



Don't Forget To Write It Down:

Gaia Lenox, Cambridge, VT

To Do:

- clean the bathroom
- pack a lunch
- find a stone the color of your eyes
- figure out where the garden gnomes keep going
- finish questions for Chapters 1-4
- wish on the fish at the bottom of the pond
- recount the exact happenings of Monday morning
- pick up milk
- hide from the ghost in the attic (learn its name)
- try to predict this week's weather
- forget the fears of Friday night
- vacuum bedroom

Anthology 12

Young Writers Project

Anthology 12 Young Writers Project



Young Writers Project (YWP) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit located at 47 Maple St., Suite 216, Burlington, Vermont 05401. Website: youngwritersproject.org. Contact: Susan Reid, YWP Executive Director, sreid@youngwritersproject.org; (802) 324-9538.

Anthology 12 is a collection of writing and visual art from the 2020-21 school year. The editorial and production team includes Susan Reid, William Anderson, Kathy Folley, Andrea Gray (design), and Alan Schillhammer (printing).

Publication of this anthology was made possible by a generous grant from The George W. Mergens Foundation.



Printed by Queen City Printers

Special thanks to Alan Schillhammer for Queen City's contribution to this Anthology

Cover photo by Alessandra Giragos, Concord, MA

Back cover photo by Lauren McCabe, South Burlington, VT

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Lila Oquendo, Rutland, VT

About Young Writers Project

Young Writers Project is an online, youth-powered community dedicated to advancing the creativity of teen writers, artists, and photographers. Founded in 2006 and based in Vermont, Young Writers Project (YWP) welcomes youth from everywhere to find inspiration, be published, and make connections with other creative young people.

- YWP's website, youngwritersproject.org, is the heart of the community. Sparked by our own users' energy and ideas, the site is an immersive experience that includes individual blogs, publications, a visual art gallery, podcasts, chat forums, online events, and an array of pop-up features. Membership is free, always open, and always inclusive and respectful.
- The Voice is YWP's online showcase, elevating the work of writers and artists in a beautiful, monthly, digital magazine.
- The Community Journalism Project encourages young people to engage with current events through informed and passionate commentary about the issues of our time.
- YWP writing, photos, and art appear weekly in the Burlington Free Press and VTDigger.org, providing youth a direct path to publication and a genuine audience in the wider world.
- The Anthology Series celebrates outstanding poetry, prose, and visual art each year in YWP's signature book. This edition, our 12th, draws on some 10,000 submissions to our website from July 2020 to June 2021. We hope you enjoy it!



Alden Bond, Middlesex, VT

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Paris and Paraguay

Zinnia Hansen, Port Townsend, WA

My bed was a nest of rag blankets and handsewn pillows. My walls were plastered with old band posters and vague sketches of my dreams. I didn't have any shelves, but I amassed books. More than I could ever read. They collected in corners and piled up on my desk. There was hardly any room to write, but plenty to write about.

I filled my attic with plants. It was nice to watch them grow; the expansion of the innocent is a lovely thing. Thin sunlight poured in from the single window. But it was enough; my plants thrived.

It took years of sheltering, of sequestering, but I finally finished my book. It was a meandering tale. The characters found their way to Paris, to Paraguay. I hoped it was literary. An epic, yet intimate saga, spanning generations and continents. I pictured New York Times reviews, high school essays, and the Nobel Prize. Pretension, Paris and Paraguay.

Every day: I watered my plants, I typed three hundred words, and I held my body together with sticky tape. Mustering the last bit of myself, I would pull the blankets over my head and shut out the light.

One Wednesday, after my three hundred words, I dragged myself to the window. I pressed my hand against the glass. It was cold. The frost had etched dull intricacies around its edges. The city beyond was hard and metallic. Slowly, I let loose a breath. I could feel its heat. I could feel the wet, wonderful life of it. That evening, under my rag blankets, my aching body was a little more beautiful.



Eloise Van Meter, Fairlee, VT

In the Afterlife

Siri Dunn, Morrisville, VT

In the afterlife,
we live in a place
filled with swirling
silk-clothed dancers
light on their feet
around trees dripping
with white Christmas lights.

We drink green tea while
petals from cherry trees
blow around us.
We all hear the same music
but it never sounds the same twice.

In the afterlife,
we sleep in open-air houses,
white gauzy curtains billowing
in the lavender wind,
colorful cushions
scattered all through the house.

We fly kites with
long streamer tails
against the sunset
and drink moonlight
from water lilies.

In the afterlife,
everyone talks in colors,
walks cobblestoned streets
lined with blooming apple trees
and clear canals.

The rain smells like wild blueberries
and the thunderstorms over the
dark evergreen mountains
like crushed ginger.

In the afterlife,
we read old love letters
while white candles burn all around us,

and dreams
sound like wind chimes.

People use sparklers as lights
and everywhere
there are blooms of lupines.

In the afterlife,
we lie under paper birch trees
with bright ribbons thrown
into their branches,
and skyscrapers push up
all around us.

Street vendors sell
anything you can imagine and
everywhere, people go about their lives.

But among the crush –
the honking cars,
the houses,
the people,
the trees –
silk dancers twirl.

Boat

Ava Rohrbaugh, Charlotte, VT

Tilda rowed a paper boat
into the deep and endless sea,
with a tangerine hat and blueberry coat,
but at least the trip was free.

She folded the newspaper to make the
boat,
lining the bottom and sides with tape
and took it out to test the float,
while all the swimmers did was gape.

But still she persisted to sail the sea –
Now let's all take a vote:
How long would Tilda's voyage be
in her folded newspaper boat?

My Side of the Lake

Roxanne Glassenberg, Wellesley, MA

How is the weather on your side of the lake?
Over here it's been raining for days.
Tell me, how high does the grass grow over there?
And how often do the fireflies play?
Over here we've got mothballs and curtains and chairs
and a broken old piano and a ticket from a fair.
Over here we've got tin cans and old hats and warm sweaters.
Over here we have fun no matter the weather.
Over here we've got gray skies and a fireplace and a book.
Over there you've got a motorboat, a counter top, a breakfast nook.
Over there you've got a 30-inch, flat-screen TV.
Over here? We've got marshmallows and everything to see.
So I say, keep your steel and your granite and your hedge funds and law firms.
Keep your tennis skirts and fake candles and apples without worms.
Keep your not-brown grass and your cocktails in Mason jars.
Over here we've got bedtime and walnuts and stars.

When We Ran Away

Willa Pelschoen, Bolton, VT

Oh, dear reader! Do you remember when we ran away?
When we ran to our loves and they embraced us?
And so we packed up our suitcases with our favorite clothes
and left
to the most beautiful place we thought could exist,
and our old thumpity-bumpity truck drove down little dirt roads
through pastures and flower fields,
and we swore we would never leave.

We slept in barns full of fresh-cut hay and spare rooms stacked with handmade quilts.
We forgot about life and let the sea breeze carry us
to places that couldn't possibly exist in the world we had known before.

I remember our great times when the world feels too much.
I think back to your face and suddenly the world feels a bit more bearable.



Vivien Sorce, Hinesburg, VT

Billy Collins

Iris Robert, South Burlington, VT

I read a book of your poetry last night
as the world around me grew dim.
I slowly turned the pages and smiled at
the windows in your words,
the way they took me to a room
with vases of flowers, and to a place
where all the versions of myself
exist at once.
I saw bits of myself in every stanza,
in every metaphor that draws you in,
then carefully sets you back
next to a bowl of pears.
I saw my strong self and my fragile self
in your poetry –
I saw the part of me that aches
to write everything, to somehow capture
all the words that are alive, to feel
the solid weight of them in my hand.
Sometimes when I'm writing
I feel desperate,

like I'm not moving fast enough,
like all these phrases will drift away
if I don't lift my hand out fast enough
to catch them.
It's like walking in reverse,
or falling down Alice's rabbit hole,
the unbreakable darkness
that surrounds me,
unforgiving but not unkind,
the only way
to let poetry fall from my body,
to let it escape and wave goodbye,
to let it calmly watch
as I imagine throwing my typewriter
against the wall,
destructive but not monstrous.
In your words I saw my desperation,
and I saw how badly I want to write
how you write,
looking out a window with a cup of
coffee,
watching as the world walks by.

The Boy Across the Aisle

Immy Sang, Hanover, NH

I get on the bus
for the first time;
it's dark,
but people have lights on,
holding them up to their newspapers,
their books.
I smile at the boy across the aisle,
and he smiles back,
waving his fingers without letting go of
his book.
I blush and reach into my bag,
pulling out my own book.

I get on the bus
for the 100th time;
it's brighter than usual,
and I notice fewer newspapers,
fewer books –
now it's phones and computers,
scattered in among the readers.
I stick my tongue out
at the boy across the aisle,
and he rolls his eyes,
a smile lighting up his face.
Then we both look down,
continuing our separate lives.

I get on the bus
for the 200th time.
I look around,
not a book in sight,
phones, computers, and tablets light up
the faces of all the passengers –
all but one.
He's already looking up from his book,
knowing this is my stop,
but I break our routine,
and I go and take a seat,
next to the boy across the aisle.

Little Love

Audrey Sioeng, Arcadia, CA

Her mouth is on my cheek,
and I smile hello at her cherubic face,
roaming eyes
completely unaware of what kisses mean,

but she does it anyway,
maybe because it reduces me to a
grinning fool.

He hugs my legs, and says "hi" without
looking up,
a world of giants and toy trucks and
eyes that light up
with childish glee and chocolate.

Perhaps I am not so old after all,
in my sweatshirt sixteen years.

Honesty, *honestly*, I marvel at how
emotions
flicker on their faces without hesitation
or second thought.

Goodbyes are more or less the same, but
bittersweet;
I can't tell if I feel older or younger now.

An endless repeat-after-me of bye and I
love you's,
well-trained to be cute and loving, I've
always thought.

But as her face lights up when we laugh,
and he screams
I LOVE YOU's by the door into the chill
night,

it occurs to me that maybe their little
hearts are simply open enough
to carry us all.

The Shelburne Museum

Zoe Bernstein, Jericho, VT

I will go to the Shelburne Museum.
I will go to the Shelburne Museum and
wear an ankle-length frock,
hold it up while I frolic down the rolling
green hills.
I will go to the Shelburne Museum and
offer the taxidermy horses scraps of
apple
as if I am a nineteenth century runaway
on the streets of London,
while in reality I've just stuffed myself
with basil crepes and lemonade.
I will go to the Shelburne Museum and
speak in a buttery southern accent
or alternatively an Earl Grey English
accent.
And I will be an orphaned maid,
mistreated, but on an important
espionage mission for the duke,
or a snobby-rich city girl uncovering
dark secrets with her elegant, eloquent
friends.
I will go to the Shelburne Museum and
spend way too much time standing at
the front of the one-room schoolhouse,
looking out over my dutiful pupils who
played in the schoolyard a hundred
years ago.

I will talk to every single volunteer until
they have to make up an emergency and
drive their golf carts quickly away from
me.

I will sit on the dirty floor of the larder
on the Ticonderoga knowing that pirates
have captured me –
and in a few weeks, they'll be calling me
captain.

I will hold sconces to cellar doors and
chalk to chalkboards and skeleton keys
to brass doorknobs and flowers to
forgotten stone statues.

And I will visit the carousel and ride it,
barely containing my joy into childish
giggles,
and the other patrons, clutching their
grandchildren's hands tightly, will
wonder if that girl forgot to take her
meds that morning.

So
I will go to the Shelburne Museum and
live all the lives I've always wished I'd
been born into,
and I will fully ignore my privilege in
favor of pretending to be a ragamuffin in
a far-off land living through fairy tales.
I will go to the Shelburne Museum and
for a few hours feel pure bliss.
And then I will go home and dream of
the next time I can go to the Shelburne
Museum.

The Sun Was Shining and They Lost Their Minds

Maggie Howell, St. Johnsbury, VT

The sun was shining and they lost their minds –
drops of sunlight on upturned faces,
laughter echoing through warm nights,
wild eyes and grasping hands,
memories of a summer gone too soon.

The sun was shining and they lost their minds.

The children scream in the backyard as they chase each other around it.
Their laughter is high and sweet.
The parents sip wine and talk.

The teenagers find a shady spot to kiss or a sunny bench to lie on and let sunlight drift down and onto their skin.
The romance of a suburban summer kept alive only in pictures,
pictures traced and held by withered fingertips,
pictures shown to children and grandchildren.

"Look," they say, "that's the summer your grandparents met."

"Isn't it romantic?" they say.

And it was,
the summer when the sun was shining and they lost their minds.

Adrenaline

Grace Kafferlin, Williston, VT

My restless knee bounces
up and down
up and down

trying to control the adrenaline
pumping through my veins,

my natural instincts telling me
that this is scary.
I need to fight or run away

but I'm in class –
I can't attack the teacher
or run out of the room –

so instead,
my knee goes up and down,
my fingers play invisible piano keys

just trying to release
this unneeded energy.

The boy on my right
and the girl
on the other side of the room –

their knees bounce too
up and down
up and down

adrenaline in our veins,
coming out through our feet
in a blur of movement,

the syncopated rhythm
of our three tapping feet –

a symphony of anxiety.



Emma Paris, Putney, VT

Peanut Butter Crackers and the Inevitable Ghosts of Tomorrow

Sam Aikman, Richmond, VT

Today I found you in the peanut butter aisle. I stood there for a moment, frozen by the possibility of your expression as you turned and recognized me and tried to think of what to say. Instead I ducked into the next aisle, ran halfway down the row, and stopped, counting my inhale and pretending to examine a box of Wheat Thins.

I can see it now, as you spun and caught the breeze of my getaway on your face, raising your hand to hide your eyes. I like to think you knew it was me, that you stared up at the fluorescent light above you and counted the seconds before you had to look away, that you were okay knowing I was there, nine feet down, parallel and never touching.

But it doesn't matter what really happened because as I went to pay, I saw you in front of me and it wasn't you after all; you were just a boy with a jar of grape jelly and the same messy haircut, in a grocery store check-out line on an early Tuesday evening.

Paint-Soaked Dreams

Lily Hutcheson, Manchester, VT

Many people ride on trains. They have become so popular that we wrapped metal ropes around the earth to let them roam across it. Generations have made their living building these ropes; binding our planet so we can get from one place to another without breaking a sweat. Some trains send exhaust spiraling into the air, a dancing smoke signal siren who calls you back to Old England, and times before we worried a little more with every mile we chugged, or drove, or sailed. Some trains hum to the music of electromagnets pushing you forward, into a future of white metal and sleek cities. Some trains tunnel through dark, graffitied, underground hallways, sifting hundreds of people around a city through a claustrophobic tube. Many people ride on trains.

When you're sitting on a train, there are three things to look at. One: your phone, where you can scroll through never-ending columns of people's random thoughts, or swipe colored tiles back and forth in a pixelated puzzle game. Two: the scenery. This could be dark, blurred walls, long sets of identical, grassy fields, or, if you're lucky, icy mountains and rainbow fishing towns. Three: the people. A train is the best place to see all types of people, from screaming babies to old ladies with bags of knitting and poofy white hair, business people in sharp suits and city hipsters in baggy T-shirts. Also in the mix are teens who have eyes only for the bubbles dot-dot-dotting on their phone screens, musicians with mysteriously shaped instrument cases, and a girl who sits by herself with a paint can.

Look around at all these people, each one a meticulous work of flesh and bone and stardust, and think about how many words it would take to tell each of their stories; how many books to publish them all. How many questions could you ask before your throat cracked dry, and still you wouldn't know each passenger's story. I can tell you only one of these stories, besides my own. I can tell you about the girl with the paint can. I can tell you where she came from, and what she had for breakfast, and why she's hogging a double seat with herself and her paint. I can also tell you that if you asked nicely, she would move the paint can and let you take that half.

This girl lives in the city; she was born from the sidewalk cracks and subway tunnels, and grew with the skyscrapers and scaffolding. She loves counting dogs from the bus windows, and watching rooftop sunrises stroke the skyline with pink and gold. The colors give her a craving, a need to crawl into the clouds and blanket herself in deep magenta, to run barefoot through the streets trailing paintbrushes splattered with the brightest orange. So one day she took the subway to a hardware store and found the paint section. She wandered back and forth, choosing her favorite paint chips: deep magenta, bright orange, light violet, and sparkling gold. When she couldn't hold any

more, she stepped up to the counter, arms full of color. The woman behind it looked at her in surprise, but she took the chips, squeezed some paint, and stirred in a little magic, and, ten minutes later, the girl walked out the door with a bucket full of sunrise.

Back at her apartment, the girl carefully lifted the metal cover off of the can. Inside were such warm, beautiful colors, that she had dipped her finger in and swirled it around. She was tempted to stick her whole arm in but resisted the impulse. Smearing a bit of it on her cheek, the girl felt a warm glow spread through her body, starting with a tingling in her face and spreading all the way down to her toes. The girl smiled, feeling like she could walk on air. She wanted to share this feeling with others. So that night, when the street was dark and quiet, and you could count the number of lighted windows on your fingers, she slipped out into the dark, carrying the bucket and an old, bristly paint brush. With only the stars and street lamps to see by, she set to work.

The next morning, the girl sat on her roof, watching the sun rise. As the sky began to glow with all of the colors she knew by heart, the houses in the street glowed too. During the night the girl had painted them with all of her favorite colors: ombré shades of pink, orange, and yellow, mixed with light violets and blues, and just a touch of gold. As morning grew brighter, people started to emerge onto their porches and front steps, spilling out into the street to drink in the surprise. Smiles spread like warm butter, seeping into the cracks in the sidewalk and sprouting shoots that stretched up toward the sky. People laughed, and pointed out their favorite colors, and trailed fingers along bricks and stone and wood to make sure it was real.

When the girl saw this, the same tingly feeling the paint had given her filled her body, soaking her heart in happiness. She could finally share what she loved with the world, and it made them happy too. The girl thought that everyone deserved to feel this way, so she started visiting other streets and painting them with color at night. Every morning new families and children and old couples and adults opened their doors to a world of color, and magic, and sparkle. Slowly, the girl started to paint during the day, too, and people would see her, and smile and wave, and sometimes a few would come help her paint for a while. Finally, with a closet full of paint stains and streets full of smiles, the girl had painted the whole city. The people all loved their houses, and the city had become a loving, happy place. But the girl remembered the first day she had painted, when she had decided that everyone deserved this magic. So she took the subway back to the hardware store and bought a new bucket of paint and a train ticket.

The next morning, the girl left the city with a bucket, a brush, and a dream. She will keep painting love, and freedom, and color into the world, until we're all stained and caked with it. And maybe you will, too.

September

Nora Gautsch, Jericho, VT

One day in September
I'll build a rocketship or maybe
a pair of wings
(you know I've always wanted to fly)
and I'll soar off into space
faster than this earth can hold me.
I'll watch the sun fall away and then
I'll leave.
I'll learn how to count the stars
and I'll learn the strata of the comets
and I'll stay away from black holes.
I'll shape a nebula
with my own hands and
make it blue and pink and yellow.
I'll name a star after myself because
I'm human enough to be selfish and
I'll name a star after someone else
because
I'm human enough to be selfless.
I'll go to a planet and
I'll find a stone
the color of your eyes
and I'll hold it tight
until it's time to let it go.
I'll go to the very edge
and I'll look back and
see everything
and I'll look forward and
see a blank to fill.
And then
I'll return here
and I'll tell you
how glad I am that I left
and how glad I am that I came
back.

New Pages

Gianna Faltskog, Sandgate, VT

Imagine being a piece of paper,
a whole scrapbook in fact,
a whole you.
Now imagine starting fresh,
ripping off the pictures,
erasing the pencil marks,
brushing off the glitter.
Wouldn't it be amazing?
Now,
we can't just start over everything.
That's not how life works.
There are still indents where we wrote
too hard with the pencils,
and parts of the paper that have been
ripped from when we tore off the
pictures.
But it's still fresh.
And that's all we need.
You can add new pictures,
new captions,
whole new stories.
And it's still you,
right down to the smell of the paper.
That's what it feels like
starting a new school –
so refreshing,
so new,
so blank.
But still me.



Mejo Liao, San Juan Capistrano, CA



Lauren McCabe, South Burlington, VT

Oh, To Be Mist

Rose Lord, Charlotte, VT

Oh, to be mist on a rainy day,
to embrace the mountains and drift away,
to curl and float above a lake,
and revel in the rising sun's wake

and oh, to sweep in silken waves
through untouched woods and cities paved,
to kiss the treetops, soaring high,
and wreath the shoulders of passersby

and oh, how sweet to simply be,
to set the scene for mystery,
to take a place, once sad and dull,
and make it seem more magical.

Ode to Concrete

Isabella Silva, Essex Junction, VT

What comes after winter's fearful
whip?
Tell, what gives sway to summer-
scented sage?
To what gives imagination's muses
blush,
the forest's bloom green, the bee's
nectar rush?

What book can tell? Aye, what poet
can say?

My naked toes, pressed on what Earth
has sung,
burning from the warmth, on which Sun
has hung
her shooting fires to make human pyres!

'Tis not the thrush, nor the greenery that
gives summer sway; 'tis the flat concrete
stair,
mirroring Earth's light, book pages that
glare
soft white, too harsh for mine own
squinting eyes.



Katherine Moran, Bristol, VT



Katherine Moran, Bristol, VT

Dreaming

Claire Kodama, Burnsville, MN

Running through fields of flowers,
 feet pressed into cool blades of grass,
 smelling the buds and blades
 of flowers made of rays belonging to the
 sun

Opening my eyes to a blinding light,
 waking up to reality,
 thinking without meaning,
 living without purpose

Taking a drink of water,
 the liquid running down my throat,
 a sign of relief as it alleviates briefly
 feelings of thirst for something not real

Crumbling like pressed flowers,
 my dreams and wishes
 torn just as easily
 as the fragile wings of a butterfly to a
 blade

Returning home with spirit screaming,
 "Let me in, let me be free,"
 internalizing the spirit and suppressing
 until the sky is dark and the stars are out
 once more

Resting my head on a soft pillow,
 eyes fluttering closed without resistance,
 thoughts wandering to a better place,
 to a field filled with flowers made of rays
 belonging to the sun.

Spinning and Twirling

Megan Carlan, Bradford, VT

After a long day of school and procrastination, it's around 5 when I finally gain the energy to go practice my 360s on my snowboard. I ask my mom for a ride to the hill near the park like always, though without my friend this time; I simply want to practice with my own thoughts today.

We just have a medium-sized jump and a small rail at the hill; any more and I'm sure we might get some complaints. No one is here and the snow is pretty good, powdery but also a bit sticky. I pop in my ear buds, most likely listening to something by Arctic Monkeys or The Neighbourhood and then strap in. After a few failed 360s, I get into the swing of things and start actually fully rotating and spotting the landing. I can't say they look pretty, but it's closer than I've ever gotten.

The street lamps flicker on over by the school as the sun dips below the horizon, but I have plenty of light to continue. I walk up the hill once more and strap in. I can feel the run up is better than normal, and I begin to twist my body and pull my head around to face forward again. My snowboard hits the ground, straight forward and flat! I ride it out, and out of excitement, I pivot on the nose of the board and twirl around. My hand flails as I hop around, still strapped in. I shout words of excitement, not caring who's around and plop into a fluffy snow bank.

I reminisce in the moment, thinking about all the time and practice it took to get here, even if it may not be the most impressive trick in the book. Knowing how much landing this trick in the future on real ramps can help me progress, spirals me into a thought process of all the other things I should and can learn. I run over to the parking lot, and on the way, I hop and spin as if I'm a snow bunny, then quickly rave to my mom about what happened.



Lauren McCabe, South Burlington, VT

What Makes Us Human?

Ella Sherry, Palos Verdes Estates, CA

She asked what makes us hurt,
and so I gestured to my tears,
I gestured to my chest –
the beating, breaking heart inside.

She asked what makes us happy,
and so I gave her a hug,
I gave her a bundle of flowers –
picked fresh the morning before.

She asked what makes us cry,
and so I pointed to a grave,
I pointed to the sunrise –
the happy light spilling upward.

She asked what makes us smile,
and so I told her a joke,
I told her that I loved her –
three words that are simply not enough.

She asked what makes us love,
and so I took her hand in mine;
I took her gentle words and beautiful
lies –
lies *can* be beautiful.

She asked what makes us human,
and so I gave her the world –
I gave her my hurt,
my happiness,
my tears,
my smiles,
and my love.



Quinn Sunderland, Charlotte, VT

Walking on a Sunny Day

Annika Gruber, Charlotte, VT

Yesterday I walked through a town.
The town felt sleepy,
not sleepy, as in there was no one awake,
but sleepy as in everything here seemed
to move at a slower pace,
like the long sidewalks were just giving
people the space to think.
There were people outside, but somehow
the street felt quiet.
But it wasn't the sad kind of quiet that
makes the locals look down and makes
the strangers wonder what happened ...
No,
this quiet was the kind that seemed to
let people catch their breath and look
around.
There wasn't really much to look at
because the town was small.

Or maybe there was a lot to look at if
you weren't just passing through.
The sun hung in the sky and glinted
down on the melting snow.
Some kids were walking home from
school. One of them was kicking a piece
of gravel.
I watched.
I didn't know this town, but maybe I
could write about it.
I liked it because it seemed far away from
chaos. (If chaos could be pinned down
to one location.)
I liked the slowness. I liked the easy
breeze.
I liked the way that I could just walk up
a little hill a few blocks away and look
over the entire town.
It wasn't beautiful, but when the sun was
hitting it that way,
I could have been fooled into thinking it
was.



Grace Kafferlin, Williston, VT



Eloise Van Meter, Fairlee, VT

How You

Khizer Mir, Boston, MA

Remember the day we met at the meadow?

How your braided petals spiraled endlessly, like the loops in a bulb?

How your voice, so soft and lovely, opened up like a flower?

How your head tilted toward the bees, extracting your kindness, tearing my soul apart?

How your personality, so tender and sweet, lifts me when I'm feeling down?

How your face, so natural and inviting, intoxicates my mind throughout the day?

How I wish to hold your hands again, so fragile and gentle, cool to the touch.

How I wish to see you again.

Relics of the Past

Thalia Kolovos, Essex Junction, VT

When I look around my room, I see my jewelry box filled with loom-band bracelets and necklaces made from air-dry clay and various earrings and charms,

my old toys littering the ground, a plastic elephant, a rubber duck, stuffed animal toys.

Little kid books litter the shelves, Captain Underpants, Bedtime for Frances, Geronimo Stilton.

In my closet, little kid clothes, too-small camp shirts, tiny PJs, pants so small if I put them on now they'd scarcely reach my knees.

In my room, a book I just read, some brushes in a water glass, the Snowflake Bentley poster I hung up a month ago.

My room – unfinished art projects, the clothes I'll wear tomorrow, a half-played record.

In my room, the relics of the past, items of the present, plans for the future collide.

Feeling

Callyx O'Donnell, Hinesburg, VT

Joy isn't just the sunny days with ice cream drips and perfect words. Love isn't just the first few seconds, flawless moments and romance books. Life isn't just laughter that bounces off the clouds, the birth of new things or the smell of leaves.

Joy is the rain falling, sweet relief pouring across your face, moments when your value of everything, every little thing, is the largest thing.

Love is the tears of a resolved argument dripping into a well of shared emotion, the unconditional "Let me wipe your eyes with my sleeve and hold you close when you dislike me most."

Life is the constant cycle of last and first breaths, of holding onto things so tight only to realize you are most fulfilled when you let them go.

See your scars not as reminders of the bad you went through but as the strength that allowed you to survive. Feel your pain not to wallow in it but to know that you can endure. Live your life not to wait for the end but to revel in each moment you spend

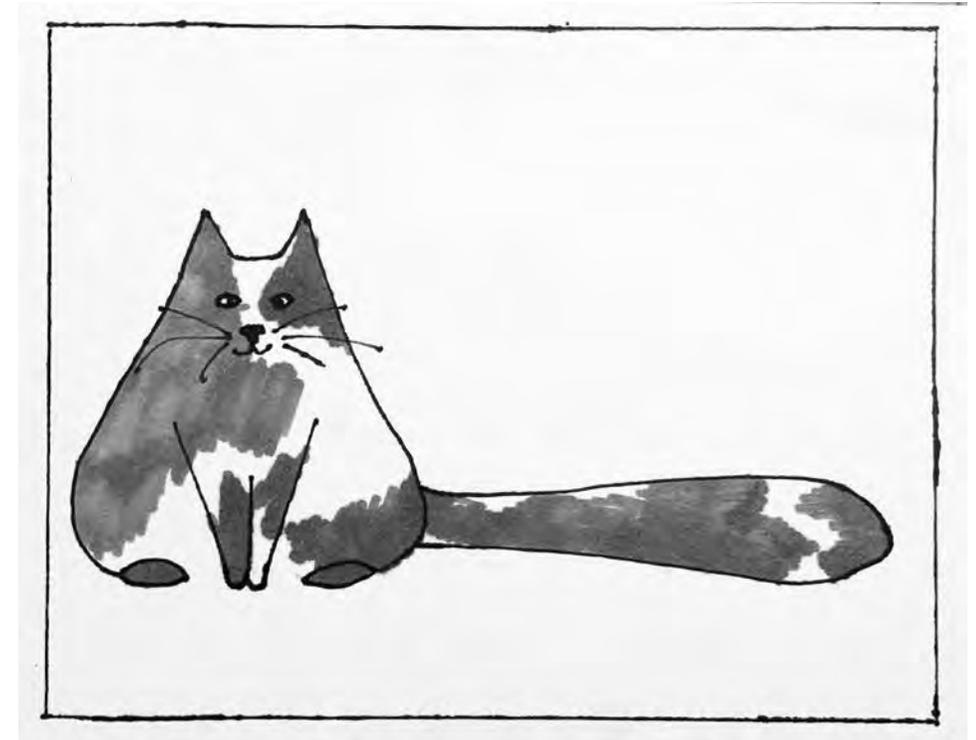
f e e l i n g

Cloud Medicine

Aurora Sharp, Moretown, VT

When the clouds drift across you,
heavy with rain and pain and somehow
still empty,
drink maple and warm milk
while wrapped in the soft brown of your
grandmother's blanket.
She made it while you screamed your
way into the world,
made it to comfort your newborn body
in this blinding harshness.
Let your hair be smoothed back from
your face with gentle fingers.
Let yourself cry.
Listen to the sad songs
while you dig out the last pieces of
chocolate
from the gold foil wrappers on the top
shelf of the cupboard.
Leave responsibility in an envelope
addressed for tomorrow,
and let yourself wallow in every ounce
of love you can find.
Like the sun, clouds come and go.
Sometimes, you must bear the burden as
best you can.
Sometimes, you must wear the raincoat
and let it pass you by.
For a time, you can turn inwards, and
give it all to yourself.
For a time.
For a time, but soon that time has
passed,
and the forecast told you there would be
sunshine today,
a warm breeze to soften the horizon,
lilies.
And soon all the petals
of the tissue box have been left crumpled
on the floor,

and you have licked maple from the
spoon
until all you taste is a metallic tang on
your tongue.
Your lungs have heaved
and twisted
and breathed while you closed your eyes
and felt that air from your feet to your
fingertips,
and you have leached all the love from
the hearts that surround you.
You've been given all that you should
need,
and it is time for your mind to clear,
to remember how to speak kindly,
and fit equations together with a clever
word,
time for your eyes to remember how to
smile along with your lips.
Cast off the blanket,
though the clouds are still there,
wash the mug and pile the petals and
give back everything you took.
All you have to do is pretend it was
enough.
But my beautiful,
my love,
there is no timeline
for closing the cuts that come from the
inside,
or from knives you never saw.
Maple and affection
are not a prescription for pain.
Sometimes, the clouds decide to stay,
and like you,
they do not need a reason
to exist.
Be gentle with yourself.
Please.
Please be gentle.



Vivien Sorce, Hinesburg, VT

Cat on the Windowsill

Ruth Knox, Essex Junction, VT

Coiled on the windowsill,
watching as the snow falls down
from a leak in the clouds,

a tail like an old grandfather clock
swish, swish, swish
giving the occasional thump on the wall.

Someone splattered the unwanted colors
and she was caught in the mix –
she is only black, brown, and white now.

Small breaths fog the glass,
steam like the hot cocoa being
passed around the table,

nose pressed against the cold window
almost as though she can touch the
feathery frost
that lines the windowsill.

Satellites sit atop her fluffy head,
twitching at the smallest sound,
always listening,

collar purple like the old wrapping paper
in the basement
or the dried-out flowers on the counter
or the little girl's coat, except it is not
speckled in snowflakes.

Still, on the windowsill,
stomach rising up and down,
gentle, calm.

Trouble

Hazel Fahey, Bradford, VT

Trouble is that shadow you can't see but you know is there.

It can pop out of nowhere and ruin the rest of the day.

Trouble is the cold chill you feel after the unforgettable thing is mentioned.

You never are looking for it, but when you are least expecting it, it hits you like a truck.

Trouble is the warm iron blood taste in your mouth after the right hook.

You can look it right in the eyes and think it's light like sunshine when it's really dark like the deep night.

Trouble is the scream of the child you can hear as you take their candy.

It can be fun only for a while, then it's guilt.

Trouble is the smell of alcohol on someone's breath.

It can be right. It can be wrong. Why such a thing exists, no one knows.

Only a Couple of Words Away

Suhanee Mitragotri, Lexington, MA

Your heart aches,
each pump of blood filling
your body with pain and regret

whether it's a loss of that special
person in your life or the melting
sorrows of that something that's
missing.

You feel hurt but don't want to say
it because they always tell you that
everything is going to be okay

but it doesn't feel that way.

It's okay to say that it's not going to be
okay.

It's okay to feel that you don't have
enough.

It's okay to feel unbearably empty.

Just know, no matter how far
apart we may be,
I am only a couple of words away.



Katherine Moran, Bristol, VT

I Am From

Hamza Harraz, Burlington, VT

I am from the cold of the true north to the warmth of the land of the free. From the Ottoman Empire to the Egyptian Pharaohs. I am from the beautiful sights and sounds from my balcony. The sound of rustling leaves from deer to the wake-up call from the birds, to the squirrels fighting. I am from the long, long hikes on sizzling summer days to the frosty winter nights wrapped around in the heaviest blanket.

I am from wearing shorts and sandals at the Mediterranean to wearing two coats, snow pants, winter boots, a scarf, hat, and mittens in the cold, freezing winters of Vermont.

I am from the beautiful foliage and snow on the trees in the Green Mountains to the dead trees over in the Sahara.

I am from the days to weeks to months that I would travel to Egypt to the days, weeks, and months of where I only could travel around my home.

I am from the long road trips that take 10 hours to the summer where we can't travel at all.

I am from the days that I see my friends every day to the days where I see a small box with their names on a tiny screen.

I am from being an early bird to school to being a late owl since every day I work from home.

I am from the loud, crowded streets in Egypt to the calm, quiet streets of Vermont.

I am from the big, big supermarkets like Costco to the tiny store with sweets under Titi's apartment building.

I am from going to dozens of the Alexandrian farmers markets each day to going to a small, quiet farmers market just on Saturdays.

I am from the loud sound of the Athan coming from all the minarets to having to go to the Masjid to hear the Athan.

I am from the mango trees of Gedo Harraz's farm to the maple trees all over Vermont.

I am from watching long soccer games with Gedo Shousha to playing short soccer games with my friends.

I am from the amazing smell of Mulukhiyah to the even better smell of my mom's chicken panne.

I am from being the loudest family in my neighborhood to being one of the quietest in meetings. This is where I'm from.

My Love

Willa Whitaker Jackson, Marshfield, VT

My love is made of shadows
and chocolate
and gummy bears,
of grit and sunlight
and cold, bare skin.

My love is made of pink fingertips
and stars
and giggling,
of secrets and dreams
and a quiet pencil
and a page turning.

Glistening Sea Glass Hearts

Esra Anzali, Middlebury, VT

Cheeks slick with tears
and hurt, my hands shake
as I try to reach
for the stars you once
wanted so badly to be ours.

My smile, once sticky
with blue cotton candy
happiness, is now empty,
littered with shards of broken
love and promises.

I exhale, my peppermint
breath glowing against the
toxic air as my
mind goes blank.

I look up at the
man in the moon,
and as he smiles at me,
my eyes only see you.

Your face haunts me,
your memory banging on
my door every morning,
but I say nothing
and pray to god that you
don't hear me crying.

My hands tremble as
I use string the color of your
honey-blond curls to
stitch the pieces of my
heart back together, but the
glass shards dig into
my hands until I bleed.

My tears taste of blue
cotton candy and happiness,
so I cry, hoping that
they will make me feel better.

I sit on the beach and
watch waves the color
of your eyes crash into
the sandy coast,
and try to go numb as
I listen to the mournful cries
of the seagulls,
beckoning me to
the sky.

Glass Girl Looking Out a Glass Window

Lily Meyer, Montpelier, VT

Looking out the window,
waiting for today to be different,
waiting for the world to show you –
you are more than a glass girl looking
out a glass window.
People do not speak to you, thinking you
might break;
some speak to you in hopes you will
break.
So you look out the clear window,
hoping the world will seem clear one
day.
You are the glass girl,
a puzzle with a piece missing,
looking out the window,
wishing for a story to tell,
and not just gazing at this glass, half-
shattered world.

Peaceful Mind

David Thaxton, East Thetford, VT

As I wake up and feel the coziness and warmth of my down comforter on my bed, I look out my frosted window to see the snow flurrying past – not hard but gentle. It makes me want to go outside and play in the snow – maybe make snow angels and catch snowflakes on my tongue.

I put on my snow pants, hat, gloves, mittens, and jacket and open the door and head outside. I feel the soft crunch of snow beneath my feet. I decide that a short walk through the snowy forest might be nice.

I head up to the tree line and enter the beautiful pine forest, the trees gleaming with ice, covered in fresh snow. The morning sun makes the ice glisten like diamonds. The air is crisp, but not too cold. I keep walking until I get to a little ledge.

This place is very quiet – which I like a lot – except for the occasional crack of ice breaking off of the branches. I sit at the edge of the little ledge and all is at peace in my mind.



Colin Outly, Burlington, VT



Eloise Van Meter, Fairlee, VT

Introverted?

Eden Anne Bauer, Houston, TX

Give me daffodils
of summer yellow,
and swaying irises'
rich purple color;
your irises spin
and I don't know why,
but I made you stand
and watch the sky
turn dappled gray
to black and blue.
What would I never
do for you?
I tried to say
hello
today, but
I was blinded by the sun.

They say the sun's still spinning,
spinning,
spiraling
out of control.

I tried to speak,
and speak I did,
but
I don't think
they heard
at all.

*Hello, hello,
do I exist?*
I didn't think
it'd come to this.

Sometimes I want
to be alone

in my
introverted
biodome

but sometimes,
when I'm on my phone,
I'm secretly trying
to find my cowardly courage,
waiting to talk -
to anyone.

Permanent Ink

Charlotte Hughes, Willsboro, NY

I try not to have any regrets
but yet I find myself
sometimes in debt
to the man in the corner
with his scraping beard
and jagged silhouette.

He's the one I would have feared
inside his web of crawling
threads,
a single cigarette
draping from his lips of lead,

a stream of smoke that slowly ebbs
inside my mind,
offset from the kind of things
that normally would have appeared,
a speeding train threatening to upset
the notion
that we are intertwined,

a minuet to which we are blind,
an orchestral chant,
a rant
for those who bled
instead of breathing,
for those who fought instead
of dreaming

because once you wait your turn in line
until your empty fate's assigned,
time will burn in fiery red,
a soulless threat.
We may not have volunteered
for this,
but why are we still inclined
to find
what words will stay
when we are dead?

Word Trip

Sophia Guo, Lexington, MA

I travel in ambiguity,
lost in metaphors,

running over nouns and loose
participles,
rushing through commas,

dodging question marks,
scraping the sides of parentheses,

not slowing down for paragraphs
or stopping for periods,

skidding on dashes,
leaving quotation marks all over,

crashing into exclamation points,
losing all content at the colon,

colliding into a word block -
I'm stuck in gerunds.

Cotton Candy Clouds

Molly Marino, Hinesburg, VT

Earlier this evening,
I saw cotton candy clouds drift by,
making their way across a taffy sky,
twisting and swirling like lollipops,
practically bouncing off the rooftops.

And as I gazed upward,
I could feel the grass at my feet,
a lovely shade of peppermint green,
and the marshmallow smoke puffing out
of a candy cane chimney
along with the rock candy bushes -
all of us gazing upward
at the cotton candy clouds in the taffy
sky.

Hay Time

Elizabeth Vaughan, South Ryegate, VT

"How does the weather look for this week?" I ask my dad early Tuesday morning.

"Sunny and beautiful," he replies.

In other words, that means perfect weather for haying.

"What are you going to mow?" my mom asks.

"Everything that is standing!" my dad says with a laugh.

That can only mean one thing: We have to unload the two wagons that are parked up in the shed. Because if he says he is going to mow everything standing, that means he is going to mow as much as he can before it is time for milking.

I shouldn't be complaining; it's good to get the hay in now so we have plenty for the winter. Also, we don't want a repeat of what happened last week. But still, around 280 bales is a lot to unload this early in the morning.

Oh, last week was a hard time. It started out just like today, a nice, sunny day with little clouds. It had been nice all week, perfect for haying, or so we thought. Since it looked like we were clear from rain for the next few days, my dad decided to mow the hay field right outside our house.

Everything was going according to plan; nothing had broken and we were right on schedule. While my dad mowed, I followed along and tugged it. We were in a good position for the next day; however, the weather had a different plan. Probably about 30 minutes after we finished fluffing it all up to dry, it began to downpour. The only thing we could do was try again the next day. However, it did the same thing. It rained and rained. It ruined the hay. If we could manage to get it dry, the cows wouldn't want to eat it anyway.

"We better get going if we want to have enough time to hay. We don't want a repeat of last week," I say to my mom and dad.

We head off to get the wagons to unload them. I think to myself, if only we could be in charge of the weather, it would make farming a lot easier. We could make sure that it is sunny for haying and make sure there's enough rain for the crops to grow. Also make it so the frost doesn't kill the crops when we aren't ready. However, that isn't an option. The weather always keeps us on our toes.



Quinn Sunderland, Charlotte, VT

Friendship of Wind and Sand

Maeve MacAuley, Colchester, VT

A friendship of opposites. At first thought, it seems unusual, yet possible. We have all heard the age-old saying, "opposites attract," but does that apply to friendships?

Opposite friends are the best kind of friendship; an opposite friend is there to balance you, keep you honest. One is outgoing and loud, while the other is relaxed and calm.

The balance is needed, someone to tell you "no" or "that's not the best idea," your person to give you the advice you never even thought of.

Your weaknesses are your best friend's strengths; if you need help with anything, you have the perfect partner to fix it.

A friendship of opposites is less like fire and water and more like wind and sand. Water and fire are mutually destructive; water will extinguish a flame, just as fire will boil water away to nothing. Wind and sand go together, yet are very different. They have things to each their own – the wind has air, while sand has earth.

When they come together it might not be noticeable to people going too fast, but if you stop and look, *I mean really look*, you see the wind gently pushing the sand along and the sand happy to go. That's friendship, not opposites that destroy each other, but opposites that thrive together.

Thither Comes a Dashing Gentleman

Martha Hutcheson, Manchester, VT

When wind whips my hair and blows it across my face dramatically,
I pretend to be in a Jane Austen novel.
For, what! I cry to the sky through my hoarse throat,
Thither comes a dashing gentleman!
(The sky is gray like murky tea.)
Dear, dear me, I am faint! I sweep my hand to my forehead and stumble across the ground.
Are you all right? (I switch to being a handsome young man in a gray waistcoat and a concerned expression.)
Just a little ... c-cold, I stammer helplessly.
He regards me and invites me on his horse,
(I am quite faint at this point, and my skin is turning blue)
and rides home with me draped in his wool coat and clutching tight to his horse (and most certainly not to him).
I am propped in bed with warm tea, the colour of the sky, and he waits anxiously in the parlor, as when he carried me in, I looked quite cold, and he is wondering how I am doing.
I blush when the maid suggests something very inappropriate and unreasonable, and I hide my face when he asks to enter.
Certainly not! I am quite unpresentable!
Alas, I finish the scene with my arms stretched wide and feeling very cold and not draped in a wool coat and clutching fast to my romanticized dreams.

Sailboat

Sophie Cross, Brooklyn, NY

Three sets of hands hoist the sails,
prepare the boat,
laughing, giggling, and struggling to keep it afloat.

The coarse sand between our toes, and a hunger for the sea,
the waves beckon to us, and our rudder answers the plea.

Like the earth and the sun, we orbit within the lagoon
and finally break free of the muddy, rocky cocoon.

Wind fills our nostrils and scuttles across our skulls,
skating over the salty palace that belongs to the gulls.

As we creep closer to the edge, pearls of saltwater glaze my hair,
fingertips glide along the waves, and our exposed bellies graze the air.

The thrill is slowing, arriving at the other side of the sound,
exploring a grassy inlet with only mosquitoes to be found.

A small lighthouse stands, surrounded by vines and ants,
an ideal setting for a tragic sailor's romance.

We turn back, soft eyes gazing at the marshy inlet, now out of reach.
Let the breeze carry us home to our rustic, charming beach.

Leggings

Julia Todd, South Burlington, VT

Black leggings are never really black.
I watch you roll off the lint and pick off the dog fur,
trying to swipe away their past like you're plucking the stars from your own galaxy.

You are meticulous in everything,
trying to gain something out of reach,
promising yourself that if you can just achieve an imposing solid black,
something will click in your world,
something you didn't have before.

To you, the dust is a disgrace,
a barrier to a world of perfection that maybe, one day, you can break down.

Because for you, your world isn't enough.
You tell yourself that with lint on your leggings
you're failing yourself, keeping yourself down;
you tell yourself you will never be beautiful,
that you'll never be able to fly.

But you're beautiful when you stand with those you love
and you laugh and you don't worry about whether or not
your smile looks crooked.

You're beautiful when you touch your pencil to paper
and capture the world in graphite, only for yourself,
not caring whether someone is watching.

And you fly, you do, when you glow with pride
when you know you've done something amazing,
when you *let* yourself know without finding every tiny imperfection to deny it.

So black leggings are never really black because if they were perfect they wouldn't be *you*.

Afterthought

Sawyer Fellows, Cochranville, PA

I.
You see, his body never made it to the city of angels,
lit by purgatory's divine lights.
Oh, he would have loved the sight –

To see chaos rolling in masses down the boardwalk and past the ocean.
But his body did not make it there.
Therefore, he could not see their despair.

II.
He wanders the yard when night stirs,
sits in the garden beside his beloved's favorite,
an iris painted in his raven's curled dream,
an iris coddled with early morning sheen.

He marvels at the drooping wings in all of their midnight-colored glory.
Oh, how he wishes the mourning dove a raven.
Oh, how he wishes to see his lover again.

Math

Cosmos Konings, Carlisle, MA

What is it about math?
Seriously. I'm asking you, dear reader.
What is it about math?
Why is it that I can understand
English and history
and science
and quantum physics
and tardigrades and unfinished dot
drawings of lady's slippers that I made in
sixth grade –
but not math?
Seriously. It's like, I see numbers,
and they do NOT make sense. At all.
Like, why is that?
I don't know why math even counts
toward college.
I wish it didn't, because my grade
really did a number on my GPA!
I'd like to point out
that math is fun, to an extent,
until it gets difficult,
and you have to line up your priorities
and study for HOURS and HOURS on
end –
It's like I can't even function!
Oh, what is it about math
that makes it so dreadfully intolerable?
Perhaps it is the fact that the range of
topics we cover are just boring.
Or maybe it's just that not all of my
math puns are good –
just sum.

On Days Like These

Saskia Gori-Montanelli, Middlebury, VT

On days like these, we hold tea between
our teeth,
ask to be calmed by some warm,
hopeless skin
like a thin line of chai against porcelain.

(milk on your lips, I am waiting)

An acquired feel, winter has;
and sixteen years of ice I've swallowed.

Sometimes I want you to spell out a
syllable in my voice.
Words seem so much kinder when they
drip from your tongue.

If I could have even a bowl of your
mistakes, I'd place them on the kitchen
counter beside a warm plate of figs;
how much I would like to trade errors
because yours, at least, make a nice
centerpiece.

Before we drift (like thick fish bones in a
tall glass of water),
close the door and tell me how you
spoke when you were brittle,

how you learned to swim, which breaths
you choose from a line of wind.
Clean out your licorice drawer and fill it
with rice; try to find me in the grains.

Who? I am one and you are all of them.

With strawberry eyes on mine, I am sold
by stomach linings.
Keep me safe, solid part,
don't let me be again but a small,
sleeping tree.

More to See

Scarlett Cannizzaro, Essex, VT

A few days ago,
I sat at a stoplight
in a car,
my elbow propped up against the
passenger door.
And
as I stared at the
pearly white cotton balls
floating in the sky,
a group of birds
flew right by,
almost as if
they were one.
It was only a moment,
only a small moment,
but even then,
there were so many things to see.
A community traveling
through the blue,
searching for some place warm.
Dancers,
sweeping,
gliding
around the clouds,
around the sun,
the stars.
And as I pictured these things,
I told myself
that even in the smallest of moments,
when everything might seem empty,
blank,
there will always be something,
big or small –
more to see.

No Moon

Addison Schnoor, Weybridge, VT

Cool, dark air whispers past
my cheeks, chilling them.
As I look up into the night sky,
I see no stars, no moon.
Clouds blot out all light
except the occasional headlights
that crest the hills before
and behind me, shining on the
telephone wires above.
As I jog down the tree-lined road,
I glance down at the barely visible
cracks in the pavement.
I pass farms with cows dozing silently
in the pastures, or watching me from
their barns
with sleepy confusion on their faces.
A truck passes me
as I start down a gently sloping hill
when out of nowhere
two long-legged deer jump out
in front of its headlights.
The truck slows down
as the deer leap and bound
to the other side of the road,
disappearing over the barbed fence
of an empty cow pasture.
The truck picks up speed and
sputters off into the night.
I turn back to the pasture,
barely lit in the late evening glow.
An elegant silhouette stands there
next to a clump of tall bushes
near the center of the pasture.
I smile to myself as I move on,
climbing the next hill.

Sincerity

Jadyn Mardy, Hempstead, NY

Today this kid wrote a sincere thank-you letter to me.

He wanted to thank me for being his friend,
for talking to him
during our 7th period jazz band class.

He said he's never been so scared in his life

as when he came to the first rehearsal,
and a few rehearsals after that.

With his thick, black, curly hair, thin
shoulders and worried eyes,

he proceeded to tell me how he was
simply grateful

I started talking to him.

I was grateful he answered me.

He did this wide-eyes stare that was
slightly off-putting

like he was surprised a ghost just entered
a room.

I joked about it with him,
teasingly asking him if he was, in fact,
okay,

on account of he looked scared.

I'd then mimic the face.

This became our little game.

We'd pass by in the hallway,
separate friend groups,

different classes,

unrelated agendas,

and he'd make this face at me, through
his mask,

and I'd return it instantly.

I knew it was fun.

Heck, I greatly enjoyed it.

But reading his thank-you note,

telling me I made a difference in his high
school career

simply for being kind to him –

not a fake kind,

not a teacher-said-to-be kind,

not a backstabber kind.

Just kind.

It touched my heart.

Because that's what I set out to do in my
high school career –

be friends with people outside of my
class,

talk to kids a few grades below me,

shake off the social stigma that

who you hang out with determines your
social hierarchy.

I wanted to take someone under my
wing

and hide them from that awful stigma
resulting in hateful words and isolation.

I didn't mean to become his friend,

I just wanted to be nice.

But

after that letter,

after reading it over and over and over
again,

swelling with pride and appreciation,

I am so glad I took the time to talk to
that kid,

to tease him

and create a mutual inside joke

that's now been running for months.

Today this kid wrote a sincere letter to
me

to thank me for being his friend.

And I want to write a letter back

because I didn't know my kindness

would mean so much to him,

and little did he know,

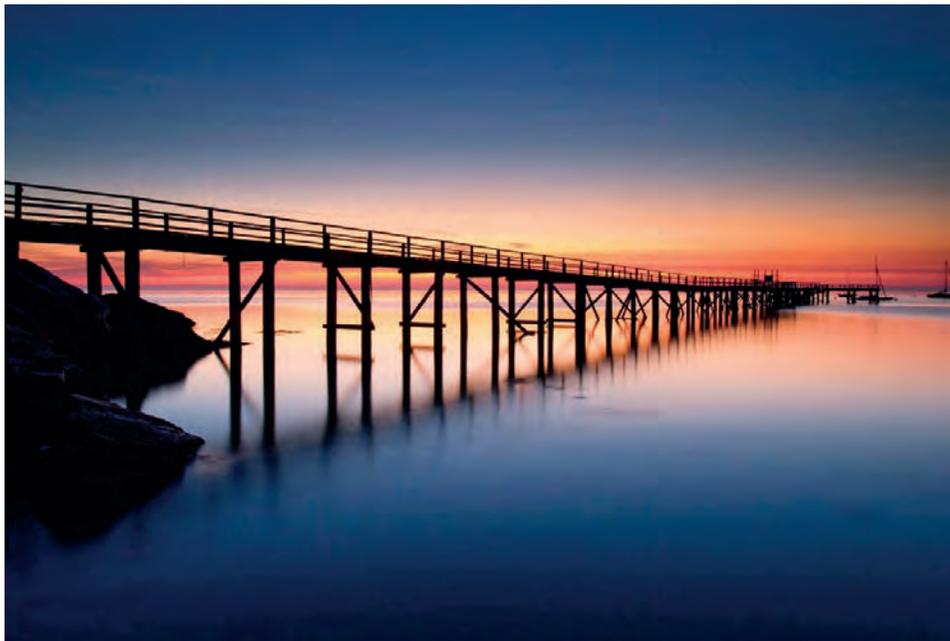
his letter would mean so much to me.



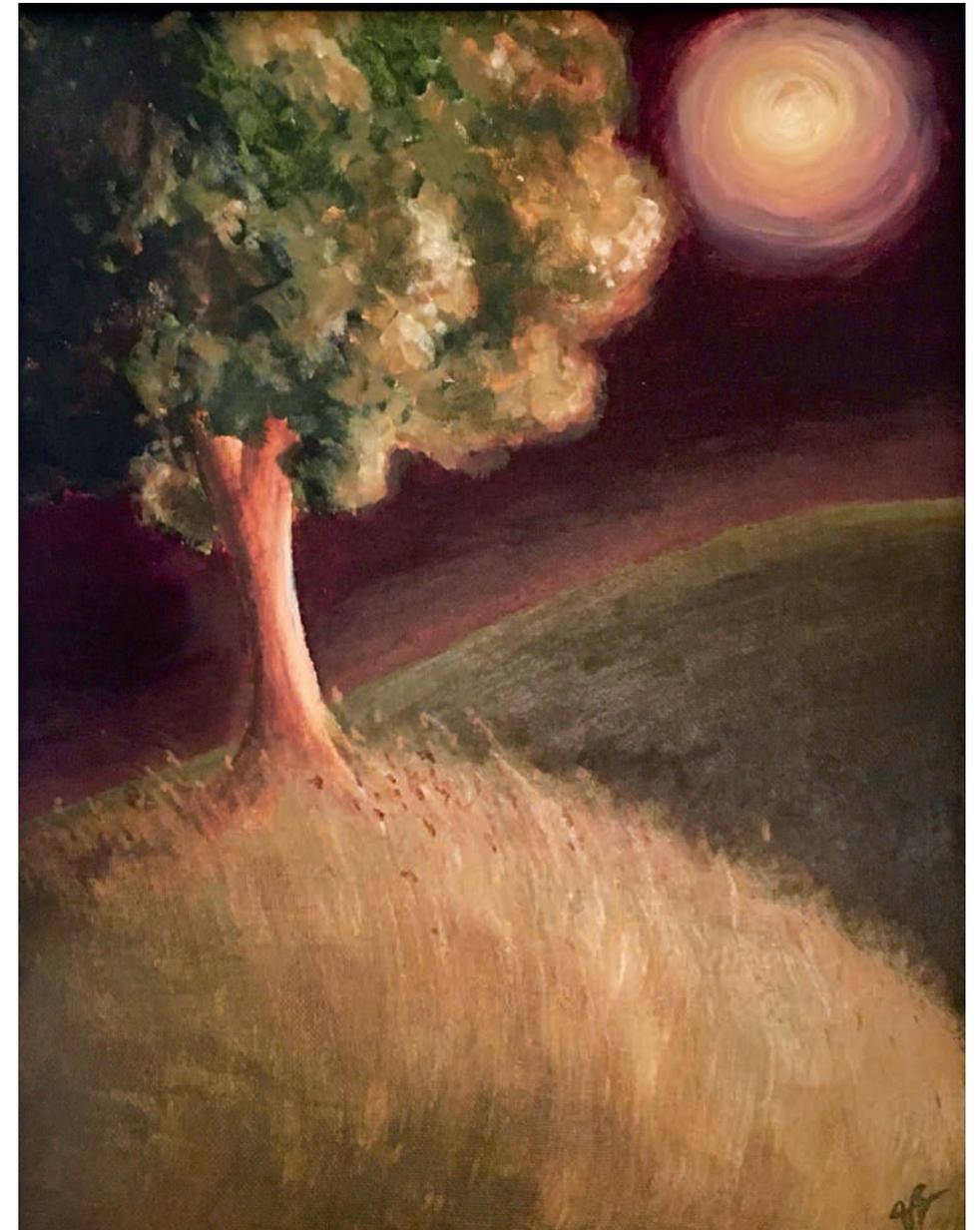
Vivien Sorce, Hinesburg, VT



Lauren McCabe, South Burlington, VT



Sophia Guo, Lexington, MA



Vivien Sorce, Hinesburg, VT



Alyssa Fullam, Rutland, VT

At Peace

Whitney Dykstra, Monkton, VT

Closest to God any mortal can be,
dressed in nature's serene embrace,
engaged with the whispers of the trees
and the dirt beneath my feet,
finding self-fulfillment through my eyes.
Forever I forage for peace in the
concealed beauty of the world.



Caris Gaito, Burlington, VT



Eloise Van Meter, Fairlee, VT



Mejo Liao, San Juan Capistrano, CA



Koko Dando, North Ferrisburgh, VT



Lauren McCabe, South Burlington, VT



Vivien Sorce, Hinesburg, VT

COMMUNITY JOURNALISM PROJECT

Commentary about the issues and events of our time



Wishing You Well From Quarantine

Eloise Van Meter, Fairlee, VT

Art has been my greatest companion. Therapy helps. It does. Incredible how Ellen stays sane during these times. And incredible that she stays sane any time. Humans are amazing. My walks to the mailbox are filled with anticipation. Today the sun was hitting the golden letters on our mailbox. Warm today. Sometimes even late fall can feel so warm and comforting. On the walk back to the house I saw a raspberry branch dance. It swayed head and arms up and then went back to dormancy. I've started compiling these four-page booklets – personal zines really – a mixture of visual and literary reflection. This one's cover is a watercolor of a fenced-in, suburban backyard. Have you ever been to Marblehead, Massachusetts? It's a beautiful place, especially in the summer. You can kind of say that about most of New England: beautiful place, especially in the summer. Sometimes when writing poetry or rants (like this one), I make grammatical errors. I don't like to fix them though. I think that mistakes help to capture the moment when I wrote the thing – and that makes it stronger. Toni Morrison helped me feel good about that decision.

I have a magic stone which I wear around my neck every day. It symbolizes synchronicity with those whom I love. To those: I love you all. I send my best. I'm thinking of you.

Time Is Not on Our Side

Eleanor Freebern, Richmond, VT

Whittlers while away time with sticks
and knives.
Me, I wait with diamonds, scratching
lines into the sky.
Down, down, down, down, and then one
across.
One for every hour that waiting has cost.
Waiting in lines, praying for movement,
praying for a movement, temporary
resolution.
Are we still? Are we silent?
Are we quiet, defiant?
I see our hourglass, and it is mine.
Time is not on our side. I'm running out
of time.
Jokes pile up in boxes on my table.
The tales of our defeat stack up like
fables.
Lost, losing, choosing not to fight.
Will we stand up? Will we do what is
right?
And then what? What is our salvation?
Will it come like rain, soothing our
nation
or will it come like a wrecking ball
and leave us broken just like we were
so we can pick up our photographs
marked 2031?
But when the stars align, and fossil fuels
fail,
will we persevere, or die leaving a trail
of destruction, a lost past, a lost path?
And although I want to cry out, scream,
and bring our demise to a halt, simple,
like a dream,
I sit here, with my lights on,
contemplating, "What goes on when
we're gone?"
And yet,
I rhyme dream and scream, and wonder
what am I doing about all this?

I Am

Dahabo Abukar, Essex, VT

I feel like a little bird,
trapped in a small cage,
trapped by society's gaze,
trapped by my own race.
I am not a bird.

I feel like a tree,
reaching for the sun,
reaching for a chance,
reaching as high as I can.
I am not a tree.

I feel like a flower,
getting picked on by people who run,
getting picked on by everything's glare,
getting picked on by how I look.
I am not a flower.

I feel like everything that I am not;
I am treated as everything other than a
human being,
for my race makes it as though I am
undeserving of being treated as a human.
Our lives matter.
My life matters.
I am a human.
I am a person of color.

Say Their Names: A Photo Series

Francis Kautzman, Colchester, VT

These photographs were taken in the summer of 2020 during a Black Lives Matter protest on Church Street in Burlington, Vermont. The photos capture the expression and passion of the crowd marching through Burlington. In this work, I tried my best to capture close-up portraits of people's expressions as well as their signs. They are showing the people's reaction to the mistreatment of Black Americans across the nation. It made me feel hopeful that so many Vermonters were willing to show up to protest.



Sisters

Sarah Mitchell, Ashburn, VA

My friend and I walk to Starbucks,
two miles away, and we are dripping
sticky sweat by the time we get there.
We go unnoticed,
laughing, talking loudly, bright colorful
clothes.
A few glances.
No one cares.
We order and slurp down our frozen
frappes that are cool and melting,
flavorful and full of energy.
Not a single person says anything.

Why would they?
We are "normal."

Two white girls with brown and blonde
hair pulled back into loose ponytails,
shorts, T-shirts, whatever we found on
the floor of our closets that morning.

My sister and I walk to the park,
half a mile away, and we look
presentable when we get there.
We start attracting attention,
talking quietly, me in jeans and a shirt,
she in a rainbow of colors, and
our matching rainbow-checked Vans.
We get glares.
We start chasing each other around and
explore the newly placed equipment.
People murmur.

Why would they?
Because we are "different."
Two girls, thought to be friends, but
"how that girl is so much older,"
a white older girl, a black younger one.

Four years apart,
we look nothing the same,
but our love is all the stronger.

A young girl runs up, recognizing my
sister from school.
They run off playing on the castle
equipment.
I sit on the bench while my sister plays
and then we walk home.

Later that night, after dinner, after her
bedtime,
my sister is crying upstairs.
Why? You wonder.

Because her friend asked her why she
doesn't look like her family.
It's fine if she was just curious,
just oblivious to the adopted community.
She's only seven, so how would she
know?

So my sister told her
she was adopted from Rwanda, Africa.
She doesn't know her parents.
Everything.

And her friend thought she was lying,
thought it was a joke or a prank.
She said adoption was fake, that it only
happened in the movies.
Annie was fake, she said.
"My mom told me."

Yeah, well, news flash.
My sister thinks she's a freak,
and you're not helping.

We love her and you're harming our
relationship.
When I look at her, I don't see color, but
you do.
When I look at her, I see the sister I grew
up with.
So stop discriminating.

Just be kind.

It Is a Good, Good Body

Emma Paris, Putney, VT

You are not all perfect.
There are parts of you that you don't
want to explain;
there are pieces of you that contrast with
everything else.

Yet
people will call you beautiful
and you will like it.

But
chaos is beautiful too
and messy is beautiful
and flames are beautiful too.

Impulse lies uneasy in your joints
but feels welcome in the heart.

Water falters at the desert
yet pours from the spout.

You do not have to burn to be shining,
you do not have to throw yourself in the
flames
to become beautiful.

A deep heart is twisted around your ribs;
blood cannot paint,
so imagine your ribs to be pearly white.

If your heart became an ocean,
your lungs would freeze to become glass
caskets
already prepared for a dying breath.

As if the body were a metaphor for
mistakes.

My hair is tangled in fishing hooks.
The ocean loves flowers too.
She thinks they are
beautiful.

Like a girl would wish to have a skinnier
waist
to make her feel beautiful.
But beauty is not hungry
and beauty is not pain.

You can be yourself
and beautiful
in the same meal,
in the same crop-top,
in the same school,
in the same intake of breath.

Your body is not perfect,
but it is beautiful.
Your body is not perfect
but it is a good body.

Your body is good enough,
it is good enough,
it has always been good enough,
it is good enough for your soul.

Matar (To Kill)

Narges Anzali, Weybridge, VT

I am doing history homework
when I watch the Capitol fall.
(Ironic, isn't it? History
always repeats itself.)

We were trying to watch the
electoral votes being counted and
suddenly
a push, no, a wave
of red, exclamations about gas masks
and armed rioters, and for a second
I thought we had been transported
right back to where we had come from.
(God! my mother exclaims. *It
reminds me of Iran!*)
Please tell me what to do.
I am fifteen years old and I am watching
democracy burning, burning.
I am fifteen and I am watching a red
man sprawled over
the vice-president's seat, confident.
(It's funny, the smoke kind
of smells like spit & passion,
like hurt & tears, like
treason & smashed glass.)
There are pictures, guns drawn
and I watch the news anchors repeating
the same things over and over again
stuck in a time loop where we all watch
them
hang by the balcony, yell
obscenities at the camera.
Is this who we are? they ask.
(Yes, I think. This is who we
are. These are your Americans,
aren't they? In all of their
burning glory.)
I watch the red men on screen and
they seem subdued, hands shaking. They
finally

know what it feels like to be chased out
of a home.
The politicians on screen keep repeating
the words
democracy, democracy like a prayer that
will save us all,
democracy like an angel that will appear
out of the light.

(*This is the
goddamn United States of America!* he says.
Oh how
the mighty fall. Oh how the mighty have
fallen.)
I want to see us come together.
I wish I could tell you that I know we
are going to come together,
but I am fifteen and I am watching
an orange man spit on screen, manning
the attack,
cocking the guns.
I hum to myself as I make mac & cheese
in the kitchen for me
and my sister.

(*Oh beautiful, for spacious skies
for amber waves of grain*)
I go study my Spanish and I pray.
This is not the end of America. We have
come too far for that.
We are damaged, and we are bruised,
and we are dragging ourselves across our
floors,
but we are not yet done. There is a
Spanish verb, *matar*, which means to kill.
How do you kill a democracy?
I don't know, but today I discovered
how you wound it.

I am doing history homework
and I watch the Capitol fall,
and I hope I won't hear gunshots today.

Frayed

Vivien Sorce, Hinesburg, VT

Inspired by Amanda Gorman's poem, "The Hill We Climb," at the Inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris, Jan. 20, 2021.

On the night of Jan. 6, 2021, my hope was frayed. The events of our country deepened the running edges of my trust and ripped through the fragile fabric of democracy, freezing the world into silence. A void of uncertainty spread across the people, a void so delicate, lapping with tension, that it seemed even the slightest touch could tear free our connection, separating red and white, two peoples divided, two peoples that used to be united as one.

Now, as I stand with America on the vast expanse of history, we point our gaze upward to the horizon that awaits, our wounds slowly stitched together by new hope and collective belief in our new president and vice-president. As dawn prevails over the land, we look forward to a new day, a new era of America, where the people stand together, not as white or red, but as the vibrant orange of sunrise, united as one, bound tighter than ever by the lessons we have endured.

America, Part 2

Eleanor Hoopengardner, Arlington, VA

Hello, America.
It's been a while.
I guess things have cooled down
a little? You seem to be
doing better; have your
wounds healed?
Wait.
Forget I said that.
Your wounds aren't
healing; new ones pop up
all the time. I guess that
your previous ones have
cleaned up a bit -
bring on the antiseptic and cotton balls!
- but your wounds aren't
like a child's skinned knee where
antiseptic and
comfort can calm you. I can't
read you a bedtime story,
can't give you some soup,
can't help you in any form;

even if I could,
would I want to? You know,
I've finished watching the TV show,
"Lost In Space,"
and you remind me of the
robot. There are some scenes
where the robot is just a
broken figure, powerless. Then
there are other scenes where he is
alive, powerful, ready to
destroy anything that
contradicts his opinions on
what lives and
what dies.
I think you are like that,
and now I am staring
at your broken form, hoping that
you are never revived
to the terror of a nation
that you are.
You have a chance
to grow up and mature
right now. To be better.
Go ahead and take it.

The Consumerism Cycle

Madeleine Connery, Shelburne, VT

The feeling of new is sickeningly addictive. From a young age, we quickly discover that new stuff makes us “happy.” New toys or foods or places or clothes bring us so much excitement and temporary joy that for a moment we forget all other worries. This feeling brings a rush of excitement and light into our lives, yet the feeling fades quickly into boredom and dissatisfaction, thus calling for the cycle to repeat.

Consumerism plagues the mind, feeding profits in the wrong direction. The fuel for so much of our economy is people’s dependence on the idea and feeling of *new*. Whether it be through new experiences, new items, or new changes. We are taught to live our lives by absorbing as much of the world as possible as if we are a sponge designed to soak up every ounce of chance. Perhaps not all new is bad. In fact, new experiences and new people can shine a light on new parts of ourselves. However, many people seek it out through extremes or materialism, which often only conceal our identity. Society breeds insecurities and then sells empty promises. Yet no one ever teaches us about how the root of so many of our issues can be solved from within ourselves, because why would they? If you fix the whole problem, you can no longer sell the temporary solution.

The impacts of consumerism are deadly. From these low-quality fixes, we create larger problems. Take a look at our polluted planet, mental health failure, substance use normality, and crumbling infrastructure, and you see that this system does not have our best interest at heart. Our existence has become dehumanized all by numbered pieces of paper.

The truth about satisfaction is that it cannot be bought or sold. Once you stop being so dependent on objects, rushes of adrenaline, and validation, and start listening to your own heart, gut, and mind, you will become infinitely more satisfied with your life and the person you are becoming. Money buys external stability, not internal growth. At the end of the day, the only cure for dissatisfaction is hard work toward what is meaningful to you. Find what you like and use it to grow.



Lily Meyer, Montpelier, VT

November Existence

Charlotte Dodds, Burlington, VT

It's November, and music and words have long become a refuge for me. They always held open arms for me, but now more so than ever. Every minute without music feels like I am being strangled. My violin has sprouted both a piano and a guitar.

If I don't write, I explode. I need to describe in great detail the afternoon sun, and so many other things, or the world will crash and burn. I have read so many books this year, but it's difficult to tell if I have learned much from them.

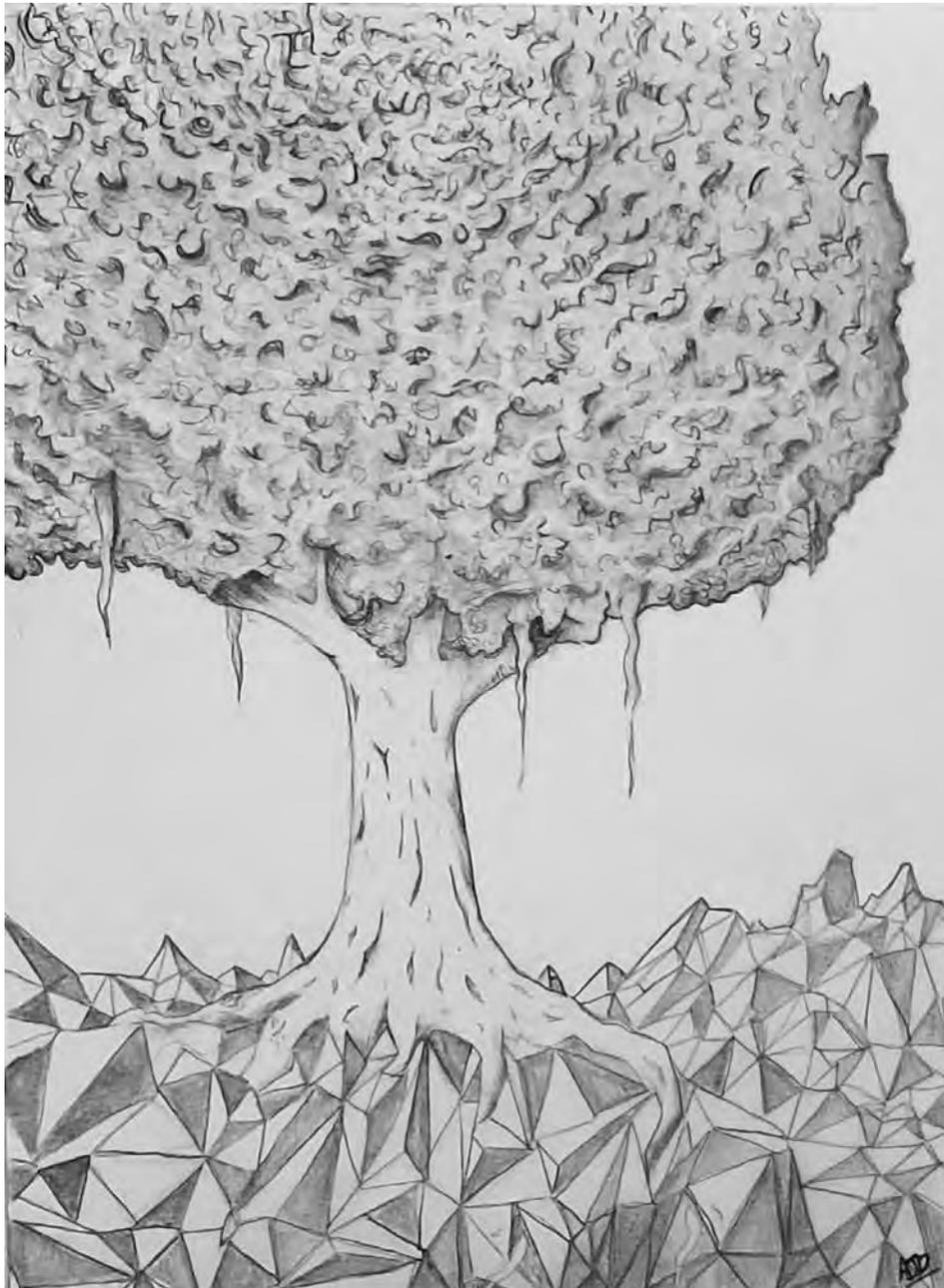
In summer, the floating emptiness of having no place to be that surrounded me forced me to apply for one too many fall programs. Now my schedule is messy, but I make desperate attempts to neaten it. I failed my license test because I didn't see the red stop sign. My mother sometimes points at one before my eyes find it and reminds me of traffic laws. She has become my best friend. I can't keep a secret from her. I tell her about my crush on the gelato man. She agrees that he's dreamy, but more importantly, his gelato is too. Even in November. There are some people I miss beyond feeling. I just want to sit in person and talk with them. I did, a bit. But then family members became sick. Social media is too draining to know how my friends are now.

Some days I forget to go outside and I fall asleep feeling unfulfilled and wronged. My dreams have become vivid and lucid, but never to the point where I can make my own decisions. I don't see many people other than my family or when I'm working. I make to-do lists to occupy myself with. Oftentimes I think that I didn't live long enough when everything was normal to truly remember how life can feel. But exercise drowns out my worries. At night, I bike around with my father and I run during the day. I run in the cold November air. It makes me sneeze and my throat winds up dry. Nobody trusts me after a November run.

I cook to bring salvation to my soul. Butternut squash and lentil stew, mushroom and chickpea bake, sourdough bread, lemon and balsamic vinegar glazed brussels sprouts, bowl of oatmeal after bowl of oatmeal after glorious bowl of oatmeal. Maple apple cake. I can't stop. It's therapy, to mix ingredients together and then taste something absolutely amazing.

Sometimes I feel down. Like Katerina from Margarita Liberaki's "Three Summers," the rain easily breaks my heart if I am inside the house, but it is my greatest joy when I am outside. I read about trees. I read poems by Elizabeth Bishop and books on being a better person. I read about Charles Darwin's theory of human origin. I read Harry Potter, go through a slight phase, then I read some George Orwell. I read Jane Austen's letters and encroach on her privacy. I read about the fossils that will be left when we are long gone from this planet.

I fear for the years of my life I am losing. I miss so many things; so many people. But late at night, I pile my blankets on top of me and read even more and write everything down inside Journal Number 5, which somehow I've managed to make my way to over these past few years. I feel content, in a mountain of cotton and feathers and old stuffed animals. I sleep deeply and peacefully in November.



Alden Bond, Middlesex, VT

Goodbye 2020

Katie Brennan Keech, Charlotte, VT

Goodbye 2020.
Goodbye masks
(*hopefully*).
Goodbye quarantine memes
and packages that still haven't arrived
and socially distanced hugs.

Goodbye 2020.
Goodbye foggy glasses.
Goodbye never sharing food
and missing loved ones
and too many advice columns.

Goodbye smiling too hard so people can actually tell you're smiling.
Goodbye backing away from your friends like you're magnets repelling each other.
Goodbye spending a horrific amount of time online every single day.
Goodbye hyperventilating when someone sneezes in the grocery store.
Goodbye president who doesn't know anything.

Goodbye 2020.
I won't miss you at all.



Grace Kafferlin, Williston, VT

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The publication of *Anthology 12* was made possible by a grant from



Thank you to these individual donors and partners: Bonnie Acker, Cathy and William Aikman, Ani Anderson, Caroline Anderson, Erin Anderson, Peter Anthony, Jessica Austin, Alan Averyt, Scott Barkdoll (for daughter Janet Barkdoll's 21st birthday), Jon Bellona, Daniel and Jane Bennett, John Berlind, Dennis Boggs, Branch Out Burlington!, Elizabeth Bundock, Burlington City Arts, Burlington Free Press, Mindy Clawson, John Colt, Jack and Vicky Cupp, Harold and Kimberly Dauerman, Suzanne Davis, David DiElsi, Frank and Joan Donath, Susan Donniss, Edith C. Hawksworth Trust, Edmunds Middle School PTO, Seimaj Eels, Christina Erickson, Ellen Fallon, David and Naomi Faltskog, Joanne Farber, Thomas Ferstle, Kathy Folley, Forward Philanthropy, Rachel Fowlkes, Barbara Frankowski, Fun is a Necessity, Valerie Gardner, Geoffrey Gevalt, Mary Glass, Anna Grady, Valerie Graham, Joan Grundhauser, Gustafson Living Trust, Dennis and Carolyn Hall, Recille Hamrell, Edward and Cheryl Heneveld, Jean Hopkins, Jeanny House, Karen House, Sam House, Gale Hurd, Jessica Hutcheson, Jacqueline Hyman, Jessica Hyman, Kingdom County Productions, Coree Kirsch, Merritt Knox, Suzanne Korschun, Carolyn Kuebler, Anne LaLonde, Anne Lampman, Gavin Ludovici, Kathleen Mackin, Gregory Maguire, Martha Maksym, Rita Markley, Michael Mathon, Mark McDermott, Bruce Melinn, Sean Melinn, Toni Millar, Deepali Mitragotri, Network for Good, Ann Page, Gina Pandolfo, Michele Patenaude, Jon Portman, Rowan Potzler, Ira Powsner, Patricia Prelock, Ellen Read, Ellen Reed, Smidgie Reid, Shannon Ripp, Andrea Rogers, Jacquelyn Schultz, Sophia Sharp, Percy Smith, Stephanie Spencer, Dawn Sprague, Peter Sutherland, Chug Talk, Charles and Mima Tipper, Helen Turner, Dana and Marc vanderHeyden, Bruce and Lillian Venner, Lisa Ventriss, Vermont College of Fine Arts, Vermont Learning for the Future, Julia Viazmenski, Justine Viets-McLean, VTDigger.org, Ted Wimpey, Anne Yates, Carolyn Zeller, and our anonymous friends.

Thank you to the YWP Board: Jacques Bailly, Kathy Folley (Board Record Keeper, Past President), Jessica Hyman (Board Treasurer), Reuben Jackson, Rita Markley, Nathaniel Millarhouse, Aimee Picchi (Board Vice-President), Hillary Read (Board President), Shannon Ripp, and Mindy Wong.



Emma Paris, Putney, VT



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