. Appalachia cannot merely be defined by its regional borders; to fully understand where, what, who Appalachia is, a person must look especially at the location, the culture, and the people.

A defining factor of the Appalachian region is its location; the region is based around the Appalachian Mountains. Growing up in Appalachia has given me a gratitude for the natural beauty that forms the region. Sprawling forests, lush green mountains, and flowering fields make the region what it is. Appalachia is truly a picturesque gem that showcases a bounty of natural wonders and beauty. The nature within the region not only offers spectacular views, but also sustainability to the residents. The heritage of current Appalachians is largely based on the land and nature within the region. Many of the settlers and current inhabitants of the region have lived and thrived off of the land. The land in all of its glory has offered shelter, food, and a source of income for all generations in the Appalachian region. Nature is a major and everyday part of an Appalachian resident's life; there

fore, when defining Appalachia itself, location must be considered. Land and nature are major parts of the region; without these considerations, a true definition for Appalachia cannot be determined.

Another important factor to consider when defining Appalachia is the culture within the region. Some people look at the residents of the Appalachian region as uncultured heathens; for this reason, many would be shocked that a lot of current societal culture is derived from Appalachian history. Not only is music a vital focus in present-day Appalachia, but music is also a major part of the region's history. In the article "Movin' the Mountains: an Overview of Rhythm and Blues and its Presence in Appalachia," the author, Jerry Zolten, writes, "However, given the enormous sweep of Appalachia...logic dictates that African-American music in all its manifestations, rhythm and blues included, must have been a part of the historical regional mix." Jimmy Martin, also known as the "King of Bluegrass," is an Appalachian native, born in my hometown of Sneedville, Tennessee. Releasing eighteen bluegrass albums throughout his career, he is a prime example of a person with Appalachian pride; for this reason, he is considered an honorable man in his homeplace even today. Showcasing a small part of Appalachian culture for the whole world to see, Martin demonstrated that no matter what region a person is from, he or she can still take on the world. He is just one of the many talented musicians to come from the Appalachian region. Music genres such as R&B, jazz, and bluegrass all have traceable roots in Appalachian history. Most music today—such as pop, indie, and rock—shows similarities to the genres aforementioned. For this reason, Appalachia's musical heritage can be considered a foundational piece of all genres of music.

In addition to location and culture, Appalachians themselves are a defining factor of the region. When try-

ing to define a place, the most important part is considering the inhabitants of the region; residents make a place what it is. The article "Locals on Local Color: Imagining Identity in Appalachia" describes how these stereotypes became popular; many authors unfamiliar with the region would wrongfully depict Appalachians. The author of the article, Katie Algeo, notes, "Essential characteristics of the Appalachian image developed by outsiders include isolation, stasis, and otherness." Many see these characteristics of Appalachians as negative; however, this is not the case. Isolation is a characteristic of Appalachia because many of the communities, towns, and cities within the region are rural and set apart from the rest of the world; these conditions make Appalachians close-knit and loyal. An isolated region is not a bad characteristic to have; isolation promotes camaraderie amongst Appalachian residents. Stasis can be perceived as bad in this ever-changing society; however, stasis in Appalachia makes the region and residents closer to their traditions and heritage. Many who travel to the region feel as if they have traveled back in time; some areas and residents in the region are so tied to the heritage, traditions, and culture of the area that it seems time has stopped for them. All these circumstances and characteristics can cause Appalachians to be perceived as outcasts or prompt a sense of 'otherness'; this 'otherness' is just uniqueness. Due to the unique circumstances and residents, Appalachians should be considered when defining the region.

Many factors are needed when trying to define a place. To dive in and determine for themselves where, what, and who Appalachia is, a person must set aside any preconceived notions or biases. For Appalachia, a true definition for the region must be derived from the location, culture, and inhabitants of the region. All these aspects are major characteristics of the region; consider-

ing and using these factors is the only way to truly define where, what, and who Appalachia is. Borders and lines on a map can never capture the true beauty and heart of the Appalachian region.

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CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

Contributors' notes appear for writers and artists who included them with their submission.

KB Ballentine

KB Ballentine's sixth collection, *The Light Tears Loose*, appeared this summer with Blue Light Press. Published in *Crab Orchard Review* and *Haight-Ashbury Literary Journal*, among others, her work also appears in anthologies including *In Plain Air* (2017) and *Carrying the Branch: Poets in Search of Peace* (2017). Learn more at www.kbballentine.com.

Devon Blevins

Devon Blevins is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville, Tennessee, where he has played football for years. He plans to continue to pursue a major in physical therapy in college. His favorite hobbies include sports, fishing, and lifting weights. Devon's favorite getaway spot is on the Clinch River with a rod and reel in his hand.

Katlyn Bogle

Katlyn Bogle is a Junior Writing/Communications major with a minor in Design and an Impressions staff member. She enjoys storytelling in all types of media, and tries to be as honest and in the moment in her writing as possible.

Sophia Cardone

Sophia is a 20 year old East Tennessee native. She has been regularly painting for about four years, and has made a few prints since 2019. When not painting she likes to dance, competitively and non competitively, and watch trashy reality TV. You can find her art on her Instagram, @s.c.art721.

Hannah Cinnamon

Hannah Cinnamon is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville, Tennessee. In her free time, she likes to spend time with her family. She plans on studying for a career as a social worker.

Amanda Clarke

Amanda Clarke is a junior writing communications major. She enjoys expressing herself creatively through writing, photography, and making jewelry.

Nancy Clarke

Nancy Clarke is a retired mother of two. She has been married for thirty-six years. Her daughter is currently a junior at Maryville College. Her son is a graduate of Washtenaw Community College. She grew up in Michigan and moved to Tennessee last year. She enjoys spending time with her family, camping, crafting, painting, and writing.

William Kip Collins

William Kip Collins is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville, Tennessee. He plans to continue his studies at Walters State Community College. "Kip" enjoys being outdoors so that he can free his mind and release stress. When he gets older, he wants to have a majestic life story so that he can sit on his front porch and fascinate his grandchildren.

Haley Greene

Haley Greene is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville, Tennessee. In her free time, she enjoys reading and spending time with her family. She plans on studying for a career as an elementary school teacher.

Chloe Hamlett

Chloe Hamlett is a junior at Maryville College majoring in Writing Communications. She is Editor in Chief of Impressions and a member of SPB's marketing team. In addition to these clubs, she enjoys reading, writing, bullet journaling, makeup, and true crime.

Elisabeth Jackson

Elisabeth Jackson is a junior instrumental music education major. Born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee, music has always been a huge part of her life. Along with this, Elisabeth greatly enjoys writing and composing music, short stories, and poetry. Elisabeth is a multi-instrumentalist who aspires to pursue a career in teaching, songwriting, music production, and music ministry. One day, Elisabeth hopes to publish her poetry in hopes of reaching and inspiring others.

Albrianna Jenkins

Albrianna Jenkins is a Tennessee native and graduate of Maryville College. She currently serves as Lead Writer on the Media and Marketing Committee for Knox Pride. Albrianna has a passion for all things creative, and in her spare time, she enjoys writing, photography, and learning new languages. Through her poem, “Just the Way I Am”, she hopes to promote body positivity and encourage self-love.

Sarah Johnson

Sarah Johnson is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville, Tennessee. She is both physically and academically determined in everything that she does, participating in numerous extracurricular activities and maintaining a 4.0 GPA. She plans to study for a career as a family nurse practitioner.

Martina Junod

Martina is a senior who transferred to MC in 2019. Her major is English Licensure for Teaching. This year she has been getting back into middle grades novels to get a break from Chaucer. As a kid, *So B It.* by Sarah Weeks and *First Light* by Rebecca Stead got her into reading.

Jordan Kamikawa

Jordan Kamikawa is a 21 year old from Rockwood, Tennessee. He's a big fan of video games and writing stories, and the “Angelic Warriors” was one of his earliest ideas for a story. He graduated from high school in 2018 and has been attending Maryville College since 2019. He is

currently working on the sequel to “Angelic Warriors” and attempting to wrap it while also opening the door to other potential original works.

Rain Larsen

Rain Dove Larsen is from Knoxville, Tennessee. Rain is 25 years old. She is a Design major and plan on becoming an animator and a writer/illustrator after graduation.

Katie Leming

Katie Leming is a sophomore history major and McGill Fellow. She also is an assistant editor for the Highland Echo. She loves to write, learn, sing, and be grateful for her friends.

Becca Lesley

Becca is studying English and Creative Writing at Southern New Hampshire University. Her hobbies include: running, reading, and writing.

Angelo Letizia

Angelo Letizia is currently a professor of education at a small college in Baltimore, Maryland. His true passion however is poetry. He has two books of poetry forthcoming with Silver Bow press *The Starry Devil and Other Unwanted Poems* (2021) and *The Pilgrims of Infinity* (2022). Angelo's poetry has also been published (or is forthcoming) in a number of literary outlets including *Tales from the Moonlit Path*, *Bewildering Stories*, *The Atlantean*, *Sirens Call*, *Red Planet*, *AHF Magazine*, *Dissections*, *Fevers of the Mind*, *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *Bindweed Magazine* and *Bowery Gothic* to name a few. Angelo lives with his wife and three children in Northern Maryland.

K. G. Mathews

K.G. Mathews, known to friends as Grace, is a junior double major in Writing Communications and Theatre Studies from Lebanon, Tennessee (but she tells everyone she's from Nashville because that just sounds better). She is a member of Alpha Psi Omega and Sigma Tau Delta. She is an avid reader and writer, a fan of weird music, and an even bigger fan of hair dye.

Sarah McFalls

Sarah McFalls is a senior at Maryville College, majoring in English Literature, who enjoys writing when she feels a creative spark. She enjoys studying language and traveling. Poetry has been one of her favorite forms of literature for several years. After graduating this spring she plans to teach English as a foreign language in South Korea. In the future she hopes to grow her literary skills as the world sends her new challenges.

Chloe Melton

Chloe Melton is a 20-year-old artist. She created Clover Fine Arts as a way to share her work. Her art has been displayed in the Knoxville Museum of Art, the nation's Capitol, and various other galleries and competitions. She placed 7th nationally among qualifying high school students in the acrylic competition at the National Beta Convention. She is currently studying to be an art therapist at Maryville College. Art has always been a part of her, and she hopes to make a meaningful impact through her creations.

"I love that I can use art to inspire others. It allows me to show viewers a perspective they may not have otherwise considered. In a world where everyone is seeking change, I believe the pivotal role of the artist is to be a messenger of the many perspectives people have."

Kylie Mullins

Kylie Mullins is a senior at Hancock County High School. After graduation, she plans on completing a degree in social work at Walters State Community College and then joining the Air Force as an officer. Her love of writing comes from feeling like it is always easier to write what she is trying to say rather than to speak it.

Skylar Ramsey

Skylar Ramsey is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville, Tennessee. She plans on attending college and majoring in nursing. In her free time, she enjoys going to church and hiking.

Jacob Simpson

Jacob Simpson is a twenty-seven year old autistic artist and photographer. He choose his career for photography because of his view in an artistic fashion and for scenery. Jacob used to go to Roane State Community College for Studio Arts and graduated three years ago. He is looking forward to having his photography business for a living and willing to express more of how unique he has shot his photos from in the future.

Brandon Spurlock

Brandon Spurlock is a junior writing and communications major at Maryville College. He returned to college at the age of 31 and fell back in love with creative writing just as he originally had in high school. In his free time, he likes to play video games and write short stories and sometimes poetry about those video games.

Jordan 'Bunny' Stafford

Jordan 'Bunny' Stafford is a writing communications major, peer career coach, and student advancement representative. She loves being outside, reading, writing, and being with her friends. Bunny is the author of two novels and one children's book and runs a blog in her spare time. She hopes you enjoy the magazine this year!

Jonathan Stewart

Jonathan Stewart has never sat in a wingback before a fire. He has never smoked a pipe, either. Because his brother is a certified dishwasher and his father sometimes sells ice door-to-door in the polar regions, he feels the sting of disappointment at his wasting potential. But he loves his family and so he works at it. He believes that God designed the human with stories in mind and that these stories are somehow precious to Him. Jonathan waits for the day when all the stories will be made clear.

Justin Strong

Justin Strong lives in Knoxville with his wife, three cats, and two dogs.

Gabriel Turner

Gabriel Turner is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville, Tennessee, where he plays multiple sports. He is an aspiring herpetologist. One of his goals is to travel all over the world, starting with a veterinarian internship in Costa Rica in the summer of 2021.

Meredith Webb

Meredith Webb is a sophomore double majoring in Writing Communications and Art from Bristol, TN. She is very passionate about art, music, and writing. After graduating Maryville College, she hopes to write and illustrate her own books. She loves and is constantly inspired by her friends, family, and pets.

Lexie Wilder

Lexie Wilder is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville, Tennessee. She is a member of AmeriCorps, serving her contract at the River Place on the Clinch River in Kyles Ford. Lexie wants to pursue a career in healthcare.

Claire Willenbrink

Claire is a senior Biology B.A. major with minors in Outdoor Studies and Tourism, American Sign Language Deaf-Studies, and Environmental Science. After graduation she wants to be a National Park Ranger. For fun she reads, goes outside, and knits dinosaurs.

Myndalynn Word

Myndalynn is a senior English Literature major and Writing Communications minor at Maryville College. When she isn't studying, she is tutoring at Roane State Community College. In her free time, she enjoys reading, listening to music, and writing for her blog.

Jamie Yoder

Jamie Yoder is a special education teacher at Lenoir City Middle School. She lives in Greenback, TN. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her family and the animals on her mini-farm. Since her children have grown, she has resorted to taking pictures of animals and nature.

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