

| **collision** literary magazine

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from the *editor*

Dear Reader,

From reading the editors' notes of previous chiefs, I've noticed that the magazine's default state has always been a tonic one; change is the norm, as it should be. This year, Collision has seen a significant increase in staff members. While too many cooks may spoil a broth, this is untrue for art magazines. I've learned from my three years here that a good issue relies on the diversity of not only the year's submissions but also of the staff that compiles them. If publishing is a matter of distillation, then the more diverse the staff, the finer the product. That being said, I give thanks to this year's staffers, a hard-working bunch of fine individuals, of whom I am undeserving.

Special thanks goes to our design editor, Isabelle Ouyang, who formatted and finalized the magazine within an especially short time frame. I would also like to thank Juliet Rose, a staffer who went uncredited for her work in last year's issue. Finally, I'd like to thank the artists who contributed their works that made this issue possible.

Ginsberg once wrote that art appreciation is like cannibalism, an artist's heart given to the people to feast upon. As this is the ninth issue of Collision, I'd like to present to you, dear reader, the ninth course of the meal, featuring the guts of 13 splendid artists. Their hearts on a platter.

Enjoy!

-Leland A. Cacayan

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| *poetry & prose*

First Prize

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OKCupid Profile

Elizabeth Lepro

University of Pittsburgh

Self Summary:

the only time I ever really prayed was to make a baby stop crying, if there is a God he molded my knees first and set me on them, he built mountains around me so that I would understand how small we are, all of my guilt is catholic

What I'm Doing with my Life:

my mother asked for a prodigy but got her youth incarnate, a motorcycle with flat tires she doesn't know I've been calling all the lost ships to harbor, letting them dock among the rocks, that when the sky clears up and the birds land on her feeder, it's me who's ushered them in, I've got a side job keeping track of the solar system, reminding the sun to stay very still, fending off the asteroids, there is still time to become a doctor

I'm Really Good at:

remembering the right time to use me and I, remembering to set my alarms, remembering the falling rock signs all the way from Denver to LA, holding the avalanche up with both my arms and keeping the highways clear, rest assured I am doing the job my body knows well

Lepro

The Six Things I Could Never do Without

- I. the sliver of season between winter and spring
- II. loose change in my glovebox
- III. do not misunderstand my equator for fault line
- III. I am getting off track
- V. my shoulders to pull the tides
- IV. a tube of red lipstick

I Spend a lot of Time Thinking About:

what happened when the world turned thirty, did Hercules cry, does the garden wheel still spin when no one's looking, did we shut the oven off, did you know my heels catch fire when I run? did you know I can circle the globe six times fast? did you know Poseidon was asking for me when he created whirlpools?

On a Typical Friday Night I am:

I am tired, this has been a long week of reminding the bark to peel away, and sipping the sap from maple trees, and holding the ozone gap, telling the caged animals of freedom, rhyming with chrysanthemum, calling in the dogs, it is late, it is really almost Saturday, I am tired

Second Prize

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Morning Psalm
Katherine Mooney
University of Pittsburgh

Mooney

dogwood petal call-and-response
voices unfurled in our water trough,
your hairstrand fronds on sinktops

but he's a deep-breathin man
and i a tree without roots
a tree i said to god without roots

mothdews, freeform and wispy,
bead lusty in cellarbrick blackness,
bourbon, sap, and clovers tapping,
tapping

still, he's a deep-breathin man
and i a tree without roots
a tree i said to him without roots

bitter garlic shavings and steam
rising up so rough and wooden
as if my tongue could stray a splint—

but he's a deep-breathin man
and i a tree without roots
a tree, a tree, a tree without roots

a hidden man, engrossed and
ever-watching bodies, watching,
licking, nectarjams & cacti women

sure, he's a deep-breathin man
and i, caryatid, my own
a tree without roots or stays

sparrows unearthing truths like kernels
his brows unclouded. pausing, pausing
beside the water mojave wanderer

but what a man he is, deep-breather,
and i a tree without roots,
fragrantwild, a tree without roots

beside him so uprooted, fluid,
unable to rest beside grassy vipers,
voiceless and breathy as pollenbreeze

he lives deeply, a deep-breathin man
and god curses me, curses a dryad woman
an oaktree, flighty, without roots

his eyes profound, sweetcream daisies,
stirring slowly drops of coffee-milk;
at dawn, he says we are, we are,

drops of milk in morning coffee.
and he's a deep-breathin man, a man,
and i, a tree, a tree without roots

Third Prize

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Wspomnienie: Reconstructing Voices
Hannah Lovejoy
California University of Pennsylvania

KAŻDE TWOJE SŁOWO
W MYM SERCU
WYWOŁUJE DRESZCZE -
MÓW DO MNIE JESZCZE...
— *Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer.*

DON'T LET THEM TAKE ME, MOTHER.
DON'T LET THEM TAKE ME.
— *Traditional Polish wedding song.*

Lovejoy

Chalka, Prababcia

Broad:

My great-grandmother was committed to a mental institution.

Tale #1 (via my grandfather):

My great-grandmother was committed to a mental institution.

*Cause: Her husband wanted to move his mistress and illegitimate son into the house.
The children were told nothing.*

Tale #2 (via my great-aunt):

My great-grandmother was committed to a mental institution.

*Cause: Postpartum depression and/or the death or stillbirth of her third child.
The children were told she died in childbirth.*

Fact:

My great-grandmother was committed to a mental institution

Length: March 1916 to October 1956.

Cause: Reason unknown.

Records sealed.

Postscript #1:

*My great-aunt destroyed all photographs of herself taken
before 1935.*

Postscript #2:

My grandfather kept his parents' wedding portrait.

Postscript #3:

*I found one lone photograph tucked in a manila folder no one
had opened in decades.*

Tata. Edmund. Eva. Mama.

Smiles. Sunday best. Sunny day.

Summer 1915.

Oral History:

"Dad lied about everything." Uncle Kenny.

*"Mom would rather lie than tell any kind of truth." Cousin
Garnet.*

Supposition:

"Why keep the pictures of them?" I asked.

"Those were the only pictures of his mother," my mother said.

Foil:

Her face is gone. A crease runs across it.

Folded too many times.

Lovejoy

The Lost Children

Secrets and lies –
that's what good little children are made of.
We were taught to lie, see.
We have reputations as liars.
I don't tell the truth much.
I don't look back much either.
What good is it?
What good does it do?

*I don't remember her.
I only remember the bitch.
I only remember Tata.
If I close my eyes –
maybe I can see her.
Just this once.
Edmund remembers her.
I will always hate him for that.*

Her name was never spoken in the house.
Don't ask questions – that's what we were taught.
I took – smuggled – two photographs out of the house.
It was all I could get.
Everything else was gone.

Lovejoy

*What was I supposed to do?
Tata told me the truth.
You can't lie on your deathbed;
it goes against the law of God.
"You can lie to Man, but you cannot lie to God."
That's what Tata always said.
I've been told we have our father's temper.*

I used to sell vegetables from our garden.
I sold them and made a profit.
But I bought Eva ice cream, too,
because she was my sister.
We're more alike
than I care to realize.

*I was angry. I was angry.
The books burned. The photographs burned.
My face burned.
I don't want to look at myself anymore.
All I see is him.
I don't see Mama.*

The picture of the four of us is before everything happened.
I got that out.

I will never forget her face.
I will never forget her face.

Lovejoy

The Bitch and the Bastard

I didn't *ask* to be born, you know.
Everything was fine until I was born.
I even had the gall to be born on *his* birthday.
You think I don't hear what they say?
The bastard, they call me. *The bastard*.
My name is Edward. My – half-brother – he's Edmund.
Mama was very subtle with that name –
She even gave me the middle name of Karol.

*I did not know Karol's wife was alive when I met him.
She had just been sent away.
He told me she passed away. Tragically,
she left behind two motherless little children.
When I discovered the truth,
it was too late:
Our son grew within me.
Only one son we would have.
I wanted a daughter.
He would not touch me again.
Feliks – Jadwiga – were gone.
I wanted another.*

You think I don't know what my brother and sister say?
When they're not denying I'm related, that is.
I don't even look like anyone.

I'm *the bastard*. I'm *the boy*.
I'll never call him *Dad*.
He can't even look at me.

I am the bitch.
All I wanted was Karol.
For that they could never
forgive me.
But I had to stay.
I loved their father,
I loved our son.
And – my own husband had deserted me.
What did I have left?

LOOK AT ME, you bastard!
Look at me. Look at me. Look at me.
See me. See me. See me.
I was conceived in your sin.
You lied. You always lied.

Whatever they say –
I never knew of her.
He lied. He always lied.

Lovejoy

The Voiceless One

MY NAME IS URZULA!
Urzula Gielicz Blachowicz.
Oor-soo-lah. Gell-eek. Bwae-hoah-veetch.
There is the *name* they refuse to speak.

Here I *am*. I am not *silent*. I am not *forgotten*.
My *family* does exist –
I am not the bitter silent old woman in the end bed.
Five sisters. Three brothers. Cousins. Aunts. Uncles. Mama.

Tata.
I never thought I would be this woman.
I was never meant to be this woman.

I had a husband before him.
I had children.
They are gone now.
I married him,
I bore his son and daughter.
Ten pounds each,
and I stand under five feet.
It was hell to bear them –
hell to conceive them –
him heaving over me like an animal –
but they were *mine*.
Mine before hers.

Ah! – but you think I do not know?
I saw his eyes, you understand, no?
I saw his eyes on her –
her fleshy frame shifting beneath her dress,
her fair hair in a plait down her solid back.
She was not delicate but for her fingers,
seamstress fingers,
made for stroking cloth and not his face.
But more – I saw her eyes on him!

I will never leave here –
Not while she and his child live.
You think I am mad, no?

I do not want my medicine.
I only wish to see my children.

Edmund.

Eva.

Please.

The Descendant

All of this is conjecture, nothing more.

Honorable Mention

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A Quiet Street in Warsaw

Chloe Evans

University of Exeter

The church bell rings twelve times over the city.

I stand on the edge of the pavement.

The winter sun has rid the rooftops of their morning
frost.

A teddy bear is slouched against the curb, waiting in
the road.

He is my only company.

Every house's curtains are closed,
even the couple with the broken window panes,
but one red door remains ajar.

It isn't until I cross the road that I see them.

Bullet casings scattered across the stones.

Additional Works

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Leaving

Luke Bell, Bell State University

A fine mist hung over our lonely acres. October meant raking the fallen leaves and pulling them from the dead bushes surrounding our home.

We did not talk, it was somber work and easier to let our minds go blank.

Mechanically our bodies filled the bins with rotting leaves, slopping them in until filled, then dragging them across the stone to the garden.

Our grandfather had always dumped them here because it was good for the soil, good fertilizer.

At the foot of the old scarecrow we tipped the bins, clubbing at their bottoms to displace the muck.

Chandler turned back to refill, but I stayed to study the
scarecrow

still dressed in one of Grandpa's old flannel shirts.

It had no features, a blank visage against a lonely gray sky.

I thought back to the summer when everything was alive and I would glance from the window and mistake the scarecrow for him, the part of him that never left.

I close my eyes and hope maybe next year

I can look out and see only a scarecrow,
his old shirt fading in the sun.

EveryKindnessGone Machine
Timothy Lewis, Occidental College

I am floating
In
My lover's room
Our
Children arguing over
Pits
Pennies
Phone
NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNU
UUUUUUUUUUUUUUURRRRRRRRRRRSSSSSSS-
SEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!

Stabilized

Back to life
Eyes
Soft and gray
She
My wonder love
They
I wonder love
When
Will the day come
Al
Looks Trish in her
Green

Lewis

They
Are talking
About
Ring
All
We
Be
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Fairy Blood

Lillian King, Bowling Green State University

The hairdresser was born with pointed ears. If his family had been inclined they might have told him that there was a bit of fairy blood in him. His family was not inclined, mostly because using that term to describe the people he grew up around was an insult to the institution of family itself.

Sometimes the hairdresser thinks he came into his profession from a desire to hide his ears, to stop the teasing. He's never cut his hair short and has a long list of styles that obscure one's ears from view, not that he needs the list much in his day to day. He has never met another person like him, except once, at a party, and she had a surgery to look that way. He would have kissed her, but her piercings were in the way, so he had kissed a man across the room, whose own piercings he saw later that night.

The hairdresser is grown, and doesn't think of the teasing much anymore, because his problems are not in the past, and besides, his freakish ears were not what made his past the stuff of therapists' wet dreams. He doesn't think much of the ears, which is why he doesn't bother to hide them at a bar one night, bony fingers wrapped around a drink he will not let out of his grasp, eyes darting from face to face, judging how much larger, how much taller, every man is than him.

King

He lets them flirt anyway, because that's why he's there. He tells himself he likes to dance, and he does. But he doesn't like to dance enough to pull his hair off his neck so that it will shine copper against the dim lighting and snap eyes to attention, every strand a separate wire, nearly translucent but more visible for that, an attention draw as big as his laughter and his clever words are.

A man goes from touching his shoulder to curving his finger along his ear, the pointed edge of which has escaped the confines of his hairstyle. His hair is loose enough to let locks frame his angular face, softening the pointed chin he has spent so many hours examining in the mirror. He flinches as though struck. This might not have happened if he'd had a mother to hold him and tell him magic flows in his veins, it's clear, see, look at your ears. He does not know even a rumor of blood, no whisper of the idea that there is some other power in this world, that his small frame may contain a legacy, that he is powerful.

He tells the man to stop, that his ears are sensitive, but it's too dark in the room for anyone to see or care when he doesn't stop, thinking his touch is gentle when every hair on the man's knuckles send tremors wracking through the hairdresser's spine, his eyesight trained on the drink in his hand, no, on the grainy and worn bar, no, on the scuffed floor where his turquoise boots twitch.

The man is smiling, his nails biting into the soft skin of his ear. The hairdresser doesn't know what to say. He

trembles a moment before he remembers he is not supposed to. He wishes he were at work, where life is comfortable, where he is in control, where men do not do this, where he is able to tell people what he thinks. He nearly wishes he were at home, but he is never comfortable there, never feels like he is alone, because instead of a mother to whisper dreams of the old world, he had an ever-shifting group of strangers to enlighten him to the dangers of the new.

He doesn't tell the man to stop. He stares at everything in the room, feels something in his body squirming, struggling, against the touch to his ears. His chest is going to burst open, revealing his heart, his ribs, his broken insides. He will be on display. He thinks absently, casually, that he always has been. He doesn't want it to happen regardless. He wants the man to leave the pointed ears alone. He wants to have power and he does, but he doesn't know it. He wants everything he has never been told he has and doesn't know how to find it, doesn't know that he should. He shudders. The man kisses him. The hairdresser lets him. If only someone had been there to tell him he mattered.

Television Courtroom

Frankie Campisano, Elon University

You're convinced it was cigarettes, not a meteor,
that extinguished the dinosaurs. You can't imagine
the face of the planet changing in the same span
of time it takes you to compose a tweet,
and if it did, you can't imagine Big Tobacco
not playing a part in it. That's a lie.
You don't quite know yet where you belong.

“Can an epigraph go anywhere other than the
beginning of a poem?”

-Ben Stringfellow, Prophet. Paraphrased.

(And that's assuming anyone belongs anywhere.)
If it wasn't the nicotine it was the anarchy.
The children's government collapsed
and society crumbled to make way
for the Age of Aquarius.
Trade in your disappointment
at the thought that you are nobody's
direct descendent. Swap it for fear
that you are somebody's ancestor.
You used to be able to trace your roots
and climb the family tree, but now it's winter
during a war of attrition so poison

sours the apples and your father is the only fire-wood.

When the spotlight fizzles on, show them all
how well you've been trained
to avoid eye contact as you mumble
your half-memorized monologue.
Once more with indifference!
Recite the same lines you've rehearsed
in the burger clown's drive thru, in the witch doctor's
waiting room, and in the notebook with
 whisky-stained pages
you're planning to bury by hand
in your foster parent's backyard,
the same spot you used to dig for bones
before you were too old for fossils.

all that you are

Alexis Spalding, Ball State University

ghosts do not exist in body —
they exist in cracks of bones, in worn pieces of heart,
in the weakly stitched together pieces of your being
where you told yourself it was fine
but it wasn't, and you lied,
and your stitches fell apart and
just like that
ghosts made homes inside of your soul
because if you don't live there,
someone will.

Father, I have sinned
Anna Kucher, Oberlin College

grandfather's kitchen table is covered
with losing scratch offs
all his years litter the table
and the penny
can't be lucky anymore

his bald head shines
under the fluorescent lights
and we know the concrete floor
is not made to break
a fall

my palms get sweaty with the thought of him
shaking, I hold out my hands anyways
taking what he gives
drive me down to the grocery store

the bottles on the kitchen counter
are the same color
as the orange juice in his glass
grandfather's breath only smells bitter
if you breathe it in long enough

Kucher

sitting down, he tells us the story
about the old Cadillac
the baby blue vinyl on top
slashed when he parked it
at the bar, he didn't notice
until the next morning when
the light forced
his eyes open

did he ever believe God would save him
dressing for church on Sundays
the sacrament was an afterthought
he was drunk before the chalice
hit his lips

the ketchup poured onto his steak
covers up the blood
when he slices it
his forehead wrinkles with concentration
looking for somewhere to place
the resentment
in his dry knuckles
Father, I have sinned

he will die with a cup in his hand
a halo stained onto the table
no one can tell him otherwise

| *visual art*



Wagner Road | A.J. Weber, University of Pittsburgh



Grandfather on a Boat by the Seaside
| Elena Botts, Bard College

Cover

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Our Native Son
Ignacio Lopez
University of Pittsburgh

collision