

sandhill review

A woman in a black dress and a light blue hat stands in shallow water, holding the hand of a child in a red shirt and a straw hat. They are both looking out over a vast body of water under a clear sky. The water is calm, reflecting the light. There are some rocks or small islands in the distance.

Volume 21: *Belonging*



Alaina Plowdrey

Army Gathering





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Foreword

This year's theme of Belonging touches the very essence of who we are. Belonging means we are an integral and cherished part of a group, a place, an experience, or a culture—in other words, something larger than ourselves. The bonds we have with other members who belong are often steadfast and strengthened through our shared knowledge, experiences, memories, emotions, and values.

Although the current theme was selected last summer before the onset of the coronavirus, it couldn't be more appropriate for where we find ourselves at this very moment. We all belong to an international effort working to address the universal threat of the pandemic. Whether quarantined, self-isolated, or socially distanced in order to save lives, we belong to something larger than ourselves.

This issue, featuring poems, prose, and artwork selected before the pandemic, nevertheless reflects the gratifying feeling of belonging that many of us are experiencing right now and the desolate feeling we have when we are forgotten or ignored. They all affirm that belonging is fundamental to our humanity.

In these pages, we're excited to debut the winners of our new student writing contest, the Kurt Wilt Prize for Student Writing. Dr. Wilt—Kurt—taught creative writing at Saint Leo for over 35 years, up until just weeks before his death in 2016. Besides welcoming thousands of students into the community of writers, he wrote the words to the University's alma mater song, creating a musical, poetic source of belonging for us all.

Congratulations to our students Sarah El Naamani, Gracie Elizabeth Swind, and Christian Farrior!

Gianna Russo, Editor-in-Chief, Spring 2020



Sarah El Naamani

The Wonders of a House of Worship: Sidon's Mosque

Sometimes you walk into a place and have an overwhelming feeling of happiness. This feeling imitates the rush of a rollercoaster at the moment of the drop, the happiness of the moment when you hug someone you love that you haven't seen for years. That beautiful feeling lasts for a few minutes. Now, combine those two moments in a potion and sip it every now and then for maximum effect. That is the exact feeling you succumb to when you enter a mosque.

The first time you embark on the journey of visiting Sidon's Mosque, you will be astounded by its exterior and interior beauty. The outside calls you in so it can suck the sadness out of you. The walls are straight, but the top middle is round and it looks as if it gave birth to another round top—I used to call them the top buns. The Mosque has four long thin towers situated on its four corners. The exterior color of light brown, which turns into dark brown after a rainy day, reminds you of the desert. The top buns are colored blue to emit a feeling that you will achieve clarity when you enter this house of God.

The first thing you really notice when you enter the Mosque is the high ceiling which holds the most stunning chandeliers, big and small, with thin rods that hold them in place. The flooring is made of carpet that screams comfort and prestige. The walls are built to mesmerize you with their scripture writings and wood carvings that probably took months to make. The tiny windows are the only thing that connect you to the outside. The light flows generously inside hitting you right in the soul, enlightening you. The night is

welcomed with open arms for the night prayers and that is when the chandeliers come to life and their electric light give you a sense of contentedness.

It is only when the Imam calls for prayer that you feel the incessant need to cry. It is when he approaches the microphone and starts with, “Allahu Akbar,” which bounces through the walls and jumps into your ears that you feel every worry, every doubt, and every hurt you’ve had dissolve with his resonating, exquisitely haunting voice. It is when you sit on the carpet after prayer and lightly laugh with your new acquaintances or when you read the Quran for guidance or pleasure that you feel a sense of oneness, community, and belonging, altogether.

The first time I entered that mosque, I was five years old. I remember every detail and every feeling because I could not stop talking about it for weeks. Even today, at twenty years old, I still have the same sense of astonishment every time I go into any mosque. I look for that kind of beauty in everything, I yearn for that feeling in everyone I meet and in everything I seek, I search for something new to refurbish the parts of my eternal soul.

Patricia Campion

The center of the labyrinth

She stands pale and tall at the back of the square
Mute and calm and as always waiting
They used to call her the Celestial Jerusalem
Who shone ivory and royal blue even in the grey
and brown of winter
The Church built her on the highest hill
On top of the Celtic mound and the Roman temple
From miles the pilgrims watched her come into focus
Among the fields level as an altar
Way back when they came in long files
To watch history sealed in pictures
on its stained-glass windows
Then head for the labyrinth of black stones
crimped in the floor of the nave
A remnant of Druidic wisdom the pilgrims still walk
Slowly
Quarter by quarter
Clockwise then counter-clockwise
As a prayer a penance in hope or in sorrow
Until they reach the center
And the promise of peace

I've never walked to the center
I turned my back on my Lady of Chartres
To walk a wider labyrinth
On a path that took me
To the green hills of County Laois
and the Cumberland Plateau
To the dry slopes of the Bolivian Altiplano
and the San Joaquin Valley
To the sticky heat of the bayou and the Florida beaches
To the luscious groves of the Mindo cloud forest
and the Sierra Madre Occidental

To the volcanic shores of Costa Rica Hawaii Iceland
and New Zealand
Clockwise and counterclockwise
Mile after mile
Looking for my focus
But always coming back to tell my Lady
About the puffins in the artic circle the dinosaur prints
in Torotoro the glow worms in Te Anau
Because she is still waiting in the square in Chartres
Mute and calm and tall and pale
For me to walk to the center of the labyrinth



Elaine Person

Belonging in Church

Mariah Colón

where's florida?

right at the gulf, atop
 a pearl, just left
to the second greatest ocean:
 plenty of beaches for the east coast.
 toward the middle, the most magical
place on earth. living above: two neighbors,
blackberry and peach. the rest
 surrounded by salty seas. home
 of warm citrus:
 first tough then tender. below
 the states, isolated yet adjoining
clinging to the two friends above: almost an island,
but it knows it belongs to us. under tourists
 spreading their wings
 ready for sunny days, all year.
even when there's hurricanes
 it's the sunshine state, burning bright.

modeled after "where's carolina?" by Erie Shockley

Homes

Rhode Island

Rhode Island is the saltiest state in the Union. Deep in its heart, where no nonnative would dare enter, is the salty air. It carries on it the taste of the sea, the smell of the tide, the crash of the waves, the sight of the foam, the vacuum of sand beneath curled toes. The atmosphere is familiar and wicked comfortable for those who have grown up cradled by the coast.

The briny seawater sloshes over the edges of the state. The ever-present saltwater is appreciated as a whole, though, since it invites the nickname of “The Ocean State” rather than “The State with That Funny-Looking Chicken as Its Official Bird” or “The State with the Longest Name No One Can Ever Remember” or “That’s in New York, Right?”

In Rhode Island, the people are saltier than the air or the water. This is not a debatable point but a fact. Their rough Rho-Dyelin’ accents and aggressive roadway habits are rounded out by their surprising devotion to family loyalty, which makes the state’s inhabitants not harsh but piquant: pleasantly sharp and thus equivalent to the salt running through their

.

Rhode Island is a small state and therefore a compact one. The state can be driven through the long way, diagonally, in an hour. Everything is close by, so having to drive more than twenty minutes in either direction for anything is irritating—like salt in the wound.

The official motto of the state is “Neither a road nor an island, but definitely salty.”

Cumberland

Once a year the people of Cumberland all go out of their houses and gather at a festival named for the town. This occurs in early August. There are games and rides, and food trucks of all varieties. The attendees do not judge the offerings too harshly but they do pay close attention to each other, as the festival is their scheduled yearly appointment to observe one another. This is not the only time that Cumberlandites converge in public or “happen” to run into each other knowing full well it is probable given the circumstances. It also occurs daily at the meat shop on Mendon, located at the corner of postal service and pharmacy.

This common instance of seeing someone familiar is a well-known (and sometimes dreaded) quality of the state, and more specifically the town. Hair must be done, makeup must be decent, and sweatpants must remain at home if there is to be any hope of avoiding this inevitability. Step outside the house and a recognizable face is bound to be waiting somewhere. Around the corner, up the street, across town. Someone knows someone you know, even when roaming elsewhere in the country. No matter the destination, all travels or moves or visits are likely to bring Rhode Islander together with fellow Rhode Islander.

Cumberland is part of the top right corner of the smallest state in the United States of America, and the town reflects its position. Although its people do not act as though they are the center of the universe, they do claim their place toward the top of society. They land generally in the upper middle class—or in the middle middle class, to be more precise. But the other towns accuse these residents of thinking they are always right, just because they live in the right neighborhoods.

The land knows her role as trophy wife and allows the gentlemen around her to wait on her while she sips on lemonade. The men wait in other states, though. Those masculine mountains stand at attention and yearn for her soft diamond hills from afar.

modeled after “States” by Emily Mitchell

Erika Girard

where's li'l rhody?

dusk of summertime, dawn of
hell's riptide, sole witness
to futile fast-paced bike rides:
cycling paths of occasional doom.
manifest in heartbeats, misunderstood as
a pulp. inhaling del's lemonade: drifting in
exhausted monotony. within
a kaleidoscope of impulse. birthplace
of vinny paz, comeback king:
less hazing than fazing. walking
the poverty line, overachieving, underearning.
mansion district: counterfeit drug lords,
high and mighty. providence waterfire:
divine spark. among
body-riddled alleyways.
beyond reality: lovecraft's secret muse.
streak of independence. naked truth.

modeled after "where's carolina?" by Erie Shockley

Paola Irizarry

The Right Mother

The moment I saw you from the sky you felt like home, as if a missing daughter were coming back after twenty years. I'm not one for quiet. The city has always been familiar, the fast pace and the noise you can never shut out have been with me since the day I came out of my mother's womb. However, your calmness and your emerald fields have called me. I had never seen you and yet there was a connection between you and me. If there's such a thing as a past life, I know you were my mother not so long ago.

If I traveled a mile down any road, chances are, I'd meet new neighbors and the first living thing I'd see next to someone would be a sheep or a horse. Everyone seemed to know one another, unlike my city where one would think there's a better chance to know one's neighbor. The softness of your skin, the beauty of your people, and the harsh edges of your cliffs had me wonder what secrets you held underneath, how powerful they were to move your sons and daughters into fighting for you. I'm a stranger on your body and yet you make me feel what I could never get from my own mother: safety.

The moment it was time to say goodbye, my tears flowed like your never-ending rivers. I was a child being pulled back from my mother's arms only to go back to the stress and the noise I so much dislike. Sometimes I wonder if it was all true, if you made me feel that way so much that I write about you as if I understand you. Literature has described you into perfection. You are natural and captivating, you are soft and gentle, yet stern and wild. They call you Emerald Isle.



Winner of the Kurt Wilt Prize
for Student Writing in Poetry

Sarah El Naamani

where's lebanon?

within 10,452 km²,
 in the midst of 18 sects,
mentioned in the old testament 70 times,
 the white one as jeremiah puts it.
bordered by poseidon's fortunes,
 scorched by isis and the promised land.
cultured in art,
home of the prophet.

where religion is an identity
 that grants you power or poverty.
deserted by 14 million souls,
 rebounded by 2 million refugees.
functioning on 12 hours of electricity,
setting fire to car wheels for revolutions.

destroyed and rebuilt 7 times
 until they called it *the phoenix*.
sanctuary for 15 rivers,
 all from different mountains.
in coffee shops playing cards
 and smoking hookah.
listening to edm at night
 and fayruz in the morning.
engraved in my grandfather's mind, gifted
to me in of adventurous stories.
in the memory of my beautiful grandmother
 who visits my dreams just to remind me of home.
untamed, deep in the wilderness of civilization,
 it is a rebellious teen, burning with a desire to be free.

when they ask you where you're from

hold your head high and enunciate
Lebanon

when they ask you where that is
do not explain to them it is close
to the pyramids or the Holy land

when they raise their eyebrows in question
tell them to find it themselves
because they are missing out

when they ask you how you write from right to left
tell them, your brain is a miracle of generations
of doctors and lawyers so it's easy for you

when they ask if there's a war there, do not look down
instead tell them that there is a war in everyone
and that every night ends with music and hookah

tell them about the revolution that has been building
up because of decades and decades of injustice
show them how your country asks for freedom

tell them the news can sometimes deceive
share the stories of every father that left their home
for their kids to have a better future

when they ask you why you came here
explain to them how much your heart aches
to hug your grandfather, how you buried

your grandmother and your old life in one day
read the scriptures you wrote about your dreams
tell them about your pride and strong will

roll your r's with pleasure
tell them your tongue needs to reverberate
because of your indecisive nature

and when they tell you to go back to where you came from
stand your ground and do not dare to cry
tell them, with your head held high,

you will return with the wonders you have yet to learn,
tell them that your home is a work in progress, just like you.

Paola Irizarry

The Depth of My Island

You have always been a part of me as I have of you. I should miss you, or at least that is what they say. I should be able to write this memoir without trouble. So, why has it become so complicated to describe you? Your other children are so loud and content to speak of you and protect you until the end. Yet all I can think about is the broken streets and the constant rains. The crowd of people that create massive traffic, leaving me stuck for two hours on the highway, the same amount of time that it takes to go from one end of the island to the other. The constant change in power due to no one's ability to pick a side and everyone being easily persuaded. The corruption of all those who are meant to protect us. The fear at midnight at the start of the year because a bullet might be fired into the air by someone trying to show dominance. The dirt left on your lands by those who said they wouldn't hurt you. The anxiety of walking down a street unsure of what is coming around the corner. The struggle of not being able to maintain a roof over our loved ones.

It's not to say that I don't love you, or that all who live amongst you are bad people. I know there's good and evil all around us, even I suffer with imperfections inside me. I do certainly miss some parts of you, like the beauty of my native tongue that allows me to communicate with twenty other countries. The cold breeze that comes in an hour before the sun rises. Your green mountains filled with the songs of your native birds and the gentle sound of your coqui, that if pulled away from your arms will perish. The ocean that surrounds you and the hot weather that was engraved in my body the day I was born. I miss your culture, the people dancing down the

streets and the creations of your spices. I miss the aroma of coffee brewing outside the garage as family gossips and laughs. The bittersweet taste on rum inside a *pina colada* on a hot beach day and the starlit nights one sees after driving away from the city. My journey in life is not to be with you, but to teach others about you. There's always going to be a part of me that loves you because at the end of the day, I am you.

Florida

The state of Florida has a toxin in its air. Those who have lived here their entire lives can't smell it at all. But outsiders can detect it. It has a rich scent promising visitors white sand beaches, vast blue oceans, and warm tropical air. The air doesn't deeply affect short-term visitors. It relaxes them, rejuvenates them, makes them drink just a little too much. The atmosphere is a drug for these visitors. It makes them want more. So, they come back again and again until they decide they want to stay for good.

However, once these visitors finally settle in Florida, the infection begins. The warm air takes root in their brains. It latches onto the frontal lobe and drives the hosts insane. The hosts will find themselves increasingly thirsty for alcohol and will be more inclined toward risky behavior. While both males and females fall victim to this condition, the toxin has a higher chance of infecting male brains as the poison responds well to testosterone. Once they've breathed in the air (and used a dosage of heroin for good measure), the males undergo a unique metamorphosis that is so drastic their own families don't recognize them. Effectively, they become Florida Men. Florida Men are easy to recognize with their long, tangled beards. They emit an odor smelling of stale alcohol as a warning for visitors to keep their distance. Typically, these creatures can be found committing unthinkable acts only the air could influence. Natives of the state tell stories of their strange feats such as:

“Florida Man Doesn't Get Straw,
Attacks McDonald's Employee.”

“Florida Man Arrested After Hitting Dad with Pizza Because
He Was Mad He Helped Birth Him.”

“Florida Man Arrested with Cocaine-Stuffed Lunchables.”

“Rattlesnake-carrying Florida Man Claims to Be
‘Agent of God’”

Residents who aren't infected are advised to avoid Florida Men. This is because Florida Men have an active venom in their teeth that can speed up the infection process if a victim is bitten. In short, if a Florida Man bites a male, that male will transform into a Florida Man. However, if a Florida Man bites a female, she'll turn into the rare and elusive Florida Woman. These beings are just as crazy as Florida Men, but their chances of attacking a human vary. Most of the time, Florida Women can be found in the bathroom of a bar or on the beach passed out, completely nude, and covered in their own vomit. While male visitors to the state will find themselves seduced by the Florida Women's sun-kissed bodies, they are advised not to make any contact. Contact with the Florida Women will only lead to the infection spreading quicker. Besides, a Florida Man could have already claimed her as his mate.

Many Florida Men have tried emigrating to other states to pass along their viruses. However, they are always prevented from leaving for two distinct reasons. First, the state of Florida has a law stating that anyone infected by the air must be prevented from leaving even the country, let alone the state. Second, the atmosphere of Florida is an addictive substance. Its sweet, citrusy scent hooks the Florida Men, making them utterly dependent on it. Some of the air's victims swear they have heard the wind speak to them, whispering, *“Come here. Stay here. There's nothing for you out there in the world of normalcy. You belong here in the tangled vines and swampy air. You are a creature of the wild, and you always will be. You belong here. You belong to me...”*

Audrey Ward

On the West Shore of Tampa Bay

Head straight on I-275 towards gulf beaches

FL-60W on to Main Street:

famous resort and spa

Tall palms sway down the boulevard

two-lane road connects each

entrance & exit

Station 52, cafes & shops

library surrounded by branches of beauty

Safety Harbor

Oak trees warm

the tucked away gazebo

invite all to embrace quiet

murals on walls of men and women

showcase the Chamber of Commerce

a taste of Greece from Athens

Parades on holidays unite the town

neighbors and businesses decorate

with lights, music, and beads

sit back on the curb and enjoy

fresh breeze at your fingertips

Marina & city pier

open to the public where birds of paradise shine

sailboats on Tampa Bay

docked near Veterans Memorial Lane

City pier immersed with liveliness

seaweed below your feet

watch for dolphins

sun dwindles in the harbor

Cheryl A. Van Beek

What's Left

The ones who raised me are gone.
My edges erased—
I am loose graphite threads, stray pencil marks
outside the answer box,
erasure shavings and smudged fingerprints—
the DNA of who I was with them, to them.

On a partly redacted page,
empty space has its own shape.
I traipse through its maze,
try to retrace
my faint, broken outlines.

A bottle of liquid paper spilled
on my beliefs, I scratch
the hardened white out, but can't see
what was underneath.

The answers are not in the inked out, erased,
they're in what remains.

Like words on a crossed out page,
They call to each other

across the white gulf.
Some memories huddle
as the ones in between dissolve.
I move forward across the page of me
trying to see what belongs.

My pen tosses an ink tarp
over pointy words,
changes the shape of my story.
Its silhouette speaks the language of missing.

Between what is lost
I begin to find syntax.
Can I create a new text
from these blanks and shadows
of what's left—
write a new story from what I select?
Maybe I will become
an erasure poem.

Andrea McBride

After

People tell me color
has returned to my face
and I wonder how much
like a ghost I looked
and how much more ghostly
she must have felt giving away
all her belongings
her very world
paling.

Amanda J. Forrester

At Mom's

My pilled, gold fleece blanket
with its tattered satin edges lies
on the dated rental carpet,
Winnie the Pooh sheet stretched
on top beneath Kenny Rogers
hanging on the wall of my weekend
room. Pallet made, I spray
Scrubbing Bubbles on bathroom ashtrays,
squirt Dawn on spaghetti-stained plates and push
a Hoover across sticky linoleum.
Mom rolls a joint and watches
Bob Ross and cooking show after
cooking show while Barbie and Ken
cheat on each other at the dream pool,
next to Winnie while Kenny watches.

At mom's
cigarettes burn down to melted nubs,
spaghetti sauce boils onto tin foil-lined burner
reflector bowls, and a five-year-old makes
sure the place doesn't burn down around mom,
passed out with a feather pillow over her eyes.

Everything at mom's
is wicker and yarn with green, pointy leaves
plastered in lacquer or glass-topped, tobacco-tarnished.

At mom's I hear

Stop running

Hands off the walls

Shut up

the *F* and *GD* words

At home, I hear laughing, soap operas, Dallas
and Looney Tunes, my dog's bark, and birds singing.
I see a fish pond and my muddy toes, worms and cane poles.
I make mud cookies with camphor berries and lizard tails
and drink from the water hose. At night, I sit
on the arm of the recliner where I belong and feel
my granny's arm around me
and her steady heart beating.

Cath Mason

Mum Fan Club

where you used to be there is a hole in the world,
Edna St. Vincent Millay

We, your children, dismantle
your home, take pieces to ours.
We scatter your life across towns,
cities, countries. On our shared
WhatsApp chat we trade photos:
your bathroom candlesticks on
Caroline's windowsill, cities away from
the house to which we cannot return.
Pete shows cake on your fancy plates.

I set your rose cup with tea on an outside
table in Florida, Caroline shows a matching cup
cradling cappuccino in her kitchen nook.
Of course, your preemie, lambkin-Michael, stacks
every corner of his home with your lamps;
your deep red recliner; your twisted-legs
table; your small teapot he uses daily;
the ugly, dumpy chair we all love.
Your baby grand now stands in Michael's
back room, looks like it has always lived there.
He even retrieved from the trash pile
that plastic light-blue first aid box
-the one from our childhood- as if
he could mend you back into life.

Gator Girls

It was 2006 when I realized something was wrong with my mom. She kept asking me the same question over and over. It was clear that she hadn't forgotten the answer. It was that she didn't realize she'd asked the question though it was the same one she'd asked 10 minutes earlier and 10 minutes before that.

The diagnosis was mild cognitive impairment. That would become dementia. Eventually, she would end her days in 2019 at an Alzheimer's care facility.

But she never forgot me, and she never forgot the Gators. We were the Gator girls.

We got our season tickets in 1988. It was before the Gators ever experienced any real success, before a Southeastern Conference Championship, long before any Gator fan dreamed of a national championship. We wore our orange and blue, we yelled when the defense was on the field, we sang "We Are the Boys" at the end of the third quarter, and we felt like we helped the team—win or lose.

Eventually, my daughter would join us at games. That was 2011 when Bella was eight and Mom was slowly moving deeper into dementia. We still sang, cheered, and yelled.

Outside the Gator stadium is an area paved with bricks where fans can donate money and personalize their own brick. We have one. It says "Gator Girls: Amy, Kathryn, and Bella." Mom never saw it. By the time I gave it to her as a Christmas gift, it was too late, though I did not yet know that. By the next season, it was too confusing, too much for her.

But Mom never forgot we were the Gator girls. It didn't matter if it was spring or summer; for Mom, it was

football season. She wanted to know how the team was doing. She had on her Gator shirt. She was ready to watch the game.

We belonged to the Gators, and they belonged to us.

We got our own commemorative brick in addition to the one at the stadium. I gave that to mom.

I brought the brick to my house after I packed up Mom's home to move her into a care facility, but as I sorted through her other belongings and clothes, I forgot to save something formal for her funeral. It never occurred to me.

Instead, I buried my Gator girl in her Gator shirt.

I watch the games. I cry. I've been a fan all my life. It isn't the first time the Gators, who've had a knack for losing in heartbreaking fashion, have made me cry, but it's different. I cry for a real loss.

Mom is with me always. My Gator girl belongs to me forever. But I miss the cheering, the yelling, the singing, and the swaying. I miss her saying before every game that she thinks the band is bigger this year. I miss my best friend, my Gator girl.

Megan Nowell

Sleepovers

Saturday nights were nice enough,
Filled with midnight trains and
Playing Rummikub until my eyes drooped,
My sister already curled up in the guest room.

But Sundays were *my* days,
Warm bright light filtering through
Amber tinged curtains that had seen better times.
We had no use for alarm clocks.

Someone had died in this room.
But it was just Papaw's creaking chair.
Somehow I felt connected to my great grandparents
More in that room than any other.

My childhood was spent one weekend at a time,
With Grandma stewing apples into oatmeal,
A hurried shout down the hall that we'd be late for church,
 The smell of a warm casserole waiting for us to get back.

I miss those morning rituals now.
The church is the same,
But we've outgrown it overnight.
 The sermons don't echo in my ears anymore.

Now when I bring my own daughter
To the halls of my mother
And my mother's mother I wonder,
How long will this last?

Will she be old enough to remember this house?
We pick okra and beans from the garden
Next to the cow pasture,
But the cows are gone now.

Crying

Waaaaaaaaaaaaabbbbbbb... The Baby's crying was the spell that triggered the curse put on me. Fear presented itself in front of me and tears flooded my eyes.

It was freezing cold in Voorhees Children Hospital, and I sat there waiting, alone, in a chair. Swinging my legs, patiently waiting. The afternoon came around, and my father came into the waiting room and told me, "*Venga que Renny estas aqui*" (Come, Renny is here).

I got up, somewhat excited and ran to my father. I held his hand as we walked through the hallways, with nurses and doctors and odd-looking machines all over. And a weird smell, I just didn't know how to explain it. We came to a door with my mother's name on it and walked in. I saw my mother and I ran to her screaming, "Mamiiii!"

I was coming in for a hug until she stopped me and said, "Noooo, Julie, be quiet, I'm carrying him right now, I can't hug you."

I backed away slowly and just waved.

She said, "Look Julie, Renny...say hi."

I waved at him and said, "Hi Renny."

The doctors walked in and my dad pointed to the corner chair to go sit down. I sat and ignored whatever my parents and the doctors were talking about. But I started to think, *Why did Mami not want my hug? And now, I actually have a little brother now.* I was stuck with millions of things running through my mind.

The doctor left a few minutes later and I got up to go see Renny. I put my finger on his feet to see if it would tickle him, but instead of laughing, he began to cry. Confused and

scared, I backed up and said, “I didn’t do anything.” He continued to cry and cry, scream and cry. Out of nowhere, I got a bad feeling down my spine and my mom said, “Julie what did you do? He was just sleeping; why did you touch him? Go over there and sit in the corner and relax.”

I went to the corner and sat. And I sat. Maybe a few hours went by. Finally, I got up and told my dad I was hungry, that maybe we could get some food. And he said, “Ahora, No, Julie” (Not now, Julie).

Later came and still no food. My father said he was taking me home, to get some clothes to take to sleep over Mama’s (my grandmother’s) house. “No one is going to be home”, he said. He had to be in the hospital with my mom.

As I was leaving, I saw my mom just cuddled up and warmed up with Renny. And my dad took forever to leave because he was right there with her. I was beginning to get jealous.

Papi dropped me off at Mama’s house, and I was still hungry. She told me to go to bed, and even though I was hungry, I couldn’t eat because Mama always said that it is bad to eat past 10 pm. Laying down with my eyes wide open, and many thoughts running through my mind, I came to a realization. I now had a little brother name Renny, and with just one day of him being born, I had already been put to the side and forgotten. I had just turned five.

Megan Nowell

Next Parish Over

Isn't it a strange occurrence
That I have waded across oceans
Only to find myself
In the faces of those who never left?

My doppelgangers stare back at me
Not seeing that our resemblances were
Encoded in the DNA of our ancestors
Diluted by time and distance.

We carry the trauma of our diaspora
Heavy on our backs like luggage
And as my cousins welcome me home
They call me Maggie and I don't correct them.

Cheryl A. Van Beek

Found in Translation

Family has its own language.
Mine were not writers, yet they taught me to write.
The lilt of their voices echoes
in the chamber of memory, vibrates in my own.

Despite my aunt's efforts, I can't carry a tune.
But I still sing her old songs, hold their rhythms
inside me, recall all the words.

I carry my own words like a jug of water
on my head, trying to balance them
till they reach the place where they will flow.

I didn't inherit my mother's sewing brilliance,
but I unfold threads and textures on the page
just as she spread out her patterns
on the dining room table, arranging
and following their lead till a picture forms.

My uncle taught me to trim dead branches,
freeing the tender, green wood inside to grow.
I prune a poem's words to spark its energy
so it will sprout, burst through the page.

In meter and prose, I translate the pulse
of our life together, remembered beyond words
in pictures and sensations, in the green,
vining part of me—sewing a tune through the loam
of imagination twining over time.



Elaine Person

The Great Falls in Paterson, NJ

Christine Cock

Roan Mountain

In a wood,
on a mountain enveloped by scudding clouds
earth opens,
 to the threading creek cleaving deeper
 and darker,
to layer below layer of our braided past.

Thrush song crisscrosses water-dappled
 openings, lace-winged light.

And their hollow echoes say:

*Let go of sorrow
 clinging like moss on fallen limb.
Stand among the tangled maps of old ones.*

*Let spirits wake; feel yourself seep into root and rock
 where leaf and rot lie
quiescent in evening's subtle gloam.*

Going to Anza Borrego

As you set out for Anza-Borrego
make sure
that when you drive the elevations
out of San Diego it has rained:
a rain that missed
those other deserts in your life—
that never whetted
their blossoming in your youth.
Go at the end of a wet winter,
when the creosote bush
is on the air and its 10,000-year-old
clone ellipse is spread out on the sand.
Be glad for the missing high wheeze of jets,
the missing contrails,
and the silent jackrabbits.
Pitch your tent near red-blooming ocotillo
and thorny mesquite.
Hike the sinuous narrows of Slot Canyon. Forget
all your other canyons with their
dry river beds
and their empty echoes of your voice.
Watch the long, late light slide across
the sand and the cholla and Split Mountain.
Sit down in the silence as dark comes down
with all its stars.

Edith Freeman

The Summer River Tales

Summer River turns south
Near Pike County
A magnet for senior men.
Each morn the six await
The summer sun's rising;
Biding the past night's gloom
To soon depart.
On the river's shady east bank
They unwind tall tales;
Watching boys splashing
And chasing snakes upriver.

One tale warns
Of the river's deep bed;
Of boys drawn to snakes, to danger.
Some lost forever where
The river rushes down a cliff
Falling into the mighty Mississippi:
Boys owed more time in life
Men who own more tales.
Bonded by will by heart
They welcome each
New day's untried start.

Angelina Troche

loose petals

facing upwards, smiling at the sky
the sunflowers whisper good morning to their mother as she
rises.
she warms them, simultaneously warming my face as I stare
out into the vast
openness
in front of me.
golden and homey and
safe.
the only place I can go to get away from the overthinking
and loudness that college brings;
quiet hours don't do anything to contain the rowdy, wild
students inhabiting my building.
running down the hallways
and screaming
and playing ding dong ditch on each other.
but the meadow
makes me feel
whole,
as if the outside pressures drift away
with a cumulonimbus cloud.
this isn't my patch; I just never see anyone else visiting.
only mother,
and she understands my reasons for being in such a desolate
place
when my mind is the furthest thing from uninhabited
and when my heart is the furthest thing from bruised
and battered – like the old building at the end of the field
that stands dilapidated, yet strong in defiance

of its outside stressors and problems.

I come here to forget
for a short time, hoping
to find home.

Christine Cock

In the Deepening

My hand wanders
 across a braille map stroking
scars, cuts, burns, sun spots, veins raised

like exposed roots.

 Fingers curve around the furrowed arc of his neck,
fitting like a ball and socket,

traveling past mended collarbone, around his shoulder,
 on down,
gripping muscles once corded as ironwood,

down onto a forearm, covered
 curling, reddened hairs that catch
sawdust, spider webs, soot.

It's to the back of the neck
 where my hand again gains purchase,
lingering

on ruts and wrinkles, the smell of tractor grease,
 diesel fuel,
mown hay and orange blossoms,

rows of sweet onions, staked tomatoes.

 As I pull his body
down, my palm is seared by sun-baked flesh.

It is *our land* in the deepening
 crease of his neck:
grit, manure, creek bottom, chattering wrens,

the cadence of night frogs,
 small fires burning.
This is what fills the bowl of my tilting pelvis;

this is earth pouring into me.

Peter M. Gordon

Belonging

My girlfriend and I were careful –
condoms, diaphragm, spermicide.
But one time after a party we weren't.

This was the Seventies, in college.
I proposed. She said, "I can't belong
to a man. Besides, it's not like

we were serious." That's a hard way
to learn that. I asked her to live with me..
"This was a mistake," she whispered.

I said part of that baby belongs to me. I offered
to raise the child if she would just have it.
"You'll never need to see it again," I promised.

Even now, forty years after, I can still see
her brown eyes looking into her future.
The mother of my child.

"No," she said.

I gave her fifty dollars toward the cost.
We broke up a couple months later.
Funny, I can't remember anything
we said when we split.

Angelina Troche

//where's home?//

simultaneously
east and west of the freckled nose
that would nudge me when i was falling asleep during
our latest rerun of friends. my heart
was captured south of his thick eyebrows,
that raised when i started laughing at a joke before i could spit
it out. smack in-between the ears that would listen to me
rant about how he didn't always treat me
like i deserved to be.

he tried to be better after that.
home lay north of the pink lips, corners turned up, accenting
the dark stubble around his mouth.

i lost
myself completely when he looked at me; his eyes made me
question what the word "brown" even meant.
i would stare at him,
his almond-shaped eyes absorbing the sunlight,
transforming into a warm honey.
we drove to the beach one day,
hoping to make it for sunset.
his crow's feet suddenly appeared; he'd caught me!
ogling, of course.
"what are you lookin' at goofball?" he asked.
"nothin' special," i responded, my nose crinkled,
eyes rolled the back of my head, as if to
dispel, deflect the warmth emulating from my heart.
i reached across the weathered center

console of his nissan versa to poke the side of his cheek,
giggling like a little girl playing with a puppy.
he caught my hand as i tried to reel it back
bringing our intertwined fingers
to his chest,
deciding to lock eyes with me. his soft gaze resulted
in the breaking
down
of my resolve in totality.
God—i was in deep.

Karen Beardslee Kwasny

The Boulevard

You left the light at full speed, your red car flashing dust,
chrome spinning out on blacktop.

I could feel your slender foot on the gas pedal,
your pink toes pressing hard.

I imagined myself
you—
my spine pressed against the bucketed back,
my fingers holding the leather wheel for purchase.

When the horn sounded behind me,
I started
climbing your rhythm, swaying over the rolling road before me,
picking up speed with each decline—
50, 55, 70.

I could feel we two measuring the distance
between not us and them,

clocking the time from me to you
and again.

My fingers curled around the handle,
you rode the curb
loose and easy,
blurring my vision to your hands
(slide smooth across my thighs
up the throttle
hugging the curve.)

To own that road and me
you drove past the limits,
your breath hot at my ear,
exhaust pluming.

Madison Whatley

Compromising (with) You

I've been thinking about my mortality
and my morality and how I compromised
both in my relationship with you.

Our relationship was better
when we would get high together.
I should have known when I quit

smoking weed that I wouldn't look
at you the same, but you were such a fun
distraction, such a cute, goofy pothead,

and I couldn't give up all my distractions
at once. It's good for the soul to practice
bad habits, at least a few, to maintain balance.

Alyssa Somoano

perfect

eyes glue themselves to small screens
and minds trick themselves into thinking
if only they changed
into perfect people,
then maybe they could finally belong.
but they forget that there is no such thing as perfect.



Madison Lucke

Belonging

Madison Lucke

Service Dog

Heads turn as I walk by
The stares burn through my soul
The laughter echoes through my mind
An outcast I am an outcast I will always be

in the eyes of many
This is a curse
A never-ending cycle of *unable*
I am disabled

In her eyes
There are no laughs
There are no stares

But in her eyes we are a team
I am not disabled
Together we are able

No longer the outcast
But part of the group
In her eyes I belong
In her eyes I wish to stay

Computer Life

It feels as if I am living inside a computer: surrounded by binaries.

“One or zero?”

“Blue or pink?”

“Forsake or trust?”

“Good or evil?”

“Soulmate or career?”

But I am playing a game of Hobson’s Choice:

I cannot win if I make a decision

And I lose if I try to find another option.

While being blue disgusts me, I abhor being pink, too.

I cannot forsake those around me, but who can I trust?

I try to be good, but have “evil” morals.

I do not need a soulmate to be happy, but I cannot focus on merely a job.

I sit in the grey, the purple, the green.

I am not what many think I am.

I still try to fit in without making myself discomforted.

However, when I lie about myself

By attesting to one of the choices,

I feel my skin burning,

Fire ants crawling underneath and biting,

Hair falling out of my scalp.

How do I fit in when I am not a one or zero?

I am a triangular peg being forced into square or circular holes,

But I feel like the people around me see only what they want,
Rather than the truth of who I am.

“You must be a zero.”

No, I’m not.

“Then you’re a one.”

I’m a two, though

“What’s a two?”

“You’re insane.”

“You’re lying.”

“You need a therapist.”

“Wait until you grow up, you’ll make up your mind.”

But I’m an adult, I know myself.

“No, you don’t, you’re not old enough to know
anything yet.”

“You’re confusing me, make a decision.”

Then perhaps life would be better without me making your life
so non-binary,
So different from the computers you thrive in.

Empathy

My body no longer my body
My eyes no longer my eyes
My tongue no longer my tongue.

The flowers on my dress dried up and cracking
Hiding my skin, dried up and cracking,
As I'm confronted with questions from strangers
To which I answer, "I don't have any answers."

My identity was snatched
And carried far away from me,
The warmth taken from my bed
A cold touch awakened me.

My eyes no longer my eyes
I searched for where you planted me.
My tongue no longer my tongue
I dig up words that would not escape from me.
My body no longer my body but
A seed the size of the smallness you made me feel
I scoop it up and hold it tight.

Fiona Williams

Belonging



Being told how to dress
Being told how to style my hair
Being told how to speak
Never allowed to just be
Always being defined by someone else
Always being filtered through someone else's
perception of me
Never having a sense of belonging
Until I stopped caring
I stopped explaining
I stopped apologizing
I stopped dimming my light to make others comfortable
This year, I've decided to be my own person.
I belong to me
I will always include myself
I will always make myself feel comfortable
I will never let myself down
I will embrace every part of me, and every version of me
Never again will I put restraints on me
This is what belonging looks like

Noah Dombroski

I Wanted

I wanted to be a football player
but I was never big enough.
I wanted to be a hooper
but I was never tall enough.

I wanted to be a runner
but I was never fast enough.
I wanted to be a genius
but I was never smart enough.

I wanted to make people laugh.
I was better at making them cry.
I wanted my enemies to like me.
Nobody understood why.

I wanted a pretty girlfriend.
I wanted to be varsity everything.
I wanted everyone to like me.
And I didn't want to work for anything.

I didn't want to move back to Florida.
I didn't want to switch high schools.
I didn't want to have to start all over.
I didn't think I'd ever be cool.

I just wanted to be a football player.

Emily Rose Miller

Moonshadows

I needed this night:
the way it rolls off the skin
like chilled water down
the hot walls of a throat.
It's bare feet in the grass's
dew, swing set too low
so mulch splinters in toes,
hands stroking heads
and truths (no dares, all
denied) with the mosquitos
on black trampoline canvas.
Youth is mourned with lists and songs
and femininity is realized
as the greatest antidote to pain;
girls heal each other like no one else
can with our presences alone,
and nothing lives up to
female connection to female
connection. This night holds
understanding where too often
there is none. We get each other's shame
secrets silhouetted in the moon's
shadows; we soothe them
in a circle, hands reaching between

the bewitching calm of liquid night
and the way chests let pieces of truth

rip out: cellular mitosis
into the air, held by a friend

and regarded, then set loose
to the mossy tops of cypress trees.

Women have always healed one another
under the eye of sisterhood's progenitress.

This night is our turn and she shines
her truth on our faces

so we have somewhere to belong.
So we have somewhere to exist.



Christina Flocken

Sabino Canyon Sahuara

Mariposa

It was dark when she finally woke. Her first thoughts were of warmth and safety.

“What a wonderful sleep! I feel so renewed.”

She attempted to roll over to her right, but her legs were stuck, wrapped too tightly in the covers. She moved in the opposite direction, but it didn’t help.

“What? Why can’t I move?”

She fought panic, trying to remember what had happened before she’d fallen asleep. Oddly, she had a hard time recalling what she had last done or even when she’d settled in for her rest. How long had she been asleep, she wondered? Something was definitely different. Normally, she napped lightly and frequently, too preoccupied in survival mode to take extended periods of rest. But this sleep had been different. She’d never felt so restored.

As she reveled in this new sensation, she continued to wiggle right and left and found that, with enough momentum, she could spin 360° in her blanket. So she spun, over and over, just to feel the joy of movement.

The sun was beginning to rise, the blue light of morning illuminating her surroundings.

And that’s when her panic set in. She was so high off the ground! Upside down and stuck, so tight in this clear shroud. As she continued to spin beneath the covers, she noticed her body. Legs that weren’t hers – so long and gangly – folded neatly against her middle. And her vision. No longer was she handicapped by blurry images and shadow. She could see the ground and the branches around her.

She flipped her head backwards to get a better look at what was below. The suddenness of her movement caused a rip in her casings. Her head was free! And soon her body was, too, as she began slipping through the tear in the fabric. She grabbed the edge of her mysterious prison to prevent her from falling onto the grasses below.

Once she was fully free and dangling in the air by her fingers she understood. The soft black and orange blankets that were previously wrapped around her opened and spread. Wrinkled new wings stretched out, catching the cool breeze of the morning. There she hung for an hour, opening and closing her wings while they dried. Wide eyes capturing all movements, searching for familiar forms. Crafting a plan for leaving.

Thankfully she didn't have to wait long. She spotted them as soon as they came into view, bouncing in the warming air currents. There were so many of them! Worried she would miss her chance to join the swarm, she gently released her fingers' grips. New wings kept her from falling, rising air helping to lift her into the wind, and she merged into the kaleidoscope.



Winner of the Kurt Wilt Prize
for Student Writing in Fiction

Gracie Elizabeth Swind

Belonging Away

Freshwater ocean waves lap at the edge of the dock to the rhythm of my heart. The tide is high today, which means that fishing will be good in the marina. Under the Cancerian sun, the Leo brand of a lion burns hot on my upper arm, a reminder that I do not belong. Born just a moment too late, I am a Leo on a planet of Cancers and now my home world is rejecting me.

The brand presenting itself is an often exciting prospect for young Cancers. Each mark is unique, appearing in different places, as different colors, or in different designs, but always a crab, the symbol and Spirit Guardian of the planet Cancer. I started feeling the beginnings of the mark forming a few days ago – a heightened sensitivity in my upper arm, mostly – and I went to bed that night over the moon with excitement, only to wake up in a cold sweat at moon high with a roaring lion on my arm instead of a crab. Only to fall ill with a fever and nausea soon after. Only to realize that I could not stay on my home planet any longer because if I remain, the planet I was raised on will slowly weaken and kill me. The only place I can go now is to Leo, the only planet in Zodiac-space that won't sicken me, in the solar system farthest away from everything I've called home for the first sixteen years of my life.

Through the haze of my sickness, Queen Nahla got word of what was happening and reached out to Leo, arranging for a ship to come pick me up and bring me to my new home. All of my family has gathered to see me off, and so we all crowd on the tiny dock waiting for the Leonian ship to come into orbit. The queen is here as well, standing peacefully

at my left side with my parents and siblings on my right. On a planet of only around 300 million, the loss of any of us to something as avoidable as a late birth is devastating. The queen calls us her children, and today, she said, she was losing a daughter.

We're all silent, the ocean waves and sea birds our only comfort. I try to enjoy my last glimpse of the floating city and the tropical waters. In school we learned that most of the planets didn't have as much water as Cancer, and Leo only has about half of what we do in terms of ocean coverage. It's hard to imagine feeling at home ever again, heading to a place without the sea.

At last the gold and amber shape of the Leo shuttle winks into view. My heart catches in my throat; I hear my mother grab onto my father's tunic with a sharp intake of breath. Perhaps she thought, like I did, that if we just stood here forever I'd never have to go.

Queen Nahla steps into action, her soldiers flagging the ship towards our floating landing pad. The intense gaze of a lion emblazoned on the side of the sleek amber metal pins me in place, as if scrutinizing me, deciding if I could belong with his people. A stab of pride sparks inside me and I meet the lion's challenge with squared shoulders, a Leo in trait already.

A strong-looking Leonian man of about eighteen with kind eyes steps out of the ship and drops the meter or so between the doorway and the dock, bowing to the queen and introducing himself. I'm not listening, too engrossed with the sudden reality of the situation to pay him any attention.

Goodbyes pass in a blur. I wish I could take a picture of my family to bring with me, but the tragic sadness on my mother and father's faces would not be how I would want to remember them. We break away from each other at the queen's encouragement and I step towards the ship with

Queen Nahla at my side. The Leo pilot smiles encouragement to me as he grabs a handrail a couple meters up the side of the ship and swings himself up into the doorway of the ship. I'm reminded by the casual display that Leos are far more athletic than Cancers. I'm reminded that as much as I don't belong here, I also won't belong there.

The Leo reaches a hand out to me with a smile as blinding at the sun reflecting off the sea. I grasp his hand, and as I'm hoisted into the ship by the Leo with the kind eyes, I can't drag my eyes away from my little world. I let myself drink in the turquoise waters and pearl-colored crab marks etched like beautiful ink all over my family's skin. I let my eyes skip over the waves and burn the image of the floating capital city into my heart and the rainforest-covered cliffs jutting up across the horizon into my mind. When the door closes I turn away, and I don't look back.

The Beta Arietis system, where Cancer resides, is the furthest system from Alpha Leonis, the star system where we are headed. My illness from being a Leo on the planet of Cancer has subsided and I'm back to feeling normal by the end of that night, but there's a new hollowness in my chest that was never there before. The small crew of Leos chosen to escort me try to make me feel welcome, but I'm processing in my own way and mostly shut them out. The only one I've spoken to since the blue and green shape of Cancer disappeared from sight is the pilot, kind-eyed Adam. We pass two of the other planets of the system, the bright green and gold Virgo and the mottled biome marble Gemini. Massive Aries is nowhere to be seen, far on the other side of the sun thanks to its elliptical orbit, but I don't mind. The enormous, dusty red planet always unsettled me.

It takes two days of nonstop light speed flight to reach the Alpha Leonis system, and another day after that for Leo to

come into view. I list the planets in my head as we pass them heading for Leo, testing myself to keep busy. The icy gray rock of Scorpio is first, followed by Aquarius, which is nothing more than a spiral of purple and blue water. Taurus I only get to see from a distance, but its rich sienna surface is gorgeous. At a distance, Leo doesn't look too different from Cancer, mostly shades of green with sparse stretches of blue water.

As we break atmosphere, deciduous mountains and fields whip past us, cast in golden fingers of light by the setting sun. A thrill of excitement bolts through me, unbidden. Cities nestled at the tops of mountains and in the middle of forests are most visible by their lights, and I can see festivals and fairs in almost every one we pass. The ship heads for the capital, a large city in a mountain pass. It's more land than I've ever seen in my life and a far cry from the floating city I lived in out in the middle of the Cancerian sea, but the swell in my chest and the tears in my eyes tell me that it's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

The ship lands in the city center, on a large, flat landing pad. The buildings of the capital are a range of all kinds of styles, a beautiful kaleidoscope of different. Adam and his crew secure the ship, and as soon as the door is opened, the crew bustles out, hopping down onto the landing pad. I hear cheers and greetings from the Leo citizens mingling around outside, the crew that had been kind and gentle and careful with me become human, calling out to friends, greeting neighbors, and commenting on how much they missed the food planet-side.

Adam waits for me with his kind smile, the one that reaches his eyes and feels warmer than the sun, as I slowly approach the doorway. I suck in a breath.

From my elevated place in the ship I can see the horizon of mountain ranges as the sun ducks lower between the peaks. Beams of light stretch out and blanket the capital.

The warm lights of the city center pledge not to let the dying light pitch us into the black and instead bleed together with the sunset to promise a multi-colored dusk and a night speckled with stars and accompanied by man-made light. Two moons are just barely visible as the sun burns out, one carrying a tint of orange, the other a cream that reminds me of my moon by home.

Not home. Suddenly the word doesn't feel right in my mind. *Leo* is home now. I know now that the hollowness in my chest was for sunlight, because that's what fills me now from inside to out. I feel like I'm glowing. Never once did I feel this safe, this purposeful, on Cancer. Is this what it feels like to be where you belong?

Adam swings down onto the landing pad and the crowd that has formed turns their attention to me. Smiles break out all over, everyone calling greetings and welcoming the wayward Cancerian—no, Leonian—home. My roaring lion glows bright gold under the sun and I feel the lion inside me purr with satisfaction, finally home. Adam reaches out a hand to help me down and I take it. As my feet hit the cobblestone road, my first step in this brand new world, I wonder on the new beauty of my home, so different from where I grew up, but more perfect for me than Cancer could have ever been.

It's a different kind of beautiful—a belonging kind.



Tiffany Anderson

Freedom Ride

Sights and Sounds of Saint Leo

Saint Leo is a place where I always tend to link
A sight...to a journey...to a small, fleeting God-wink.

Palm trees line the pathways I walk each day to get to class,
The dining hall, Women's Group,
Sigma Tau Delta meetings, Mass.

Every building I pass it's true, I love them all:
Kirk, Tapia, St. Jude's Chapel, the Abbey, St. Ed's Hall.

In Lewis was is Dungeon; I'm told it's weird that I love it,
But it's where I first discovered my deep love for Old Brit Lit.

113? More like A113 Pixar animators sneak in;
Their Intro to Animation room is where *their* paths begin.

Just like the palm-treed walkways that I travel every day,
They have branching journeys that also start in this same way.

Saint Leo is a place where I always tend to link
A sound...to an event...to a pattern of thought I think.

A tiny pop, the phantom threat of every fire drill;
I've been asleep for none of them—
a thought that makes me ill.

Why is it time is different in a different home I claim?
Two a.m. from here to there is technically the same.

My lack of sleep concerns my mom back home and friends,
it's true,

You know it's bad, though, when I shock professors
with it, too.

Two hours per night each week is not quite safe, I do admit;
I will respond here what I respond there:
"I'm working on working on it."

Inevitably, I continue to pay attention to homework instead:
Keeping up with—and catching up on—
and not even going ahead.

For all I promise myself, I simply cannot seem to fix
The problem that sleep, social life, and schoolwork
just don't mix.

Having had minimal friends before arriving here at school,
I don't want to let my sleep habits from back home in RI rule.

So I order my priorities and use sleep to survive,
While time with English and Ministry friends
helps me to grow and thrive.

If there must be one over the other evermore to stay,
Then I would pick my sources of community any day.

(Sorry, Mom!)

Just One Question

You asked me “Where do you belong?” Not “Where’re you from?” or “What do you do?” or, God forbid, “What’s your sign?” (Do they even use that as a pickup line anymore?) And me, trying to be cool and irreverent and young, said “In a whorehouse.”

I thought you’d laugh or say something suggestive, but you looked at me as if I was the most asinine idiot you’d ever met and said, “When you know the true answer to that question, come find me.” And then you walked away and disappeared into the party crowd.

So me, aka Little Miss Divorcee, stood embarrassed by the wall (I make a stunning wallflower) and wondered what the hell had just happened. Yeah, I’ve been out of the singles scene for a long time and I don’t know quite what to do when a tall, good-looking man with blond hair pulled up into a trendy man-bun comes over to me and smiles, says hi and then asks where-do-you-belong? What kind of a question is that, anyway? Where do I belong, indeed? What does that even mean? Once I belonged with my husband. I thought we’d last forever, get wrinkled and saggy together, but that’s not going to happen. Apparently, getting old together is not what he had planned since his new wife is 15 years younger than he is. I guess he’ll just grow old and saggy by himself. Ha!

Right now, I wish I was home with my dog, a pizza and a Netflix movie, but Jessie begged me to come with her to this party. And where is she now? Over by the fireplace with a gaggle of men and women around her as usual. Always bigger than ordinary life, always laughing, always with the lightning-fast repartee that keeps the crowd laughing and on its toes. I

want to punch her for dragging me here. I don't know how to party and don't particularly like it either, so I know for sure that I don't belong here, Mr. Man-Bun. And where are you now? Where do you belong? Praying in a Buddhist temple, edging along a dangerous ledge on Mt. Everest, walking hand-in-hand with a pretty Parisian mademoiselle, surfing the wild waves off Hawaii? Just where do you belong?

I know I have a scowl on my face. Not particularly appealing, especially on a face that is wrinkling towards middle age. I don't know why Man-Bun's question has dug its way under my skin. Who cares where I belong? Really, does anyone belong anywhere? Aren't we just trying to get through the day in one piece so we can do it all again the next day? And what does Man-Bun mean by "the true answer"? How does he know that "in a whorehouse" isn't the true answer? Okay, it's not; it's not where I would like to be, ever. Where I'd like to be right now is far from here. Is that where I belong? Far from here? Is belonging a place, an attitude, a spiritual zone? Is it a longing to be more than what you are?

I decide I'm going to search for Man-Bun. The party's in a big house with rooms galore, but I've got nothing but time on my hands and a growing anger in my soul. It takes a while but I find him on the large teak deck surrounded by beautiful young women. How cliché, right? He's listening to a brunette with a big smile who is oblivious to the glares from the other women. I walk right up to him, interrupting the brunette, and ask sugar-sweetly,

"So, is this where you belong?" He looks at me like I'm a new and exotic specimen of bug, and then he laughs. "Touché," he says.

I can tell the young women want me to vanish. Old is rarely welcome in the land of young, but I don't care. I have nothing to lose, but maybe something to gain.

"Is this where you belong?" he asks me.

“I don’t know!” I yell. The young women stare at me like I’ve contracted dementia.

Man-Bun smiles. “You belong where you belong.”

Are you kidding me? No words of wisdom that’ll change my life? All this brouhaha for nothing? Too bad I can’t push him off the deck, but then I’d go to prison for assault and I definitely don’t belong there. So I turn around and stomp off to go where I do belong—home, sweet home.

Alyssa Somoano

in books, i belong

the only time all of my anxieties disappear
is when i'm reading.
my troubled thoughts float away
like leaves on the wind
replaced with worlds of fantasy

the words merge together
and the story becomes a movie in my head
the book is the projector, my mind is the blank white sheet

i am transported into a new and unknown world
where my problems don't matter and
my pressing reality seems to vanish.

i am content.
i am happy.

in books, i am home.

Carol Ann Moon

Gathered Forms

Gathered Form@

1. a book has a body
2. a gathering of leaves
3. sewed at its middle
4. fold to cords a c r o
s s the spine
5. a thin book's body
6. may be stabbed—
7. sideways—thank
8. goodness for covers

Examining the Body, I mean, the Book

1. a book is a series of gatherings
2. signed in some way
3. a printer's alphabetical signatures,
statement of collation
4. with catchwords like “ing?,” Arabic press numbers,
page numbers
5. “back marks” concealed when the book is bound
6. with practice
7. this becomes automatic
8. everything will look as if it belongs

Chain Lines, Wire Lines, and Watermarks

1. impressed sheet de/signs
2. eighteen heavylines side to side *may be slant*
3. twenty-eight faintlines per inch top
to bottom
4. maker's mark at half, off-
center
5. follow chains, wires, jugs
6. (note the additional leaves and the
subtractions)
7. (note the folds and the
directions)
8. they will not appear in reproductions, or after wove
paper



James Hughson

Belonging for Eternity III

The **Migrants** in My Heart

i think about it a lot, how they didn't even need to leave the country to trade one class for another. across town was far enough for them to reach a place oppressed still oppressing but different. one could not call it better although it would claim to be. better would suggest nicer. emigrated from "how are they still alive" poor. immigrated to "those [insert plural racial slur] are stealing all our tax dollars" poor. less sympathy, more antipathy, never empathy. always neuropathy of the heart. as grit from the gravel of the road crunches underneath their soles it stings their eyes. chafes their souls. rubs their wounds raw 'til they bleed. they have no choice but to breathe it in. eat it. the dirt served up on platters of hatred turns to chalk in their mouths as they try to swallow years of hurt, decades of pain, centuries of agony. far from the border same as at the border. the wall there is the same one walling them off from everyone else no matter where they go. it rises higher than humanly humanely possible sinking hopes blotting out dreams. follows them. casts its glacial shadow they can't escape. injects chills into their spines, scorches their bones, burns its mission into their nostrils so they never forget the bitter scent of **keep out** you are not welcome here go back to where you came from. but they came from here to here long ago it's everyone else who migrated to hate. but this isn't new it has never been new. they can't run don't run won't run.

if we are
all human
why do we
need walls

How to Experience Truly Living (An Instructional Guide in Four Parts)

1. *You must be hyper-aware of every moment that passes, quickly turning from present to past and therefore losing their vibrancy, and any color at all, with every millisecond that ticks by.*

At twenty-one years old I am fairly new to the suffering that comes with truly living. I am, however, somewhat of an expert at this hyper-awareness. Standing on the edge of this rocky Washington cliff, looking over the bright blue Pacific, I can see the moments trickling like water through my fingers and filling up the churning ocean below me. Nothing passes through me without careful consideration and more than a hint of desperation at the idea that this moment will never be in me again, that I will never belong in it again, only its echo. It is an exhausting realization to have over and over again, and one that gets no easier with practice. Every moment passing through leaves a dull ache in its wake and I am left to futilely grasp for them like an unknowing child to the stars. It is this ever-present dull-suffering we must be willing to take on in order to truly live.

2. *You must be able to let moments pass you, and stay there.*

Along with the hyper-awareness of every passing moment comes the urge to commit those moments to memory so that, even though they would be only echoes of the moment itself, we can experience some feeble attempt at reliving them no matter if they are good or bad or entirely inconsequential. But committing every moment to memory is a futile act no matter how hard we try, and it is one that brings endless anxiety and sadness, as well. Continuously chasing the joy that

comes with truly living and obsessing over that joy brings the pain on the other side of this coin. It is intoxicating and overwhelming, often in the worst of ways, and thus we must fight the urge to cling to things in the past, even when we feel like they don't belong there.

3. *You must learn to live with the weight of too-much empathy.*

Another hazard of truly living is feeling too much at once. Often, I am bowled over by the feeling of balancing not only my own emotions, but an amalgamation of two hundred other people's emotions as well, each more complex and confusing than the last and all building on each other exponentially. Feeling too deeply is a side-effect of truly living because truly living requires us to let our guard down and experience everything with our hearts on our sleeves. It is ironic that truly living requires us to feel like we are dying under the weight of emotion, as well, but that dying is really only the discomfort of growth we must bear.

4. *You must go where you can connect with life on an all-encompassing level.*

Sitting with my legs dangling over the rocky Pacific cliffs, flailing out towards the ocean like caught fish yearning to return to the deep, I can feel every moment and every emotion, both mine and not mine, so clearly. Feeling these things and being hyper-aware of passing moments is the price we pay for the joy and freedom that comes with truly living, and no place knows this pain better than the heart of the Olympic Peninsula.

When you are ready for the weight of it, find the spot on our planet Earth that shouts to your soul and take in every detail like I am in the ocean where my body and the Pacific Northwest meet—it will awaken in you, too, the overwhelming desire to truly live.



Janna Correa

Ring

Dennis Pupello

Innerspace

Dived the cobalt sea—
Never felt so much at home
As an alien



**Winner of the Kurt Wilt Prize
for Student Writing in Nonfiction**

Christian Farrior

Dear Friend

How can you say that we belong to you, and yet we don't? I mean, what happened to us is a tragedy. You promised a city upon a hill, but all I was greeted with was a passage of indescribable horrors. Your Great Emancipator, as you hailed him, told you that we are one people who can make even former enemies friends, yet we, the most faithful of workers were an obstacle preventing unity. How messed up is that? I thought we had this indescribable bond, that after all that forced labor giving you a destiny to manifest, we'd finally receive our forty acres and a mule.

Lies, friend, it's nothing more than a paradise lost to us, which is funny considering how we have been treated with burning of crosses and hanging fruit with blood on the leaves. Isn't it amazing how our beliefs changed us? You turned over your prodigal son to the Klan, while for me, our prophet became the foundation for an X and the Nation. Maybe I do belong to your Bible in that I remind you of your original sin and that symbiotic connection is what will result in this relationship we have, friend. I loved you, I honestly did, and I know in a perfect world you and I could perhaps belong together, but we don't live in that world. What a dream, huh? Though I feel it's maybe a waste of time to talk like this, as we come from radically different backgrounds, and perhaps this is something out of the Montague and Capulet feud just with fewer stabbings and more shootings.

I mean, look at it this way, friend—Sinatra told you he wants to wake up in the city that never sleeps, yet Nas tells me that he doesn't sleep in the rotten apple cause it's the cousin of death. You've got my people out here yelling they're Ready to Die, so was this the dream the great King promised us back in

1963? Perhaps what both of us need to do is be honest and look at what's going on between the two of us. I mean, we talk about it from time to time, but I feel that you lack the primal rage that comes from within towards the feud. This goes deeper than a blood feud; this is a genocidal war. Maybe I'm dramatic, but every single day feels like a war on a culture that has been just trying to earn the right to struggle in this country for over 400 years. I sometimes wonder if we are descendants of Cain and that is the reason we have been on the receiving end of such malice.

Now, what I have been saying has probably upset you just like last time, but at least it's not as public as Charlottesville. I see you trying to understand now more than ever the opposite side of the conflict, and while I know you aren't directly responsible—at least that's what the Savior story tells you—I can't help but wonder what will come of us when this war reaches its apex, especially since you are the apex. To me, this is our Easter, you see, and I thought it made sense considering that we are only a couple years removed from that bloody year that ends in 16. I hate you, yes, but I do love you since we were birthed here, although I am the stranger and still must stand and show allegiance to the colors red and blue. Still, the red and blue we pledge to bleeds a little closer to home, and there's an absence of white unless it's the white that through you is ravaging my neighborhood. I feel that I want to win this race you created, but maybe not.

No, I don't want to win this race. I want to destroy this race at its core, friend. I wish for no one ever to be told they are second-class due to being a child of Cain or bearing the curse of Ham. I want everyone to be protected and served, not for some to be served a Whopper after a massacre and others a bullet while eating ice cream. I guess I do want you to burn and me to burn with you. Maybe that's where we both belong, and from those embers something brighter and more beautiful than we could ever imagine can be born.

Peter M. Gordon

Selling Your Soul

It's so easy to do these days.
The Devil made an app for that.

It floats up from the dark web
when you're mired in deep despair.

Satan's offer tempts. Not just
power, riches, sex—free

parking in midtown Manhattan,
cell phones that never crack,

ringside seats to championship
bouts. Heck, after a few years

you may come to believe that
you earned all the Hell you raised.

No regrets, even after the Devil chains
your soul to that rock in the lake of

fire, blistering your thirst-crazed
husk of spirit. Demons poke you with

pitchforks, pushing you under molten
lava, taunting, "You belong to us, now."

"Yes," you croak with
what's left of your throat.

Where I once belonged

I once belonged to a place that is a land
where no man, woman, or child is safe.
I guess it's the price of crossing no man's land.
Where the shelter of your home will fold under
the slightest pressure of an itching trigger finger.
A place where rival schools lived on the same block
and every year people would celebrate as if
the Superbowl was in their backyard.
A place where police car sirens sang through the streets
like a choir during service.
A place where street signs were branded and replaced
with vigils of where your home girl or home boy was shot.

I once belonged to a place where school looked more like a
prison but not even that was enough to make students listen.
I still wonder how long before their student number will be
"inmate 10210276."

Where children had their innocence stripped and became
adults before puberty even took over their bodies, and their
bodies became shallow shells of who they could have been.
This place took so many lives that even I started to question
my guardian angel about my own obituary.

I once belonged to people who told lies and gave alibies
just to throw me to the wolves.
But, I came back leading the pack.
A place where martyrs come in cliques
(I'm sorry, I mean gangs) because that is the closest thing
to family that they have ever known.

This is where mothers and daughters turned against each other,
and daughters, in turn, became mothers.

I once belonged in lowlands and dry places where souls cried
out to the seas, but they wouldn't answer.

This is the place I called home.

Work in Progress

Walk straight past the multitude of memories you made in
these colorless homes.

See the milk white mailboxes signaling each new box
of troubles and tribulations.

Gaze at the neatly trimmed grass that cost my father
so many swears, all sent to the HOA.

Then take your first hard right past divorce
into a claustrophobic alley called Uncertainty.

Painted on the right side is a mural to my father,
the man whose temper broke our family.

On the left is a mural to my mother,
the woman who only spoke what truths she needed.

I suppose one of them should hold more beauty,
as most things can win another's favor,

But I never really cared for this short, but poignant alley.

Once you pass through it, you're nearing my old high school.

Here you will find halls painted in the blood
of those I could not save,

echoed words that tormented me through my enduring stay.

I advise you not to stay long, as I never did, and instead
take a sharp left to better times ahead.

Here is the end to your very short visit, for the road ahead
is still being paved.

I implore you to see the very best of me at the college
PHSC where I earned my first degree. For despite

all you have seen before, this contains something good.
Because, for the first time, I enjoy building the road ahead.

modeled after "How to Get There" by Philip Levine

When Does the “Moving on” Phase End?

1. My family moved to Hollywood, our nicer neighboring city in 2013. My mom grew up there, in a part of West Hollywood called Driftwood. I broke up with my first boyfriend in tenth grade by the bus stop. In twelfth grade, I broke up with my second boyfriend in the driveway and threw up in his car.
2. In 2016, I moved out of my beloved high school home in favor of going “away” to college. My new home, Alumni Hall, allowed me the privacy to make new mistakes with new people until I finally really fell in love for the first time, and then, in 2017, found a new love a second time.
3. I took a plane by myself for the first time in 2017. I started spending my vacations and holidays in a 4-2 in Colorado with my new boyfriend and his two friends. We went hiking and got super high in the woods. This was the first time somebody called 9-1-1 for me. I’ll never forget how scared he looked.
4. In 2018, my parents closed their bookstore in Davie, sold their house in Hollywood, and moved to a small beach community of retirees in Vero Beach. This disoriented me. We are from Hollywood; that’s our identity. My parents told me Hollywood had gotten too expensive for them, but how could our family be priced out of our home of four generations?

5. At the end of 2018, I told my boyfriend in Colorado to move to Florida for me, and shockingly, he did by the beginning of 2019. We stayed together at his mom's house for a while, saving money and planning to move when I finished my junior year of college. I made the list of apartments to tour.

6. We moved in together May 2019, and at first, it made so much sense. I was lonely in the dorms, and I didn't have to spend so much time in Colorado away from my family. But by October, I fell out of love. We laughed and cried as we broke up. He told me, I love you, but I can't be friends with you.

7. I understand now why they say not to make a home out of a person. When I am through burning these bridges that I have followed, will I ever be rewarded with a home of my own?

Janet Watson

Fixer-Upper

The house puts on her makeup
and wears a brave face, disguising
her wrinkles and age spots—
the battered doors, popcorn ceilings,
an awkward-entry shower
and broken whirlpool tub.
She wears outdated cabinetry,
stained carpets, cracked tile,
faded wall paint and fake-wood paneling.
Cast-off mementoes are hoarded
in a forgotten bedroom.

Beyond her spattered windows
she flaunts the lush beauty of southern flora,
paying no mind to the leaking pool
and creaking pump, the peeling patio,
and an armadillo tunnel beneath
the fissured deck. Her estate
has seen better times, when roof shingles
didn't shimmy to the ground after storms
and the dead loblolly pine out front
hadn't been struck by lightning.

A tilting dog pen, broken tractor,
dimpled driveway, and scrap metal mounds,
a round pen imprisoned by vines and weeds,
a barnful stash of purposeless gizmos,
two pony carts precariously balanced
on their wheels and shafts,

a swaybacked horse in a tumbledown stall,
and an overgrown pond with resident gator
exaggerate her current trashy-chic style.

The whole place is a mess.
But it does have character.
And every bit of it belongs to me.



Tiffany Anderson

Deserted

Carlton T. Johnson

The Indifference of Space

That is all there is
of space
not the warm nurture of a spring shower
nor the gentle thrum of a bumble hum
but vast and so bitter cold,
complete and indifferent
to you and your little world
of blue-eyed daisies and caramel-colored daydreams
of ecstatic wonders and merriments.
But cold
without a soul or an eye for you;
without knowing you
and yet
there is within your very matte,
like coiled springs in a grand watch,
the library of 'forever dreams'
branching out like so many swarms
finding home in the universe.

Janet Watson

A Message to the Hubble Space Telescope

Go ahead and wipe fog from the window
and allow us to see deeper into dark.
Count time and distance with numbers
that we never knew existed.

Our own fierce little fireball breathes
energy into the turbines of us,
but we are rooted to our planet
and must send you as emissary.

Already you have shown us what
we never thought to see—colorful galaxies
mothering stars more numerous than all
the grains of sand on all the beaches of Earth.

Quest to the farthest places. Tell us where
you are, what you find. Our wonder grows.
The universe does belong to us. Can you pry
from it what we really want to know?

Emily Rose Miller

The Moon Watches Me Through the Bathroom Window While I Shower

or maybe I watch her.

We regard one another,

not hungrily nor judgmentally but impartially,
openly; I remember the flag

of conquest buried in her skin, protruding
as a reminder *she is claimed*.

There is a flag of conquest much the same
under my skin, reminding me

always to lay sexily in bed
watching Netflix alone

in my room, not to speak
too femininely or otherwise in front of men

lest they feel challenged or enticed.

It ripples under my skin as I do nothing

but exist, planted there
by those who make a conquest

of us both while we observe
one another through the fog on the pane.

The flag juts stock-still
from the moon's rocky face,

yet she does not belong

to anyone—not a soul on Earth.

A flag juts from my all-woman skin;
how I ignore it will determine

who my soul belongs to. I am
still trying to orbit only myself.



Contributors' Notes

Susan Abercrombie is the Academic Advisor for SLU's Key West Center. She is currently working on her Master of Arts in Creative Writing with Saint Leo. She is focusing on creative nonfiction with a specific emphasis on memoir. Abercrombie earned her Bachelor of Arts in English with a specialization in Language, Writing and Rhetoric from North Carolina State University.

Laura Altfeld is an Associate Professor of Biology at Saint Leo University. She teaches various courses in ecology and zoology and her research focuses on invasive species, plants, and insects. She has recently taken up creative writing as a hobby and is currently experimenting with short forms, including flash fiction and short stories.

Tiffany Anderson is a student at Saint Leo University pursuing her masters in Psychology. She completed her undergraduate studies at the Lakeland Education Center where she also worked as an academic advisor. Her interest and passion in the field of psychology lies in the arts. She has completed much research on the topics of writing and art therapies. She has participated in the Sandhill Writer's Retreat and launched her "Project Me" writing workshops in Lakeland, Florida.

Anne Barngrover's (nonfiction editor) most recent book of poetry, *Brazen Creature*, was published with University of Akron Press in 2018. She is an assistant professor of English and Creative Writing at Saint Leo University, where she is also on faculty in the low-residency MA program in Creative Writing.

Kiersten Breck is a Creative Writing major at Saint Leo. They go by they/them pronouns, are the President of the club Prism, and they enjoy learning about other cultures and bringing influence of these cultures into their own writings.

Patricia Campion is Associate Professor of Global Studies and Sociology at Saint Leo University. She lives in Temple Terrace with her husband, their cats, and their dogs. Her poetry and non-fiction have been published in *The Sandhill Review*, *Soul-Lit*, and other magazines. She is a member of the San Antonio Writers' Group.

Rohana Chomick has wanted to be a writer ever since she was a teenager in Canada. She is a writer-wannabe with a Wordpress site (StoryGirl18.com) that showcases old and new short writings and poetry. She loves post-apocalyptic novels, movies, and TV shows, and wrote an unpublished novel she would like to further pursue in the future.

Christine Cock's most recent work appears in Sparrow & Nightingale Press's *Screams From the Silence*, an anthology about victims of violence. Previously her poetry was part of a collaborative visual art effort at the Florida Museum of Natural History for conservation of swallow-tailed kites. She was accepted and received a scholarship a second time at the Writers in Paradise Conference. Some of her poems can be found in *Soul-Lit*, *An Online Journal*, Madville Publishing's anthology, *By the Light of the Neon Moon*, *The Albatross*, and *And The Rocks Shall Hum*. She has received awards from the Florida State Poets Society, National League of American Penwomen, and received an honorable mention in the Peter Meinke Chapbook contest with YellowJacket Press.

Mariah Colón is a junior at Saint Leo University majoring in Professional Writing. She enjoys creative writing.

Janna Correa has just completed her first journey at Saint Leo University by graduating summa cum laude with her Bachelor's in Advanced Literary Studies. While an undergrad,

she contributed to *Sandhill Review* as assistant editor as well as contributor (*Flag of Us*, 2018; *On Orion's Belt*, 2019). Now in Saint Leo's Creative Writing Masters program, she is ecstatic to still take part in the Leo life and practice her craft as a writer. When not writing stories, she loves drawing, her guitar, and her tiny garden in her backyard.

Patrick Crerand (fiction editor) is an Associate Professor of English in the Department of Language Studies and the Arts. A member of the Saint Leo faculty since 2008, he received his Ph.D. in English and Creative Writing from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, his MFA in Fiction from Bowling Green State University, and his BA in English from The Ohio State University. His short stories have appeared in literary magazines such as *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, *Conjunctions*, *New Orleans Review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Indiana Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Knee Jerk*, *Monkeybicycle*, among others. Two of his stories have been short-listed in *The Best American Nonrequired Reading* and *Best American Fantasy* anthologies. His creative nonfiction essays have appeared in *New Ohio Review*, *North American Review*, *The Collagist*, *Midway Journal*, and the *Tampa Bay Times*. Recently, Arc Pair Press published a collection of his stories entitled, *The Paper Life They Lead*.

Noah Dombroski is a senior at Saint Leo University, where he is working towards a degree in Criminal Justice with a specialization in Homeland Security. His favorite kind of writing is fictional narrative.

Kathryn Duncan is a professor of English at Saint Leo University where she has taught since 2001. Her research includes eighteenth-century British pirates, Methodism, Harry Potter, and Jane Austen. Her current project is entitled *Jane Austen and the Buddha*, a book examining how Austen and Buddhism share ideas about human suffering and how to alleviate it.

Sarah El Naamani (editorial assistant) is currently a junior at Saint Leo University where she is studying English with a specialization in creative writing and minoring in Marketing. She enjoys writing nonfiction and poetry and hopes to one day write a book about her home, Lebanon (MEA), and her big family. When she's not busy writing, you can find her enjoying her hundredth cup of coffee of the day.

Christian Farris is an undergrad English major at Saint Leo University. This is Christian's first publication. Christian was born in Texas, but lived all over the United States growing up due to his parents' military background.

Christina Flocken is a graduate of both the University of Maryland (BA) and Rollins College (MAT). She lives in Maitland, Florida and works as a bookkeeper for a not-for-profit school. Chris attended the Sandhill Writers Retreat in 2018 and 2019. She writes memoir, essays, and poetry and has been published in *Cadence*, the Florida State Poets Association Anthology, in 2017, 2018, and 2019. She serves as Membership Chair to the FSPA and is a member of the Florida Writers Association. She enjoys landscape painting and photography.

Amanda J. Forrester's book *Resurrection* is forthcoming from WordTech Communications, LLC. (March 2021). She is a program administrator and adjunct faculty at Saint Leo University. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Azabares Spanish Language Literary Magazine*, *Pink Panther Magazine*, *SWWIM*, *Santa Ana River Review*, and other anthologies and journals.

Liz Franzone is currently a junior at Saint Leo University, where she is studying English with a minor in Creative Writing. She is a recent inductee into the Sigma Tau Delta English honor society on campus. She hails from Tarpon Springs, Florida, and, whenever she's not writing, she works with children at her local YMCA program, volunteers with an

animal shelter, and participates with the Saint Leo theater department's plays and other productions.

Edith M. Freeman is a retired university professor. She taught at the University of Kansas for many years. Since her retirement she has had several poems and a short story published. She writes both structured and free verse poetry. Most of her published works have been inspired by her travel experiences all over the world and throughout the United States. She has been a member of an informal writers' group for a number of years. It has been a source of informal support and writers' craft development. She has attended the Sandhill Writers' Retreat for several years.

Kaisha A. Girard is a recent graduate of Saint Leo University with a Bachelor's degree in English Literary Studies and a minor in Hospitality Management. She is now participating in her second Disney College Program internship before she continues on to graduate school, where she hopes to make magic with words.

Erika B. Girard is a graduate of Saint Leo University in Florida with her B.A. in English Literary Studies and a minor in Hospitality Management. Originally from Rhode Island, she is currently back in Florida for her second Disney College Program internship. She claims writing, proofreading, and photography as some of her greatest passions and says, "Challenge yourself to great things. If you find something you can't do, try harder."

Peter M. Gordon won the 2019 Thomas Burnett Swann Poetry prize, awarded by the Gwendolyn Brooks Writer's Association of Florida. He's published two collections: *Two Car Garage*, and *Let's Play Two: Poems About Baseball*, and over 100 poems in magazines including *Slipstream*, *the Journal of Florida Literature*, *Poeming Pigeon*, *the 5-2 Crime Poetry Weekly*, and of course, *Sandhill Review*. He earned a BA from Yale and MFA from Carnegie-Mellon, and teaches Film Business in Full Sail

University's Film MFA program. He's a member of the Society for American Baseball Research and contributed baseball history articles to over eighteen books.

Gene Grabiner's chapbook, *There Must Be More Than Trigonometry*, was published in 2017 by Foothills Publishing. His poems have appeared in various journals and anthologies including: *Café Review*, *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*, *Comstock Review*, *Sandhill Review*, *Sojourners*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Passager*, *Jewish Currents*, *Blue Collar Review*, *Steel Bellow*, and *J Journal*. He won third place in the 2014 Connecticut Poetry Society competition, was a semi-finalist in the 2013 Passager competition, and a runner-up in the 2012 William Stafford Award Competition. He was also a semi-finalist in the 2002 "Discover the Nation" poetry competition.

James P. Hughson, is an adjunct instructor of photography at St. Leo University where he is an alum. Born in the Dominican Republic, he had the opportunity to travel the world with his parents. While in high school, during a trip to Africa, he discovered his love for photography. He mainly photographs using black & white film and prints the images in the dark room creating unique art. He enjoys traveling, photographing nature, finding patterns and details. He has guided many students to discover their artistic talents.

Carlton T Johnson, a native of Maryland has lived the past 13 years in Winter Park, Florida. He was an educator and a tutor of Math and Science. He is a member of the Florida Poetry Association. His works have appeared in the FSPA and Central Florida Poets anthologies as well as a few online locations like *Breakfast Poetry*, *Provo Canyon Review*, and most recently, the fivetwo.com. One of his poems (Tour of Flanders) was included in the 2014 K9 for Warriors Veterans' Day Program. He is a graduate of the poetry masters program, The 12 Chairs, run by Al Rocheleau. He is hard at work editing his first collection of poems.

Karen Beardslee Kwasny is an Assistant Professor of English with Saint Leo University. Her doctoral work focused on multicultural literature and culture studies. She has written and published two books and various essays in the fields of folklore, literature, and composition and continues to present her work at professional conferences. As a creative outlet, she enjoys writing poetry and non-fiction/memoir.

Madison Lucke is a senior in biomedical engineering. She is from a small town outside of Scranton, PA where she grew up on a farm and aspired to be a veterinarian. She has a three-year-old service dog named Tammy who is the light of her life.

Andrea McBride is originally from Ohio and has lived in Florida for the past ten years. She and her husband live in Wesley Chapel with their two teenage children. She enjoys writing poetry, playing and teaching piano and learning to play violin. She won a First Place and Honorable Mentions in the 2019 NFSPS Contest and has had poetry published in several online and print journals such as *Odet Literary Journal*, *Alba*, *A Handful of Stones*, and *One Sentence Poems*. She has enjoyed participating in Saint Leo's Sandhill Writers Retreat the last two years.

Emily Rose Miller is currently an undergraduate senior at Saint Leo University where she is studying English with a specialization in creative writing. Her work has been published in *Inklette Magazine*, *The Dandelion Review*, *Sandhill Review's* 2017, 2018, and 2019 issues, and is forthcoming in *Red Cedar Review* and *The Dollhouse Magazine*. When not writing, she can be found reading and cuddling with her five cats.

Carol Ann Moon is a full time professor in the Cannon Memorial Library at Saint Leo University. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Stetson in Deland. Most recently, she won a vintage typewriter as the prize for PSPOETS choosing her as their October Poet of the Month.

Megan Nowell is the Staff Coordinator at the Daniel A. Cannon Memorial Library, and has been working in academic libraries for nearly a decade. She is a Tampa Bay native, graduated from the University of South Florida with a Bachelor's in English Literature in 2015, and is currently working on her Master's of Business Administration in Marketing. Some of her hobbies include creative writing, watercolor and digital art, and traveling the world with her family.

Jasmine Parrish attended Saint Leo University in fall of 2019, and majored in clinical and counseling psychology. Being there pushed her to the fullest, teaching her to be her best self even when she felt that she wasn't. "Where I Once Belonged" it is about what she has been exposed to for 18 years at home in Jacksonville, FL. She has a passion for poetry and many stories to tell. The best way for her to tell those stories is through poetry.

Alaina M. Plowdrey is the Center Director of the Saint Leo University Key West Education Center on the Naval Air Station. She is currently working towards her Ph.D. in Aesthetic Critical Theory with a dissertation focus arguing the blend of Neuroaesthetics and Embodied Phenomenology elevating visual perception and frame of mind from the Institute for Doctorial Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA). Plowdrey earned her MFA from the New York Academy of Art in New York City, BFA from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, MI and AFA from Delta College in University Center, MI. She regularly exhibits her work regionally and nationally.

Dennis Pupello II is a multiple past contributor to the *Sandhill Review*. He is a flash fiction writer and poet from Brooksville. He enjoys fantasy and science fiction, progressive music, and hand-drumming with his djembe at Pine Island beach in Hernando County.

Julenny Rodriguez, also known as Juju, is a junior in communication management at Saint Leo University. She has lived in Camden/Pennsauken, New Jersey all her life until she decided to move to pursue her education in Florida. She started expressing her feelings through poetry, creative writing, drawing, and painting at a young age.

Gianna Russo (Editor-in-Chief and Poetry Editor) is Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing. She is the author of a full-length poetry collections *One House Down* (Madville Publishing 2019), and *Moonflower*, winner of the 2011 Florida Book Award Bronze Medal. She is also author of three poetry chapbooks, including *The Companion of Joy*, based on the artwork of Vermeer and published by SLU's Green Rabbit Press. Ms. Russo won the 2017 Best of the Bay Poet Award and the 2011 Best of the Bay Poetry in Motion Award from *Creative Loafing* magazine. A Pushcart Prize nominee, she has had publications in *Green Mountains Review*, *Eκφρασις*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Florida Review*, *The Sun*, *Poet Lore*, *The MacGuffin*, *saw palm*, *Tampa Review*, and others.

Brennan Smith is a junior enrolled as a Creative Writing major at Saint Leo University. He enjoys writing his own emotions and feelings, as it allows him to create realistic works that have an impact on the reader. He hopes to continue his education with the dream that one day he will become a best-selling writer.

Gracie Elizabeth Swind is an aspiring writer and novelist attending Saint Leo University. She is a junior English major with a creative writing specialization and a minor in theater. She is fiercely in love with stories and spends much of her mental space unraveling promising television show narratives that don't deliver and reworking them into ones that do. She is a devout fan of all things animated and her current career goal is to intern with DreamWorks Animation in the

summer after her graduation, during which time she plans to convince them to hire her.

Angelina Troche is a senior at Saint Leo University graduating in May from the Creative Writing program. She is from North Port, Florida and is excited to embark on life after college.

Cheryl A. Van Beek's work has appeared previously in *Sandhill Review*, *Odet*, *Poeming Pigeon*, *River Poets Journal* and many others. Her poetry is forthcoming in the Burgert Brothers anthology. She is grateful to have won first place for Poetry in *Odet/Safety Harbor's* 2018 Romeo Lemay Contest. Her poetry has also been awarded prizes by The National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Florida State Poets and Creative Writing Ink. She is a member of New River Poets, a chapter of the Florida State Poets Association. She has attended Saint Leo's Sandhill Writer's Retreat. She lives with her wonderful husband and an entertaining cat in Wesley Chapel.

Audrey Ward is a sophomore at Saint Leo University, majoring in English with a specialization in Professional Writing. Her end goal is to pursue journalism abroad, to bring her roots and past journeys into writing, and to continue appreciating the beauty of words.

Janet Watson is president of New River Poets and some years ago partnered that group with Saint Leo University, to obtain a grant from the Florida State Department's Division of Cultural Affairs for a free community poetry event at the Pasco Schools Center for the Arts. Since then, she has published a book-length collection of poetry, *Eyes Open*, *Listening*, and several chapbooks. Her poems have been published in numerous journals and anthologies, including the *Sandhill Review*. A longtime resident of Wesley Chapel, she wrote for several community newspapers before retiring to focus on poetry. A frequent Sandhill Writers Retreat

participant, she currently has a historical-fiction novel making the rounds of publishers and makes time for long walks with Charles Dickens, her corgi.

Madison Whatley (editorial assistant) is a Saint Leo undergraduate English major from Dania Beach, Florida. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Furrow*, *Chomp*, *Sheila-Na-Gig Under 30*, *30 N*, *Outrageous Fortune*, *The Magazine*, *Variant*, and *Evocations*.

Fiona Williams is a senior, finishing up her final classes at the School of Social Work in the Tampa Education Center. She is expected to be done by Summer 1.

Tiffany Anderson
Susan Abercrombie
Laura Altfeld
Kierston Breck
Patricia Campion
Rohana Chomick
Christine Cock
Mariah Colón
Janna Correa
Noah Dombroski
Kathryn Duncan
Sarah El Naamani
Christian Farior
Christina Flocken
Amanda Forrester
Liz Franzone
Edith Freeman
Erika Girard
Kaisha Girard
Peter M. Gordon
Gene Grabiner
James Hughson
Paola Irizarry
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Madison Lucke
Cath Mason
Andrea McBride
Emily Rose Miller
Carol Ann Moon
Megan Nowell
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Elaine Person

Alaina Plowdrey
Dennis Pupello
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Angelina Troche
Cheryl A. Van Beek
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Janet Watson
Madison Whatley
Fiona Williams

