

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This *Acts of Resilience* anthology is a production of the Bailey Library, the English/College Readiness Department, the Sustainability Literacy Task Force, the WCC Poetry Club, and the Writing Center at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

It features work written by WCC students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends that was posted on the WCC Poetry Club website in November and December 2021.

An Indigenous Poetry open mic took place November 17 on Zoom. It had 40 attendees, many of whom read work, some of it appearing in this anthology. This was sponsored by the Bailey Library, the English/College Readiness Department, the Sustainability Literacy Task Force, the WCC Poetry Club, and the Writing Center.

Special thanks to WCC faculty and staff members Maryam Barrie, Amy Higgins, Molly Ledermann, Emily Thompson, and Katie Williams.

Book design and digital images by Tom Zimmerman unless otherwise noted.

Copyright © 2021 the individual authors and artists.

The works herein have been chosen for their literary and artistic merit and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Washtenaw Community College, its Board of Trustees, its administration, or its faculty, staff, or students.

www.wccnet.edu/library
wccpoetryclub.wordpress.com
<https://www.wccnet.edu/learn/departments/engd/writing-center/>

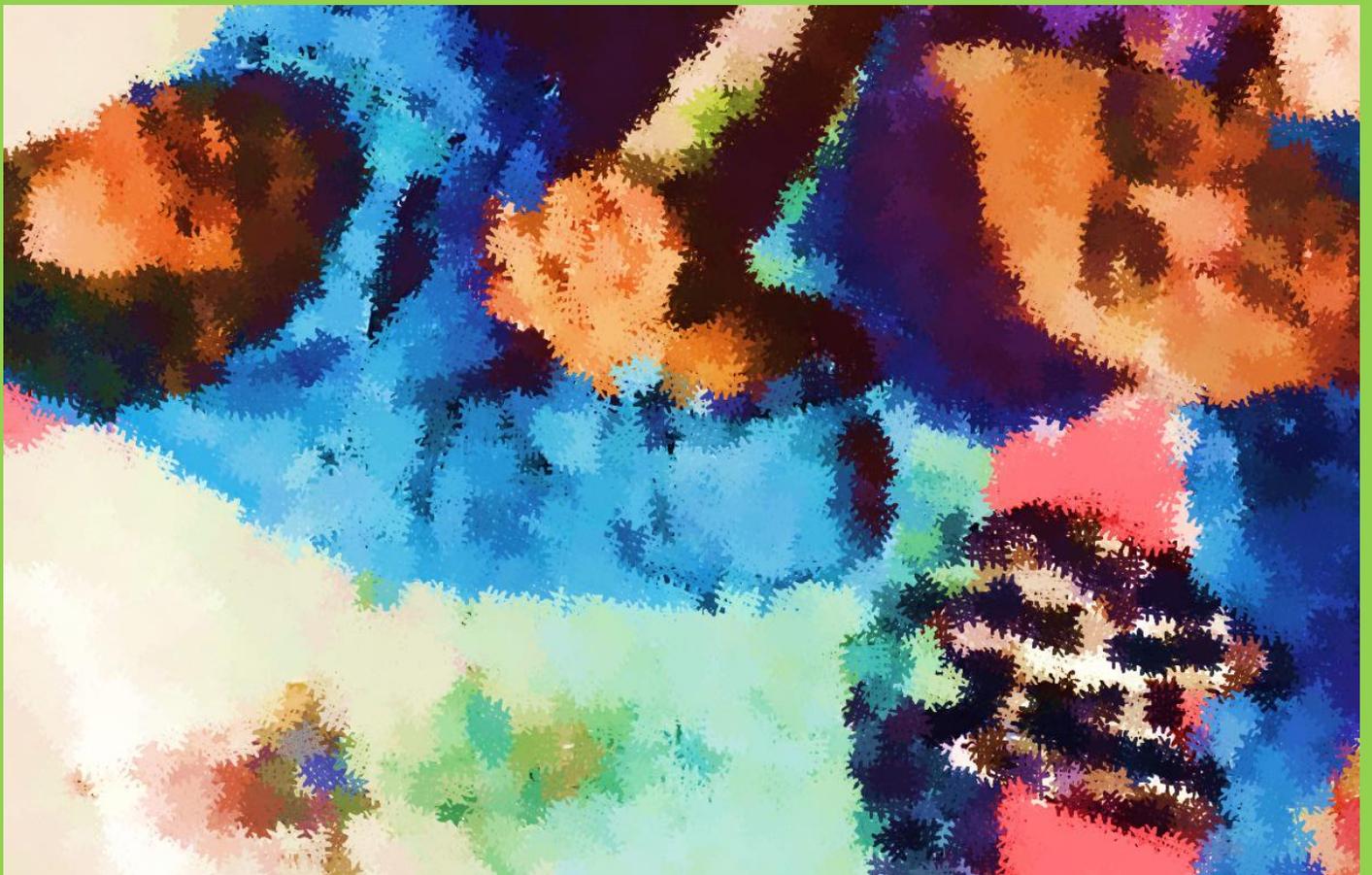
ACTS OF RESILIENCE

A WCC Anthology Edited by Tom Zimmerman

Contents

Nieka Apell	I Remember	5
Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell	[Origami]	6
Maryam Barrie	The Body Tells Its Past and Future Story	7
	Vessel	8
Mae Bumpus, Trinity Campbell, and Natalie Stringham	[Origami]	9
Michaela Bell	I Dream of City Crumbles	10
Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell	[Origami]	11
Joshua Evans	Peeling Out	12
Amy Higgins	[Photograph of Bison]	13
	Refugees	14
Diane M. Laboda	Bridging the Gap	17
	Drinking Like a Grown-up	19
Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell	[Making Origami]	20
Diane M. Laboda	Trophies	21
Madeline Lewis	A Fantastic Idea or a Fatal Flop?	24
Daniel Long	Elements	29
	Solstice Soup	30
Mary Lou Nagy	Covid.	32

Ayowole Oladeji	Beyond Our Resilience	34
Ben Vanderhyde	Excerpt from “Detroit 2099”	36
Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell	[Origami]	38
Ben Vanderhyde	Tunde Music	39
Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell	[Origami]	41
KD Williams	As We Do	42
Tom Zimmerman	Camouflage	44
	Domestic Sonnet	45



NIEKA APELL

I Remember

I remember January mornings, dashing down freezing wooden steps, grabbing the pilled yellow afghan, and curling against the heat register, pressing my toes into the metal grate, waiting for the heat to kick on.

I remember my dad's morning routine, always carefully timed, listening to the comforting voices of local newscasters, pulling on clothes acrid with foundry dust or scattering woodchip confetti.

I remember our good-byes in the dark, the rattle of our embarrassing van coming to life, starting my own morning routine of Pop Tarts or Frosted Flakes, still huddling in front of the radiator that turned my legs to alligator skin.

I remember high school years, skipping radiator basking in favor of showering, shaving, conditioning, makeup-ing, always leaving enough time for completely rewashing my hair if it didn't turn out just right.

I remember calling up the stairs to my still sleeping mother, yelling, "I'm leeeeeeaving!" and not bothering to hear if she replied. I remember being told that she was doing her best.

I remember the misery of getting to school in those days of just one car, clomping through snow, dragging my bass clarinet a mile to the city bus stop,

knocking ungracefully into the knees of other glaring riders.

I remember being jealous of the hot shot girls who lived in that other neighborhood,
watching them walk all together in a color-coordinated pack,
arriving at school calm and coiffed and safe in their numbers.

I remember wishing I had just a little bit of that.



Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell [Origami]

MARYAM BARRIE

The Body Tells Its Past and Future Story

Long ago, my milk soothed and nourished
my girls. I nursed each for four years,
alpha wolf protecting my cubs. The first said
want to more nursing, the next said, *all for me!*
My father told me how beautiful his mother
was as she refused him. My mother did as
she was told, fed me formula. The fire
in me is my pathway, so my soul storms
through the bones, synapses linking this
body to itself. I calculate the space between
myself and my desire, by the dead waiting
to be heard. I want to travel through
my skin, slip through the veins, metamorphose
so the wings buried within my shoulder
blades loose themselves and unfurl.
Damp with birth and sweat, the wings
will slowly flap up and rise behind me.
The temple of the skull, packed with
grey and red, stands erect and purposeful.
My tongue is a fountain that curves
and rolls through language to make
melodies that divide the unspoken from
the heard. I am part of the herd of animals.
My body, with its minor historical disasters,
laughs and tells its story.

MARYAM BARRIE

Vessel

I love the toe that almost left.
Sliced by some sharpness I never found,
they stitched it back on, but it slants
to the right, a toe on the verge of exiting
the land of the foot. There were times
I wanted to leave the cage of the body,
am happy in this moment that I stayed.
I celebrate the high arch of my feet,
along with their arthritic rumbles.
I love the twice repaired rotator cuff
of my strong right shoulder. I love
the cobalt chrome mechanism of my knees,
the way my steps are bolted to me
by a color I imagine as blue. I love
the retired womb that bore my girls,
the belly they swirled in as they made
themselves perfect. I love the hands
that hold the curve of his shoulders
as he rides me, the way our bodies fit
after thirty-seven years. I love the lungs
that have survived the buzzing of angry
bees in my chest, swarming through
the vagaries of infection, dust, pollen
and mold. I love the birthmark on my
right ear, the one that matches the mark
on his. I love the way the inner circle

of my left ear forms the shape of Africa.
I love the way my myopic eyes distinguish
a multitude of colors – they skip delightedly
over words that fill my heart, feed my brain.
I love the mysterious engine of the body
that has carried me so far. One day,
I will slip out and into the next great wave.



Mae Bumpus, Trinity Campbell, and Natalie Stringham [Origami]

MICHAELA BELL

I Dream of City Crumbles

I dream of city crumbles,
Pieces that made it up
Earlier, when my hands, feet, and mouth were small and nimble,
They made rings of grass and food from mud.
They sowed seeds to nourish pecking beaks,
Walked on rocks without hesitation and said the mind's unfiltered
creations.

I dream of the city that made me wired,
Where my eyes melted at the sight of a hazy sun.
Dead grass and broken sidewalks that I wasn't allowed to wander.
I dream of the crumpled men that walked the lonely roads
Humming their crackling songs of life and longing.
Their legs and backs would grow tired,
And sleep would find them by the river, or the creek, or the corner store—
Wherever God allowed.

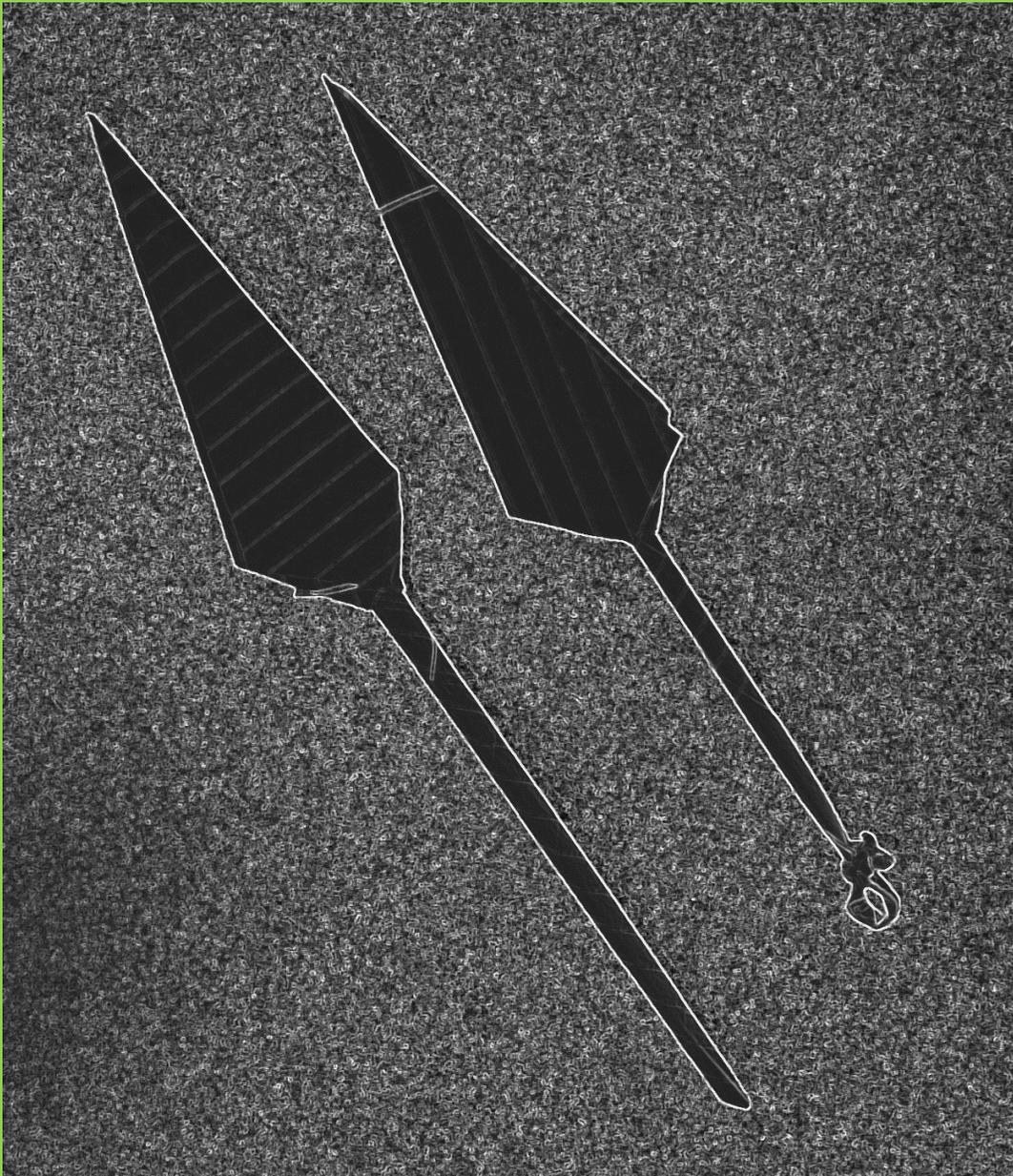
On rainy days I would dance and sing,
Free to feel the sky's patter against the softness of youth that
encompassed me.

Church hymns sounded feathery, light
and stained glass still mystified.

I was drunk on my own imagination,
Constantly living a long life within a single day.

Now days go quickly,
Body has grown, and mud is no longer food.
The chickens are dead and buried,
The men have become part of the river,

And I watch the rain from my window.
Believing is of the past.
I dream of it though, late at night
When I ask the God, I don't now know,
Why I had to discover the city crumbled.

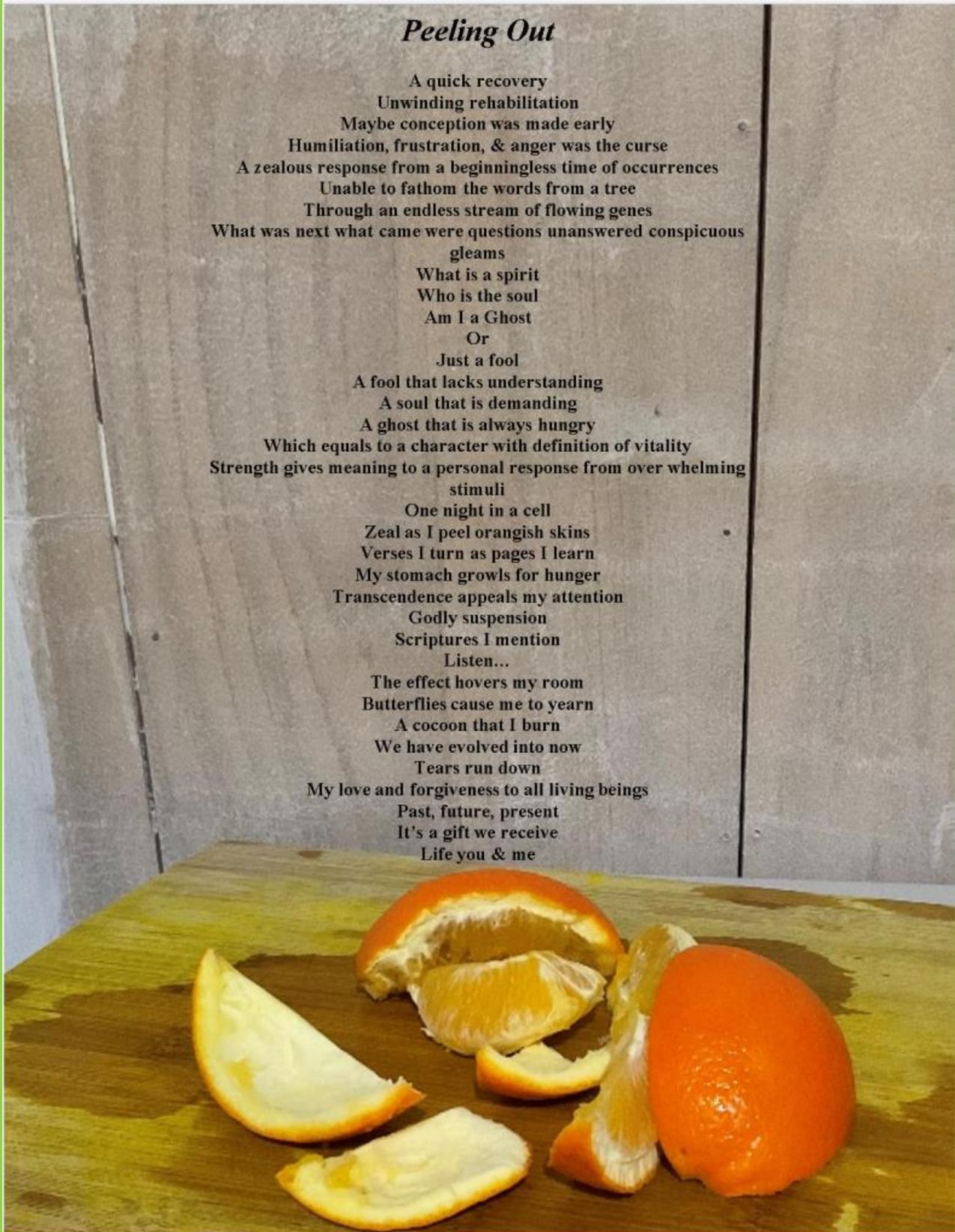


Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell [Origami]

JOSHUA EVANS

Peeling Out

A quick recovery
Unwinding rehabilitation
Maybe conception was made early
Humiliation, frustration, & anger was the curse
A zealous response from a beginningless time of occurrences
Unable to fathom the words from a tree
Through an endless stream of flowing genes
What was next what came were questions unanswered conspicuous
gleams
What is a spirit
Who is the soul
Am I a Ghost
Or
Just a fool
A fool that lacks understanding
A soul that is demanding
A ghost that is always hungry
Which equals to a character with definition of vitality
Strength gives meaning to a personal response from over whelming
stimuli
One night in a cell
Zeal as I peel orangish skins
Verses I turn as pages I learn
My stomach growls for hunger
Transcendence appeals my attention
Godly suspension
Scriptures I mention
Listen...
The effect hovers my room
Butterflies cause me to yearn
A cocoon that I burn
We have evolved into now
Tears run down
My love and forgiveness to all living beings
Past, future, present
It's a gift we receive
Life you & me



AMY HIGGINS



AMY HIGGINS

Refugees

Serbia's forests are gone;

her cities are full of owls.

Twenty years back,
war ended again here
but embers remain—
a generation born of rape,
homes rebuilt on scorched ground.
Ancient grudges seethe
under smooth and wrinkled brows.

The trees draw every eye upward.
Displaced, the long-eared owls
commandeer Kikinda's town square,
roosting in wide-armed sycamores
that witnessed genocides.

Guns and torches left untouched
an orthodox church—St. Nikola's
nestles among solemn pines.

A schoolgirl plays football
under arching branches,
calls Hello to the owls, a soft sound
like theirs, like breath blown
over an empty glass bottle.

As she kicks the ball into the goal,
one bird opens an eye, follows its roll.

Like a silent film of snowfall
played backwards, at dusk
on silent wings they rise.
Farmers, mostly women,
tuck children in, unfurl
aching bodies, take their rest.

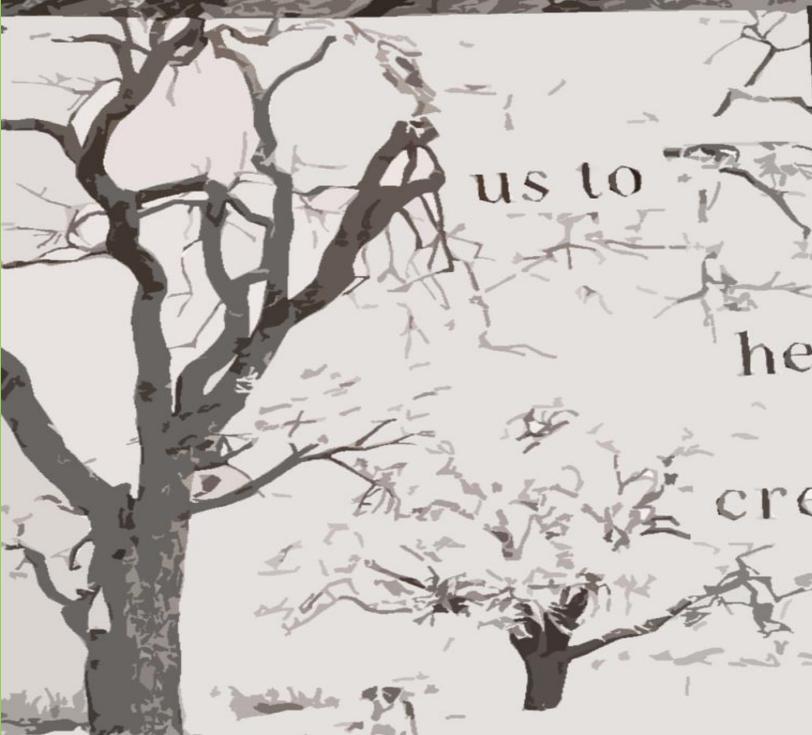
Having gleaned the fields
of mice, the owls return
with bloodied breast feathers
and stuff their eager young
until bellies stretch tight.
Seven hundred heads swivel
away from the streetlights' glare.

Sunrise.

In Kikanda's shady heart, they sleep.



With the world population heading for 9 billion people



us to



It's important for

heal

create

develop solutions

grow good food



DIANE M. LABODA

Bridging the Gap

There's a gap between the before
and the after. The time before
is filled with care and accommodation,
doctors and whirring machines,
medication, fear and blind hope.

The time after overruns with tears
and the certainty that he will not
come home. It is filled with planning
and decisions, bureaucracy and vulnerability,
and a whole lot of missing.

There's after-guilt and after-regret,
and time after time beating myself up
over things out of my control.
There's friendship and sisterhood
and beautiful surprises and kindnesses.

And the real sense that his life made
a difference, that he'd touched
so many in the time before.

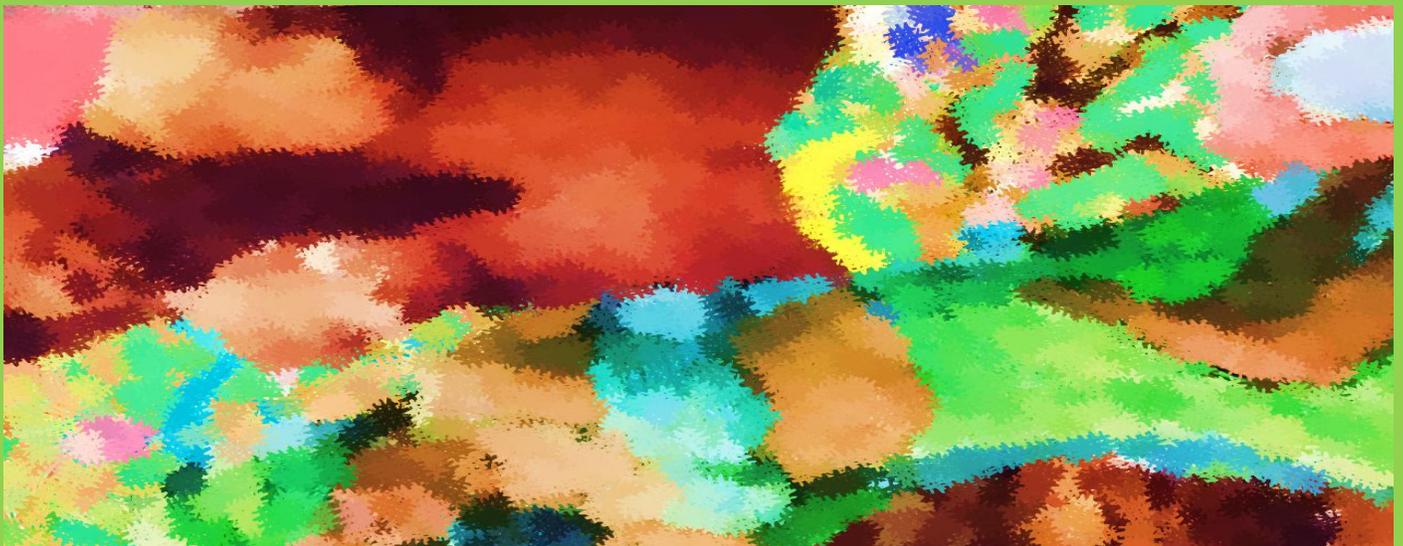
There does not seem to be a bridge
between the before and after—
pictures don't add laughter to his smile,
keepsakes don't make more of the man.

Memories are placeholders of happy, but do not include arms to hold, or warmth, or a continuation of our story together.

The bridge does not reach far enough, and I am stuck on the living side watching him walk away, turn and wave, and continue where I cannot go.

I must accept the before time as his gift to me, a finite storybook full of all of our emotions. It has an end date, a point in time when he must go and I must stay and carry on, not alone, never alone, but by myself.

No bridge will span the gap,
no balm will smooth the aching,
no goodbye will ever diminish the love.



DIANE M. LABODA

Drinking Like a Grown-Up

I'm a Riesling with dinner, Weissbier with barbecue,
and a Baileys Irish Cream before bed kind of girl.

Tried a martini once, a gin and dry vermouth number,
a lemon twist and three olives — always an odd number
for luck, I'm told.

I felt like I'd arrived, finally had a grown-up drink,
elegant, sophisticated. James Bond had it all wrong —
it just needs a brisk stir with cracked ice.

I saw a lady, I could tell she was a lady by her up-do
and ripe-red nail polish, holding a martini glass
with her pinky finger stuck out.

I wanted to be her, grown-up, lady-like,
and signaling to the world through a pinky-antenna —
I'm all that and a handful of olives.

I wanted to telegraph to the world that I'd arrived,
that I was a force to be reckoned with. If nothing
else said grown-up, at least my drink choice said
I could hang with the big girls.

I could speak their language, fight for their issues,
raise enough hell that I deserved a respite
with a cool drink in my hand.

**Nothing said sophisticated like a martini. It meant:
part of the brat pack, right side of the street, touting
Spanks and megaphone, a placard and a damned good cause.**

**No one was going to push me over, or push me down
anymore. No one.**



Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell [Making Origami]

DIANE M. LABODA

Trophies

Enter the house of a friend.
Look around for signs of life,
trophies of action —

labeled plastic, non-tamper bottles of drugs,
lifelines to sane, pain-free living

props of every kind —
cane, one for each hand
walker with basket for necessities
shower chair
hand rails
lift chairs, potty chairs
wheelchairs
gummy whips

bed rails
Chux
rubber sheets
melatonin
Prozac

Medical machinery —
nebulizer
humidifier
oxygen concentrator
miles of rubber tubing
nose

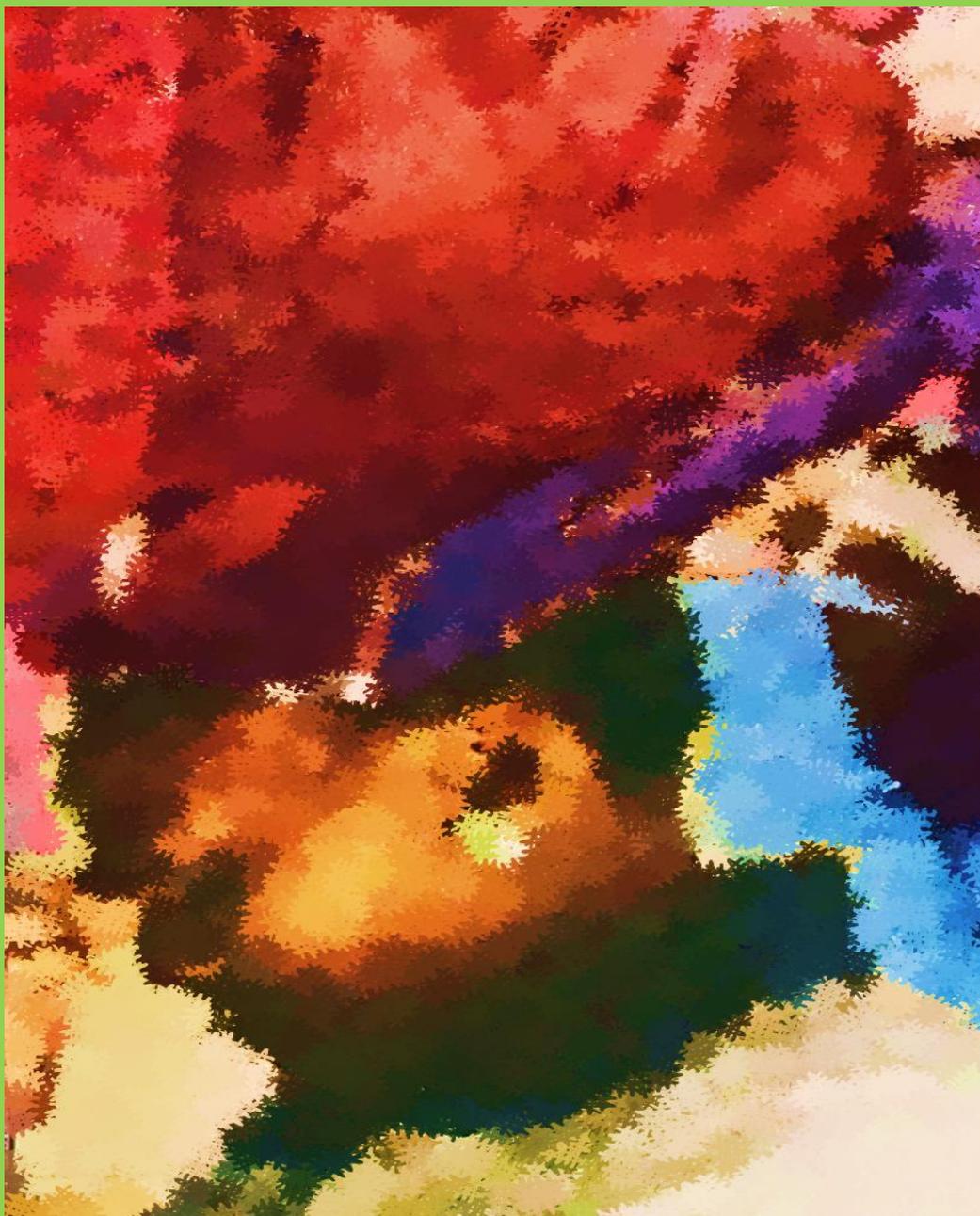
blender, bleeder
pulverizer
steamer
whisk and straws
laxatives
bandages
Thera bands, crutches, ramps
razor wire

frayed socks in the corner
bloody towel on the counter
scars and sutures
covered mirror
silent loss

alarms
timers, buzzers, beepers
walk-in tub, walk-out shower
tight belts
cloth restraints, Posey vest
fat knobs and handles
life alerts and lockboxes
a rifle

locked hallway door
locked appliances
locked cupboards
locked medication trolley
locked heart
guilt and shame

Enter the house of a friend.
Look for signs of life,
trophies of action —
vestiges of love.



MADLINE LEWIS

A Fantastic Idea or a Fatal Flop?

It was a particularly cool, crisp autumn day. I could feel the breeze toy with my hair as I walked up to the front door. Inside the heat stung my cheeks as I hauled my overfilled backpack off my shoulders. Realizing how aggressive I slammed it down, I ripped it open to make sure all of my precious art supplies weren't broken from the force. With a sigh of relief, I kicked off my shoes and bellowed "I'm home!" Or at least attempted in my young vocal fry.

"In the kitchen!" My mom called back. I quickly grabbed my sketchbook from the contents of my bag to show her my masterpieces of the day.

"Anyway, she does what now?" I walked in on my mom doing a crossword, taking a break to sweep her long brown hair into a quick updo; she was sipping coffee and chatting with my dad.

"Who are you guys talking about? I want to know!" I demanded, being the classic, nosey, information leech most middle schoolers were.

"My cousin, you know the one, Autumn. She's using her U of M art degree to peddle random water color prints and spread 'love' through 'free hugs'. Ridiculous. How is she earning a living wage? What a waste of potential, she should get a real job." He scoffed before gulping down the rest of his coffee and sitting down next to my mom on the couch.

"Yeah but didn't your other cousin who graduated from there make those cool sculptures in Detroit?" My mom chimed in, scribbling some letters into the boxes of her crossword.

"Yeah but he's in the same boat. Why even bother going through school if you aren't going to make any money?" My dad answered, running a hand through his black hair in a perplexed fashion.

As the first offspring of a lawyer and a self-made business man, I

turned my nose up too. “Yeah that sounds dumb.” I said, shoulders slumped, and slowly inching backwards toward my backpack to go slip the burden in my hands away and out of sight. That felt weird, the words foreign in my mouth. Why did he sound so disappointed?

Yet this conversation would shape the way I viewed college and careers in every way.

I’ve always felt my most alive and confident while creating. The brush would work with a mind of its own, the pencil in my hand flying across the canvas with seemingly little abandon, but at the same time would result in a work of art. I was once proud to be an artist, my mind an olympic pool swimming with possibilities and nuanced ideas for all the projects I wanted to complete. As I grew up, my love for art began to diminish, and soon it took the backseat to my new found responsibilities that come with age: applying to college.

I had no time to feel alive anymore. The weight on my shoulders is no longer an art supply filled backpack, but filled with textbooks and brochures. I knew this decision would point the direction of where my life would go and it was an opportunity that had no room for error. Everytime I’d think about college, I was filled with anxiety. Bubbling in my belly like a wicked witch’s brew.

Never the risk taker, the money was on the forefront of my mind. I felt unsure and scared that my parents would talk about me in a disappointing way. Naturally, art school crossed my mind. Some friends were even pleading with me to consider it. But remembering that conversation long ago, I couldn’t let it be anymore than just a hobby.

As applications drew closer, the more my anxiety about life grew. I had no plan, and the utter cluelessness terrified me. I couldn’t sleep without dreaming of hellish college landscapes. I couldn’t eat without thinking it would be on someone else’s dime.

After eavesdropping on these girls, ironically considering I barely drew anymore, in my senior year art class talking about this major called

'fashion merchandising'. At the time, I was starting to really get into the fashion world. It's something that I've been interested in for a little bit now, and it crossed my mind that my aunt was in the same business. Perfect, I have a mentor to show me through so I won't be aimless any longer! I raced home and after some quick google searches I told my parents. They approved, so I felt like I was finally on the right track to success. I was sure I could find a way to incorporate art into my life through this in a way that would actually produce some monetary value. A little bit of the stress was gone, but I still found myself unable to relax, and incapable to revel in what was supposed to be joy when you have found your path. Instead the anxiety soon quickly began to bloom again.

I came to a realization that I was not ready to leave home. I knew in my heart I was not ready to leave and fight my way through this world on my own just yet. After talking with my parents I applied to Washtenaw Community College. I was nervous about what they would think, coming from generations of successful teachers, lawyers, and prestigious college alumni. Yet they still approved.

Wanting to get my required credits out of the way to transfer as a fashion merchandising major, my counselor advised me to take an art course. The studio art was full, so I reluctantly settled for Art Appreciation.

Never having a class so long, I was not sure if I could sit and listen to a lecture for three hours. Never having a great art teacher, I viewed art history as abysmally boring and useless.

I walked into class, slumping into my chair, armed with a red bull and coffee to get me through this snore fest. I've been to museums, I've listened to those ancient docents drone on and on about some boring dead dudes who's works I've already seen a million times.

As the lecture started the teacher was surprisingly jovial and young to be teaching such a course. Surely I'm in the wrong class, I kept thinking. But as it continued the more my shoulders picked up, and the

less I was grabbing for my caffeine jolt. She told stories of dramas, scandals, dark histories, tales I've never heard before of paintings I've always seen. Vermeer's Girl with the Pearl earring? A mysterious peasant no one knows who she was, being painted by a guy who was notorious for taking way too long to finish his pieces. The mind of that little girl with the backpack full of supplies came ferociously back. Unsatiated by just that class, I went home to research more and more slowly, becoming obsessive.

A week after that first class, I was hungry to create. It was a stark difference from how I felt about fashion merchandising. Fashion merchandising began to sound like a people pleasing answer. I couldn't connect to it the way I did with art. And after some internet sleuthing, I discovered that it was all clerical, computer work. Not me at all. A pit formed in my stomach as I stumbled upon my true path, art school.

Now it was time to brave the talk with my parents. I was prepared to stick up for myself because in my heart of hearts, I knew I would make art school and a career in the arts work for me. I had to, I had to chase that feeling of being truly and irrevocably alive for the rest of my life no matter what. No matter the consequences, if there was a time to take a risk, it would be now.

After sitting down and pouring my heart out to them, expecting to be chewed out and reprimanded for such a hopeless dream, they were all for it! My dad even confessed that he thought it was a much better idea than fashion because he knew how talented I was and knew that behind a computer screen was not right for me.

"But what about your cousins and what you said?" I asked, still unsure how to approach this open armed acceptance. Although, I could feel the anxious grasp around my heart loosen.

"I spoke too soon. Autumn devoted herself to making others and herself better people and spreading care and love, which is more honorable than most of us can say about ourselves. And Carl is insanely

successful, even selling a Banksy for around \$100,000. You just need to go in with an open mind and a plan to be prepared to fight for whatever you want." He answered. "I was wrong before."

Hearing him say Banksy, a very famously mysterious artist, I did a double take. I was astonished, and not just at my cousin's success, but at my parents' pure and unwavering acceptance. But what did I expect? Throughout my life, they have shown time and time again that they would be there for me through whatever path I chose. I finally have found my true calling and my heart burst with excitement for the future. The first time in my whole life I could let myself think about the future and feel true, pure joy.

With help from parents, I have decided that I will be aiming for the U of M art school program, the very same that my dad turned his nose up to. Through all of my trials and misdirections to get here, I can now say I am proud to be an artist, and I will never hide my sketchbook again, like all those years ago.



DANIEL LONG

Elements

Molecules of water harbored inside
Drawn to shores like moon-pulled tides.
Long-bridled waves strain to be freed
Returned at long last to crashing sea.

Iron coursing through veins like hares
Will turn to rust once it breathes air
And crumble like sand through fingers balled tight
All while yearning to be smelted by wrights.

Carbon that binds like asphalt to tar
Gazes through eons and dreams of the stars.
From cosmic disorder this being was forged
By the hands of They from whom all is born.

Thus honor is due to all that resides
On our Mother, the Earth, 'til the last subsides.

DANIEL LONG

Solstice Soup

The planet has reached its maximum tilt
With Sun low in the southern sky.
Nat Cole revolves on the turntable
I remove the chopping board
As home fills with the scent of pie.

I don't enjoy the baking as much
Exactness leads to anxiety.
I prefer soup.

Vegetables washed and peeled
Knife's edge bites; first onion then parsnip.
Garlic and shallots crushed and minced means
More flavor is unsealed.

Butter sizzles in a hand-me-down
Dutch oven, the cast iron seasoned perfectly.
Vegetables crackle under fat and heat
They soften and slowly brown.

Small particles dance in lingering rays
Slowly receding across my floor.
Evening's begun.

As stock and cream are gently poured,
Then cabbage, potato, and finally meat.
I've found the rhythm as oven timer chimes.

My love, at last home, comes through the door.

“You and your soup!” she says
A smile wry, with half-hidden pride.
The unspoken joy of “who is this treasured find?”

Hearty portions ladled out
Steam rising in offering to God.
Rich butter spread across thick, warm brown bread
Frothy head on Irish stout.

Conversation filled with loving mirth,
Warmth of laughter, beer, and stew.
In this healing time, needed each year,
Our spirits and the world unite in rebirth.



MARY LOU NAGY

Covid.

It caught me, spun me sideways and pulled me back from my intentions that day.

“Plans? What plans? You are mine for now” Covid chortles. “Yes, I feel your vaccine but it’s not as strong as it once was. So, first, let’s begin with these massive cold symptoms.”

Noted. Sneezing, congestion, runny nose and the cough du jour.

“Next, here comes an attempt to get into your lungs. A little pressure now, some twinges in the chest.”

The Vaccine swats Covid away.

“Ah...no matter then. You like to taste your food, smell the leaves and the crisp, fall air? Be gone!” Covid laughs.

It is as if Saran Wrap envelops both senses. There is nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

But wait. There is something. A HUGE something! Breathing. Deep breaths. Shallow breaths. In and out. I listen for hesitation, wait for discomfort. None.

Covid looks to deliver fever and headaches.

Another swat from the remaining vaccine.

Covid slithers inside, looking for weakness. Determined. Seizes and saps energy, making naps and early bedtimes the new normal.

Days pass. Covid remains. Resigned it can not get to the lungs, it continues its tight hold on what it has gathered so far.

One early morning. A whiff, a definite hint of a smell. I speak aloud, "I can smell something."

Covid smiles. "I'm still here."

Another morning I come to consciousness. The smell of clean sheets wakes me further. A good surprise. At breakfast, a fleeting taste of peanut butter on toast.

Covid wants to prevent me from turning a corner but I am in the intersection and ready to go.

10 days of quarantine, over, done, out the other side.

"I will leave you with traces. You will remember me," Covid smirks and drifts away.

I will remember. I will remember fear and uncertainty. Taking my temperature and checking the oximeter obsessively. Sleeping in a prone position to help my lungs stay strong. Waking up. Remembering I am alive.

I am breathing. I won.

AYOWOLE OLADEJI

Beyond Our Resilience

beyond our resilience looking through the far east of depression
counting the days universe of power resilience beyond our spirit of
passion's love
knowing how we are all full of resilience mighty power beyond our
years of fantasy.

Suddenly the sun shines like golden doves of finding your destiny
flowing like a river of doom and destruction but resilience beyond our
imagination
resilience beyond the destiny of passion's desire to seek.

Day sets light fades darker in the sky shadows oversee the blue
seek the evolution of resilience beyond our passion
of destiny and fulfillment of empowerment of love
and love beyond resilience looms and blooms across the blizzard sky.

A C T S

Ob

RESILIENCE



BEN VANDERHYDE

Excerpt from "Detroit 2099"

"DIRECTIVE – DIRECTIVE – DIRECTIVE." the words sprinted across the thin screen on my arm, lighting up my profile.

"INTERRUPTION AT D35-VII – QUELL – REPORT BACK." The message looped, but I didn't need to read it to know its command.

"Hey, you! Shut that shit off!"

The goon behind me noticed the green pulse and started to close in. I would've preferred to surprise them, but that wasn't an option anymore. The gangster inhaled deeply, expanded his chest and shoulders, and clutched his rifle. He reached for my arm, but I was ready. Faster than he could react, I flung my left hand down onto his rifle's grip and pulled. His unwilling fingers fired twice. One bullet tore through his left elbow and another sparked on the lights. Grey turned black. A strobe of hot orange gunfire ripped through the darkness. I ducked and rolled, leaving my first assailant in a rain of friendly fire. Muzzle flashes led my iron sights to their target.

"Vrrr-CLACK!" My magnetic pistol cracked and the smell of burnt lithium filled the room. A short thud followed the shot. Two down. I stood up just as the hatch opened and illuminated the bar. The silhouette of the final threat stood steady with Blanchet in a chokehold and a pistol jammed in his ear. Weapon still drawn, I stared him down.

"Drop it," he ordered.

I wanted to take the shot – just to get it over with. My finger twitched with anticipation but it wasn't worth the risk.

My pistol fell, but my eyes kept contact. His gaze shifted to my blinking forearm. An expression of greed and desperation flashed underneath all the scars.

"Take it off," he pushed the barrel harder against Blanchet's skull.

"That's not happening."

" 'Kay then I'ma have to take this off," he glanced at blanchet's head and tightened his grip. "I'm sure he won't miss it as much as you will that arm. . ."

His pistol whirred in preparation but I didn't move. In that moment, the earth seemed to slow its rotation as the bar was the stillest it had ever been.

"Alright. . . ." I detached my forearm and set it on the bar. "Happy now?"

His trigger finger relaxed and grip loosened – Blanchet took his chance. He swung his head hard at the Kicker's nose, shattering it. The force sent them both into the metal doorframe. Blanchet straightened up and stepped away to massage his skull. The gangster crumpled behind him.

"Y'damn near got me killed," Blanchet yelled over the sound of patrons scuffling out, "killed my fuckin' 37usiness s'what you killed!"

"Yeah, I'm real sure you would've been fine without my help. Speaking of" – I nodded to the motionless gangsters – "looks like you don't need it

anymore." I reattached my arm and turned to exit.

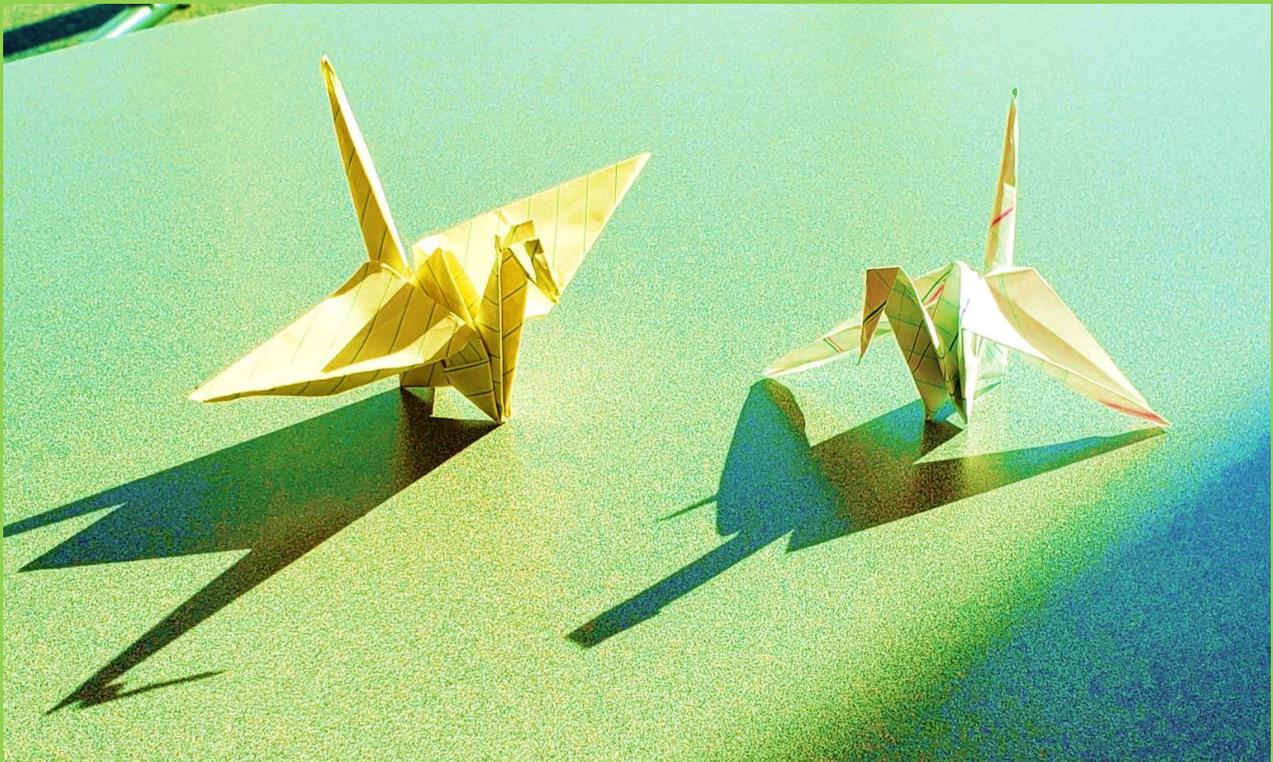
"No way kid, you dump them bodies out back first."

"That's not my job."

"Nah, nah, see, it is. It's just like how you saved your own skin here. S'long as that arm's blinking – it's your job" He lifted the alert pad and rubbed the yellow button like a lucky coin.

"No choice, huh?"

"No choice, man."



Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell [Origami]

BEN VANDERHYDE

Tunde Music

He strolled toward the house, harmonious with the dirt under his feet. Steel blue jeans and a western shirt hung coolly on his slim frame. Under his arm rolls of cloth sagged. His head rocked with whatever tune his Walkman played him. You see, he had no car – vibrations were his transportation.

Tunde Music knocked on my door for the first time on that spring morning in '82. My buddies and I were busy preparing for class but invited him in. It was impolite to reject a visitor. The savvy Nigerian easily made himself comfortable in a canvas chair in our sitting room. Tunde slid a pack of Marlboros out of his breast pocket, knocked a spliff out of the pack and was returning the case when he paused. "Oh, does anyone want one?" he asked. I declined kindly but his next offer made it seem like I'd taken the first.

Tunde unrolled the fabrics and his colors and characters almost came to life – bright like the glint off a wave, and vibrant as the jungle. Tunde's art amazed me. He thanked his mother for this magic. She taught him the forest, its roots and how to make the deepest dyes from them. Partway through his tale of his paintings' characters, something else caught my attention. The hanging flowerpot beside Tunde was swaying. I felt no wind. Not a leaf waved but those next to Tunde. I figured he must've knocked it, so the strange thought passed. We talked and I bought a couple pieces before he left.

About a month later, Tunde knocked again. Last month's scene replayed:

Walkman, knock-knock, Marlboro, living-room conversation. Tunde planted himself in the same chair and grinned with the same radiance. Again, my eyes were pulled from his art to the pot gently swinging back and forth. How.... Why did it move? Right then I made a mental note for Tunde's next visit.

Another month came and went. Just like the rains in June, he returned. But that day, his lively illustrations of Nigerian folklore weren't the magic that intrigued me. When we walked from the door to the living-room, my eyes shifted from him to the pot. Sure enough, Tunde sat, the pot swung. Stumped, I stopped him mid-sentence, "Tunde, y'know.... Every time you come here, you sit in the same chair, and that plant.... That plant always starts to sway." He looked at me matter-of-factly, nodded a bit, then looked at the plant and nodded a bit more. His mystic grin appeared. "Ah.... The plant is happy to see me and the roots are dancing."

We chuckled and never spoke of it again.

The years passed and I'd see Tunde periodically, but our meetings never were the same. The coup and failing economy drove away foreigners: Tunde's market. He thinned with each time I saw him. His fresh snappy clothes decayed. His colors grew dull. Eventually he was reduced to black and white. More time passed and I left Nigeria, occasionally returning in search of art. One such trip, my cab got stuck in a hazy Lagos traffic jam. Staring out over the valley, I looked at the hawkers lining the road: beggars, vendors, survivors. Through the sea of burlap shawls and dirty windshields, I barely noticed a pleading figure stop and turn my direction. Despite the hundreds of yards between us, my gut told me he was set on my cab. Unwavering, the man strode past lanes of cars flanking him. Tunde Music knocked on my door, smiling.

“Bill, I knew it was you! I knew you were in this car! I knew it!” He spoke with a stability his image betrayed. He didn’t beg, but I gave him all I could spare. Even in rags, Tunde was a harmonious man. Somehow – miles and years from our last meeting– he knew I was there. He found me again. The world against him, Tunde was still one with the earth. A mystic soul surviving by ways unbeknownst to the rest of us.



Mae Bumpus and Trinity Campbell {Origami}

KD WILLIAMS

As We Do

Sometimes, a minor inconvenience can break you. The straw that breaks the camel's back, the final straw, the end of your rope. At the end of the first day at my new house, I flipped the lightswitch and nothing happened, but another switch flipped in me. I couldn't speak. My heart felt like it was both outside my chest and buried too deeply inside my chest. My body was too cold while my face was too hot. I have had panic attacks my entire life, but this was different. I said it out loud, "I think this just broke my brain." It was the last in a series of unfortunate events over the past 24 hours. The day before, while moving everything from my grandma's house, we could not locate one of my cats. He has usual hiding places, and we checked all of those.

I didn't start to panic until I had personally searched every square inch of the house, exerting myself so much from crouching under furniture and crawling around the corners of closets that I could barely move. There was no way he was still in the house, but everyone assured me that there was no way he could've gotten out either. He was Schrodinger's cat then. I was upset at my body for not being able to move, unable to keep looking. I rested and cried and said to myself "We were all supposed to be together at the new house by now." Shortly thereafter, my aunt found him hiding behind a picture frame that created a sort of false wall at the back of a closet in my grandma's bedroom. I was so relieved. We all slept well in the new house the first night.

That morning, I desperately needed a shower for my aching muscles after moving the day before. The water wouldn't heat up, which was distressing to an unusual degree. The pilot light was out, but I started spiraling, unable to be reasonable. How often would it go out? It took so

long for the water to heat up after we relit it. Would this be a common occurrence? The walls were closing in on me. Then, at the worst time, that light didn't spark. The breakers were flipped. Nothing. Let there be light! But there was only darkness. And I felt something break inside me. This house is not a present. It's not a gift. It's a prison. I wanted an ax then. It was my prison to destroy. I wanted to break all the useless bulbs in the bathroom. And who could be mad at me? Who could blame me really? For taking an ax to the walls that were so keen on closing me in, on killing me. I stood in the kitchen clutching my chest and told my partner in a faraway voice, "I knew this would be hard but I'm not reacting in the usual bad way. This is different and scary and I don't know what I need." He said, "Well, you need dinner. That's a start."

And then we did what we always do together. We bounced back. We arranged the cheeses and meats and veggies and fruits I had bought early on a charcuterie board that was a present from our realtor and somehow, I was smiling and laughing and reading the French cheese labels in an Italian accent. It made me think for a minute that everything might turn out all right.



TOM ZIMMERMAN

Camouflage

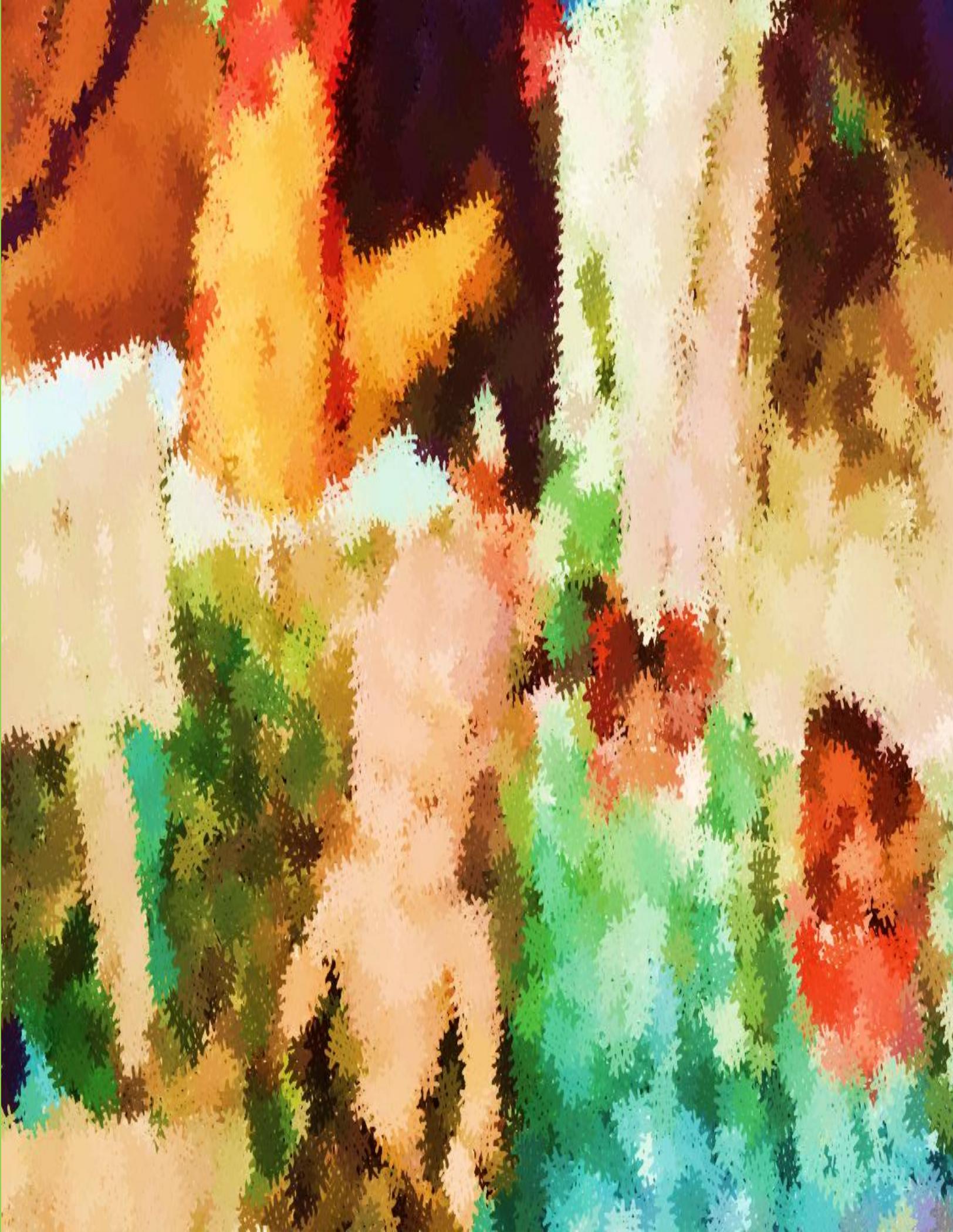
a memory it's running with you down
the street could be Hanoi could be Des Moines
you're naked in the rain or is this napalm
falling Dad in Vietnam mid-'60s
you're in Iowa with Mom two younger
sisters man of the house with grade school eight
to three film noir (you didn't know to name it
then) at night a softball bat rests in
the bedroom corner for protection safer
than a gun Dad brings you back a black
silk jacket map of Thailand Laos Cambodia
embroidered on it garish red and green
and yellow stop no go proceed with caution
blood grass sun or fire envy son

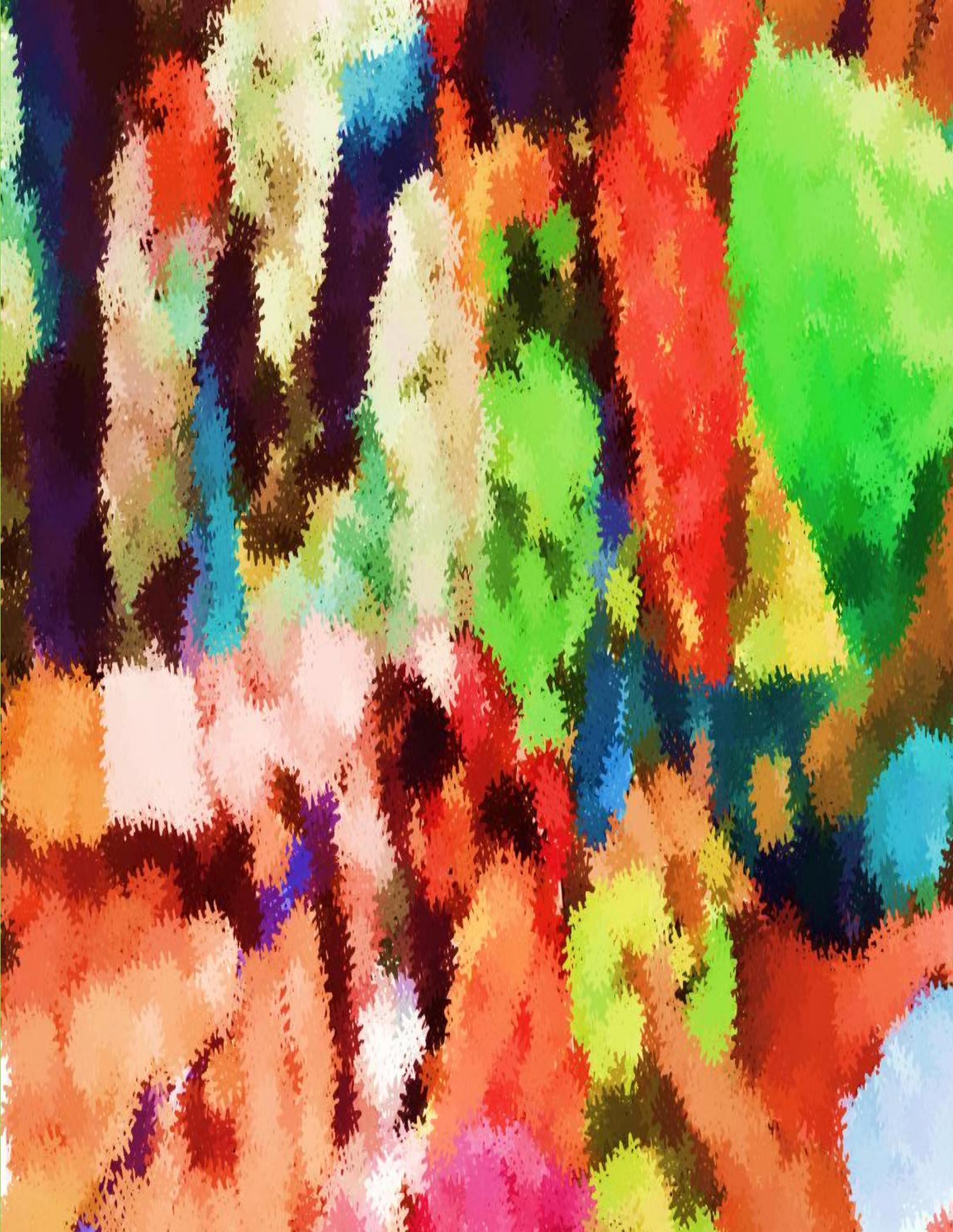
TOM ZIMMERMAN

Domestic Sonnet

I'm on my second scotch; Trey's had his p.m.
pee and nighttime snack; the pasta water's
getting hot in Thumper, Dad's old sprung
Revere Ware pot: so many boxes checked,
but when's a groove a rut? Ann tossed bright yellow
flowers in a crimson vase today.

I like to channel sex at this point in
a poem, like the myth of every seven
seconds. But, in eighteen minutes, there'll
be football on TV. I'll drop this meaning-
mongering and be one man of many
I can be. I fear my new book coming
out: *Domestic Sonnets*. Repetition
is an artist's death. I'll switch to beer.





Apell Barrie Bell Bumpus Campbell Evans Higgins Laboda Lewis
Long Nagy Oladeji Stringham Vanderhyde Williams Zimmerman

