

WILDER VOICE

Summer 2021



Visit our Website



 @wildervoice**mag**

 @wildervoice

Editors-in-Chief

Dorothy Levine, Clara Rosarius

General Editors

Emily Alfano, Ally Chase, Saffron
Forsberg, Kira Mesch, Gillian Sutliff

Arts and Layout Editors

Anna Harberger, Becky Trigo

WILDER VOICE

Summer 2021

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 32

Founded in 2005, Wilder Voice is Oberlin's publication for creative nonfiction and longform journalism. In each semesterly print issue, we publish true stories—from deeply researched reportage to intimate personal essays—as well as art, poetry, and more. We also publish an eclectic mix of exclusive content on the World Wide Web. (You can reach our website by scanning the QR code.) We welcome questions, comments, criticisms, letters, tips, jokes, postcards, miscellanea, and curio of all kinds. You can reach us by email at wvoice@oberlin.edu, or by snail mail at Wilder Box 43, 135 West Lorain Street, Oberlin, OH 44074.



Photography by Becky Trigo

Wilder Voice

Table of Contents

A Summer Night by Chloe Casdagli.....	6
bariatric daydream by Cora Lopez.....	9
Horsefly by Ariana Hughes.....	13-17
I Knew I Was Falling by Emily Alfano.....	18-19
Herbert by Ariana Hughes.....	21-22
Quarantine, Day ?, 2020 by Chloe Casdagli.....	26
Notes on Body by Kira Mesch.....	28-30
call transcript to my friend on a sunday morning by Kira Mesch.....	32
Mouth Poem by Kira Mesch.....	33-34

Contributing Artists

Teagan Hughes, Maya Das O' Toole, Chloe Casdagli, Katie Frevert, Becky Trigo, Aislinn Cannistraro, Michael Hastings, Anna Harberger

Cover Art

Front Cover: Teagan Hughes
Back Cover : Becky Trigo

A Summer Night

by Chloe Casdagli

Slow sinking of a lava-orange sun,
as moonbeams rise; the laughing day is done. The
blazing smell of smoke as embers gleam a dancing
prayer, dying quicker than it seems.

Stars streak across the sky in shades of white,
casting bats in a shining silver light.
The air turns cold in gusts of rolling storm.
But summer raindrops patter soft and warm.

The crackle of the logs and fading flames
roast marshmallows as people play their games.
With words and stories they wish for finite glee,
ignoring quiet thunder warning them to flee.

They drink and sing as embers turn to ashes. With
time, will they remember only flashes?





Drawing I
Maya Das O'Toole
Sketch

bariatric daydream

by Cora Lopez

i am thinking about what it would be
if my fat melted like polar ice caps.
as grubby money men (in their prime!)
bungle the jungles to build new gyms,
i'd melt

away

away

away

to grease some archetypal, cosmic pan
with all of my arm fat, be folded into cookie dough
as profiteers and warmongers fiddle idly with fountain pens, ink gushing
the surging, the skin stippled and sore
i am becoming a drain
in the name of the father, the son, and the holy Adam Smith (praise be unto him!)
no more dues or processed foods—
no more flab or love handles to grab—
a slurry of squelches sound;
as the dieticians dance in this liposuction deluge
for the day has come for my BMI to see green, green, green!
I wake with surgery scars from an invisible hand
and sigh contentedly, emaciated at last!



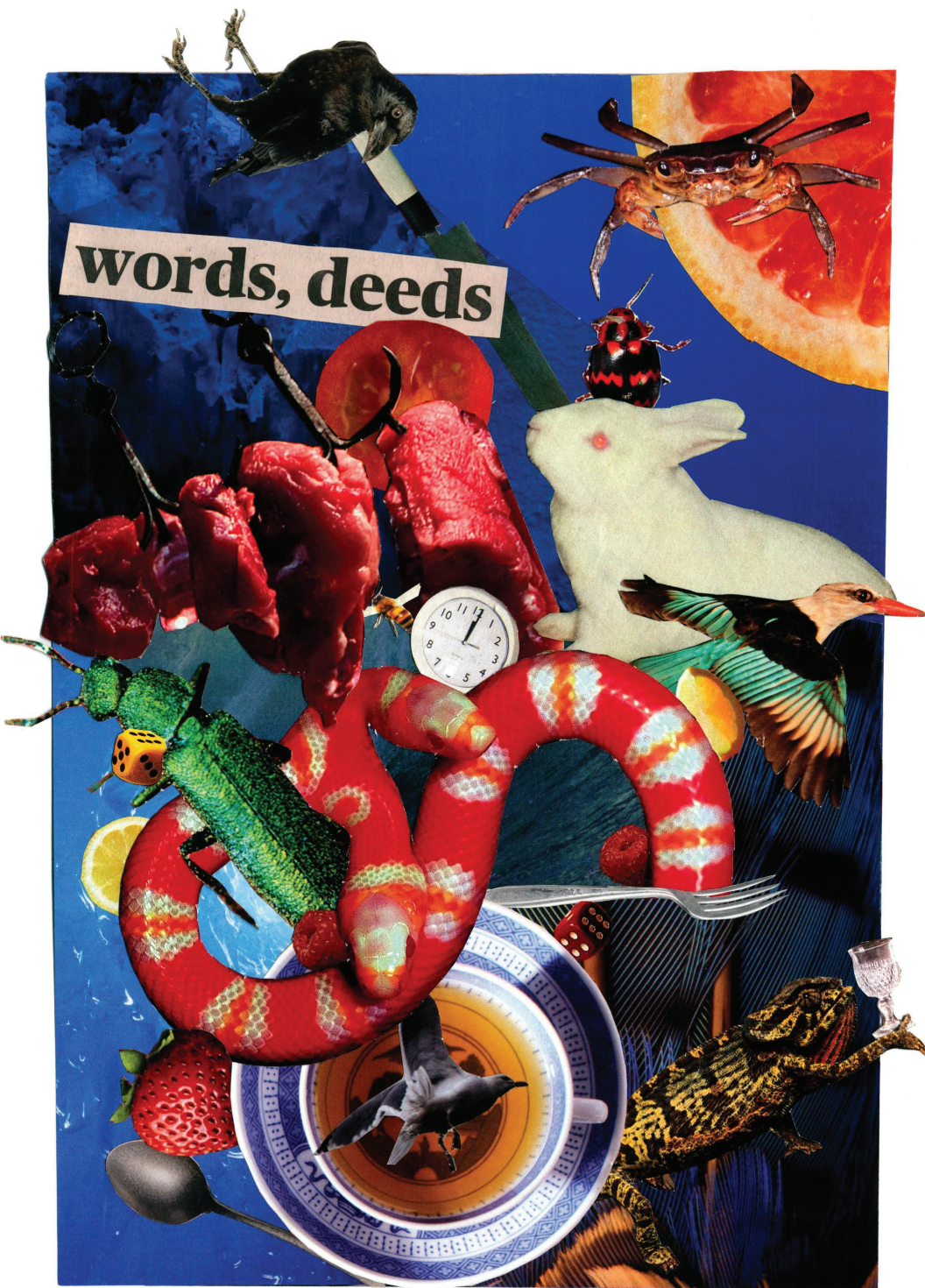
Drawing II
Maya Das O'Toole
Sketch 11

Horsefly by Ariana Hughes

Just as I was finishing up my philosophy reading, and literally on Kant's last few sentences, I became aware of a large horsefly that had somehow flown into Lulu's room. I always wondered how these miscellaneous bugs crept their way in, and why they chose to stay. Was the space really so welcoming? The boisterous air conditioning unit fizzing, the ceiling fan hissing as it sliced through the air, our feet tapping with jerky energy as we threw ourselves into our numerous readings and assignments. Perhaps it was the left-over nibbles from a day-old scone that sat in the corner, a mellow iced tea that had become diluted and drab since the loss of its ice cubes. Was it really so amusing? Better than the vast openness of outside? This particular horsefly was wandering around in a vaguely threatening sort of way and then suddenly, distressingly, throwing itself into the air, zig-zagging awkwardly, clearly confused by the constraints of the space. It gradually zoomed closer, and I tensed up. It zagged towards me and then zigged back and then zagged closer still. Finally, I had enough.



Self Portrait
Chloe Casdagli
Digital Art



Words, Deeds
Katie Frevert
Collage

Horsefly continued

Grabbing the laborious Kant I gave it a good thwack. The horsefly vanished from the air, lost for a delightful moment. Not dead or seemingly anywhere, lost in the void—and then it reappeared on the floor. Crawling, thankfully, toward Lulu. At this point the energy of the horsefly had seeped into us both, no problem or assignment could be handled until this criminal of distraction could be apprehended. Lulu commented on the somewhat bent wing it was now dragging oddly and I realized I must be responsible for this critter. At this stage, I understood that action had to be taken. The horsefly had to be put out of the misery that was this room and the thwack I had inflicted upon it. I had put it in misery, it had put me in misery. Now the misery needed to end. I held all the power. Kant was not powerful enough to take out this suffering brute, my laptop much too personal, too clean. I turned to my water bottle, it would have to suffice. And so I tracked it across the room, as it hobbled, perhaps suspecting its moments were numbered. I hesitated, and then brought the bottom of my metal water bottle straight down with an awful bang. Leaving it there for a moment, sucking in air rapidly, feeling a rush of shame.

Horsefly continued



Postponing my view of whatever horror lay underneath. I raised the water bottle to find the fly dying, twitching its broken legs and wings. I brought the bottle down hard again, still moving, again, and again, harder and faster, not stopping to look at the horsefly. I was a mindless pulsing Cuisinart. When I finally stopped, it was nothing but a mush of legs and wings and horrible bug insides. Thankfully Lulu had a tissue at the ready. For a moment I felt the texture of its dead mush under the thin surface of the tissue. And then it was in the trash can, gone... problem solved... I retreated back to Kant. No more horsefly. An empty room. Lulu and I shared a nervous glance as we turned back to whatever it was that we had been doing before. The silent tension of the awful murder that had just been committed felt louder than the buzzing of the bug. Lulu tried playing music but kept skipping the songs... how could we relax and read and listen to music about love and heartbreak when we had so willingly taken a life? Not we, I. I had sacrificed another, an innocent! No, not totally innocent—a life for the benefit of my own. And all I could do was sit and avoid Kant, revolving in my guilt and the absurd amount of power I had been given. The bug was not coming back so I needed to accept its fate and move forward with my life and feel fortunate that I would never be squashed into a carpeted floor by a metal water bottle. But a rush of emotions took over, I could have trapped it with a cup, the tissue I had used for its dead carcass could have been a landing pad for a flight out of the window, I could have allowed it to continue zooming around the room—maybe it liked the small space, the nervous energy, the old scone and tea. Maybe it liked us. I couldn't face Kant. I couldn't face Lulu. So I took a moment for the horsefly, closed my eyes, sent out my best wishes, a silent apology, an admission of guilt, a promise to be better...

TERROR
Katie Frevert
Collage

I Knew I Was Falling

by Emily Alfano

I think I fell in love with you when you wiped the dirty grin off my face after tripping up the flight of stairs leading to your apartment.

I think I fell after you watched Moonstruck with me and we talked about it for hours on end.

I think I fell when you saw me cry for the first time and wiped the tears off my cheek with your calloused thumb. I was so embarrassed, and you held me and told me everything was going to be okay.

I think I fell in love with you even when I hated you. I hated your crooked nose and bushy eyebrows and your sandpaper hands that pressed too hard against my cheek. But your nose had been beaten and bruised so that it looked like a mountain ridge from top to bottom. And your eyebrows frame your golden, almond shaped eyes which trapped my soul in them.

I knew I was falling when your mother held me in her arms and I saw your smile that showed all of your teeth shining back at me. Her arms an echo of yours.

You used to know me and my smiles and my big, ugly, cackling laugh. You said how you wished you could meet my mother, and I told you how much she would have loved you. You knew me inside and out.

I used to know me. Inside and out.
And I used to know you with your impulsive adventures and scarred hand holding mine in a secluded wood without fear or uncertainty.

You, with a devilish grin that could laugh out loud with a hand around my neck. Did you ever fall in love with me?

Did you sign your name with love on my back, my thighs, my cheek?

I wish I could remember a time when I couldn't go a second without touching you. Now, all I feel are your hot hand prints and they are suffocating me.

I don't think I know you anymore. I haven't for a while. Your eyes are transparent, your tongue too solid against mine. You've stopped wiping the tears from my cheeks. I stare at my body that is not my body anymore and I swear there are marks I do not remember putting there.



I Knew I Was Falling continued

Your mother's hug is so alien from yours now. Who could come from such loving arms and hurt someone so badly?

No matter how hard I try, I will never get enough distance from you. You'll never blur out of existence like I want and I will be left with your shadow lurking behind every attempt of mine to move on.

But I will move on. And eventually I won't feel your hands on my neck, my back, my thighs. And my tears won't sting my cheeks in your name. The woods will welcome me back and I'll stop thinking anyone with a scar on their hand is you. And I'll know that my mother would have warned me about you, just like yours should have.



Herbert

by Ariana Hughes

On the hottest summer days, I like to be up early,
Racing the advancing blaze. I tiptoe to the balcony
Accompanied by a gleaming bowl of oranges,
And absorb the shy warmth, the distant groans of construction.
Before long I am lost in a memory—
If I squint towards the sun I see him smiling dreamily, Herbert.

The father of my mother's mother, Herbert
A man who never needed an alarm to rise early,
His inner clock beat steadily, unlike his memory
Which chased itself in circles, looping around his balcony
Traveling faster, as he would turn to stare at the distant construction. The tiny
people hurrying to catch their mornings, as he peeled his first orange

With the sweet slice of orange
Herbert
Would find his voice, and tell me "I like to watch the construction—
They start early,
Like me, so I cheer them on from my balcony."
It awakened a memory

Summer Courtyard I
Becky Trigo
Sketch

Herbert continued

A memory
Of the view from a naval ship—and the juice from his orange
Sprayed like the sea off the side of his balcony.
And then I could almost see him, Herbert,
Amidst the chaos of time—and the war that stole his brother too early.
I believed that he could see all that amidst the construction.

He leaned back towards me, “I like to watch the construction—”
The freshness of the memory
Faded like the wispy clouds, “They start early-”
His half-empty bowl of oranges,
Hinted at the passage of time, but Herbert
Continued, “Like me, so I cheer them on from my balcony.”

A distant drill pauses, pulling me back to my own balcony
Facing oak trees and closed windows, only the sounds of unseen construction
Permeate the air, and I yearn for Baltimore, and the distantly moving crane, and Herbert.
I cannot quite grasp a hold of him, or time, or his whirling memories,
But my bowl is full of peels and my fingers are sticky with the juice of oranges.
So I turn my face to the sun and soak as the wind tickles my skin, pleased to be up early.



Summer Courtyard II
Becky Trigo
Sketch



Staring Death in the Face
Chloe Casdagli
Painting

Quarantine, Day ?, 2020

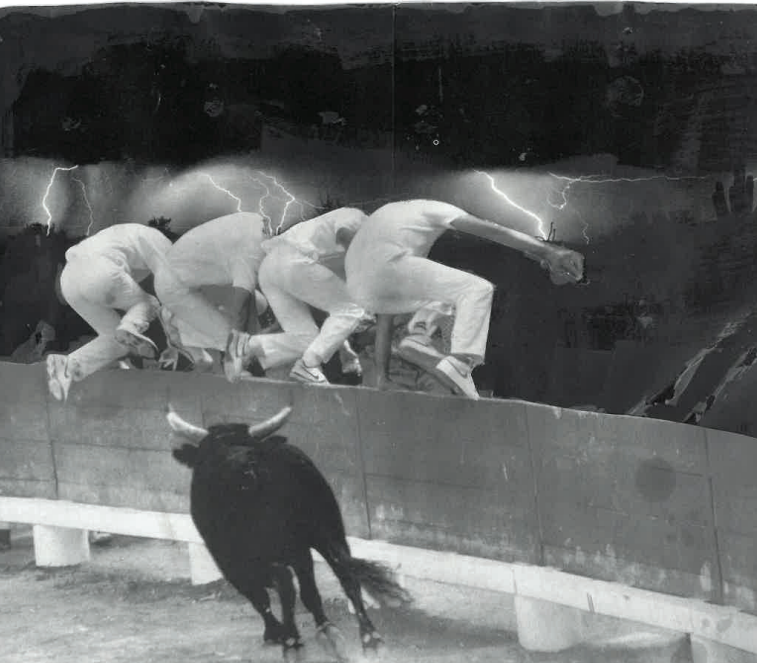
by Chloe Casdagli

A cracked white wall catches shafts of blurry sunlight, shadows dark as prison bars. A window smudged with fingerprints ripples with rain and streetlights, twisted gnarly trees.

Cars drum by full of chanting laughter and quiet hallucinations. The fire sunset grips you in its thawing yellow claws, pulling you from your world of bleach and aching dust.

A ceiling peppered with stick-on plastic stars, crude and manufactured compared to the real ones, arrange themselves into made-up constellations and pull your marionette-like strings until you're nailed to your shallow bed. With thoughts alone, they draw truths on your skin, too terrible to say out loud. Remember when that car was your car, those laughs more than a pocket watch of time? When shadows weren't prison bars and windows needn't stay shut?

When you held the trees, rain, and burning day in your palm, too close to really touch? It wasn't a dream, no, but reality is thinner than paper. Soon, you'll be left with nothing but the plastic stars, a shallow bed, and a cracked wall teasing you with sunlight.



(left) *Untitled I*
(right) *Untitled II*
Aislinn Cannistraro
Collage 27

Notes on Body

by Kira Mesch

CW: Gore and death

Here is what I have to offer: round face, sun-burnt neck, scar on my right knee, bruise on my left thigh. Cracked toenails, one tattooed hip, oven burns on my forearms accumulated over years. My face gets red like my mother's does. I cry when I am angry.

When I was born, my mom had a planned C-section. She knew she was having twins and didn't want to push both of us out of her. The way she tells it, it snowed the day we were born. The snow sat pale white and gentle on the ground while the doctors sewed her body back up.

In elementary school, doctors cut my dad's back open because there was cancer back there. They got it, but later the doctors had to cut him open again so his back wouldn't hurt so much. It didn't work like they thought so he started smoking weed. His lower torso is riddled with keloid scars, thick purple insects in raised lines along his lower body. He can't hear me if I don't speak loud enough. He falls asleep with the public access channel in the background.

As a child, I was cruel and spiteful and barely a girl. I grew my nails like claws so they'd be sharp, and when my brother and I fought, I'd try to scratch him so hard it broke the skin. When we were eight, he



Corner of the Pantheon
Christine Dugas
Photography

Notes on Body continued

challenged me to a race at a highway rest stop and I agreed, even though I knew he was faster. Halfway through, I pushed him down so I'd win, and he fell into gravel and bled like nothing I'd ever seen before. The wound healed to be this lumpy, white raised scar, an unfading island on a sea of tan skin. In high school, a decade later, I would sometimes look at his knee to check if it was still there.

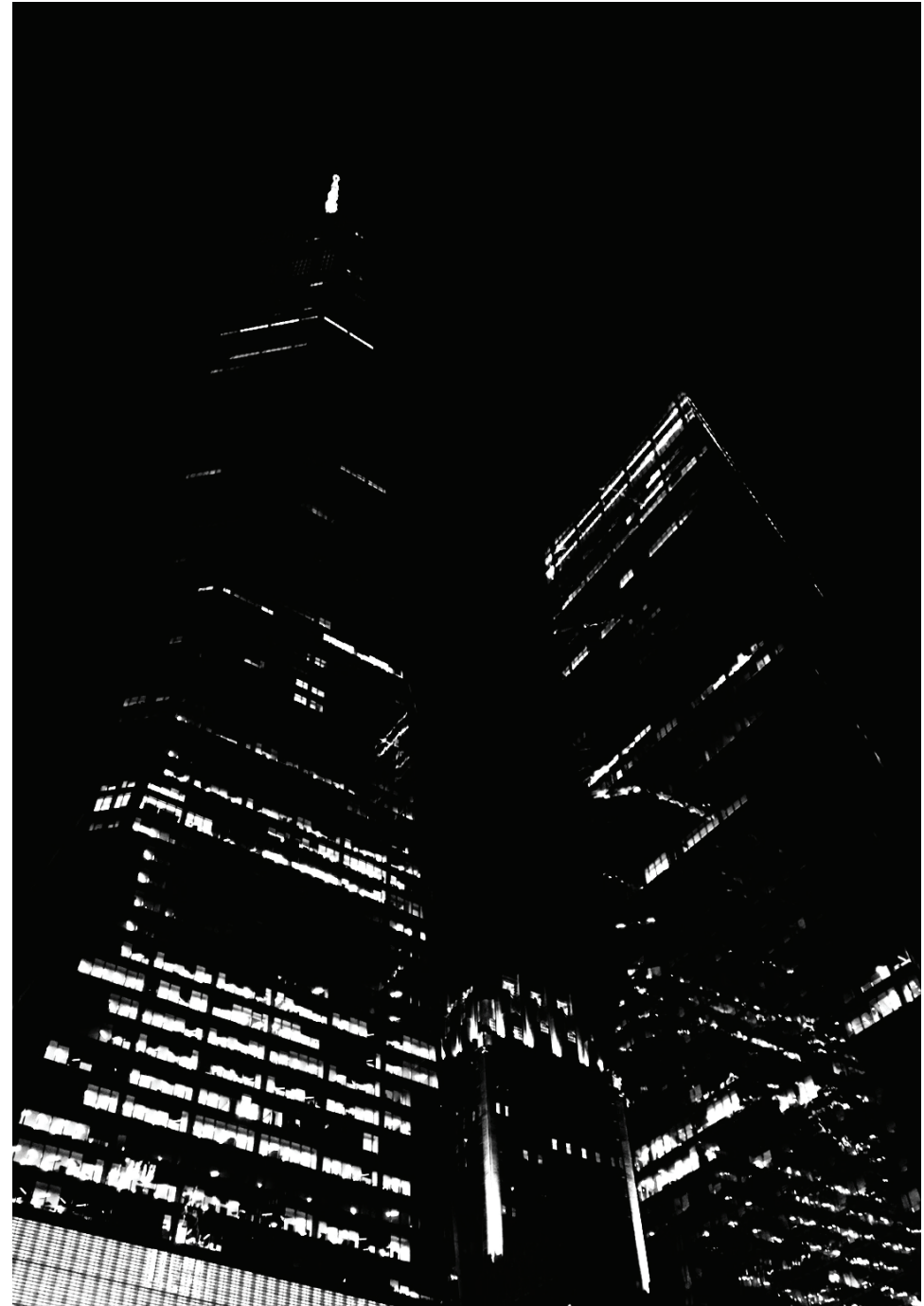
I have the photos of my brother's appendix from when he got it taken out, the same year that I tripped him. The doctors stuck a camera inside the slit they'd cut in him and, once he was out of the hospital, they printed the images in color onto glossy photo paper for him to show his class. They made me nauseous. The thing in the images was yellow and distended inside his open stomach, covered with veins and blood.

My girlfriend talks about how when the cicadas came to her town five years ago, they'd scream with anguish and shed their bodies onto the ground. You'd step out of your house onto their crackling dead skin and anywhere you walked, you'd crunch the shells onto the ground beneath you. The sky blacked out with their bodies: their dead, orange eyes, their clear, papery wings, their bloody, howling laments.

A scream is red, a nightmare is red, cough syrup is red, lollipops are red, the eyes of some bugs are red.

Most days now, I sit and I rot. I let my body get old and evil and curdled. I bet I'd taste foul to kiss. My mouth is wet and dark and red. Blood is wet and dark and red. I bite cherries and let the juice seep from their skin. I let my breath go sour from the sweetness. A scream is like a yearning, my mouth is like a yearning, a wound is like a yearning.

I was eighteen when my dad and I found the photos of my brother's appendix in a shoebox, about a week after he died. I could barely look at the photos, this object suspended in the wet darkness of his torso. I bet he was so small. I can't imagine him having ever been that young.



City Streets
Chloe Casdagli
Photography

call transcript to my friend on a saturday morning

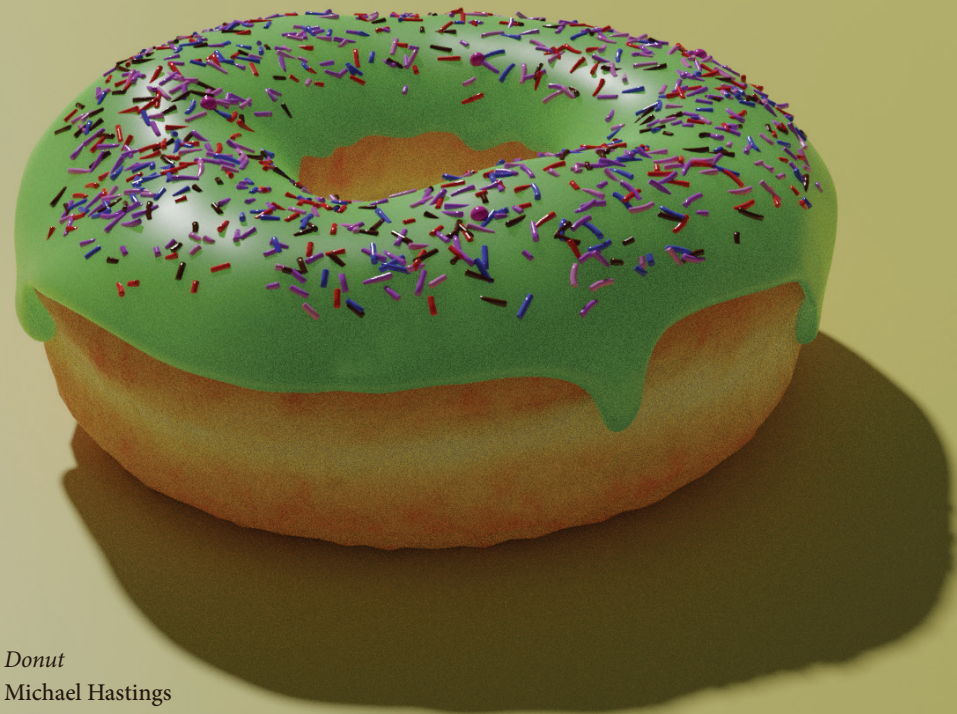
by Kira Mesch

CW: Alcohol use

the speaker of my poem told me to tell you she's actually really fucking sorry that she left you alone at that party last night but her boyfriend was just really drunk and she was actually just getting him home and she's sorry she didn't text you and she was going to tell you earlier but she lost all her contacts she's been totally off the grid i think she put her new number on her instagram or something so if you could text the speaker of my poem's new number with your info she'd totally appreciate it and also if her boyfriend said anything mean to you he didn't mean it he's actually super nice if you talk to him

no but it was actually crazy i'm not making it up last night there was a second party after the speaker of my poem took her boyfriend home and we really missed you the speaker of my poem totally would have invited you but it's the whole phone thing she actually needs you to text her first but anyways the speaker of my poem got into a fight and she broke somebody's nose but it was actually so funny because the girl totally deserved it the speaker of my poem pulled her hair so hard it came out into a clump in her hand it looked like an animal there was so much blood it was like a murder show it was crazy no like it was actually crazy

the speaker of my poem stole a purse last night the speaker of my poem vomited into a thorn bush last night i held the speaker of my poem's hair last night while her blood-stained hands were gripping her knees the throw up had chunks of pepperoni in it it smelled like melon vodka the speaker of my poem put on such a fucking spectacle it was pathetic to watch don't tell her i told you that but yeah no we should do lunch sometime you should definitely text her.



Donut
Michael Hastings
3D Digital Modeling

Mouth Poem

by Kira Mesch

CW: Gore

I.
Open the gullet, pollute the throat, bleed the stomach, pick the scabs. Burn the liver, bolt the tongue, blacken the ovaries. Don't you like me, think I'm pretty? My body all lecherous and whorelike? A woman should be greedy and selfish. A woman should pick her bugbites till they bleed. She is good for her mouth. She is good for her hunger.

II.
Something's growing inside me and she's a demon, she's the devil. She's so starving she'd eat roadkill raw. She says to me: Eat the man, eat the man. Make him dead, crisp his skin. His red meat, the digits, his cold raw fingers. I dip him in jam and I eat the man. I suck his marrow for the vitamins. I get full of bread and bone fragments.

Mouth Poem continued

I want and I eat and the devil's still hungry. I ask the men, Don't you like it? The acidity of my spit? My uncanniness? Don't you wanna look into the darkness of my mouth? Wouldn't you like to taste it?

III.

Inject the lips, plump the pockmarks, fill the sunkenness. Harden the softness then soften the plastic, arch the eyebrows, pluck the hairs. Smooth the skin. In a bug bite, the body forms a red hard armor over the hole left by a hungry thing's sharp mouth. I pick at one and squeeze the poison to the top. Look there: orange liquid seeps out. It's thick like oil. Now there's two holes in the same place: the one the insect left and the one I made myself

Missus
Anna Harberger
Mixed media



Like what you see? Join the *Wilder Voice*
staff or show us your work! Check out
our website and submit your application
for a staff position. For art, writing and
nonfiction pitches, email us at:
wvoice@oberlin.edu

