

S P I R E S

TWO THOUSAND THIRTEEN
AUTUMN





S P I R E S

intercollegiate arts & literary magazine

- autumn 2014 -

Copyright 2014 of Spires
Volume XX Issue I
012345 First Edition 67890

All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from Spires and the author.

Critics, however, are welcome to quote brief passages by way of criticism and review.

Spires accepts submissions from undergraduate students around the world. Works are evaluated in small groups and then recommended for further review or for elimination from the review process. Spires is published bi-annually and distributed free of charge to the Washington University community at the end of each semester. All undergraduate art, poetry, prose, drama, song lyric, and digital media submissions are welcome for evaluation.

spiresmagazine@gmail.com

Design	Christina Chady, Dante Migone-Ojeda, Miri Zawadzki, and Eva Bloomenfeld; set into type digitally at Washington University
Printing	Midtown Printing, St. Louis, Missouri
Special Thanks	Washington University Student Union; Mike Rogger of Midtown Printing; and the authors, poets, and artists who submitted.
Type Face	Centaur MT; designed by Bruce Rogers.

LITERATURE

Yael Toren	The Goddess of Molecular Evolution.....6
	Distance and His Company.....8
Leah Silverman	All Mothers.....9
Michael Shaw	RUNNING OUT.....10
Leah Silverman	Pickled.....12
Sophie Mindes	Sundays.....14
Seth Williams	The Warmth.....17
Ashley Wilkinson	fractional distillation.....18
Callie Fields	Elevator Music and Death: An In-Class Exercise.....21
Seth Williams	Wind.....22

ART

Maxine Joie du Maine <i>Webster University, '16</i> Digital Media	Home Alone 2014.....front
Elizabeth Tran <i>Fontbonne University, '15</i> Ceramics, Low-fired Glazes	Floral Tea.....inside front
Lauren Marx <i>Webster University, '14</i> Ballpoint Pen and Ink	Cicadas.....inside back
Destini Johnson <i>Webster University, '16</i> Acrylic on Wood	Black and Gold.....back

STAFF

Editors-in-chief: Christina Chady
Miri Zawadzki

Literary Editor: Meytal Chernoff

Layout Editor: Dante Migone-Ojeda

Public Relations: Shelby Ozer

Treasurer: Anna Mai

Staff: Holly Baldacci
Eva Bloomenfield
Erika Castriz
Kristi Hagan
Ben Harvey
Andrew Sgarro
Noah Weber
George Zhou

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

You've probably heard the one about the diamond: Rock solid, sparkling, stylish, and eternal -- practically indistinguishable from the modern vampire. If you're in a rush and need to tell the difference, you'll have to ask how it was made. Unlike vampires manufactured at whim by capricious undead, diamonds require billions of years of pressure and cooling in the Earth's mantle, and the historical record shows that humans around the globe have prized their beauty for millennia. Barring total collapse of capitalism and culture, they should retain their value. This decade's infatuation with vampires, on the other hand, is already fading.

At this point, the casual reader may wonder what diamonds and vampires have to do with this magazine. The reader well-versed in editor's notes, however, may recognize the beginnings of a genre trope and expect a hackneyed metaphor for the creative process on the other end of this tangential meta-discussion. Such an expectation would not be remiss, the author will admit.

To wit: We hope you find that the contents of this magazine bear more likeness to diamonds than vampires; we certainly did. From Maxine's mesmerizing take on Home Alone to Seth's humorous perspective on a lost dollar bill and Yael's rewritten creation story, this issue of Spires consists of great artistic effort condensed into a dozen pages. Take a moment and feel that weight. The slim publication you hold in your hands is hours of skillful labor and craftsmanship curated for you to enjoy. In its pages we recognize that timeless, ineffable beauty which transcends bounds of style and register, and we hope you do too. So perhaps the art within this magazine is not diamond per se, but you'll have to use a microscope to tell the difference.

Anna Mai
Editor-in-Chief Elect

The Goddess of Molecular Evolution

When the Goddess of molecular evolution first came into existence, the world was disordered and unbound. The space she entered was like a desert - arid and amorphous, but instead of sand dunes, it was surrounded by black shadows. It was without rules or direction. She entered this environment with a magnificent boom, a blast of light, and a questioning gaze. Where she came from before was unknown, both to her and the darkness around her.

On the first day, she blinked twice and then looked around at the blackness and gloom. Her limbs were neither big nor small, as there was no standard measurement to use as comparison. Parts of her seemed to be consumed by the darkness, and her appearance shifted between that of a newborn (red and round and wrinkled) to one of an ancient grandmother (withered and wrinkled). But no matter what shape she took, she was fragile within the blurry space that existed. There were no laws that governed this strange land. The Goddess curled her fist and swung her arm against nothing. When she closed her eyes, she felt like she was falling, without rest or rhythm.

On the second day she cried out, and there was sound. She cried (for herself? for the nothingness?), and her tears were the first particles to populate the space. They floated around her and, thrilled, she tried to capture them between her delicate fingers. Subatomic particles whizzed around, flashing like fireworks and combining to form chains that curled around her ankles. By the time she finally rolled herself to sleep, the dark matter had proliferated into an ocean of neutrons, protons, and electrons. From the particles, she fashioned the first atom, a unique combination of all the components. It hummed with energy. Particles became enzymes that found their counterparts and clicked together like puzzle pieces, becoming proteins, becoming cells, becoming living bright matter that made the barren land bloom. The Goddess decided that she, with whatever powers she possessed, would create the rules that this land would obey. She felt greater now that she had a measure of control. That night, the Goddess dreamt of boundaries – of circles and lines and artificial distinctions that separated the space and made things discrete.

On the third day, she spoke.

“Hello?” she asked the air (the newfound oxygen molecules bobbing heavily around her). She listened to her voice vibrate; the vibrations bounced off newly formed mountains and echoed back. “I’m here,” she announced to nobody. “I’m here now.” Opening her arms out wide, she embraced the open space. With a sweep of her arms, she split up what was to be heaven and earth. She gathered the oxygen and hydrogen molecules together in her palm, and threw the combination up to the sky. It began to rain – gently first, and then forcefully. The droplets reminded her of tears. The rain streaked against the ground and filled the air with an earthy smell, pure and heavy. The land was still unformed, but ripe with potential. Some of the water combined to form a vast ocean, a network of oxygen and hydrogen tightly bound but still permeable. Nearby there was sand that became soil, and within the soil there were numerous operations taking place, cells breathing and expanding, multiplying and dying. They performed these functions without thought or rest, steadily repeating the same things. That night, the Goddess felt calm.

On the fourth day, she laughed. Plants had sprouted overnight and everywhere she looked there was color. There were flowers and fruits and even poisonous plants that had taken form. The fruits were fresh and ready to be eaten, but she was not hungry enough to consume it all. The Goddess kneeled down, and while on her knees she stuck out her hand and began to dig a hole in the dirt. The first things that came out were simple, multi-organism creatures with basic functions – all they could do was eat and reproduce. Some of them were so small they seemed to barely exist. Some were translucent and she could see their microscopic organs if she looked closely enough. They crept along the dirt - almost as if they themselves were extensions of the dirt, feeding off invisible bacteria. She grabbed at one of the creatures and gave it wings. She took another and gave it more legs. And on she went, randomly selecting one thing or the other and making it more elaborate. She watched as they replicated themselves actively, performing dances of sorts with one another, creating colonies and new generations. But they did not provide the sort of company she was so desperate for. That night, she went to bed feeling alone.

On the fifth day, she danced. She woke up to the sound of insects chirping loudly, using their wings to produce music. The Goddess heard them and answered by moving her feet and arms extravagantly, as if she herself could chirp and fly. The plants had grown even higher and she imagined different sorts of creatures – scaly and furry and hairless, dancing along with her. And the insects grew to birds, and from birds sprang reptiles, sprang mammals, sprang animals of every nature. They too reproduced and formed colonies or clans, each creating a home within the new world. And it was on that day that she fashioned the first Adam, a being more complicated than the atom from which he got his name. And he cried and he spoke and laughed and he danced, and together they were happy. And that night, she went to bed with him.

On the sixth day, she sighed. The man she created did not follow the same rules as the rest of her creatures.

“I don’t love you,” he told her, and with that he left without a backward glance.

Though he was composed of the same matter, though his cells were programmed identically to all others, the Goddess of molecular evolution felt that her powers had reached her limit. She could create and destroy on the microscopic level but she did not know what to do once large beings were created.

Yael Toren
Washington University in St. Louis, ‘15

Distance and His Company

When Distance threw a dinner party, everyone was invited.

Optimism arrived an hour early and fluttered around the house in impatient anticipation.

Commitment had prior commitments (he was often overcommitted).

Trust arrived at the same time as his old enemy, Betrayal. They stood stiffly side by side outside on the stone steps, studiously ignoring one another.

Confusion was perplexed by the very meaning of a 'dinner party,' and after changing into five different outfits, she eventually showed up at the wrong place.

Blame was a brute; he stole into the kitchen, ate all the pie, and accused the twins, Attachment and Detachment of the crime.

Idealism was so blind sighted by excitement, she accidentally walked into the door and had to hold a cold compress to her forehead for the rest of the evening.

Time came an hour late; his watch was broken and the seconds were taking an extra long time to tick by, but the consistent tick-tock sounds gave the meal a rythym that soothed those around the table.

Sorrow was the first to slip out, and as Time tired the the rest of the guests slowly followed Sorrow's trail out the door.

Longing stayed late to comfort Loneliness, who had spent the meal alone in a corner by the window. Both lingered, watching the stars glimmer in the sky, until the last candle was extinguished and the evening festivities were a dreamlike memory.

Distance decided to revise his guest list for future occasions.

*Yael Toren
Washington University in St. Louis, '15*

All Mothers

About the time they de-boned the train tracks
I was going about smelling people's sheets.
I'd turn to oil and snake in through the cracks in their windows
as they were dressing or undressing or shampooing or clipping
I'd make like beetle-feet into their sheets.

And Ms. Earth, feeling dew now
where there once were train tracks,
felt it as sweat, and sniffed herself un-armored
not proud of her sulfur and salt scent
but not quaking in her new bare and unbuttoned skin.

As they unclamped the remaining scales
teeth of a beast rusted all over,
from what once were train tracks,
I was going about my day collecting the skin
of peoples' night-selves,
like God's cupped hands were under my nose.

The nostrils, divine plow,
made a thesaurus of smells in me.
And later, Good afternoon Mr. Cumin and Detergent!
I know what's in his skin, I know what he sweats
what he leaves behind when he pulls out of his dream self.

Ms. Earth's green hair shook out of her heavy hair pins
of what once were train tracks,
and she smelled like Morning, Mrs. Moss and Milk!
who slept in her blush and dinner-making skin,
who wore her children's piss and her husband's spit to bed,
who dissolved out of her skin so quick in sleep
that she seemed to come and go as a sneeze.

That is what Ms. Earth smelled like
when they de-boned her.

Leah Silverman
New York University, '16

RUNNING OUT

I have an idea –

I'm like a child all breathless arms-a-flailing supercharged an energy with no beginning
end, and I am bursting sud-
den though the room on some adventure with no time for
care about no time to care about
some tracks of mud a- long my route.

My mother reached
for me no NO!
I'm under table
over couch the
mud

streaks
grounded for weeks
get to the door I'm near–
“I just mopped that!”
–ly out where there is freedom yet again but turn the corner looming shadow
figure father on the floor–

“Stop!
Clean up this mess!”

“Consider all your actions; act with care and grace.
Please demonstrate decorum; you will wipe your face.”

no, NO!
NO no NO no!
I was running out!

Clack, click! Circuits whirling, like a robot.
Always trusty, working hardly. I am
rules! I build the tools by instinct, unthought.
Conjugate direction'ly, the vowels
Fools! Equations, terms, trochees, I am:

//Rules!

```
if ( life is fleeting ) {  
run faster;  
                                work harder;  
}  
  
else {  
    be happy;  
}  
  
for ( every moment wasted; every idea squandered ) {  
    punish;  
}
```

No NO! I'm running out!

I'm like a ship at sea not lost not found around me is a vast expanse of
empty-filled,
the life below is deep unseen complex
unknown unshown to me:
my eyes are in the mast.

I'm blind to rocky shoals and bails of sand
My sails, my hands can tread the breeze until a whip, a rip,
the cracks of wind a'turns the till, endarkens skies.

It's trying, turning me, a'pulling
from the path so many
 visions, thoughts
in the clouds

That voice...
"Our actions make us who we are, and you are not.
Without a path, astray, you'll be not found nor sought."

I am running; I am running out!

I'm like a child, I...

—I forgot what it was.

Michael Shaw
University of California Berkeley, '15

Pickled

I came into the yard at dusk—
Which sounds like what it is:
orange dust in the sky, thick,
swept behind the trees
into a dustpan that emptied on the other side of
my window every morning.
Today it emptied
at approximately 6:35
while my mother was in her bed still,
lost behind Forgetting Me.
So I was on a stool in my Quiet Socks
in her kitchen,
wanting to be big, bigger.

Jars have marvelous excuses
for lids twisted tight.
So tight sometimes mother puts them under
hot faucet water and they stay shut,
to preserve the justice of their insides.
I would get a screaming
if I were to keep my lid up tight like that.
They tease me,
letting me see their insides
wet and yellowed and thick in twisted
snakes behind the glass at the Zoo
clay shards in a box at the Met.

Or me wanting to be preserved too,
even if it means being pickled.

So I went out,
after listening to the Jars with my fingertips
their intestines suspended, wishing me
well on my way out the door,
at approximately 6:49.
While my mother was in her bed still
forgetting me in her sleep.

Though for now I was closing the front door,
Wet with dew
and yellowed with coming sun
that thick glass door
with twisted
people inside.
In their beds,
or standing on stools,
who went out until dusk,
to be swept to the opposite end of my window
as small as I was today.

Leah Silverman
New York University, '16

Sundays

On Sundays, the Wallaces wake to the sound of vacuuming. Emilia, the lady who comes to clean, gets there around 9:00 am and stays until it is too dark to see the trees outside. In return, she gets four or five rumpled 20s and a ride back to the Grosvenor Metro station.

The Wallaces: last house on the cul-de-sac of Sulky Lane. Daughter doodles all over the newspapers; cat doesn't know how to shit in the litter box. Wife is a journalist. Emilia has come to know this family, studying them as she stacks wooden chairs on wooden tables to sweep the dust balls underneath. Her Walkman plays lively Latina beats, and is attached to the fanny pack she wears wide round her sturdy hips. With her Walkman and the two Advil she took this morning, she can manage until lunchtime without difficulty. Sometimes he calls, but otherwise she is fine, no she doesn't need a break, thank you though, Mrs. Wallace.

On Sundays, the house is rank with the scent of vinegar; the secret to clean windows, Emilia knows, is newspaper rags dipped in vinegar. The Wallace girl retreats to the uninfected downstairs.

The doorbell rings, and rings, and rings, the person ringing thinks it is broken. It's him, he is drunk, he is wearing a Superman outfit six sizes too small for him, and he is crying. The girl opens the door, recognizing him as the man who sometimes drops Emilia off in the mornings.

Where is Emilia, he says, lurching. She's upstairs, can I help you? She looks into his eyes, soggy and rimmed with red. His crotch bulges at the smallness of his suit. I need to speak with her, shouting but not knowing that he is shouting.

Somewhere in the house, Emilia turns up the volume of her Walkman, beats dust out of green cushions from the couch.

* * *

A man wakes up on a Sunday morning to the stagnant smell of syrup. He lives above the Pancake House on Democracy Boulevard, three bedrooms and a laundry machine that shakes and sputters when it runs. He likes his street, likes the name of it, even though it is always whizzing with traffic. Democracy, and it looks that way at night, too, when he comes back from the Rite Aid with a bottle of something wrapped in brown paper, red and green stoplights shining just for him, for this moment. Head abuzz, eyes alight. Invincible.

But he is not so invincible now, as his head swims around the apartment, kept spotless except for this couch that he has claimed as his territory, cigarette burn by cigarette burn. His brain sloshes with yesterday's drinks, the man groans. Rolls his body into sitting, blanket falling off him to reveal his sagged body clothed in a stained dress shirt, no pants. He stands, stretches into a walk. Beeline to the kitchen cabinet where she hides her vodka behind the soy sauce, the peanut oil, the sesame oil. Flavors and sauces for meals she no longer makes, dinners they no longer share together.

He sits down with a tall clear glass of drink and the couch sighs into him as he too, sighs. And now the man begins his daily narrative to himself of who is he and how he came to end up here in this clean desolate apartment. There was a time before all this, he knows, before he lived above the pancake place on this ugly street, when he thought he would become a great writer. This was back in college, back in the city, where he smooth-talked women as he smoked down cigarettes to their stub and spoke boldly of his aspirations. Dickens, Hemingway, Shakespeare, he was going to read them all and absorb their words into his own, become somebody. The man reminisces of these days and his eyes glow bright with the remembering of it in the dark room on the dark dank couch where he sits.

Before Emilia, there was only a bright shallow well where he put his faith in the future and flowed through life like water snaking through sidewalk cracks. A writer, a banker, a computer technician, he could do anything. He would be anything. After Emilia, life slid into the dreamplace where he lives today. The world bounces around in his head with too much color and brightness, brightness that can only be subdued by pouring drink after tall drink into the glass.

* * *

The air swims and wavers in front of him. His cape doesn't go past his shoulderblades and he looks the Wallace girl blankly in the eyes for a moment before he pushes past her into the house.

He follows the sound of the vacuum cleaner, leaving bootprints on the beige carpet.

It is a Sunday afternoon and the sun shines in through the tall panes of the kitchen windows and that is where he finds her, scrubbing the inside of the refrigerator clean. He calls out her name.

She stands up fully, rubber-gloved hands limp at her side. She scans over the drunkenness in his step, the marks on his neck from the cape pinned tight like a choker. Quickly she calculates in her mind how much money she has saved up; she cannot afford to lose another job this way.

What are you doing here. What are you wearing, she says.

Here I am, baby, I've come to save you. He grins and a spot of saliva gleams on his chin.

He comes forth and tries to clasp her shoulders with his hands but she steps back, holding a styrofoam container of leftover Indian takeout between them like a shield. Her mouth barely moves when she speaks.

Go home, please, I'm working. Please.

Don't you miss me? You work all day I never see you baby come here gimme kiss.

Her hands grip the container tighter.

I'm working, she says.

He keels towards her, rocking, the seams of his Superman suit split at the thigh, tear upwards to his side until his gut hangs out. The Wallace girl watches by the door frame, blushes when she spies the soft hairs trailing from his navel to the ripped Superman underwear. The girl looks into Emilia's eyes, brown almonds set deep like caves.

Honey go call your mom, tell her I can't find the dish soap, Emilia says sharply and the girl leaves.

The man is now slumped, staring into the marble facets of the countertop. She loved him once, she knows this, back in school when she wore the lipstick that he liked, when he'd curled her into him and only drank on the weekends. Now all she sees are his clammy palms, all she smells is his stinking breath. He sinks all the way down to the floor and now the seams come apart completely; he is shirtless but for sleeves that bulge red and blue. A wave of pity, she goes to him.

Why on earth are you wearing that?

It's almost Halloween. I wanted to surprise you.

And now tears glaze his eyes and she remembers how they met, a Halloween party and he was Superman, brave enough to talk to her.

He had gone to Party City and found the only costumes left were the children's sizes. He wanted to surprise her at work, like in the old days, spin her and take her out to lunch and her almond eyes would crinkle into a smile. He had a whole speech planned out in his head, I'm going to get his act together, I'll find a job, maybe go back to school so you don't have to keep cleaning people's houses, so you can find a job that doesn't give you back aches.

But her black hair is tied sleek back in a bun and she has nothing left for him. It is time to go home, she says, you are drunk. She grips his wrist tight and walks him out the door, up the street to the bus stop. Go home, she says, more gently this time. She is still wearing her rubber gloves.

* * *

It is a Sunday night and the Wallaces have finished eating dinner and watching Wheel of Fortune; it is time to go home.

She is quiet on the car ride back to the station, thinking. She will cook him one last dinner. Let him sleep one more night on the old couch in the apartment that reeks of syrup. Then he will have to leave.

They pull up at Grosvenor Station. See you next week, Mr. Wallace waves cheerfully. The train thunders in and Emilia boards, clutching her black bag to her chest.

*Sophie Mindes
New York University, '16*

The Warmth

If
I were a drinker
and tonight were one of those
on which I'd let it drink me too,
would it warm
 (the warmth
 from the underbelly of a bus
when it's cold:
 you sink into it,
 though it tastes noxious
 as a last date;
or the warmth when you board
 which is full, but tense
because the crowd,
 swaying with the stop-and-go
 like an alpine grove
 through the cycles of a storm,
and because the sound,
 pounding white
 as the clap and flash of a migraine,
and because the eyes you met
 of the girl you can't
 curl up with
 like newspaper on fire
[no lights;
 clothes, hot
 water,
 and a movie on;
 couch tighter than a quartet's strings;
 not needing
 to go further
 because that's warm];
but you wish, so you look
 and you go too far,
making the inside of that bus
 filthier
 than the air in its wake,
but better
 than where imagination shows you
 only you)
me?

Seth Williams
University of California Berkeley, '15

Fractional Distillation

when solar winds stream from the sun down to earth, they follow lines of magnetic force generated by the earth's core. the path across two parking lots and one busy street takes me 230 seconds to cross, my apartment to yours.

collisions of atoms occur and flow into a teardrop shaped sphere of charge. the light of the aurora borealis dances across the sky, atmospheric current. your thumb pressed into the arch of my foot.

we were once unsustainable recourse of action and dark fumbling out of straps and sleeves. you were a moon bite away from howling. I counted finger strokes like mapping galaxies.

in the kitchen in the back of the restaurant that belongs to you, we are discussing God and preparing fresh vegetables to make into soup. my voice shakes a note or two as I unload fear and gut a ripe red pepper, slowly peeling the roasted outer skin away from the fleshy surface. I scrape seeds from the insides, bright orange and pulpy like a gaping mouth. I look at your mouth. across the metal table you are dicing onions in a symphony of movement between your fingers and the knife.

the stickiness of whisper sounds.

excited states of oxygen make up the red and yellow-green colors of the aurora. there's a red light from the building next to yours that bleeds through the slats of your blinds at night, making the outside city seem a looted universe. I forgot about poems for a while and days moved like a prayer's beat.

you are grief on certain days. I am heavy with it. I accidentally peel dead skin from my chapped lips until they sting. what can you do with a sad like that except let it sit? it could ruin me if I let it and my bird shoulders can't hold the frame.

the only thing preventing metal from welding together on contact is a layer of oxidation. you and I have never been in the same bed unthreaded, anything but a merged scenscape. a blue velvet song.

a white mouth gape. bathroom procedures like daily prayers. can I get in with you? we scrubbed clean you knelt and picked up an ankle. washed the bottoms of my feet. I understood that it was an apology for truths you didn't speak.

I feel secure in your sickness. is this love or self-abuse? are they different? a calming hollow makes me shrink and stay up all night, forgetting or refusing to eat but drinking coffee like water. my hands shake for three days. google gives me 20,200,000 results for "how to love someone with mental illness." none of them mention that oxygen is essential for combustion, though it may seem the opposite in our weeks apart. I thought I would sneeze but cried instead.

I would leave you poems on the counter when I left in the morning if I thought you would want them, scrawled on the corner envelope of your phone bill. I like to think you would tape it to the fridge if it was particularly lovely.

why do you hurt people? I do not ask you, what does their pain mean to you?

in the kitchen of your apartment at I am, we are discovering the fluidity in which we wriggle in and out of affairs. I didn't ask about the earrings in your drawer. the name for oxygen comes from the Greek roots oxys (literally "sharp", referring to the sour taste of acids) and gonos ("producer", literally "begetter"). you projected onto my youth a red wintered tethered baggage I dragged for much too long.

in witching hours I feel the presence of absence and once again am leaking back into your bed. threads and patterns, you smile a moonbeam, threads and patterns.

the texture of shifting pangs of dependence.

you felt wrong to me that morning. it always feels like jaywalking being with you but today it's criminally toxic, thick and fucked. most of the time you are a layer I brush from my skin, a grime to inhabit and step out of.

some days breathing takes practice. without enough particles to bounce light, the sky becomes charred.

driving in the car across the 30 feet of bridge that once took me home my mother says, “writers acknowledge” and I think but do not speak of showers and sky and the rust crumbling from oxidized metal. in the ditch of the interstate running below us a dead deer lies breathless unblinking. I briefly consider feigning resonance but observing loss of life is not always significant.

when we pray over dinner later that night I cannot bear to shut my eyes.

without oxygen, concrete turns to dust. I spent four nights in the cycle of your bed before I missed the sheets of my own.

it becomes too familiar. is this therapy or self-sacrifice? are they different? it begins to seem that my prerogative is to risk rawness that invites pain, risk myself to hurt, and learn to medicate or soothe it once it happens, rather than never have it at all. does it make me strong if I know I don't deserve it; it doesn't touch me?

I remembered poems and wept through autumn,
soft petals on mouths on hands
on making mounds in dirt.

participate combustion,

or burning,

is the chemical union of the burning substance with a gas named oxygen.

the space of a city is never enough when I miss our mess.

we are always flaming whether I've breathed for myself today or not.

element reactions follow a pattern determined long before my continual surprise. there's always someone smeared on the insides of my eyelids and damp hair in the drain. the universe only feels like a betrayal if you let it.

Asbley Wilkinson
University of Iowa, '15

Elevator Music and Death: An In-Class Exercise

Mozart juxtaposed with heavy metal
first quiet notes, unassuming, quickly morph
chords rip through the speakers
progressions move with a purpose
slowly building into a fire
that consumes the artists vocal chords
words lost to my ears are heard
only by those who have acquired
a taste for agonizing screams

The song has a long, drawn out
death, but nevertheless fades back
through the holes in the speakers from
whence it first penetrated the room
the class lets out a collective sigh
and pens cease to scratch paper

Eyes look around in a weary fashion,
their owners not quite sure of what
horrors they fared nor the proper way
to react to them, but content
with the thought that whatever
it was, it was now over.

Callie Fields
Texas A&M University, '14

Wind

I find what's passed
is lost:
a dollar bill hijacked
by a gust
from an ill clasp,
and everything falls in-
to everyfuckingthing
because I need it
for the purchase of a pretzel;
I forget
that it's just one blown
tree limb outside any town
within the whole
scope of the tornado
storm that's churning the south-
east United States like churro
dough.
But still, it was mine.

Seth Williams
University of California Berkeley, '15



