

Fall 2025

Celebrating 25 Years



estuary

ACADIA'S CREATIVE ARTS MAGAZINE

~ Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself II*

Faculty Advisor // Wanda Campbell

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Foreword // Kait Pinder, Department Head

For twenty-five years *estuary* has been a place for students at Acadia to share their creative work. Here, different media and genres, perspectives and desires, meet and mix like the fresh and salt water of the estuary in the magazine's title, becoming richer by being together. Looking through past issues, I'm struck by the talent of the students who have created this magazine and its legacy. Their poetry and short fiction, photography and visual art, editors' notes and editorial work have held, protected, and celebrated the arts at Acadia. This work inspires and renews those who read it. Like the nutrients from the estuary's waters that help the surrounding lands flourish, this little magazine leaves something generative in us readers even as the student contributors eventually graduate and move on. The message they collectively leave is clear. Here, in this place where sea and rivers meet, here in the Department of English and Theatre, the arts matter and we make them. May it always be so.

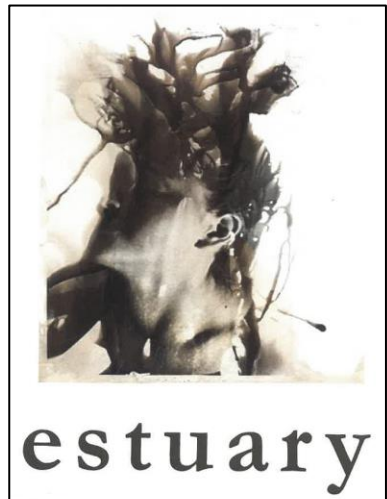


is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq nation

Looking Back // Wanda Campbell, Faculty Advisor

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of *estuary*, we look back at some significant milestones over the last quarter century. Building on earlier student publications including *Alpha Arts Magazine* (1985-1990), *Perpetuum* (1996-1998), and *Mosaic* (1999), founding editor Christine McNair put together the first issue of *estuary* in the academic year 1999-2020. She has since gone on to become a “book doctor” with the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa and an awarding winning poet of three collections published by Book*hug Press, *Conflict* (2012), *Charm* (2017), and *Toxemia* (2024), a poetic memoir of her experience with preeclampsia.

For the tenth anniversary of *estuary* in 2010, editor Rebecca Dobson created an elegant, archivally important retrospective anthology showcasing the contributions of past editors and the history of Acadia’s creative journals. Becky also organized a tenth anniversary gala at the Acadia Art Gallery, bringing together student writers, artists, and musicians to celebrate the important role of the arts at our university.

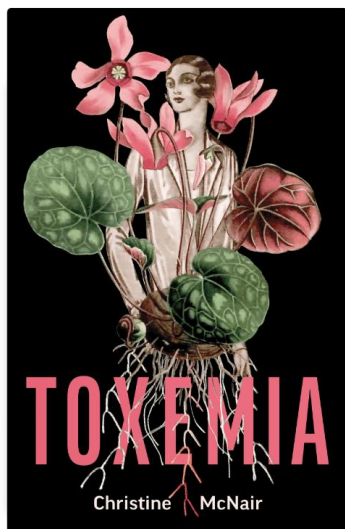


To mark the twentieth anniversary, students carried on this tradition of looking both backward and forward by selecting works published from 2010 to 2020

to include along with new material and an interview with founding editor Christine McNair. Faced with the social isolation of a global pandemic, this edition was put together by an editorial collective who also wrote “Corona Corona,” crowns of sonnets on learning to live with Covid-19.

In 2025, on the silver anniversary of *estuary*, current editor Angel Percentie has selected work from the past five years since the last retrospective edition, along with new student work that heralds a bright future. Also included is a contribution from Christine McNair who will be giving a reading at Acadia from her latest book *Toxemia* followed by a celebration supported by Dean of Arts, Dr. David Duke.

In my capacity as Faculty Advisor to *estuary*, it has been a great pleasure to work with a variety of student editors over the years to create a welcoming home for Acadia’s creative achievements. Published for the first time in the pages of *estuary*, many have gone on to make their mark in the world. Though housed in the English Department and edited by English students, the journal provides a creative home for writing and art by students from across campus, just as a tidal estuary provides a nurturing home for the young of many species before they head out to the open ocean.



Notes // Christine McNair, Founding Editor



Let me begin by saying that I'm uncertain of my utility. I'm writing this with a kid curled up next to me. She is wearing a unicorn eye mask and will be snoring soon. A unicorn themed meditation plays on my phone to help wind her down. And I try to think of things to say that will be useful to you.

If not letters, then at least sticky notes. I stumble out speed bumps but mean well. Take what you find useful and discard the rest

1

Read anything that interests you. Everything when I was young pointed at prosody and form. I liked the control. I admired patterns and quiet clever things. And then at some point my brain broke. All the latches flipped up, and I started to read everything. Deep dives into possibility. I fundamentally don't care about control. (At least not only about control.) I care about impact and what feels alive.

I lean towards sound and wordplay. I lean towards questions and disrupted communication with a touch of visual. But I'm omnivorous. I don't feel beholden to one way of thinking or writing. I'm bored by strict boundaries. Everything at the intersection feels so much more alive. I do not feel at a remove from my work.

2

Confess what you don't know. Learn about publishing, particularly if you hope to publish with a traditional

publisher. Particularly if you're thinking about publishing with a Canadian small press which is nothing like a Super Big Press. Talk to other writers about their experience publishing their book.

3

Don't give your attention to temperamental ambitious peers with something to prove. They show up with every cohort. They will probably mellow with age and then be more interesting to talk to. Don't trust anyone's manifesto about which clutch of writers writes best.

4

Be cautious with flattery. One of the most painful things in my writing life has been watching successive young writers picked up and dropped by the same few older writers once they are no longer as young or beautiful or single. It's vile.

5

That said, find community. Go to readings. Talk with other writers. Buy the books of other writers. It will ebb and flow. Sometimes you will feel outside of it all. Sometimes part of a web. The most interesting writers I've met are enthusiastic: about writing, about a small particular passion, or about the work of others.

6

Little insecurities will nuzzle their way into your heart whether you welcome them or not. Do not care. Okay, well, try not to care. I care a lot. Too much. Be careful of that.

7

We're not supposed to say be careful anymore. We say instead – "Take your time" or "What are your next steps?" or "Does that feel secure?" or "Look at your feet." You should do that. Take the time you need to gain confidence. Be gentle with yourself and those around you.

8

Things change so quickly. Nothing is permanent. I miss the freedom of my twenties and thirties when I could write without a ticking clock. Everything now is a negotiation with family, health, work, pain, energy. Sometimes something will have to give. Defend what you love.

9

Touch dirt. Not grass but dirt. Imagine the many millions of things in the dirt. The sentience of possibility. My favourite thing about growing up in the suburbs was the potential. How under all that endless grass was the muck and the maybe of wildness. I breathe in all of it coming undone.

10

Because ultimately, we are all temporal. We are fixed into the small slice of time and space in which we are born and die. Our insecurities, our hesitations, our flawed work – all of this dissipates into the ether eventually. All material things break down. Nothing is guaranteed other than a beginning and an end. You should make the space between mean something to you.

estuary // Past Editors

2000 Christine McNair

2001 Steven Fortune

2002 Tegan Zimmerman

2003/2004 Chris Chisholm

2005/2006 Jennifer Knoch

2007 Jennifer Dibble & Nadia Bryden

2008 Kaitlyn MacPhee

2009/2010/2011 Rebecca Dobson

2012 Jill Glasgow

2013/2014 Ceileigh Mangalam

2015/2016 Andrea MacMurtry

2017 Georgia Woolaver

2018 Micah Carruthers

2019 Madison Tully

2020 Abby Secord & the Fall 2020 Editorial Collective

2021/2022 Riley Moscato

2022/2023 Lukas Saklofske

2023/2024/2025 Angel Percentie

Named for the place where salt and fresh water mix to create lively and productive nurseries for small fish, estuary is proud to showcase a promising diversity of work in this edition. I have no doubt that this diversity will carry forward, and estuary will continue to thrive at Acadia due to the courage of contributors and editors alike.

~Riley Moscato, Editor 2021/2022

I wanted to dive right into this community and provide more students with a platform to share their artistic expression. I received overwhelming contributions from science students, which went on to be featured in both editions. The estuary is not reserved for certain academic disciplines, it is for those who wish to connect and to be a part of a flourishing community.

~Lukas Saklofske, Editor 2022/2023

My time editing estuary has been nothing short of amazing. I have loved listening to the pen and heart of each contributor and seeing how best to represent our work as a collective. I find that art has the amazing job of holding the sentiments of a period. It captures change, love, yearning, resistance, complexity, and so much more that very little would make sense if we did not have the privilege of expressing ourselves through creativity.

~ Angel Percentie, Editor 2023/2024/2025

2020

lament // Cam Anderson

do it. destroy me,
CARVE MY SKIN WITH CHROME--- / sculpt me beautifully
make me *divine*

do it. i beg,
SEVER MY SOUL WITH SOFTWARE --- / debug my corruption
make me *transcendent*

do it. please help,
EXCIZE MY MIND WITH ELECTRICITY --- / reduce to efficient
make me *empyrean*

METAL
mortal

TECHNOLOGY
humanity

make me glitter with symbolic binary
eviscerate my existence / replace with metal
install a semblance of human-divine

<<<<< REPLACE IT ALL >>>>>

01100111	shear my humanity off this corpse ----	G
01101111	immortalize the concept of me forever ----	O
01100100	integrate my intelligence into the virtual ---	D
01101100	make them mourn me as i move beyond --	L
01111001	their petty grasping at purpose and faith -	Y

~~~WE WILL LAMENT THE DAY WE LOSE OUR HUMANITY~~~  
BUT UNLIKE THEM, I WILL GROW BEYOND



**Portrait // Olivia Black**

**2021**

**Eden's Echo // Rylie Moscato**

87 years coiled in a loop  
first steps, first laugh, first love –  
Eve eats the apple –

clammy hands join, Ring-around-the-rosie  
16th birthday, wax dripping down –  
Eve eats the apple –

clandestine love affairs maim and  
Ben & Jerry's fill the gaping hole –  
Eve eats the apple –

demeaning comments roadblock  
but  
the promotion is achieved –  
Eve eats the apple –

your child graduates in a scarlet robe,  
will she be exempt? –  
Eve eats the apple –

wrinkly purple fingers of your first grandchild  
new life, same patterns –  
Eve always eats the apple.

## Natural History // Emma Cole

I take stairs two at a time, trying to avoid the raindrops. The museum lobby smells like rain, small puddles of slush accumulating in the grooves of the stone floor.

I hand over my museum pass, and the museum staff slides me a bright red plastic clip. It attaches to my lapel. I recognize this employee, bald with glasses. Smiling, I wonder if he recognizes me.

From this rounded lobby, the arms of the museum extend: classics, modern, post-modern, a temporary display about furniture, the natural history section.

My shoes are still flecked with rain as I take the pathway branching off to the right, away from the other exhibits. I don't look up, but the sign above me reads 'Egyptian Life and Afterlife'.

Inside feels like a different world. The walls and floor are done up in fake orangish stone, with tall columns, alabaster imposters, stretching up to the high ceilings. Plaques and graphics explain the choices in architecture and their significance. I brush past the displays of pottery, cracked knickknacks, tools, and the sarcophagus.

About halfway through, the displays on the walls give way to a mural, right up to the ceiling. There's a little railing to keep distance, but if you lean you can see the texture of the brushstrokes. Two-dimensional people in profile; bathing, fighting, ruling, working, dying.

There are five nooks the size of phone booths but for sitting, facing the mural. I always take the one on the far left; it's cozy and smells like wood. I run my fingers over the familiar graffiti – initials and dates scratched with nails or pencils or knives.

With my right hand, I pick up the phone that hangs by a cord in the booth. I can hear the looping audio before I even bring the speaker to my ear.

Her voice is perfectly measured. The kind of friendly, informative tone you'd expect at a museum. The speech is long; nearly ten minutes of information about the mural. It's a recreation, the original telling the story of an ancient Egyptian queen. She discusses how the historians derived meaning from paint on a wall, into a cohesive narrative. Her cadence rises and falls with the action of the story. Some of the phrases, the ends of the sentences, I mouth along to.

I don't cry anymore. The first couple of weeks, I would sit in this booth for an hour, maybe more as the speech looped. But after a few months, I don't cry. I just cradle the receiver closely.

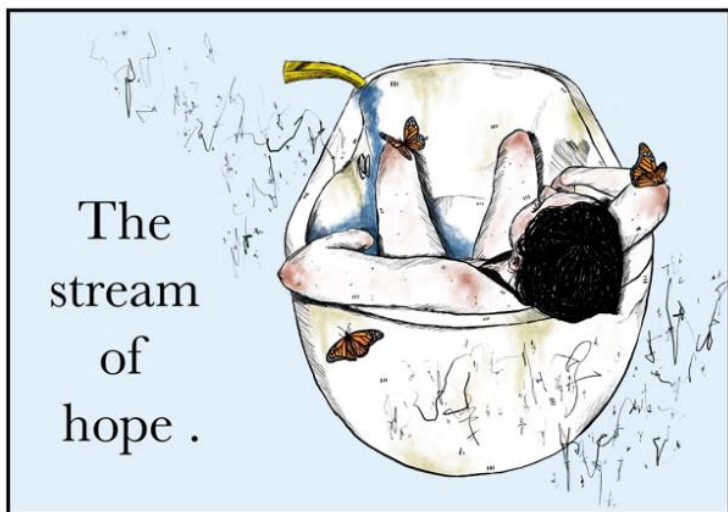
My dad would always tease, say her recording voice sounded too fake, not like her at all. I was entranced by it. In the car, we'd always listen during the commercial breaks when her voice would blare through the stereo. It felt like knowing a celebrity.

I notice a couple taking seats in two of the other booths. I see their shoes and legs sticking out. I hold on to the phone, clutching it, until she reaches the end of her speech. I nearly say goodbye, but I'm afraid the people would hear.

The exhibit loops around, and dumps me back into the atrium. Footsteps and voices echo, despite people's best attempts to be reverent and cautious. I pass by the front desk, give a nod to the staff member. Smile at the security guard as she holds the door open for me.

Outside, it is still raining. I huddle close to the building as I open my purse, dropping the red plastic clip into a side pocket. The clip takes its place among the multitude of multicoloured others.

**2022**



**The Stream of Hope // Yas Jawad**

## **Dust // Max Rowell**

september—the last vestiges  
of setting sun, another go around  
my tongue stained every colour  
from beer warming on the counter,  
and you, and the wet leaves  
of thunderstorm afternoons.  
now, soft dawns, the air slowly conjuring  
what little chill it can muster  
to bury you in violet, and me in my  
long sleeves and sadness. i try to kill  
the autumn while it's young,  
before it can grow cold and  
wish it was never born. i try to kill  
everything in me that ever pined  
for anything else.  
i am home one more time  
to watch the apples turn red  
and the tides slip away like  
they always do, like clockwork.  
i think you are a scared cat  
sometimes, approaching me  
guarded, all your teeth in your mouth  
when you feel ready. i will  
lie with no defenses and i will  
bear the weight of your open claws  
with some semblance of grace.  
summer is bleeding down my arms again,  
and i am a giant human heart, and you  
are the jacket on my shoulders  
when the leaves dry into dust.

**2023**

**How to Be Happy // Julia Sylvester**

Read books. Wear  
fun hats and funky rings. Spend  
time in the sunshine. Even if it's cold outside, bundle up.  
Take  
your antidepressants with a tasty tea. Pretend  
not to see the knives in the kitchen. Paint,  
even if you lack talent. Cook  
elaborate meals that end with Oreos. Sit  
in the shower and scrub your skin until it's raw. Wash  
every part of you a man has touched. I promise,  
it will help. Dance  
every day and sing as much as you can. Drink  
shitty wine. Have  
lots of sleepovers and theme parties. Never  
stop dressing up for Halloween.

Love  
people more than you think you need to  
and remember –  
you are people too.

## Reasons Why You Haven't Written Your Poem Yet // Ty Wright

1. The dog you passed by on Main St. didn't let you pet it, so it's obviously not going to be a very good day for writing.
2. It is 10:15 and you were supposed to start writing at 10:00, it's better now to wait until 11:00 (*ad infinitum*).
3. You decided to drop out (again) and are spending all your time looking up hostels in Thailand.
4. You fell back into that dreaded period of flatness, where all inspiration feels distant and all colour gray.
5. The caricature of Marcel Proust on your wall has been silently criticizing you all day and you will never be able to write half as well anyway.
6. You have taken up a monastic oath and renounced all things of this world (including poetry).
7. You spent too much time watching the night sky and your thoughts feel really small.
8. The practicing Wiccan on the corner of Elm has cast yet another enervating spell over the town and you are much too tired to do anything.
9. Your wireless headphones are dead, so you can't rip off Bob Dylan anymore (like he did with everyone else).
10. Your creative faculties have been severely impaired by a steady diet of caffeine and ramen noodles.
11. All your top material was used up in the first three weeks and you feel like you have been faking it ever since.
12. You have been trying your best—there's just really not enough time in the day... but you'll get there.

**2024**

**Lavandula // Emma Hamill**



## **The Sun in My Arms // Aspen Webster**

“Stay away,” I saw him flying, moving closer to my light. The scorching and withering light that ravaged and killed mercilessly. It sparked fires and ruined crops and fried the ground around it. My light brought only death. The wind cackled viciously, whispering of its intentions to ruin all I held dear.

“Turn around, please,” I begged him, his manner only encouraged by the wicked wind behind him. His feathers rippled, then recoiled ever so slightly as they found my heat.

“I’m going to hurt you,” I reached out my arms, their rays not embracing, but repelling. I used my harshness and burning light, to push away his eager self. It did not work. I watch, dread filling my mind as he grows closer and closer, pushed ahead, motivated by the swirling wind, twisting my words, my meanings into those of longing, of love.

I did love him, but I did so from afar, I made his days bright, burning the clouds to help his way, to aid his escape. I urged him to keep his distance, to take the advice of his clever uncle. I wanted him to escape, to survive so I could shower him with my blessings from afar.

“Please not again,” I cried silently as the winged man drew closer, the breeze shaking the sagging feathers with the same twisted tempo of my pleading head. The winds had taken so much from me, I begged them to leave me this one love.

All at once he was in my arms. I looked at him closely, savouring what I knew would soon be just out of my reach again. His sharp jaw and tussled dark locks, his soot smudged nose and pock-marked olive skin. He was

beautiful, and yet would soon be little more than a memory.

He fell. From my embrace to the cold, dark ocean below was more time than even the divine could count, and yet it was mere seconds. I felt cold. His embrace had stolen the life from my light, and I would never have it back.

He smiled. To a life as short as his, holding the sun for just a moment must have felt an eternity. I smiled back. I knew I had given him more than most mortals ever dare to dream of. I had to be okay with that, if not for me, for him.



**2025**

**A New Species // Ewan MacLean**

*This World is not Conclusion.*

*A Species stands beyond—*

*Invisible, as Music—*

*But positive, as Sound—*

*~ Emily Dickinson*

Often, around the break room gangbox  
others offer their religious pitch  
to why one is a ‘fucking idiot’  
if they don’t invest in Tesla.  
They claim it profitable,  
yet stocks and slots suck dry their funds,  
small dots on their phone dictate the time  
they drive home and worship their projected future.  
Faith placed in inflation as if a talisman,  
*This world is not conclusion.*

Humans have been at the wheel  
far too long,  
hitting every pothole, skipping, clipping  
each shoulder, killing a few species  
with each swerve, destroying the earth  
as we park drunk on the lawn.  
I hope in hindsight this skid mark was short and bitter.  
A better species can come remove our bodies,  
sober they will be when we take our last yawn.  
*A species stands beyond.*

This species will be humble, resourceful,  
much more content.  
We've pushed too hard and lost the safety  
of mother nature's net.  
She deserves better. I don't think  
I'm being pessimistic  
for dreaming of a creature  
living in peace, no fear of the fiscal,  
not bound by plastic,  
*Invisible, as music.*

Will I mourn my Lego, lovers, and cars?  
Of course, won't we all?  
But I'm content with the past,  
I think I'll keep looking in the rear view  
though, I expect to crash, going off  
what I see when I look around.  
Being replaced is not negative  
nor something absurd  
or profound,  
*but positive, as sound.*

## Flames // Olivia Hooper

In  
this  
suffocating  
dark, I strike  
a match, and  
watch it bloom  
a golden arc.  
Tonight,  
I

burn the silence down,  
as violins swell and  
cymbals sound. The  
past is ash, I let it go,  
bathed in embers' fevery  
glow. Gone are the  
shadows, the weight, the  
cold. Hope tolls like  
bells in towers of gold.  
A dove ascends into the  
sky, no longer caged, no  
need to cry. But winds  
conspire to steal away  
my fragile, flickering  
flames. As the light  
converts to crumbling  
char, I cradle the  
warmth inside my heart.

## **A Letter to September // Matthew Duncan**

Am I allowed? Am I allowed to want you back?  
You're not even completely gone, but you've packed everything up.  
A brown suitcase sits on top your bed.  
There's a stain in the quilt.  
The doormat changed since you arrived, have you noticed?  
Décor in the kitchen speaks with a mysterious dialect. I'll get used to it.

Your room hasn't changed since last time you came.  
The curtains are still creamy brown.  
Pictures on the wall are still crooked. Cracks and holes haven't been fixed.  
The windows open ajar, and reddened leaves are on the outside ledge.  
There's a broken guitar in the corner, behind the chair.  
It's dusty, and there's nobody to fix it.  
Your train leaves in three days, yet I'm writing you a letter.  
I'll stuff it in your bag with all the others.

I'll admit, I've been dreading your departure.  
Last time, you left in a panic. Sloshed things around my yard. It was disastrous.  
I tried to talk to you, I ran outside.  
You insisted on leaving. You said, "I can't stay here anymore!"  
When you sped away, I watched from the living room window like a kid.  
Dust and dirt in the air looked like clouds.

Every time you visit, you leave so soon. It's like I don't know you at all.  
Are you okay, September?

## **Leech Jar // Katherine Stanislów**

We run shrieking out of the lake every time. It's a dreaded fact that lingering too long between the point at which our feet touch and the safety of the shore ensures a leech will latch onto our legs, causing panic, tears, salt, and an addition to the dark and slimy leech jar.

Charlie laughs at our shrieking in his overconfident lanky stance, holding his wakeboard and waiting for his friends to pick him up in their speedboat. Julia rolls her eyes and scoffs every time, tired of his sibling superiority at only two years older. I pretend to act annoyed and roll my eyes in solidarity, but I don't dislike his laughter. I can't identify the line at which he went from being one of us kids to something else, and I can't quite identify what that something else is but, like the laughter, I don't dislike it.

I sit, sand warm beneath my legs, letting the reflection of the sun off the water blind my vision when I hear footsteps approaching. Charlie sits next to me, his blonde hair glowing in the light. He informs me Julia is helping their mom with something. He laughs, like usual. He leans in. I'm shocked. His lips press to mine, and I feel them moving around ever so slightly, wet from his saliva. My imagination conjures up an image of two leeches, but the pulse in my stomach conjures up something else. It's over as quick as it began. I'm startled out of my shock by Julia's footsteps. Charlie gives me a smile and leaves. Julia quickly begins giving instructions for our game of pretend, but there's a new tone in her voice that makes me feel nervous.

Julia and I play by the shore. I can see the leeches wriggling around in the shallows and my mind keeps replaying recent events. It's become a small obsession, an excitement I can conjure up at will. Julia accuses me of not paying attention. I apologise feebly. She's been on edge with me all day, nitpicking every little thing I do, snapping at any fault. Her annoyance is starting to make my stomach hurt. Come *ON*, she cries as I accidentally step through her pile of shells. I look away, my eyes welling, and see Charlie near the treeline, watching us, his lips forming a tiny frown.

I run into Charlie alone on my way to the lake. My stomach tightens. I smile at him, and he doesn't return it. He looks at me thoughtfully before he says he's sorry. I feel heavy. I know what he's sorry for. I wish so badly that he wasn't sorry. I stand frozen in front of him for a long minute before I can finally turn and walk away. I wade into the lake slowly, feeling the rocks dig painfully into the bottoms of my feet, indifferent to the leeches.

## Briland // Angel Percentie

She is as pretty as they come, the boyz  
dem *sugar*, sweeter than a can a corn  
fresh like coconut water. She is poised.  
Indigo dusk, aquamarine at dawn.

She is more lovely than the Exumas.  
As treacherous as the Devil's Backbone.  
Hotter than goat pepper. The past promise  
land of Afro Carib children, all grown.

She is cowbells, golf carts and daiquiris.  
Jumpin off the dock in bra and panty.  
Sun spanking bare black backs, coffee feet,  
eyes bloodshot like the out skin of Lychee.

Pray she be as strong as God is good,  
Let her beauty withstand both storm and flood.



## **Salt Water // Samantha Burke**

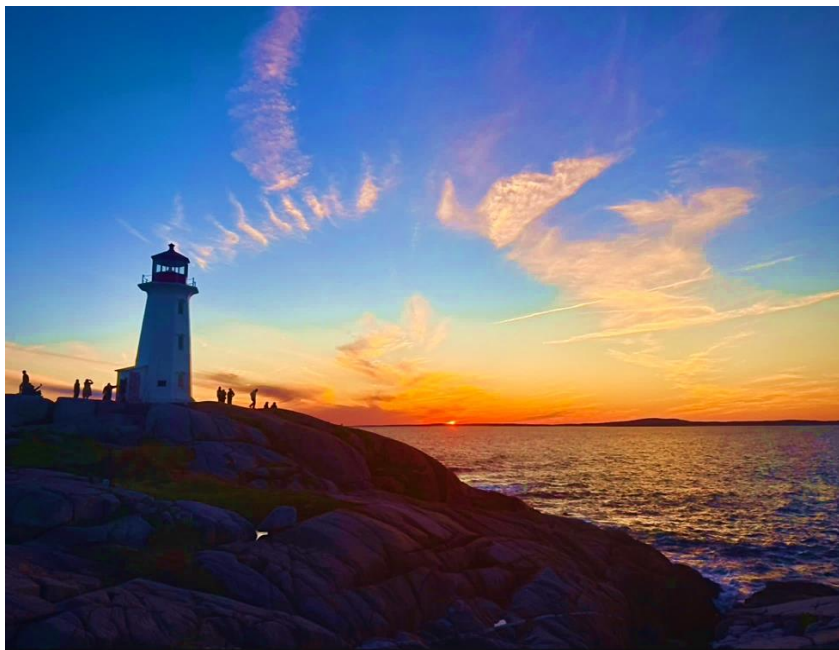
There is something remarkably healing about the ocean.  
The way she ebbs and flows but yet remains constant.  
The way she leaves treasures on the beach for people to see,  
and when the wind's not blowing,  
she blankets you with the sun's heat.  
The people who find solace at the sea are my people,  
when a word doesn't need to be spoken but the peace the sea  
brings is understood.  
Solitude at the beach rejuvenates me.

So take me to the ocean,  
I want to hear the crashing of the waves.  
I want to hear the happiness she brings, and feel the comfort  
she delivers.  
I want the passers by to see me by myself, fully enjoying my  
own company.  
I want to watch the people holding hands, the people  
walking dogs, the children playing, the picnics, the love,  
all of it.  
I want the blood to pulse through my veins,  
the sand underneath my feet,  
the water caressing my body with the movement of the tide.  
I want to comb for treasures, and smash rocks so I can see,  
the beauty beneath the surface,  
in a world of possibility.

## **Bewitching Blue // Scotia Broome**

Sunlight warmed the fine sand, sparkling like tiny shards of glass. She walked upon them, toes crunching, to the water's edge. Towering pines lined the beach, their earthy, rich scent wafting on the breeze. It was so different from her home — a town nestled amongst the endless, rolling, grassy hills. People had always talked in hushed whispers of the infinite stretch of blue that extended beyond the horizon. She had even heard tales from travelers of people who rode on it in tall wooden structures. She had needed to see it for herself. Now she was here, and it called to her. The water sang a melody through each ripple and rise, notes floating towards her, intertwining. The waves extended a hand, rolling sapphire upon midnight. She took a step into the refreshing embrace. The touch was soft against her skin with the gentleness of a mother. A feeling of calm swept over her, and she felt safe. She kept walking. The water rose over her knees, her hips, her shoulders. A discreet numbness began to creep through her. It rose steadily until it reached her neck, until the sea floor dropped away from her feet. She felt the gentle hands wash over her face, feeling her ears, her eyes, her mouth. The water closed over her head and the sky melted away. She scrabbled for purchase on holds that would never appear as she sank. Bubbles escaped her mouth as it dropped open in shock. She had never learned how to swim. The pale light of her eyes, still wide with fear, faded into darkness as she was lost to the depths.

## Heaven's Cove // Megan Sanford



**Mark has been gone for three hours**  
**// Mariah Blanchard**

*Mark has been gone for three hours.*

He left at 5:27 to get chicken broth and butter from the store for the gravy and hadn't come back since. You weren't surprised.

The fireplace crackled softly, its dim warmth settling all around the house, a welcome contrast to the snow scape outside. Sparks crackle, acting as a backing track to the soft 90's christmas movie emanating from the TV; the screen shows a warm, picturesque fireplace that is far more aesthetically pleasing than yours. When you first bought christmas decor after moving out at 20, you had decided that pink and silver was going to be your decorating theme, a mistake that you learned you had to live with until your bank account could handle the baggage of redecorating. The tree in the corner of the room was adorned in dusty rose and champagne, matching the ribbons around the doorframes and the army of little sparkly snowmen on the mantel. The savoury scent of christmas dinner settles through the halls in a dim cloud, the smell of mashed potatoes and turkey was a magnetic force that would cause everyone to gravitate to the kitchen.

This must have been what finally drew Mark back.

He came in stumbling, a gust of frigid air blowing in behind him, bumping into the door and knocking the wreath clean off its hook. He didn't notice. A dusting of snow clung onto the fleece of his coat, but it wasn't long before he shrugged it away, flakes melting into dew drops before they even hit the carpet. He closed the door, with more force than needed.

The wreath crunches under the heel of his shoe.

“Sorry.” He glanced down at the wrinkled ribbon, half-apologetic, half-detached. “Roads were slick.”

Last week, when he had returned from getting batteries, you asked him where he had gone. He responded, “just needed air,” as if a breath away from your partner typically turns a 20 minute trip into three hours of absence.

Tonight, you were too tired to listen to excuses, so you don't bother to ask. Cheeks red, eyes glassy, he swung a thin plastic bag as he walked down the front hall to you, the contents being exclusively chicken broth. No butter.

You didn't say anything at first. You didn't even move— the only sound was the movie in the background (*Jingle All The Way*, you distantly notice.). You pressed a palm to the cold granite countertop to stabilize yourself.

“Dinner's almost ready.” Your tone was flat and void of emotion. “Turkey will be ready by the time your parents are here tomorrow.” Mark slipped his coat off, draping it over a chair instead of putting it in the closet. He glances toward the stairs as he runs a hand through his dampened locks.

“Smells good.” he offers, as if it's enough.

And maybe for tonight, it is.

But tomorrow morning, he'll make your coffee just the way you like it, with enough cream to turn the inky substance white and perfectly bitter. You'll take a sip, like always, but today it tastes different. It tastes like three missing hours he was never going to explain. Like snow on shoulders. Like this was the shape of things now. Molded, manipulated, mutilated. A cold breeze. A ruined wreath. Chicken broth, but no butter.

## Wonky // Avery McWilliam

The sun shines down a wonky orange hue.  
The birds sing in E flat or C sharp,  
tone deaf to the squawks that interrupt  
their perfect pitch.  
The dogs nip black flies that swarm  
their heads, but struggle to tell the difference  
between a bug that bites  
and a butterfly.  
The bees buzz as they bumble  
but forget who they're looking for  
in the maze of phonies  
cheaply printed on swimsuits.  
The trees toast to tourists of all kinds,  
hosting tussock moths and tinder fungus  
between ridges of bark  
but are blind to the difference  
between beneficial bugs  
and the baleful.



## **The Runner // Mareike Meents**

Since I never took my belongings with me when moving, a visit to the local flea market was always obligatory when arriving in a new town. Usually, I did not buy anything but the bare necessities—dishes, a lamp and whatever else was needed on a daily basis. Everything else was just clutter and an additional weight I would have to get rid of again soon enough. However, standing here in the searing heat of the church's parking lot, I felt inexplicably drawn to a jigsaw puzzle on the far side of the table. It showed two skeletons in front of a multicoloured background looking each other in the ... eye sockets.

“Three dollars. Should be complete. New in town, eh?” the old woman behind the table said, catching my gaze before leaning back in her chair and nipping on her disposable Tim Horton's coffee cup. Nodding, I handed her the coins. I could not be bothered to engage in any sort of conversation with a person who would remain a stranger anyways.

The cardboard box in hand, I left the flea market and strolled through town towards Seaside Park to sit down at a picnic table and work on the jigsaw. After a while, it became obvious that the right skeleton's chest was missing a piece. Clenching my teeth a bit too hard, I shoved the worthless puzzle back into the box. I ran over to the cliffs' edge and threw it down into the roaring waves, one hand already searching for the car keys in my pocket.

## **Snow // Puzzle and Demons**

I'd meet you in winter  
When the snow starts to fall  
And the wind becomes silent  
But the cold breathes

I'd meet you in winter  
When all has lost its colour  
When day becomes permanently night  
And everything is grey

I'd take your hand, and you, mine  
And we'd gaze to the dull heavens above

Wordless, we'd feel  
As our souls became free  
And escaped our mortal flesh

We'd race, silent through the woods  
As the grey became black  
And the black became void  
And we became lost to thought

I'd meet you in winter  
And I'd silently watch your figure  
As we shared the silence  
Knowing

I'd meet you in winter  
The way we dreamed  
But in reality  
Ghostly, faintly

I didn't know if I'd see you  
Perhaps we'll see  
Or if your ghost  
Sits quietly next to me

## Heart of Darkness // Randolph Ren



## **Earth's Bureaucracy of Human Wishes // Willow Seitz**

There is a giant satellite floating through space that intersects the wishes of every human being on earth, and I've got a desk job there. I've been at this company for ten years now, listening to the furtive desires of mankind and typing them into endless spreadsheets. We used to make a killing selling the wishes to marketing firms in the States, that is until Dave fell asleep at the wheel, per say. Some wacko scouring the horizon for UFO's in Saskatchewan took a video of us slipping in front of the yellow waxing moon, lighting the space station up like a goddamn Christmas tree. We've been in the news ever since. First, they wanted to know what it is we do, exactly. When they found out, they rioted. Breach of privacy, they said. Billionaire parasitic scumbags, they said. I'm no billionaire, I'm just a desk jockey, but there's no arguing with these people. They couldn't get to us, of course, being thousands of feet in the air, so they set parliament on fire. They launched rocks through windows and turned off notifications on their phones. Things got so out of control that our investors threatened to wash their hands clean of us unless we did something.

Upper management brought in this little orphan girl today who apparently has never seen the ocean before, let alone a spaceship. PR thinks everything will blow over if we can show her a good time, please the non-profit hosting her, and inspire her to become an astronaut, or something. They toured her around all the floors while I followed with a live video camera. My colleagues tried to explain how the wishes worked, and I found myself

listening with rapt attention; all this time, and I hadn't even known. The wishes are a natural phenomenon. They seep out of books, churches, and the heads of the sleeping, gathering into plumes of light that are swallowed by microscopic aphids. The bugs migrate into the atmosphere, heading toward the throat of the Milky Way—where they are promptly incinerated by the satellite. The fumes emit a radio frequency that can be translated by our team.

Fascinated, I zoomed in real close to her thin, doe-eyed face and asked her what she thought. She shrugged and glanced forlornly at a poster on the wall of the earth and stars. "This place sucks. Why don't you guys have any windows?"

## **The Soldier's Grief // Stephen King**

He did it for home, his tome of the Past.  
The breath of death lingered ever deeply  
The Dome of heaven seem too high, too vast.  
Never to drink the river Lethe, sweetly

Alone on the field, it was revealed  
Happily was his family, waiting his return  
The wounds that he had, would never be healed  
He knew in his heart, that his soul would burn

His guilt might break him, the weight of sin, deep  
His body quaked, trembled and shook his faith  
The promise was his to keep, never cheap  
Deep was his grief, one that would always scathe

The tears that he shed revealed his own fears.  
It will be with him, for all his long years.

## **The Break of Innocence // Sara Farguson**

“Go on, go outside!”

It had been a slow morning, and Abraham’s mother shooed him out the door immediately after breakfast. They’d just had porridge, and he’d been scrubbing the congealed mess out of the pot. When she’d turned from clearing the table to find him hunched over the sink, she had dragged him by the arm and marched him to the door. She didn’t want him wasting another beautiful day inside.

Abraham wandered away and into the trail behind their house. It wove its way through the woods, and as he walked he looked upward at the patchy canopy of trees. Sunlight poured through the gaps and illuminated the mossy forest floor. His attention was pulled to a flash of copper, and he craned his head to see a doe weaving her way to a clearing.

He continued forward, careful to avoid any branches underfoot that might startle the doe. He only made it a few paces before she noticed him, and froze in place in the clearing. They watched each other, and being very slow and deliberate with his movements, Abraham took another step forward. The doe stayed, and when he stepped forward again, she lowered her mouth to the ground to munch some clover.

Their staring match continued, as did Abraham. When he was within six feet of the doe, he stopped. He was amazed that she had let him get so close. She blinked her big eyes slowly, dark eyelashes obscuring them for a moment. Abraham thought the doe had the most honest

eyes he had ever seen; but maybe that came with the territory of non-humanness.

Abraham raised a hand, inch by inch, and reached out to her. For a moment, he thought he'd scared her, as she'd made a sharp movement with her head. The doe stayed, though, and when she bowed ever so slightly, he knew he'd been given a very rare kind of permission.

A loud bang rang through the forest, and Abraham instinctively raised his hands to his ears, squeezing his eyes shut. A gunshot. When he opened his eyes, the doe was no longer standing. She was on her side, and there was a hole in her belly.

"No!"

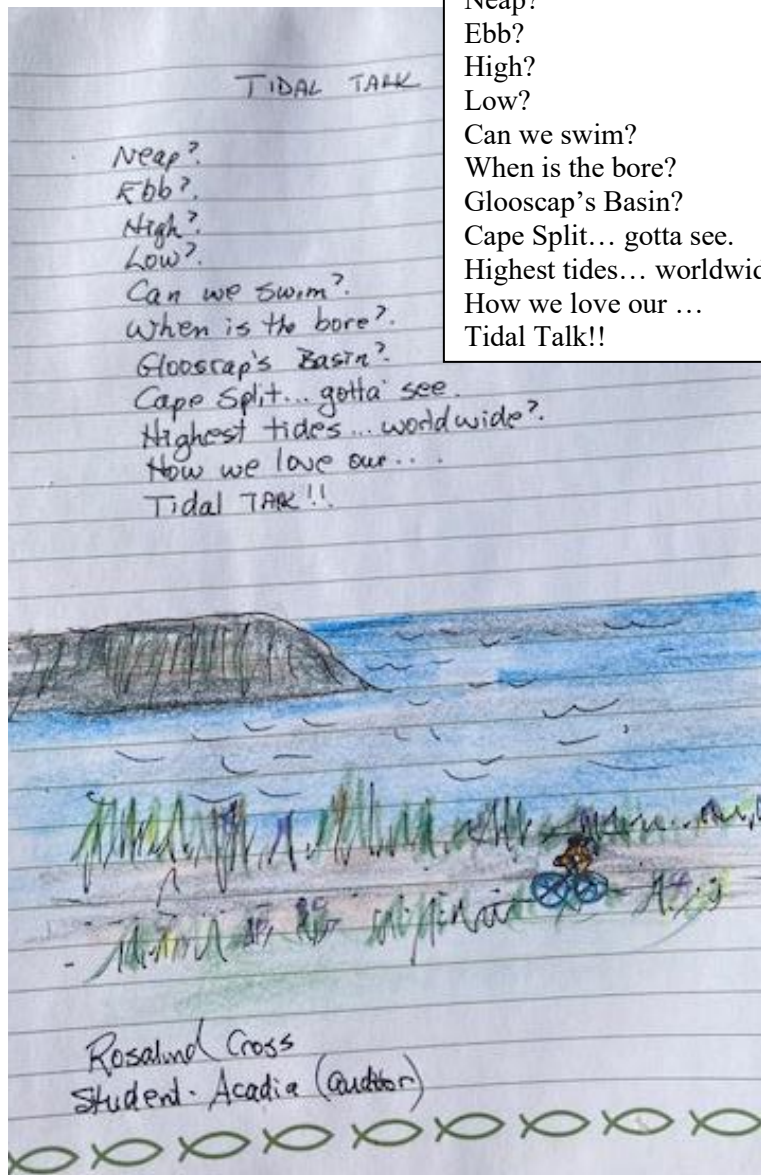
He rushed to her side, and hovered his hands over her, panicked and wanting to help. He started searching his hands around for something to cover the blood. He didn't hear the approaching footsteps over her soft but laboured breathing.

"Best leave her now, boy," said the hunter from behind Abraham.

Abraham sniffled, and hesitated, reluctant to leave her. She was looking at him with big, sad eyes, and his own welled up as he looked into them. The doe closed her eyes, and he got to his feet. The stranger nudged him out of the way, and slung her over his shoulder. When he started back toward town, Abraham followed, head hung to avoid looking at the body.

"C'mon, I'll show you how to make deer stew," said the hunter.

## Tidal Talk // Rosalind Cross



## **Irises // Maryam Sheikh**

I always think you're better than me.  
"The version of me if I ever tried"  
But..  
you think I'm the better one.

Since the first day we met,  
Fortuitously,  
as they would say,  
I could tell.  
I saw it in your eyes,  
that same look I have in my eyes,  
every time I look in the mirror.  
You're alone.  
We're.... alone.

As long as there's breath in my lungs,  
hope in my heart,  
and jokes in my head,  
you won't be alone.  
He who gives Faith and Security won't let you

We met,  
not on a whim,  
we met cause He knew,  
we needed to cross over to the other side,  
He knew our secrets,  
our pains,  
we had to learn,  
so He made us look,  
made us take the double-take.  
You lead my 'What If?'

And I can't help but think,  
do you look at me, and wonder,  
"Wow, what a blunder  
what a mess,  
what madness,  
she should learn to be a lot less...  
Or, should I learn to be a lot more..."  
I love that I bring out the chaos in you.  
I'll cage mine, so you can release yours.  
The unnameable atrocity can't relate.

I'll love you until you learn to love yourself.  
Be patient and relax,  
I'll spend forever working hard for you.  
I'll be the husband you don't want or need.

What was it you said?  
"I'm better."  
And don't you ever forget it

## Still Night // Axel Shorrock

Broad strokes of red encircled the sky – like an overenthusiastic child’s canvas – looking much too sloppy and unrealistic, but with its own distinctive charm. Katherine enjoyed evenings like this, where the air was cold and still, biting at the back of her throat, and she had the roof all to herself. She sat in the silence, knees raised to her chin, trying to see over the horizon.

It’s not that she actually did anything with this time: it wasn’t particularly relaxing, nor was it thrilling. It was a habit she’d consciously formed, a time to be completely unproductive. She’d stay until the advent of the sun’s journey turned the sky black and blemish-free above her, no twinkling lights marring its surface – only the steady glow of the city before her.

Once more, she headed back to my apartment below, switched on the kettle, and opened her laptop to the onslaught of pings: work emails, as always. Cracking her knuckles, she sat at the desk and drafted responses to each in turn. She worked until she was sure she’d see the sunrise too.

“You’re doing it again.”

Katherine opened her eyes slowly. “Doing what?”

“That thing where you pretend to be somewhere else.”

“I don’t do that.” Katherine crossed her arms and scowled, assaulting her ears with the all too familiar crinkling of her school uniform. (It should logically be impossible for a piece of fabric to be so noisy, but she

didn't think anyone had told the manufacturers that.) Martin was always acting like this, like he knew what she was thinking at all times. His flawless track record was almost impressive – he managed to be wrong every time, despite the hours they spent together every day. She threw one of her coloured pencils at him for good measure.

“I’m just saying. You’ve got a perfectly good sunset here—” He thrust his arms out dramatically. “—and you’re missing it.”

“Sunsets are a daily occurrence. Multiple times a day, even. Across the world... Peace and quiet? With you around? Now that’s some once in a lifetime stuff right there.”

Now it was Martin’s turn to scowl, which he only managed to do for a few seconds, before scooting towards his friend and “casually” leaning forward to look at Katherine’s open sketchbook.

“Oi!” Katherine shut the book on his fingers before shoving it into her bag. Martin raised his hands in mock defence; a guilty smile etched on his face.

“What? I was only looking.”

“Exactly.” Katherine shook her head and got up to leave. “See you tomorrow?” She paused at the roof’s door, and looked back at him in the few silent moments where she waited for his response.

**Reflection Outside of Hirtle's Variety**  
**// Nick Lundrigan**

"The Spell of the Forest"  
*Dream Verses and Others*  
By Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald

*"Far from the haunts of man, and the weary clamour  
of folk that for ever toil without content,  
there let us rest and rejoice in the fragrant shadow  
under the fir-tree's tent."*

We can walk to the convenience store  
on the corner of Main and Walker  
from either of our houses.  
Once, the woman at the counter  
gave us each a free caramel –  
sticky teeth causing a sickly sweet stammer –  
melted into the cellophane creases  
so you have to peel it apart with your fingernails.  
The shop interior doesn't change; its dusty glamour  
*far from the haunts of man, and the weary clamour*

of time and progress and whatever.  
Everything is expired by one or six years,  
but we grab jumbo Freezies (orange and white)  
or a Cyclone and a SpongeBob bar.  
They melt rapidly in the hot June sun  
even though the wind's torment  
makes it too cold for just a t-shirt.  
We walk past acres of identical haystacks;  
change could be the resentment  
*of folk that for ever toil without content,*

but what if it's tradition?  
I mourn the café that my grandmother  
walked to every Saturday  
while I complain that nothing changes.  
I can't tell the difference between a  
swamp sparrow and song sparrow;  
trills and chips in harmony,  
copper and iron and rusty plumage,  
both hopping near the aboiteau.  
*There let us rest and rejoice in the fragrant shadow*

of looming conifers,  
and one of the twelve churches  
within five square kilometres.  
I wish I was a sparrow.  
For a moment, I can rest here  
with you, lulled by the scent  
of wet earth and lilacs and marsh brine.  
Please hold my hand.  
Together, we can repent  
*under the fir-tree's tent.*



## Estuary // Wanda Campbell

*An estuary, where salt and fresh water mix,  
is ten times as productive as the open ocean...*  
~Harry Thurston, *A Place Between the Tides*

Each season somehow you and I have won the living  
shores of the estuary; from my high window I can almost  
see your house where fresh meets salt, mud meets sun.  
A coast clear and cool but never the same—one day  
sandpipers swerving smooth as rhyme, the next a heron  
from an ancient time, or a modern fox flickering like a  
flame, a fish leaping up like the silver toss of a rare coin  
I cannot help but win. Here hours are holy and places thin  
in ways that redeem larceny and loss. Here where  
complex and shining worlds collide, friend, we haul in  
treasure on every tide.

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# estuary

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