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Jasmine Wang
John Waters
Zoe Wong
Alice Wu

Content Warning: This magazine includes some written pieces with possibly sensitive subject matter. If anyone is experiencing difficulty with issues that you feel are hard to manage, consider using the following resources:
Student Counseling Center (SCC): 215-955-HELP (4357)
National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800-273-8255 (available 24 hours a day)
Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 for free, 24/7 crisis counseling
Forward

Welcome to the 2022 issue of Inside Out!

Inside Out is the literary and arts journal of the Jefferson student body. As such, it gives voice to our scholars as they migrate through their educational experience at our University. The creativity and vision of our students is featured within the pages of this book. Showcased is student work that was created in the intervals between classes and notebooks, dorm rooms and city streets.

Please enjoy this issue of Inside Out, as our students offer a unique view of their world using images, colors, words and light.

Charles A. Pohl, MD
Chancellor for the Center City Campus at Thomas Jefferson University
Vice Provost of Student Affairs at Thomas Jefferson University
Vice Dean of Student Affairs and Career Counseling and Professor of Pediatrics at Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University

Editors' Statement

We are excited to share this year’s edition of Inside Out with you! One year since the last publication of this magazine and so much of the world has changed. In many ways, we continue to be challenged as students, healthcare workers, and members of the Jefferson community. We struggle to balance a reverence for what has been lost over the last two years with a gentle optimism for the future. Despite this uncertainty, what is clear is that creating and sharing art will continue to be a critical way for us to reflect and better understand ourselves.

The diverse collection of written work and visual art represented in this magazine speaks to the complexity of our Jefferson community, and in that complexity we see beauty. Through this publication, we celebrate the achievements of our contributors and take inspiration from their art.

We are deeply grateful for the contributions of the Jefferson community to this magazine. The vulnerability, strength, and self-reflection exhibited in their pieces is truly admirable and we are sincerely thankful for their openness to share.

Amy Baumgart & Steven Bieser
Chief Editors

John Curran & Alice Wu
Literary Directors
Connor Crutchfield & Roselind Ni
Art Directors

https://jdc.jefferson.edu/insideout/vol12/iss1/1
Submission Information

Inside Out is a presentation of artwork, photography, short stories, poems and essays that is published annually. All full-time and part-time Jefferson students are welcome to submit work and to apply to serve on the magazine’s editorial board. Submissions may be emailed to Dorissa.Bolinski@jefferson.edu. Photographic submissions should be saved as a .jpeg file using the highest resolution possible. Artwork should be photographed from a direct angle, without glare or visible background, and saved in the same manner as photographs. Artists who submit non-photographic material will be given the opportunity to have their accepted pieces professionally photographed by a Jefferson photographer in order to assure the best presentation in the printed magazine.

All submissions will be reviewed anonymously: not all submissions will be printed. Please note that entries will be judged as submitted, Inside Out will not crop, sharpen or otherwise adjust an improperly-saved graphic submission.

Manuscripts (prose, poetry, translations, short plays, etc.) should be submitted in a Word-compatible document, and saved under the name of the piece (or “untitled,” if applicable).

All submissions must be accompanied by a separate cover letter document containing the following:

- Author’s or artist’s name
- Email address and local phone number
- College, department or undergraduate program and year in school
- Genre/medium and title of each submission

View the online version of Inside Out at: jefferson.edu/university/student-life-engagement/medical-humanities-series/inside-out.html

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Shawn (Joseph) Collier

**He разбивай моего**
Elisabeth Inns

**С каждым вдохом, который могу**
Elisabeth Inns

**Максимальная нагрузка**
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**Alternative Medicine**
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Fatima
Zaynab Sajjadi
Acrylic

Warm Expression
Roselind Ni
Oil

Peaceful Longing
Joy Zhao
Charcoal

Fluttering
Benjamin Fleet
Graphite, Prismacolor pencils

Tentatively & Confidence
Yasmine Sultan Raheem
Digital Painting/Graffiti

Isolation
Sophia Block
Digital art
A speck of blue in an orange jar
Like a patch of morning sky glimpsed through deep forest canopy
Within lies the promise of freedom

The flock of thoughts scattered across my neuronal branches slow their fluttering
For once they perch in stillness
Listening
I pause, expecting an eruption of random flight
But they remain at attention: waiting, I now see, for me

I timidly call out, and they come to me
One by one in an unbroken stream so beautifully distinct my eyes well up with tears.
No overwhelming swarm surrounds me, flitting in and out of view;
This is a dance
With every step at my direction

A peace so rarely felt fills the air like the gentle breeze of a thousand beating wings
A faint song of sadness whispers
This is what it was always supposed to be like

The setting sun reminds me this stillness won’t last
But as restless chirps flit back and forth in the darkening branches
I rest my eyes with hope
that tomorrow will have more blue skies
Alternative Medicine
Zachary Davis

There are so many problems that reside within our bodies, way down deep inside: like pathogens, or tumors in your head. Meds won’t always work, so I think instead, they should shrink me to the size of a cell, and I’ll make sure you stay alive and well.

I’d go one-on-one with bacteria. Fight off strep pneumo and listeria. You won’t need drugs with beta-lactam rings; I’ll lyse their membranes launching rocks from slings. Won’t matter if their cell walls are crosslinked, I’ll hunt them like Dodos, ’til they’re extinct.

Moving on to block two, I will divulge, I’ll stomp down CML’s myelocyte bulge. M-spikes too, I’ll suppress with diligence, unless we don’t know their significance. I’d break up fibrin if you DIC’d, so don’t fear an intracranial bleed.

If I found ruptures in your heart’s landscape, I could fix it right up with some duct tape. And coronaries: clean as a whistle, cholesterol plaques: cleared by my chisel. But dead heart tissue, I could not act on, so keep taking your spironolactone.

In the lungs, I’d cleave all excess trypsin, and if you smoke, I’ll clean ’til they glisten. If you aspirate from too much Stella,

I’d take on all the Klebsiella. Break apart their capsules; stop the abscess, so you don’t cough up currant jelly mess.

I’ll also keep sodium in your pee as I pass through the loop of Henle. You’ll stop needing your loop diuretics.

No need to track my enzyme kinetics. Just make sure you continue to hydrate. Don’t get stones of calcium oxalate.

I’d reach the liver if I cycled well, but I might be eaten by a Kupffer cell. To escape, I’d jump in the portal vein, and eventually, I’d reach the brain. The liver may remain in disarray, but that’s fine, it can re-grow anyway.

I’d make your basal ganglia run clean, so you’d have plenty of spare dopamine. No Parkinson’s; Alzheimer’s next. My axe will destroy your beta amyloid plaques. Meningitis doesn’t scare me a lot, I’d soothe it away with some icy-hot.

So that’s how I’d heal you from the inside. I’m ready to hop on that wild ride. I’ll even fix a genetic mutation for the appropriate compensation. I promise, you won’t ever look the fool, ’til you learn I never finished med school.
Gold
Zachary Urdang

Gold. A speck of sand fleeting, born from the heart of Earth tumbling along the river, glimmering in the morning light. Slowly disintegrating back to Earth as the trees breath 🌿
Healing with Congee
Nancy Dinh

There was some implicit rule,
Passed down from generation to generation
Across all of human history,
That when you are sick,
Your mother takes care of you.
However, there was nothing said
About what you should do
When your mom was sick.

What did she do for me when I was sick?
She gave me medicine.
I wrinkled my nose,
And my young brain gagged
At the imagined bitterness.

No, I couldn’t give her that.
I had to be the better person.
Besides, the looming medication shelf
Floated just above my reach.

Was there anything else?
She made me congee. Of course!
The only acceptable course of action
Was to make her congee.

It was the food of love, of warmth.
It was a fool-proof treatment.

There was only one slight problem:
I was ten and had no idea how to cook.

No problem. I’ll just ask my mom.

As she laid down on the couch,
I pestered her for the recipe
While I wrote it all down.
Once I was satisfied,
I ran down to the kitchen
to turn my plan into action.

Did I know what I was doing?
No. I was ten.
Was I particularly good at it?
No. Again. I was ten.

It turned out horribly. Somehow,
I managed to burn the soup.
How does one burn soup?

Staring at the bowl, I wrinkled my nose.
It smelled just as bitter as medicine.

Still, she ate it anyway and asked no questions.
I sat there, in awe, watching her eat.
It wasn’t my meal, but I felt full all the same.

Looking back, I don’t know if she got better
because the congee worked or
because she didn’t ever want to eat it again.
Well, I guess it doesn’t really matter.
Either way, the congee worked.
A leaf falls by the river
Steven Bieser

A leaf has chosen now to make its great Journey from a perch among the canopy fluttering down in the morning sun. It hears many languages during its travels, from the runners speaking Mandarin, cicadas calling out for love, and crew members rowing and coordinating their great pulls through the water below.

The medical student sitting on the riverbank is taking a luxurious morning with a smoothie and a book, his soul feeling quiet and full. The silent transcriber of a fleeting moment. For the leaf is rapidly approaching the sparkling water below.

It feels fear briefly as it has never been so far from the mother that nurtured and produced it from her own flesh, coded by ancient genes marching towards some great goal that we may never understand. What catapulted this race of life and growth, of death and decomposition? She taught it everything, for it was part of her, and gave it nutrients collected from the burning ball in the sky to create millions of its siblings year after year.

The leaf catches one last updraft before carefully settling on the river surface, causing delicate ripples to surround and expound outwards. It has no idea that its journey had only just begun as it is gently swept downstream, the future holds waterfalls, thousands more languages of life to behold, great glass buildings overhead, and gardens flanking this water laden expressway. May it’s journey into the unknown be full of Wonder and Awe, Love and Peace.

I love you little leaf.

---

Queens
Michele Ly
Photograph

Hidden
Makala Wang
Photograph
Valley of Fire
Simran Rahi
Photograph

The tears will fall
captured in the lines carved by the masks and the shields

They are like valleys
pushed into land that was once unmarred

Freckles indented into face
like cacti scattered in the desert

There is beauty in the vales and the depressions
both on the face and in the mind

Like the sun cresting the mountains
your smile lines will radiate from behind the wires

There will be sun in the valley once more
Gratitude
Janita Matoke

The sun is gentle when it touches my face
It wakes me up in the morning.
And although it is early and my body yearns for sleep-
When I meet the sun in the morning it pours a smile out of me.
For the sun is gentle when it touches my face
It tells me I have /met yet another day/
As I whisper gentle prayers and thank God for this new day
The sun whispers back in a warm and blissful way
For the sun is gentle when it touches my face
The tears watered the soil where the seed lay
Although they came from a place of uncomfortable and deep pain
they bore a stem
and then a leaf
and then a tree
where flowers began to grow
no matter how the cry fell
they always hit the soil, they always watered the seed –

flowers always found a way to bloom
beauty was always found
beauty always found a way
she bloomed beauty
beauty always blossomed from her.
The Fall
Elpidio Sandig

First, the apparent change.
Take a verdant leaf.
How it turns beige and dry, with time.

Then, the weaning.
A fissure appears where it attaches to the twig
Until finally, the leaf breaks off.

The dance ensues.
In midair, the leaf slides and glides, upward and down,
At the whim of the wind beneath it.

Then ultimately, the landing.
The leaf kisses the ground on the spur of the moment,
Then rests its battered soul upon it for eternity.

The fall – its sorrow unthinkable,
Its proximity undeniable –
Is a near kin of death.

It strikes when you least expect it,
Seizes you with a cold hard grip,
And drags you down to your grave

Like stone thrown in water.
We walked slowly each step a gamble as our toes found silt and recoiled from roots hiding further as we kicked up clay streaks that swirled thick caramel.

We settled in, chin deep convincing ourselves— as we slipped soup through our fingers— that this was refreshing.

Small talk gurgled in our mouths. Occasionally bubbles reached the surface from air escaping beneath our feet.

Kayla tugged the straps of her borrowed swimsuit and Bryant with a deep breath broke the film on the water’s surface, vanishing for a second, and popping up… refreshed.

Ben’s face twisted and suddenly he looked enlightened, his head plunging under the surface.

First up was his hand with a Bud Light the liquid gold still bubbling inside it catching evening sun.

I don’t even remember how we got it opened but we drank it immediately the fizz tickling our lips.

One swig got me drunk and we giggled our way back to shore, to spend the rest of the evening strumming a ukulele and singing whatever left our mouths.

On the car ride home, I let my hand catch the wind outside. Pointing my fingers up until the wind made a small hill, then forcing my hand down in a series of tiny waves.
Winter Canyon
Zachary Davis
Photograph
Sing for Me
Skye Rice

Sing for me, why don’t you?
You will wrap me in your voice as the snow enfolds a field,
and I will make no noise.
Breatheless, throaty, hoarse.
I want to hear your voice in all its forms and in all its places.
I will become lost in your melodies,
my mind will ride on the waves of your song.

Sing for me, for a moment.
I will cease all movement and I will lie down beside you.
Your hymn will flood with peace my soul.
I will find rapture in your chorus,
your voice as close to a God as I will ever be.

Sing for me, this last time.
You will part with me at your crescendo,
and I will begin to hum my tune.
Euphonious, breathy, clear.
I will find my voice in all its forms and carry it to all places.
I will become lost in the dulcet of the world,
my mind will always wander to your song.
When I put on my white coat I think about what I’ve gained
But more about what I’ve lost
The memories come flooding back
The walks, the games, the hugs, the ups, the downs
The love

When I put on my white coat I think about the future
But more about the past
The sacrifices that they made
Being there for me when I needed them the most

When I put on my white coat I think about joy
But more about sorrow
Of what could have been but never was
Of experiencing big moments in my life without them
Of feeling lonely now more than ever

When I put on my white coat I think about success
But more about failure
I’m afraid of letting them down
I’m afraid of letting myself down

Some days, I feel confused and broken
Some days, I’m not sure where to go
Some days, I’m lost in my mind
And I wish they were here

But when I put on that white coat, I see them again
In patients and friends, I see them
In kind gestures and laughter, I see them
In family dinners, I see them
In my dreams, I see them, if only for a moment

And I hope that I’ve made them proud
The Abolition of Spring by Covid-19
Elpidio Sandig

Neighborhood turfs sprout lusher
Where frost evaporated,
The gentle wind has twigs sway
Weightless, like ladies in red.

I glance – no, stare quite sternly –
For days and days on end now
At the empty cul-de-sac
Muted outside my window.

White and purple hyacinths
With tulips interspersed
In pastel shade of pink
Ornate, odorless, accursed.

The fresh crisp breeze is squandered
While all the kids are confined,
Hibernation protracted
Into their bedrooms resigned.

The only soul that’s out there
Is you, the soulless lurker,
Weaver of isolation,
Invis’ble brute of terror.

Unseen, yet dare do I say
The robbery is vivid,
How you have spring abolished
Has left many a-livid.

Unique the melancholy
Now the lively spring lies dead
Longing for a distant smile
Of a love unrequited.

Such theft, oh beast most cruel
Who took away the thrill
Of gawking at a (tear)drop
Of dew on a daffodil.
And there you are,  
Right where I always find you.

No laugh, no smile, no confusion,  
Just you—  
Or is it you?  
Or is it someone else?  
Or is it no one?

The nurse just fixed your shirt.  
Fixed it like you were a mannequin  
And we're in a store  
And I'm just a customer  
And you're just plastic.

The woman in the next room is wailing,  
Wailing like the world is falling apart  
Like you and I are witnessing a parting  
In the fabric of time and space  
As if she's enraged at our gentle complacency  
And the sloppy smear of your once favorite lipstick  
That doesn't quite fill into all the wrinkles  
In your parted lips.

Do your children plead with you?  
Grab your bony shoulders and wonder why you don't remember the very beings you bore  
From your own womb?

You created life,  
But where did yours go?

It's lost in that lipstick  
On the shelf of a store  
Where I am a mannequin.
The Astronaut in the Sea
Nancy Dinh

They always say that it’s lonely on top of the hill.
This hill, it’s high up. Higher than anyone has any right to be.
Many covet it. They scramble and claw their way up
Its windy paths to reach the top.

Up there, they’ll hand you fame and know your name.
You’ll practically be in space, face to face with the stars.

And yet. It’s cold. It’s dark. Only the pedestal of a hill
Below your feet reminds you of home.
You may, if you’d like, have a rope
Tying you to this hill and for a second,
Whilst you jump in the air, pretend you are an astronaut.

One day, someday, if you climb too far up
And find yourself an astronaut, there is always a chance,
That persistent chance that covers
The expanse of the earth, minus the hill
That you’ll eventually fall
Back down, tumbling and stumbling into the deep black sea.

You best hope someone is down there to fetch you.
Deus Ex Machina
Emily Ashton

If heaven is real
it would look like the room I am standing in
surrounded by plastic wombs.
The nurses walk
as if their feet
hover inches off the ground
and the throaty hum
of the monitors
feels vaguely Gregorian.
The first soloist
with a high and tinny cry
raises his raisin fingertips
to the ceiling
and the nurses float over
to perform a laying on
of latex hands. They place his arms and legs
between thumb and index
bringing all four limbs close
to his heart.
The respirator sighs
as he returns to sleep, and the nurse
tenderly draws the blanket
like a curtain enclosing the pod
returning to her post
waiting for the next song
to break the silence.
The Feeling of Air Slipping over My Skin
Steven Bieser

The feeling of air slipping over my skin
Oh the gradient of the sky, the purples, blues, yellows and peach.

Matched only by the soft breeze caressing my skin.
The temperature is perfect, my mind is proud. Proud of what it can do, what it can handle, what it can produce, and how it finds peace within chaos.

Thank you to my Mind, my eyes, my skin. Thank you to friends who patiently listen. Thank you to whoever mows this grass I am sitting on.

I think the leaves on a nearby tree rippling in the breeze feel pleased and at peace. Grateful for the cool air of night that lets them breathe without fear of losing all their precious water. They effortlessly flip and bend and sway in the wind but return back to where they belong, stronger because of it.
Easter
Michael O’Connor
Ink

Orange
Jasmine Wang
35 MM film

Still Life, Apples
Michael O’Connor
Charcoal pencil on paper

Blue
Jasmine Wang
35 MM film
We were not alone.

Even though you weren't there.

This is not to say we didn't miss you — of course we did!

But hopefully this postcard finds you well, no need to despair.

We had Claudia,

or Irene

some had Suzy.

Their voices bellowed through the hall day and night,

We were not alone.

They came in and sang us hymns, tucked us in, and offered us their version of gin,

The kind that's administered via an IV drip.

Then there was Bruce, who became a dear friend of mine.

A plump little blue jay, with only one eye.

The physics of his flight truly rattled my mind,

Nonetheless we got along just fine.

Big ol' Bruce would fly right in, nearly hitting the window with each descent.

And by nearly hitting, I mean quite literally pummeling into the glass.

The thud would jump start my heart better than that AED machine did when I was admitted.

But alas, Bruce was once again alive and well!

He had a nag for always coming at just the right time.

Right when that gin Suzy gave me would wear off, and I'd feel a little pain inside

His one-eyed grin would bring a twinkle to my eye.

Sometimes a man came and played the guitar,

It reminded me of that little bar on the corner of south street,

You remember that bar,

The one where the musician clearly didn’t know how to play the guitar.

Are you smiling now?

We were not alone.

Boy, did those memories surround me.

The bar, Aunt Cathy’s on Easter, Mel’s birthday at the beach.

They came back so vivid, full of color and life

Inciting the most wonderfully visceral feeling of warmth and happiness.

You know, I even got to see our old neighbor, Frank,

The one who got in that terrible accident all those years ago.

He’s looking swell, hasn’t aged a bit, and is still funny as hell.

Alright, ciao my dear, I have many things to do.

Just thought I’d drop a line and make sure you weren’t feeling blue!

I hope you realize now that we were never alone,

And you’ll never be alone

Because I am always with you.
Judgement
Briana Dragone
Bronze, steel, reclaimed wood, cast iron

Avoidance
Zaynab Sajjadi
Acrylic

Aeidein of Ambien
John Waters

I ask questions I don't want to know the answer to.
When it came time to pick, did she even see me?
In her Elysium of sleep and pain relief,
Did I ever cross her mind?
Who...what does she think about more?
I don't want to know.

The Galaxy Erupts Over Mauna Loa
Matt Sears
Photograph

Judgement
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Bronze, steel, reclaimed wood, cast iron

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The Galaxy Erupts Over Mauna Loa
Matt Sears
Photograph
NEIL: I liked being with you in California. Otherwise, I wouldn’t go back.

MISHTI feels her scarf: Hmm...

MISHTI closes her eyes and dramatically narrates her favorite feelings in California

MISHTI: Imagine the sun warming your skin right now. Standing on the ocean, staring at the waves. A light breeze on your neck...

NEIL grins: Yeah, I can smell the salt.

MISHTI eyes still closed: And after work we could just walk on Santa Monica. At sunset, it would just be you and me. And I wouldn’t think about work (slight pause) or my family... and you wouldn’t have to think about the hospital, or anything else. It would just be so... nice.

MISHTI opens her eyes, reality sets back.

NEIL takes the last sip of his coffee: That truly sounds beautiful.

MISHTI exclaims: Doesn’t it!

NEIL: It does. (shakes his head) But that’s not how it’ll work. I’ll always be thinking about the hospital, that’s what residency is. I don’t think we’ll take as many long walks on the beach as you think.

NEIL puts on his jacket: I love you. Are you ready to go? Should we get another tea, I know you like the chamomile (NEIL starts beckoning for the BARISTA)

MISHTI is silent. She doesn’t like how NEIL cut her off, and she’s visibly upset: I don’t think I’m ready to leave yet.
Sterile
Gloria Pereira

Aseptic, disinfected
Uninhabited and uninhabitable

Sanitized lab benches and UV lights
Men in long white coats, faces adorned with glasses, furrowed brows,
And a vertical slit across their lips, that never dare curve at the edges to form a smile
Petri dishes basking in the warmth of their incubator
...growing, growing, growing
Breaking free of the agar chamber and climbing up the glass wall to liberation,
...life

Sterilized needles penetrate skin,
The contents of test tubes find their new home in a vasculature highway
In the wards, science and humanity lock eyes in a never-ending gaze
The hand injecting the propofol filled needle,
Is the same hand the patient holds anxiously as they slip into a terrifying unknown
The eyes that reviewed the scans
are the same comforting eyes the patient sees when they awake
Eyes that smile, even behind the mask
Eyes with a warmth that doesn’t cultivate bacteria

"Did you break sterile field?"
The attending surgeon asks a question he knows the answer to
Latex gloves form a slippery second skin on the medical student’s sweaty palms
A wandering elbow is to blame
Sterility is broken

Sterilized order is regained through the rumble of a nearby autoclave
It’s steaming hiss is accompanied by an orchestra of beeps, buzzes, and hums
That slowly waken a 32-year-old woman in the PACU
Medical instruments, latex gloves, and antiseptic wipes surround her
Florescent lights reflect off white walls
Her palms are sweaty
She clasps her hands together to feel the moisture
She dreams of the tiny hands she hopes to hold
A knock on the door, and the good doctor enters
A warm hand extends out from the sleeve of a white coat
His palms are sweaty too
The corners of his mouth turn downward as his lips part to whisper
"I’m so sorry"
Her brow furrows in agonizing anticipation,
Until she finally hears the word she has long feared
"Sterile"
Fading in My Hospice
Nava Barman

Awash in purple pills, Poseidon in my pain.

My faith in God, reflected in the rain.

Through glowing, hopeful windows, you ask me

Papa, can we play with the dolls?

knowing nothing of life’s divine comedy.

I lift your gentle figure in my gingerbread arms, afraid to tell you
our house is crumb.

You are a sapling. Blooming before my very eyes.

Scourge rattles obsidian mortars in my skull.

Hand me the doll, baby girl, let us try and sing a song.

Shadowy wisps invade pink seas. Hellfire kisses serene waters.

These ancient battleships, older than war itself, know nothing of surrender.

The melody of chaos is all I can remember.

Yet you smile wide, connecting your little face
to mine.

Ah yes, our song!

The tune is faint now,
like sirens
whispering from their beacons.
The Spider Ball
Skye Rice

Her body is the same hue as her hair once was, gleaming and obsidian as ever.
She is now feared rather than loved, an outcast to friend and foe alike.
Her web twists around her tarsus as her jewels once twirled around her fingers.

She is adroit at her craft, the thread effortlessly sliding across her.
She no longer needs to pay for her trade, the craft comes from her figure faster than it ever could have from her mind.

When the moon is crested in the sky, the humans retire inside for their feasts.
She waits at the window, her new home spun across the orb into their world.

She pretends that she is one of them, donning her feet in the finest silk for her evening out.
Her back is dressed in red, the same hue as the flowers she was gifted millennia ago.

Her body is eager to begin, legs long and adept at dancing across her web.
As the music swells, she hears the vibration of another.
He tumbles into her lair, like a man falling into her lap.

The humans spin to the music, whirling across the floor to the symphony.
The music of the fly swells, the wings beating to a crescendo.
She unleashes her spinnerets and falls, tumbling to her victim like a lover in the night.

He is wrapped in her embrace, her kiss will be the last thing he feels.
Upstream/Downstream
Roselind Ni
Paint

Uglow Master Copy - An Exercise in Grief
Michele Ly
Oil paint
I wish that I could say I don’t miss touch but at this point I think I would accept the warmth of anyone: excuse to brush my absent-minded fingertips against another forehead, just to move the hair behind their ear and after, maybe, trace their cheek until I find their neck, and there I’d place my lips, to feel another pulse beneath them. I can almost shape my arms an oval, aching for another waist to tangle in, appreciating where I find its slopes and curves, so that the most inviting feelings wouldn’t be my own caress, that is and isn’t quite alone.
I’m in the City
Janita Matoke

Pick up the pace you’re in the city
No time to waste you’re in the city

One foot in front of the next
Bag on you swinging closely by
Stepping to a pace that helps you get around
Drifting vigilantly, quickly to the youthful sounds

Pick up the pace you’re in the city
No time to waste you’re in the city

The smell of cigarettes reaches my nose
I lift my head briefly to see if the culprit is close
As the smell wooshes and swooshes and swiftly drifts by
I’m met by the smell of the trash unit nearby

Pick up the pace you’re in the city
No time to waste you’re in the city

I hear a bang a pop and a pow
I see the dump truck picking up trash now
I hear a bark and see a pull of a leash
A pigeon perched in front of a dog is bound to cause a scene
I smile at the dog and stay clear of the bird’s way, as it flies off into the distance not giving me the time of day

Pick up the pace you’re in the city
No time to waste you’re in the city

I began to zone out
Mind strictly on the route
Focused on the lights, changing to green
Carefully crossing the street so the cars do not scream
I hear honk, it was my turn to go
I turn to the car who beckons a show

Pick up the pace you’re in the city
No time to waste you’re in the city

As I walk hearing just the rhythm and beat of the sounds my headphones bring
I feel small in a space so large
As I began to reflect- a “weerrr weerrr” sound is off in the near distance
A siren, an ambulance, I break the gentleness of my thoughts to pray for the recipient

et al.: Inside Out 2022

Pick up the pace you’re in the city
No time to waste you’re in the city

I hear a different sound now, the click clank of coins,
I look down now, to see a cup
A sign
A somber, solemn face

I see a man lying with no shirt, I see clots and bounds of real dirt-on this man
Who is he? And why is he so poor??

My body slows down
Do I have coins?

I pass the man who needed money
Yet here a woman stands with the same plea
I see her eyes going back and forth and then up at me

I am frozen in time
because after your eyes met mine, I was reminded, no, I was scolded by the truth, you are no different than me, I
no different than you
my brother, I am sorry, my sister I do weep
for spaced in the pace of the city that is so sweet, no one left any nectar for you.
“We take better care of dogs than loved ones,”
He said, while rounding on the comatose patients.
Blood in their brains, they could not hear the fights,
The push and pull between family with hope-filled tears
And the doctor who thinks in pressures and mortality curves.

The halls echoed that their lives are worth as much as a dog.
“Rocks”, they say.
No longer the human beings they once were.
An act of mercy to end life while it is still ongoing.

But his name is John and he has a wife.
“He loves to play the banjo”, she says.
And the patient down the hall has a stuffed bear
Gently wedged between her fingers.
“Bears are her favorite,” her daughter tells me.

The rhythm of the ventilators hum
In tandem with the talk of comfort care and euphemisms
They lay, unable to have a voice.
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Photograph