

25
Spring



Westwind

Journal of the Arts

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Editor's Letter

This year has taught us many things — how to carry on in the face of disaster, how to adapt, and, most importantly, how to support one another through the intense chaos. In each of our previous issues, we interrogated the importance of art during times when the world seemed to be falling apart. Art, we found, is how we keep our community strong. And community — that is how we survive, how we build power together, how we fight against systems that oppress us.

This journal is a testament to that enduring hope. Even as we came to witness that things could, in fact, get worse, we prevailed. We pushed through the monotony of school, an endeavor that for many seemed increasingly futile against the backdrop of a more sinister reality — one defined by mounting attacks on higher education, international war, a collapsing democracy, and continuing global genocides.

Westwind has been and continues to be a pillar of the free expression, creative passion, and fierce resistance to the erasure of art that is necessary to our campus and society at large. As you embark on our final issue for the 2024-2025 academic year, we hope you will find among these pages a call to action, a comforting embrace, and the energy to translate this power into something even greater.

Thank you, first and foremost, to our contributors, whose artistic passion, vulnerability, and courage continue to be the foundation of our publication. Thank you to all of our club members and faculty for their unbending support throughout the years. Westwind would not be possible without the guidance and advocacy of our advisor, Professor Reed Wilson, and our fellow board members. As we depart from this wonderful team, we have no doubt that the vision and future of Westwind is safe in the hands of our successor, Gwendolyn Lopez. We thank you, our readers, for sticking with us through each season.

Warmest regards,
Sydney Gaw
Managing Editor Spring 2025

Editor's Letter

Here we are again; another quarter completed, another Westwind issue published, another reflection into our political climate. However, I can only think to say one thing: thank you. I remember attending my first Westwind meeting Week 1 of freshman year, and standing at the back since I arrived a little too late to find a seat, having gotten lost on a brand new campus. I remember how invigorating the discussions felt, alongside the relief that yes, thankfully, I picked the right major and career path. Throughout all my four years at UCLA, this journal has been by my side, filling my college experience with a lot of reading, laughing, and people I will never forget. I cannot put into words how incredibly grateful I am for this community. As you read this issue, I hope you can feel the love and labor that everyone at Westwind has poured into making this journal. Thank you for reading. Thank you for being a part of this.

With love,
Sabrina B. R. Ellis
Managing Editor Spring 2025

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Poetry

But who, then, would pray for the devil

Haniah B. Hamza

I wish I carried tasbeeh with me. Wrap my arms in coils and coils of sandalwood beads,
perfectly measured to my wrists.
I wish belief were tangible, that I could feel the shape of it, run my fingerprints over it and get
splinters.
Have the roughness of my hands be sanded down with the wood.

I have segments on my fingers, cut into threes for
subhanallah, alhamdulillah, and la ilaha illallah
It feels intangible to me sometimes, my own fingers, my own hands.
Like I can't feel the texture of them despite being rough as sandpaper,
as curls of wood from bark.

I miss the dark of the masjid when everyone is gone.
When I was a child
I imagined curling up in the furthest corner back
Furthest from God
and sleeping.
Lying on the soft carpet, my socked feet pulled up beneath me, head pillowed soft with devotion,
I would finally feel calm.

I am an adult now.

I miss sleeping.

Editor: Sara Safari

Refusal to Erode, Cyprus

Rebecca Pattichis

a sea of pleasure
fascinating years, half lies
line its history

miles and miles and miles
a restricted area
'round the buffer, run

exercise island
despite official efforts
to orient west¹

Editor: Caitlyn Kim

¹ Note: This poem was found from the Fulbright Open Research page for Cyprus, "What is life like for Fulbrighters in the host country?": <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries/europe-and-eurasia/cyprus/1672>

LA County (A Travel Guide)

Finn Kobler

Pasadena

RIYL: green-eyed deserts; cigarettes that replace the nicotine with Portugal; adobe signs and Adobe Sign; younger sibling of Griffith Park resentment; opening your windows for the amber light; opening your nostrils for the jet fuel; enough roses to resuscitate the entire Tudor family

Brentwood

RIYL: Boho-chic pickpockets; rainbow capitalist pyramid schemes; high school juniors lab-manufactured to become E! journalists; John Mayer-flavored foreplay; “which side of Sepulveda” elitism; the good half of Tobey Maguire; 1 good drag brunch Sunday at 10AM

Santa Clarita

RIYL: the red sand equivalent of swamp ass; JV megachurches; 4 identical quadruplets named Austin; quarry foremen complaining about tennis elbow; yassified Reno; soul-crushing compromise; making eye contact with your high school bully’s stepdad at least 3 times a week

Downey

RIYL: iron lungs on standby; cocaine still wet with Reagan’s ink; everything greyscale except the billboards; cancer research as a platitude; silicon hairpieces; enough traffic to make your performative rage Meisner-level

Santa Monica

RIYL: tenderpunk botox; second mortgages to pay for quinoa; anti-homeless rollerblading; parking in the form of folklore; a beach that’s always hot or too cold but goes Goldilocks 6 seconds a day and, when it does, the whole ocean flickers with hope making you feel like the whole Hollywood dream might actually happen for you

Echo Park

RIYL: walkable condescension; Brooklyn without the house parties; fertile gentrification; tamales with exhausted corn; that one fucking Walgreens that was here before us and will stay long after the entropic heat death of every conceivable thing that is, was, and will be; Dodger dogs

Silverlake

RIYL: trad wives with top surgery; matcha crystals in your boyfriend’s porn stache; bumming cigarettes off Father John Misty; apologizing for sincerity; apologizing for apologizing; apologizing for ending your poem with defeatist navel-gazing or “my neighborhood’s better than yours” tribalism; it wasn’t meant to be—you’ll find hope here if you look hard enough; after all, it’s great weather...and you gotta live somewhere, right?

Editor: Nicole Torris

atomic war(e)fare

Abbie Doll

why does no one
ever acknowledge
the barbaric nature
of “nuked—
in the microwave”

& what on earth
does it say (about us, the
human race) to employ
such a lethal word in this
oh-so-so-so casual way?

Editor: Brent Twerson



The Sea Dragon

Hannah Park

Graphite illustration on paper

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Fiction

Black Ink

Daniel Speechly

On the day Great Grandfather told me he would die, we didn't follow our usual routine. We didn't go into the fields, nor the small orchard at the edge of the property. Instead, Great Grandfather led me across the stream into Shanxi and opened a door to a shed. Inside, he cleared a withered ficus from the table and laid out a long sheet of xuan paper.

"Today, I'm going to teach you how to write. Would you like that?"

I didn't answer. Instead I stared incredulously at Great Grandfather's hands. They were busy opening and closing heavy drawers from which emerged two jars: one tall and thin and the other short and wide. In the tall jar, he placed two brushes and a trickle of water. From the short jar, he removed a handful of small velvet-black husks which shimmered like soft silken drapes, but clicked and clacked together as he poured them into a mortar. To these, Great Grandfather added water and the white of a single jay's egg.

"To thicken," he said.

Great Grandfather must have noticed that I was staring at the small squat jar on the table because he called for my attention.

"Guai guai," he said as he ground together his mixture with a flat river stone, "We make ink from the carapace of the black beetle, ground into a paste like this. And in this way, we release language from its body."

He stopped for a moment and glanced down at me. "You didn't know that, did you?"

Instead of answering I lifted my hands and pulled my chin above the edge of the tabletop.

"I like that," Great Grandfather said. "You're more like a beetle than you know. More than I knew until now. You see, the black beetle carries about all the language of the world in its body, yet it never speaks; but when it does, it can say the most beautiful things." Great Grandfather set down the mixture, and with a smile that overpowered and closed his eyes, he said, "Let me show you."

With his left hand, he smoothed over the sheet of xuan, and with his right, he picked a brush from the jar. Wide-eyed concentration overcame his smile as he practiced forming a character, bobbing the brush up and down in the air before setting its bulbous tip into the ink, where he let it soak for a moment—thoughtfully. And as the ink and language pulled up from the brush and into his body, he brimmed with newfound energy. And then, without announcement, he brought the brush down upon the paper. Three rapid strokes and it was done.

He bent his head toward mine. His smile rematerialized.

"Guai guai," he said, "This character symbolizes wisdom." He lifted the paper to show me. "And this," he said as he executed another rapid succession of movements, "is the symbol for silence."

After he said this, he stared pensively into the distance. He was quiet at first, but then he laughed loud and heavy, sounding as though all the air in his body were forced up through a vat of viscous melancholy, bubbling in an explosion of fits and pops.

It was odd, but the moment passed, and the laugh methodically turned. And just as suddenly as it

had started, the moment fell away into a silence that stretched into an excruciating emptiness.

“Great Grandfather,” I finally said.

Then, louder, I called him again. “Great Grandfather, why did you laugh like that?”

His eyes darted into focus. He seemed to be interrogating me, but I must have shown no answers, for just as suddenly as the moment had erupted, he alighted back on the xuan in front of us.

“Together, these symbols can be read, ‘Silence is wisdom’ or ‘Wisdom is silence.’ Either way, the meaning remains as long as the symbols stand—one beside the other.”

I listened and let the lesson soak in, ignoring as best I could the moment that preceded it.

“Now it is your turn. Pick up the brush. No, not like that. Hold it close, down by the hair. There you go.”

I held on tight and waited for instruction.

“Now. Roll the brush in the ink. Bring it up and work from the top down. Good. There—your first written word. And now your second. Good, good.”

“Wisdom is silence,” I said.

Great Grandfather smiled as I repeated his words, and when I had finished, he whispered in my ear, “Guai guai, you’re good at this. I’m going to tell you a secret now. All language is like this, tinged with deeper meaning. Can you understand that?”

“What do you mean?”

“Of course not. You’re too young. But you have time. More than me.”

As the day wore on, Great Grandfather taught me more paired words. He showed me phrases and concepts, and I practiced writing until we had run out of xuan. And at that late hour, as the evening shadows began to stretch across the land, Great Grandfather took my hand and walked me down the narrow path, winding through the fields toward the stream. The night air was crisp and cool as we approached the water.

“You have learned much today,” Great Grandfather said. “Tonight, I will show you one more secret.”

“A secret?”

Great Grandfather’s eyes twinkled. We stopped beside a grove of old willows growing out of the muddy bank. Their gnarled roots knotted into the damp soil. Moonlight reflected off ripples in the water. There was magic in this place. Great Grandfather knelt down to splash the exposed roots of the largest willow, and in the dark, something shimmered at the base of the tree. There, revealed upon a piece of smooth bark, was an etching formed of glowing light, humming like fireflies in June.

“This is where it began,” Great Grandfather whispered. “This tree is an ancestor of our people. It is the progenitor of our language and it holds our thoughts. It speaks the language of the earth. The characters you’ve learned today are not just symbols. They come from the world around us. They are truths. They hold our memories.”

I crouched down and reached out to touch the bark. The moment my fingers brushed against it, the glowing characters shifted and writhed as though they were alive. The glow pulsed, and then flowed like ink across the surface. The air filled with the sharp tang of a cool mountain wind.

“The words are alive,” Great Grandfather said. “They are the blood, the body, and the soul of all things. They are in the wheat we mill for flour, on the wings of the birds that call overhead, and even in the sound of falling rain drumming across our fields. Everything has language. Each is its own written character. You’ve already learned how to hear and speak them. Now, you will see them too.”

I struggled to grasp the meaning of Great Grandfather’s words. “How can I learn them all?” I asked.

“Writing cannot be learned with ink and paper alone,” Great Grandfather explained. “It is not about the stroke, but about the life that flows through you, connecting you to the world. I will pass what I know to you so that you can learn to write with your heart and thereby learn to grow.”

Great Grandfather closed his eyes and held out his palms toward the darkened sky. I mimicked his

action, and after a moment, a faint glow rose from the ground beneath us. It was the language of the land, rising like a thread of light caught on a mountain breeze.

“Do you feel it?” Great Grandfather urged. “The words are within you, within everything. Take them and learn to understand.”

The world around me pulsed into being. The sway of wetland grass, the flutter of nesting ducks, and the murmur of the stream: I felt them deep inside me. I moved my fingers through the air and the characters came alive in the space between—glowing and swirling like the breath of unseen gods. They were not ink on paper, nor mere symbols. They were, as Great Grandfather had said, somehow alive—as alive as constellations twinkling in the night sky.

“Great Grandfather, I can see them. I can feel them.”

Great Grandfather smiled. “Yes. Yes, you can. You can learn to write now. You can learn to speak with the mountains and the wind, and the rivers and the trees. You are part of this world. We are connected to it.”

I nodded.

“Guai guai, you are young but at my age life seems to slip away as easily as summer turns to fall. Do you understand why I have brought you here?”

I shook my head.

“I will not be here much longer. I know it’s difficult to hear, so I’ve written it for you in this place under the stars. I’ve written what I know, so that you can learn from my memories. Promise me that you’ll come back to this place when I’m gone. Promise me that you will seek out my memory.”

I looked away from Great Grandfather’s gaze. The willow that had been glowing moments before had become a silhouette; its branches flowing out of the night sky and blending into the stream. I didn’t understand Great Grandfather’s insistence, but I knew by the timbre of his voice that his words meant a great deal to him.

“I promise,” I said.

Great Grandfather exhaled, and in the silence that followed, night fully enveloped the grove, swallowing the last vestiges of the visible world. Without a word, Great Grandfather reached out to me and together we walked home, leaving behind what we had witnessed but carrying the memories in our hearts.

*Editors: Rachel Tapia, Diana Sargsyan,
Julia Wong, Hannah Park*

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**Creative
Nonfiction**

High Frequency Sound Waves

Julia Maeding

“It’s the friends,” T said, with the kind of confidence that could get me to join a pyramid scheme. “It’s always the friends.”

They are too kind. They proposed a whole thesis to explain why REDACTED isn’t into me.

The homies do not take care of your fucking feelings. They do not create a shared space where feelings exist and matter. They do not share, at all. They smoke.

I pictured it: REDACTED jumps off a plastic slide, flips into nighttime air. Lands on two feet. Stumbles backwards. Fuck yeah.

It is humiliating to want any man, but especially one so abrasively boyish, which is probably the whole thing. I hear T’s voice, the wisdom of my very own stoned gay prophet: You are not weird for catching feelings. He is weird for not wanting you. Also he is named after one of the most boring characters in the Bible.

I wish T was attracted to women and we could just get married. As it is, we’re both stranded. They sent me pictures of the latest guy. He’s a hottie. We have the same type. Something mischievous in the iris. Nerdy interests. Muddy sexual orientation. Flaccid half-answers and a smudgey, slippery consciousness that never quite settles. Talking to these guys is infuriating, but have you ever fucked one? The fog is gorgeous.

Honestly, I have two types. I think this is also part of the problem. REDACTED fell dead in the middle of my intoxication spectrum. On one end of the spectrum there’s rusty skateboard wheels, STDs, blurry stick and pokes, expired acid tabs, graffiti dabbling, experimental fireworks, endless negotiations about things I said I wouldn’t do, but maybe I’ll reconsider? Please? Things have been so hard with school and everything. It would really relax his mind. On the other end there’s a PhD, or a professional gaming contract, or a job doing cybersecurity that takes you to Switzerland sometimes. Regardless, my crushes always have slightly unexpected hobbies to which they are utterly devoted. Parkour, competitive lockpicking, fragrance, sketch comedy. Did you know there’s a whole sport where dudes play with frisbees? Its athletes pledge the commitment of gang members. And they are not half bad at fucking.

I love playing this role. The girl who has fucked all these wacky characters. It’s a cozy persona because it is completely hollow. I can crawl all the way inside, burrow, nest. This girl, her whole existence is an action. It’s about doing, not being. What a vacation.

I left the role for about a year because I was dating this wonderful guy. He was all about monogamy and being together. Being. Together. Both at the same time. In the past, I’d only been with people who either could not tolerate existence, or existing with me, or both. REDACTED was an incredible boyfriend because he really wanted to be.

He wanted kids more, which I will always find bizarre. So he left. Went to search for a woman who wants to grow a fetus in her swollen belly and push it out her cervix. The truth is, even if I wanted to, I don’t know if I could. My cervix has so many problems as it is. The physical therapist who prodded it last month told me it’s not where it should be. I wasn’t even surprised. I was surprised

anything was intact.

This week my mother took me to my fancy UCLA ultrasound in Palos Verdes. I had agreed to the procedure mostly because my doctor, a bitchy specialist in Gucci loafers I waited many months to see, said I had to. Well, he didn't put it like that. He said we needed to do it in order to move forward.

What was I gonna do, wait another 6 months to see a different specialist?

The test was early in the morning. I live an hour away. I was grateful my mother drove me, because I was pretty fucked up from the bowel-emptying protocol. I kind of thought I might throw up or shit my pants or both.

Neither. When they called me back to the office, I scooted to the table's edge and opened my legs. I felt myself laugh.

"Sorry. It's just—usually it's cold."

The tech smiled, nodding. I don't know if she keeps her lube in some sort of warming drawer, like a plated dinner, or what. My prior ultrasounds felt like fucking a series of icicles. She had warned me about the pain.

If you have pelvic pain, there will be some discomfort, because I will be systematically moving each of your pelvic organs. And, if you're here, you know, it's because you have pelvic pain.

I nodded. But the real pain didn't come for a while, because she started on my right side, where the wand hurt in the normal way sex usually hurts me. A sore stab. Not the whole time—just certain positions. There's always a point, or several, where I blurt out, oh, no—hold on. And readjust. And they go, everything good? And I say, oh, yeah, I just have this thing where it hurts sometimes.

I was with REDACTED so long ago and only a few times. I don't have any specific memories of those interruptions. Which probably means he had the right reaction, a nonreaction. Acceptance. Or, more likely, indifference.

Maybe huffing the brain-destroying fumes of the crush kept me from feeling pain at all. Have specialists considered boys like him as a clinical tool for pain management? With no choice but to accept the wand's probing, I stared at a clean expanse of ceiling tiles. It was a grid with many lights tucked in, pinched and spraying in different directions. I thought of the trampoline my family had when I was kid. We'd get the garden hose and click its head to a setting called MIST, then tuck it between rusty springs, aimed at the bouncing pad. Water diffused into wet clouds. We spent hours jumping in them, floating, a thousand shiny beads pulling up from the mesh with every landing. It was ethereal. I hoped heaven had a waterpark. OWWWW.

Fuck.

The tech paused.

"I know. I'm sorry. It's your left. That's where the lesion was, right?"

I made a noise to confirm.

She kept going, working her way into a screaming elbow of tissue. I thought about what could have possibly made me feel better in that moment, besides getting high. Maybe if my cat had been there, purring on the table. Maybe if a medical assistant had walked in and said a pharmaceutical rep had come by and handed out Sephora giftcards and they had a few extra and did I want one? Maybe one of my crushes—a sensitive one, like REDACTED, holding my hand and scanning every detail of the room with writerly interest. He'd gather a portrait of a beautiful but troubled woman (and her beautiful but troubled pussy) whose story is peppered with humor, including possibly homophobic resentments towards her specialist, ultimately collecting in a puddle of bittersweet truth. I'd look at the puddle, seeing my reflection. Then I'd kiss him, because no one ever bothers to do the gathering I do, and it's romantic. I just don't know how far romance goes. In my experience, it's like hydrogen peroxide, dissolving quickly in daylight. My fantasies are an opaque container. I keep that cap sealed tight.

The doctor came in—not the twink one. A woman who joined the tech at her giant, curved screen. On it was a map of my seething flesh.

I don't like how that looks.

So she rubbed the same screaming spot, back and forth, for what felt like hours. A hot tear ran down my cheek. I thought of shooting stars, the burning tails of comets rarely caught. I did see one, once, while camping. I'm 99% sure I used my wish on some guy. I was in middle school,

so I bet I know who he was. He still looks at my Instagram stories. Some days I think of messaging him. He only has a few pictures up but he looks hot, like I remember him. REDACTED was on the PhD end of the crush spectrum. I wouldn't be surprised if he actually earned one. At the very least, he got a bachelor's degree and a dependable job. He had immigrant parents and there was a lot of pressure to succeed, but I always believed he would. He was one of the only guys at that school to make me laugh—the kind of laughter that actually hurts, jabbing your ribs, bending you in half.

Even back then, I was such an attention whore. Him and I had a whole skirmish at a bar mitzvah and I wrote an essay about it where I referred to him and the Other Girl in codenames from Les Mis. A few weeks later, The Other Girl came up to me during P.E. and said she'd graded my essay. I'd forgotten she helped the teachers with grading. That was something the popular and/or smart kids did. She said it was amazing. She said she was sorry about everything.

That was the first time I felt seen for my writing. It was the clearest, warmest feeling. I walked to the locker room with open lungs.

I think that's just redundant vaginal tissue," the doctor said, a little quietly. I had never heard that word used in this context. I made a joke in my head. This pussy is so good, it's like, duh. It's redundant.

Or maybe, this pussy is so good, it's twice as good. It's redundant.

I set the joke aside for further workshopping. The doctor moved on and found another spot to bother. I imagined my insides as a dense forest of problems. When I was little we had these VHS tapes. I can't remember what they were called. They featured puppets who bore more

than a passing resemblance to muppets, but were flagrantly evangelical. One time one of the puppets got lost. Or locked outside his house. He was alone, in the woods, at night, and scared. He began to sing.

All you have to do is pray. All you have to do....

"I don't see adhesion," the doctor said. "But over there...."

I saw the puppet's face in a worried scrunch. An icicle dripping from a ceiling tile. A boy named REDACTED, bouncing off of walls, rubbery, weightless from all the forgetting. My mouth twisted in pain. The wand insisted on going deeper. And who was I to argue? Maybe things had been so hard with wand school and everything. This would really relax its mind. I breathed. My flesh softened a bit.

Is pray.

*Obviously I ran home and Googled Redundant Vaginal Tissue and was immediately humbled. Actually, I was horrified, because the initial results conjured a completely busted pussy: an imploded organ, a popped balloon. I combed through Reddit, though, and began to settle down. It's pretty normal, especially if you've given birth or have endometriosis like me. I think I know the area she was referring to. It's way back by my G spot. Only one person has ever commented on it. I was nineteen. He was thirty-eight. He had the largest bed I've ever seen, and he told me he bought it specifically to accommodate extra bodies. It was oceanlike. Sometimes I would crawl in and sleep for fourteen hours, and I never woke up rested, probably because I was on antipsychotic medication. I had a fixation on rats, shadows and cameras. I used to check for tiny lenses in the corners of every room. I never trusted the periphery of anything. This guy, this man who was old enough to be my father, was one of the founders of REDACTED, which blew my teenage mind. He told me stories about the guy played by REDACTED in REDACTED, which remains one of my favorite films. To this day, when I watch it, I think of him, and of the shadows scattered on his dark ceiling, and his recipe for homemade REDACTED which he used a Kitchenaid to blend up. I had never heard of anyone making that substance, let alone ingesting it themselves. It's usually something you give to someone you want to REDACTED. Looking back, it almost seems like a threat. Like he wanted me to know that, at any time, I could slip into a fugue state and get lost in his control. But that never happened. He was only interested in getting lost himself.

Editor's note: Julia Maeding now identifies as a lesbian. She calls this piece "the dry-throated death rattle gasp of comphet." She is doing better now, although a recent surgery proved her ultrasound findings invalid.

Editor: Mikayla Stoddart

Vancouver's Symphony

Hannah Park

Wooden planks creak under my feet. Waves lap against the pier. The wind is as gentle as a mother rocking her babe.

We're drawn to the edge of the water, and I smell the brine of fish and sea. Giant, red cargo ships lounge beside luxury cruise liners. Metal buoys bob to our right, almost black in the darkness. But the crowd hasn't come to gawk at these.

Deep indigo blankets the sky. Expectation surges and swells around us. I adjust my backpack, heavy with overpacking. I hope we won't have to wait long!

"It's starting!" Murmurs rise like steam.

"아, 예쁘다!" How pretty! My cousins and I nod, agreeing with our grandmother. "Prendre une photo!" some Frenchmen gasp. Take a photo!

Across the sleepy bay, Vancouver comes to life.

Thousands of artificial eyes blink open: twinkling lights appear on the skyline. One by one; building by building. I run over to a binocular stand and swivel the heavy machine toward a rainbow blur.

A gasp sails from my mouth, unbidden, like dolphins surfacing for air. The lens zooms in on the city. A neon fountain display shimmers, incandescent and vivacious. We're a mile away, and I can see the logos on that distant street.

The Canadian air begins to nip at the tips of my fingers. I untie my jacket from my waist and slip it on. Mocktails and a fancy seafood dinner lounge in our bellies and make our eyelids droop—my cousin's yawn almost swallows the pier whole.

"잠깐만," My grandmother says. Wait.

We pause halfway down the pier. Grandma sinks into a bench and sets down her purple walking cane. She's watching a musician.

They're about the same age. Sitting on the edge of a blue lawn chair, an elderly violinist cradles her instrument between her shoulder and neck. Music soars through the cool night air, aglow with aching beauty. How many times has that resined bow soared through a crescendo? How many years have those fingers flitted over the wooden board?

I recognize the song and smile. Her open case, the ubiquitous tip jar. I love live music. It's a two-way street, where a musician can spot a hovering stranger in the corner of their eye and pour just a little more magic into the strings.

I watch the two, wise women. How could they be more different? My grandmother lived through the Korean War and raised five children with her faithful, capable hands: she had no time to learn music. This woman probably spends all her spare time playing. Grandma leans on her walking stick, while the other grips her violin bow. And Grandma wears a cozy jacket, while the Canadian native sports a pink T-shirt.

But they're both wearing flowery prints—a universal grandma fashion? They're both drawn to the music. And, when she finishes, my grandmother puts some colorful Canadian bills into her violin case—

and they both smile at each other.

All around me, similar things happen. I see people of all hues, cultures, and experiences brushing shoulders. I hear many languages, as different as sharks and jellyfish, singing the same song of appreciation.

I close my eyes, relishing the symphony. The violin, the sea, the voices. I may not understand them all, but it doesn't take away from this moment. We all cherish the things that matter: the vastness of the ocean, the stars twinkling above the city, and music that speaks to the heart. Planks creak. Seagulls cry. Grandma gives me a hug, and I smile.

Editor: Kyle Lincoln



The Languid Stare

Hannah Park

Graphite illustration on paper

Contributors

POETRY

Our wordsmith **Haniah**, better known as [REDACTED] online, is an Aerospace Engineer with far too much love for writing than is fathomable. A known sweetheart in person, they have a knack for writing pieces that crawl under your skin to haunt your steps forever. Or saccharine love stories. If you're lucky, that's one and the same.

Rebecca Pattichis is a Cypriot- and Mexican-American poet from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her poems have previously appeared in AZINES Library's communal zine for Palestine. Rebecca graduated with a BS and MS in Computer Science, with minors in Comparative Studies in Race & Ethnicity and Dance. Her research focuses on making her native languages of Cypriot Greek and Mexican Spanish accessible through creative language technologies. She is working on her first manuscript, which seeks to connect surveillance nation-state agendas through her uniquely personal experience from Cyprus to the US-Mexican border.

Finn Kobler (he/they) is a poet, screenwriter, playwright, aneurysm survivor, and Korn apologist from Greater Los Angeles. They hold a BFA in Writing for Screen & Television from USC and currently work as a creative writing and public speaking instructor for various schools in Southern California. As a runner-up for the Los Angeles Youth Poet Laureate, they hope to pass their passion for the craft on to their students — who, since Fall 2023, have won 100+ awards in Speech, Creative Writing, Debate, and Mock Trial (with several national finalists). Their plays have been published by Pioneer Drama and Dramatic Publishing, and their feature debut grossed over 1 million dollars worldwide (of which they've seen approximately \$4.63).

Abbie Doll is a writer residing in Columbus, OH, with an MFA from Lindenwood University and is a Fiction Editor at Identity Theory. Her work has been featured in Door Is a Jar Magazine, 3:AM Magazine, and Pinch Journal Online, among others; it has also been longlisted for The Wigleaf Top 50 and nominated for The Best Small Fictions, Best Microfiction, and the Pushcart Prize. Connect on socials @AbbieDollWrites.

FICTION

Daniel Speechly is the Academic Manager at a private language institute in Seoul, South Korea. In his free time he runs NFEscapism.com, a nonfiction book review blog. His most recent publications appear in Litro Magazine UK, LIT Magazine, and The River at The Sandy River Review.

CREATIVE NONFICTION

Julia Maeding is an English major and writer who plans to pursue a graduate degree in Social Work. She has been writing her thesis novel, *Dog Rose*, for eight years. She hopes to finish soon.

Hannah Park is a creative writer and poet who enjoys writing about morality, the experiences of youth—especially in reclaiming kinship with nature—and fiction in experimental settings. She recently finished her debut science fantasy novel set in the Neolithic era and Ice Age, and hopes to publish it by the summer of 2025.

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