



the

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our staff

editors-in-chief

mina ono

fiona warnick

managing editor

evan swanson

layout editor

rose rasor

publicity

coordinators

katie frevert

ursula hudak

general staff

keira larkin

cecily miles

danielle oliver

ivy weston

table of contents

* content warning available

cover	Delivery (<i>collage</i>) katie frevert
6	Pot Pie ursula hudak
7	Boy with Chicken (<i>drawing</i>) phillip chao
8	From an Apartment in Ohio, a Fly Speaks zoey birdsong
10	Weekend Sketches, Apr 2021 helenor harris-evans
11	Little Room peter fray-witzer

- 13 I write**
harry snyder
- 14 Fish with Teeth** (*drawing*)
phillip chao
- 15 Memento Memorium ***
helenor harris-evans
- 19 Headache**
ariana hughes
- 20 Confronting My Shadow** (*drawing*)
annie palmer
- 21 Anna Ecklund**
ivy weston
- 23 Reservations** (*acrylic*)
e.j. lafave
- 24 Maman to the hospital ***
ursula hudak

26 Corps-text

jesse noily

28 Haven't We All Been Violated a Little? *

helenor harris-evans

29 Pissed

ursula hudak

30 Maple Sugar Triptych

rose rasor

32 The Sun (*drawing*)

phillip chao

**33 What Not to Say to Strangers
You Meet at A Party:**

helenor harris-evans

back Ritual (*collage*)

cover katie frevert

Pot Pie

ursula hudak

I spent too long writing angsty poems
about lost innocence and melancholy.
During my last visit home I found a gem:
my dad knocked on my door
to say he was making pot pies for dinner
and I pumped my arms into the air.
Who knew that buried underneath all that grief
was the child I was mourning.

Boy with Chicken

phillip chao



From an Apartment in Ohio, a Fly Speaks:

zoey birdsong

Doors opened
and shut in a rapid fire
rhythm. Waves of chaos,
an explosive shuffle
of gusts. Everything
moved inwards all
at once. I flew
frantically, finding no crack
or crevice for escape.
That was then, when
my wings were soft like
newborn gladiators. When
I could sense the call
of sweetness from across
time and space. I have grown
brittle in this gated little city,
where the streets seem
to loop back around
forever to the same place.
I know every corner,
every dive-bar, every
overlooked crumb.

I've burrowed myself
homes in folds of
flannel shirts, counted
down my fated handful
of days. I know the cold
cinderblock and the tender,
silky sheets, the desk
with my library
of ten whole books.
I could tell you how full
the air can get,
given enough hours.
I rediscover the same treasures
every day and the world
gets smaller each time.

Little Room

peter fray-witzer

I leave the stickers that say "used" on the spines
of my books:

I peel one corner up
and stick

it back down as I read.

You were the first to forgive
me for dog-earing the corners of the pages.

Outside someone
is on the phone saying,

"...it's fine, I'll just come explain it in person."

There is really so little empty space in the world,
between things,
there is so much
matter,
poking out of every crevice, the
world is bulging over the belt with love,
with people who will come over
to watch the sun dip through the venetian blinds,
while you lie under the duvet
to scream at you while crying

(like really sobbing),
to look at your radiator for you
when it breathes too hot,
and your room fills with steam,
even between each person-
between each person's lips and
between our hands and the
trunks of trees—look, even
something so still and stagnant as a tree, think of
that!
—There really is so little space, that
is empty.

To think we even came up for a word for space
at all! To
think that pressed pressed-together bodies
would not be the default.
To think we separate veins. From blood. Or
mountains. From valleys. That there are
measurements other than a pinch
or handful of anything.
my love, my love, come here:

It tastes good! But pass me that—thank you, that's
the one, it could use a little, just a tiny bit
more, of this. Come, I will show you how much.

I write

harry snyder

in prose

- half poetry -

arranged properly

in grammatically

satisfactory

sentences

that hide

like tiger stripes

in broken stanzas

and witty little

lines.

Fish with Teeth

phillip chao



Memento Memorium

helenor harris-evans

* suicide, drug use

I RECENTLY READ SUSAN SONTAG'S ESSAY "ON PHOTOGRAPHY."

BECAUSE IT HAS AGED OR DECAYED OR NO LONGER EXISTS.

All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person (or thing's) mutability, mortality. Precisely by slicing this moment, photographs testify to time's relentless melt.

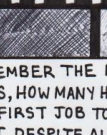
IN IT, SHE ESSENTIALLY ARGUES PHOTOGRAPHY AS AN ART IS ABOUT "**MEMENTO MORI**," CREATING REMINDERS OF OUR IMPENDING MORTALITY.

Cameras began duplicating the world at that moment in which

WE SLICE REALITY INTO LITTLE PIECES OF TIME THAT WILL NEVER AGAIN BE AS THEY ARE.

I BOUGHT MY FIRST NICE CAMERA THE SUMMER I TURNED SIXTEEN.

IT'S
STRANGE
...



I REMEMBER THE MONTHS OF CHORES, HOW MANY HOURS I WORKED MY FIRST JOB TO SAVE UP, AND YET, DESPITE ALL THAT...

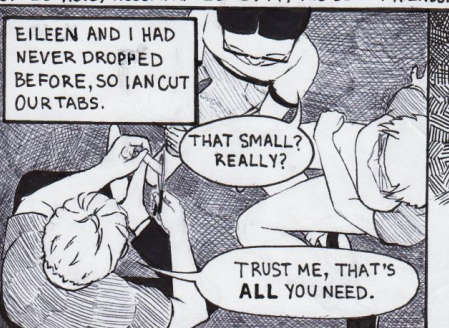
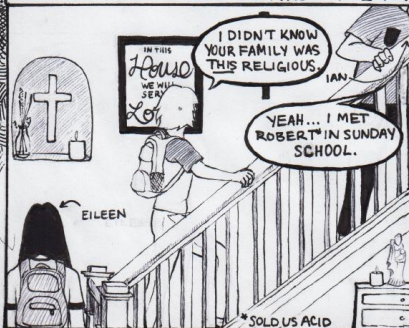
... I DON'T ACTUALLY REMEMBER HOW MUCH IT COST.

MEMENTO MEMORIUM

by helenor harris-evans



THAT SUMMER WAS ALSO THE FIRST TIME I DROPPED ACID, ACCOMPANIED BY MY TWO BEST FRIENDS.



*SOLD US ACID

HOLD IT UNDER YOUR TONGUE
FOR TEN MINUTES, THEN SWALLOW.



...
AND
WE
WERE
OFF.

ACID IS
HARD TO
DESCRIBE.

AT FIRST, EVERYTHING IS
HYSTERICAL...



THEN IT'S HORRIBLY SAD...

YOU
GOOD?

OKAY
MAN...

WHAALLES.

AND THEN IT'S JUST

...



ACID THOUGHTS:

—
—
— acid

BLESSED WITH
THE EYES OF GOD.

I WENT HOME WITH EILEEN THAT NIGHT
FOR OUR FIRST SLEEPOVER, AND WE
TALKED FOR THIRTEEN HOURS.

IT'S FUNNY HOW WELL I
REMEMBER LITTLE MOMENTS
LIKE THIS...

SHOULD WE
DROP AGAIN?

FUCK
YES.

WHEN?

I DUNNO.
NEXT
WEEKEND?

NAH,
MY DAD'S
OUT OF TOWN.
I GOTTA BABY-
SIT AMY.

SHIT.

YEAH.

THEN WHEN?

I DUNNO.
NEVER?

YEAH,
THAT SOUNDS
GOOD TOO.

... BUT NOT THE FACE OF
ONE OF MY BEST FRIENDS.

I KNOW IAN. I
REMEMBER THE
SOUND OF HIS
LAUGH, THE WEIRD
DECORATIONS OF
HIS HOUSE, HOW
HE CHECKED ON
ME ...

BUT WHEN
I TRY TO
PICTURE
HIS FACE
...

THERE'S
NOTHING
THERE.

IT'S NORMAL
TO FORGET
LITTLE
DETAILS
LIKE...

WAS IAN'S BROTHER'S BAND CALLED...
A. HARD ROCK GOATS OR B. MAD TAURUS?



DIDEILEEN LIKE A. TED OR B. BEN?



THE DAY I COULDN'T REMEMBER IF
IAN'S EYES WERE A. BLUE OR
B. GREEN WAS THE DAY I
WENT TO WALGREENS AND
GOT NEARLY EVERY
PHOTO I HAD OF HIM
PRINTED.

THERE IS SOMETHING
ABOUT A HARD COPY
THAT SEEMS SECURE;
A DENIAL OF THE EPHE-
MERAL IN FAVOR OF THE
TANGIBLE, THE PHYSICAL. WE
FEEL LIKE WE'VE MADE IT PER-
MANENT.



WHEN I WENT THROUGH THE PHOTOS, I FOUND ONE IAN TOOK BACK WHEN WE DROPPED THAT SUMMER.

MY IMMEDIATE THOUGHT WAS THAT WE LOOK TOO YOUNG.

IAN COMMITTED SUICIDE LATER THAT YEAR.

IN THE AFTERMATH, A LOT OF PEOPLE TOLD ME A LOT OF THINGS.

"IT GETS BETTER."

"TIME HEALS ALL WOUNDS."

WHAT THEY DON'T MENTION ARE THE NEW ONES IT OPENS UP.

IT'S BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE THEN. IF IAN SAW ME NOW...



...WOULD HE EVEN RECOGNIZE ME?

IT'S **ONLY** BEEN FOUR YEARS, AND I'M ALREADY LOSING MY MEMORIES OF HIM.

REALLY, THAT'S NOT ENOUGH TIME AT ALL.

I WANT SOME WAY TO FREEZE TIME, TO PRESERVE OUR PAST SELVES, RESIST, LIKE SONTAG SAYS, THE RELENTLESS MELT OF TIME...

BUT ALL I HAVE ARE SOME FUCKING PHOTOGRAPHS.



Headache

ariana hughes

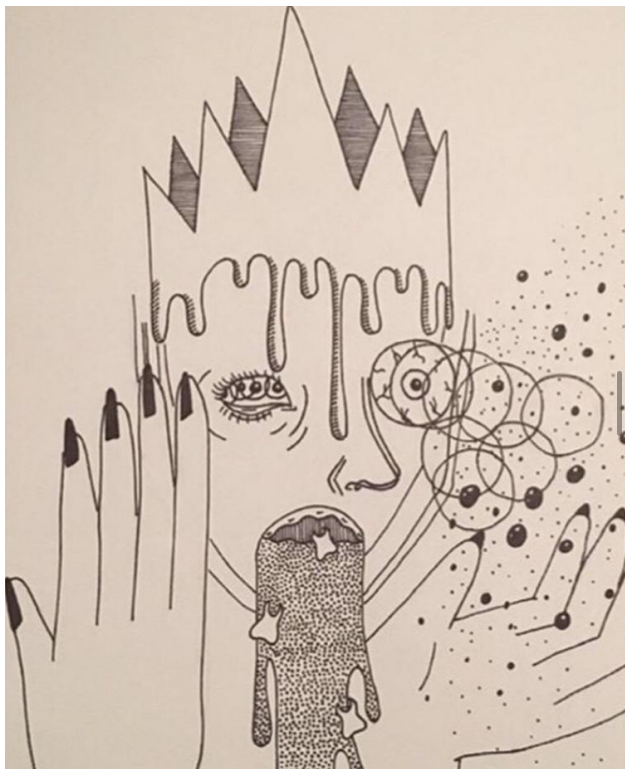
Scratched scribbled strokes spread
They direct themselves out of focus,
Straight, faded, and then not so.
Curled lines form in bunches,
Not predictable or accidental,
Flustering away from monochromatic,
Glowing blue, something to brighten,
Sparking with undisciplined energy,
Never knowing where else to go.
Trapped within a frame they cannot see,
Inexplicably excited to exist.

Tear jerk, spill out of damp ducts.
Onion juices released with a quick slice,
Leaking into the airways,
Prodding an entrance through lip corners
Left ajar in pressing pulsation.
Opening up the thinly glue sealed cavities.

Spots of multicolored rain permeate
Through the resolving sunlight.
Stuttering stump settle stop.

Confronting My Shadow

annie palmer



Anna Ecklund

ivy weston

This is the story they love to tell. Our heads are spinning, we are walking down the stairs backwards on our hands and feet, we speak in tongues and throw heavy men off of our small, small frames. I want to tell the priests, *wait for what happens when the blue goes so bright you see flowers in your own eyes*. Do all good Catholic girls have psychic wounds? Do we all have witches? Do we all sit down on dry grass and say *please, please it is all true, it is all accepted fact, it is all grains of salt in my father's angry, immigrant blood*. I kept Father Theo up three nights in a row, I grew fangs, I exceeded borders and had so many Antichrists in the base of my skull. The ghost of my mother told me to pretend that the hands in the hospital would be kind. I am in a white dress, I am without fingernails, I sit in the back of the movie theater and weep. *Can the flames surround us both?* I played with corn husk dolls and made the scripture my road, I walked it all the way to Rome. It was smaller there than the Iowa sky. I persist in the ungrateful, sweat-soiled blonde plaits swinging. I make you regret the catechism.

The royalty checks keep slipping under my door.
This is how I know when somewhere a girl is
floating.



reservations
e.j. lafave

Maman to the hospital

ursula hudak

** death, vomit, sickness*

Lilies in the back seat,
her face pale in the car light
as I hold her wrist.

"Wash your hands," she says.

Lilies are pressed into my grasp
and the car speeds away.

What to do?

Walk back inside,
wash her vomit from the kitchen sink,
wash your hands.

Knife in hand,
cut the stems off diagonally
like she taught you,
arrange them like you used to.
They don't fall right in that vase,
get a new one.

Dead pale flowers wilt in the middle,
she almost couldn't drive home;
normally she would have
seen them.

I take them out
but cannot throw them away,

leave them instead on the bare dining table,
trying to not think about how
my classmate's father just died.

"Don't worry," she said,
"Be strong" she meant,
but she made me
and I have run out of things
to make better.

Corps-text

jesse noily

There is a risk implied, you would remind me, in
making life
a kind of literature. Ignoring you, I—naïve exegete—
noted
the allegory of the sun

melting between your blinds,
and
the Freudian associations accompanying the wine-
stain in
your bedsheets. I misread, in retrospect, the gaps in
your teeth as a

theological motif (the holy is found in absence) and
your Romantic
allusions (the unnamed winged boy; a pale Byronic
cheek)

with the pedantry of a specialist. At
last, then,

sitting upright—wounded prophetess—
while I played a satire of troubled sleep
you were wont to whisper:

How dare you embellish me.
How dare you reduce me to poetry.

Haven't we all been violated a little?

helenor harris-evans

** sexual harassment/violence*



Pissed

ursula hudak

Goddamn!

You

screeeeech

like a whirlwind squawking bundle of birds in

Sunday market grime,

feathers in the after-rain street,

you kick and

kick!

Your thorn thick

troubles,

then you purse your lemon suck lips,

crane back, tummy black,

and you

spit.

Maple Sugar Triptych

rose rasor

As snow gives way to sunlight and winter yields
to warmth, we drill taps into bark with chilled
fingers,
watch the slow drip past a bucket's dented lip
as the kiss of spring's silver mouth
against frost-frilled lichen and rough-ridged wood
sucks sweet blood up from the lattice of roots.

Nothing can escape the alchemy of heat and time—
not the earth's creeping plates and molten core,
not the forest's black-bare limbs wreathed with
snow,
not the pot of sugar water boiling like a witch's
cauldron.

We remember, now, too late, the fine line between
gilded and gold, between sweet and stuck.

Prisms of amber line the kitchen windowsill,
gems of dusky gold and brilliant brown.

My father hands me the pitcher of syrup
and I think happiness can be no less than this:
imperfections—a finger burned, a pot
ruined by stubborn sugar crystals,
winter's last gasp of frozen breath—
lost beneath the glory of sticky fingers
and tongues glazed with liquid sunlight.

The Sun

philip chao



What Not to Say to Strangers You Meet at A Party:

I have a canker sore on my bottom lip. I was suckling the blood out of it while you were talking.

It took me forever to put together this outfit.

I've sexted on the toilet more than once.

The dress my friend is wearing is so ugly but it was really expensive and I didn't want her to feel like she wasted her money so I told her it looked great. It actually looks like a brown paper bag.

I kind of wish the music was a little quieter.

If you think it's hot out here on the porch, don't even try going in the house. There's no AC. Phoebe and Joaquim set up a couple weak little fans in the corner of the living room but they just spit out the same wet air that filters in. Dots of color from the string lights are the only things that cut through the heat. They look like luminous strands of gristle.

Do you see that pair of girls over there? I recognize one of them because I once saw her do a stand-up bit about her gluten allergy. (It was hit-or-miss).

I took a nap before this because I usually go to bed at 11pm and would get really tired otherwise.

I'm here talking to you because I almost passed out in the room with the speakers. It's so hot you don't sweat. So hot you can't think. No one talks in there. You get high off of each other's breath. Body heat and CO₂ form ozone, a menace of air so thick your voice drowns alive.

Do you mind if I take a sec to write this all down? It's for a creative writing assignment.

I chew gum instead of brushing my teeth.

I heard a girl on the porch talking about this artist she met recently. Once, they made a 10-foot tall costume-puppet of themselves to move around in as part of a performance piece. They wanted to be inside the puppet so bad until they realized they had horrible stage fright.

This morning when I went to the bathroom after class I realized I knew everyone in there, so I just left.

I've been really noticing the roadkill around lately.

There's so much of it out here compared to Richmond. Whenever I'm out driving I try and go around the remains, or roll directly overhead so they land between my tires, but that requires me to scan the road really closely. Notice every single suspicious shape. Estimate the width of the splatter and how I can maneuver around it. I've missed turns because of this process. Sometimes I drive on the other side of the road to avoid it.

A couple years ago I watched the car in front of me drive straight over a groundhog. It was so quick. Because I was so close behind I couldn't react in time to avoid it.

I use too much toilet paper. It's really embarrassing at home because I always go through so many rolls I have to ask my parents to buy more after like a week. But I can't stop. Not using enough makes me so nervous.

I realized all the observations in my notebook are bitchy.

Is my concealer still on? I picked at a scab until it stopped weeping and peeled off. The pink scar-skin underneath makes a poor surface for makeup to

cling to.

I think weed is rotting my brain.

I didn't realize sex could be emotional until I met my girlfriend. I thought I was broken for years.

I eat food off the floor all the time.

I have a lump in my arm that I didn't think was cancer, but also definitely kind of thought was cancer. I drove forty minutes to Cleveland to get it checked out. (It was not cancer. Obviously.)

I hate this girl in my Holocaust class because she asks questions like, "Why wasn't that a like, 'Let's stop killing people!' moment?"

I can only experience my own fear of death through animals. I used to think that I wasn't afraid of oblivion, just the pain and suffering required to get there. Now I think I'm scared of both. I think that's why roadkill freaks me out so much. Someday I will be as obliterated as the groundhog.

Someone described college as a "liminal space". You can call anything a liminal

space these days.

My dad sent me pictures of the 'Where Will I Be In Twenty Years?' essay I wrote when I was ten. I'm closer to being thirty than ten but somehow being thirty seems so much more distant. I wrote that I wanted to be a creative writing major at Yale. To be fair, my parents are college dropouts. The only colleges I knew back then were VCU, UVA, Harvard, and Yale. What would I have thought if I saw myself in the future, now— twenty and a half years old, at a mid-tier liberal arts college, on the rain-damp porch of a dying house party?

The past stretches forward to meet this second.
Even the universe can't escape its own heat death.

The Plum Creek Review is Oberlin College's oldest literary + arts magazine, published semesterly.

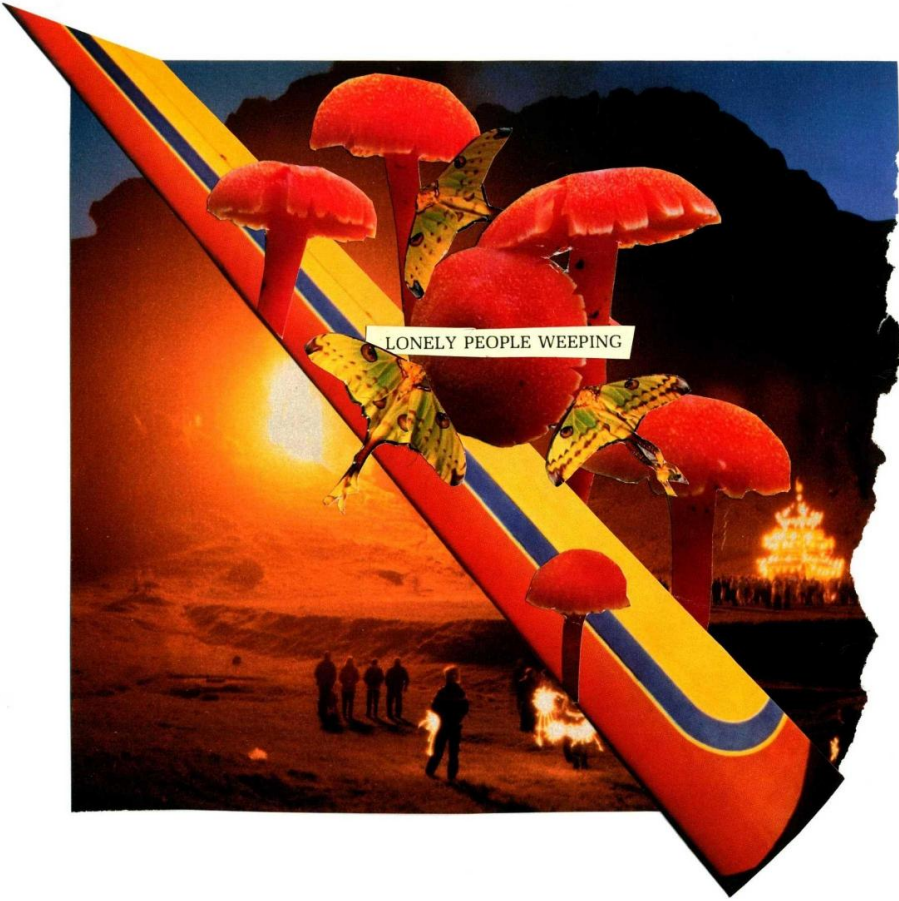


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LONELY PEOPLE WEEPING