

Capillaries

The Journal of Narrative Medicine

ISSUE 6: Winter 2020

Cover by Miriam Mayhle

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capillariesjournal.com

Printed in USA by 48HrBooks (www.48HrBooks.com)

A Note to the Reader

The following pieces may contain themes relating to sexual assault, suicide, disordered eating, mental health, and other sensitive topics.

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Letter From the Editor

Welcome to the sixth issue of *Capillaries*, the University of Washington's Journal of Narrative Medicine. Our mission is to create a more empathetic community –by facilitating dialogue between the sciences and the humanities, by providing a space to discuss mental health, shame, disordered eating, suicide, sexual assault, and our most vulnerable and often silenced experiences, and by uplifting the voices of populations marginalized by our fractured healthcare system.

Many of the pieces in this issue revolve around the cycles that we as individuals and communities find ourselves trapped in. Letting go of cycles of thoughts and behaviors is difficult, even when we are aware of the negative ways in which they impact our lives. When it comes to relationships, the familiarity of a hurtful or abusive person can be more powerful than the desire to cut ties with them. Whether our addictions are mental or physiological, whether they are to a substance, a feeling, or a person, they can lead us to feel trapped. We may even become so frozen in these unhealthy mindsets that we begin to fear what will happen if we manage to break free of them.

The following narratives are diverse in their perspectives: some are from the point of view of those currently struggling to end a harmful cycle while others are a celebration of the ability to do so. Importantly, these stories serve as a reminder that cycles *can* cease and change –and that the first and perhaps most crucial aspect of re-establishing a sense of control is to look *within*: stepping back, as these writers have done, and breathing, carefully examining one's present situation and one's aspirations, and re-strategizing.

We wish to express our deepest thanks and respect to the writers for providing us with a glimpse into their struggles and triumphs. We hope that these stories provide readers with solace and the strength to overcome their own cycles as well.

Best,

Alice Ranjan

Miriam Mayhle

Nikki Talebi

Kristy Lee

Peachyapa Saengcharoentrakul

Jiana Ugale

Sumaya Ali

Mariya Haveliwala

Special Thanks

Capillaries would like to thank the following people, groups, and funders for their support and guidance:

- UW Resilience Lab and Campus Sustainability Fund
 - Thank you to Anne Browning, Billy Farrell, and all members of the Resilience Lab and the Campus Sustainability Fund for the generous support through the 2019-2020 Resilience and Compassion Seed Fund. Thank especially for believing in the power of the arts to bring healing to the community.

- Health Sciences Service Learning and Advocacy Group
 - Thank you to Tracy Brazg and Rachel Lazzar for their mentorship and for providing us with a mini-grant from the Center for Health Sciences Interprofessional Education, Research, and Practice to financially support this journal. Thank you also to Leonora Clarke, Josephine Ensign, Rick Arnold, Genevieve Pagalilauan, Lynly Beard and all others who welcomed us to the table to share our ideas. We are indebted to your support and guidance.

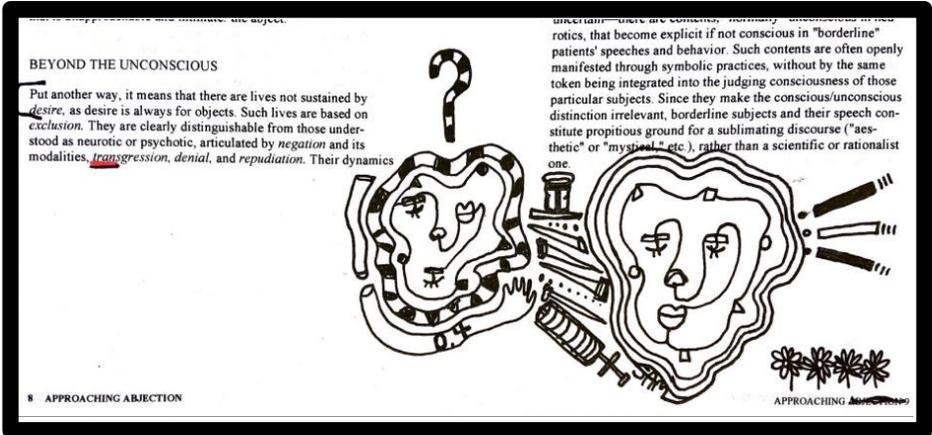
- UW Student Activities Office and Wells Fargo
 - Thank you for the generous funding through the Wells Fargo Fund for Registered Student Organizations, which has allowed us to provide a space for students and members of our community to honor and discuss stories that may otherwise go unheard.

- Nancy Sisko, Department of English
 - Thank you for all your words of wisdom and empowerment over the past two years and for helping us to bring greater understanding between the sciences and the humanities.

(t)rans-forming my narrative

By Sam Choi

Psychology and History of Comparative Ideas Double Major



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The Sky May Be Blue

By Erez Bermudez

English Major

When you look up at the sky, what is it that you see?
Do you see the endless, expansive universe? Or do you see a reflection of blue from the oceans below?

Maybe you see neither of those things and simply know that the English word for the phenomenon is ‘sky.’

I happen to be one of those people.

It made my life easy but not in the way you may imagine. I was someone who used to look at things and imagine their intricacies in great depth. I would bring to life the things that interested me, so I could better experience them, dancing before my mind. I enjoyed understanding what made them dance, the processes and purposes for their movement. I took apart every little thing that I laid my eyes upon. The world was my oyster.

But then I realized that the world does not appreciate that.

There is nothing material to be had by recognizing the subtle details if it is to only recognize the beauty in them. There is no tangible reward in the sole appreciation of existence. People do not care if you see something beautiful unless there is danger to heed or profit to be made. Nothing cares about fascinations if they cannot sustain anything.

Yes, we need visionaries and executives who have hopes and dreams that lead companies to success. Yes, we need idealists and politicians who can lead our people in fair governance. Yes, we need doctors and authors who save lives with their medicine and language. But I question whether these manifestations of our imagination are reflective of what we are truly capable of. How can capital compensate for this miraculous feat that remains unseen and unheard to this very day?

As we advance further, let us remember what it is to be human. Imagination is the vehicle of choice through which our expression lives. I am unwilling to trade this for anything less than its true value, as this would be an injustice. Who would give an invaluable service for a bag of eventual dust?

It is tempting to conclude that there is nothing in this world that could possibly compete with such a magnificent process, devolving into a perspective of despair. But let me remind you, and myself, that there are 7.7 billion imaginations running wild at this moment. Let me remind us all that they possess the same incredible faculties of thought as we do. Let me remind us that there is great joy to be had in communion with these imaginations even if they travel in directions we do not yet understand. There is hope, a future, in listening to all imaginations, even though they will be discomfoting or strange. We can learn to not only listen to them but love them as well. A mutual exchange can only occur between imaginations.

So, next time you look at the sky, ask yourself and a friend, stranger, loved one, what it is being seen. Is it the space beyond, beneath, or between? I have realized that the sky connects us in more ways than one.

My Fearful Hands¹

By Noah Jacobsen

Japanese Language and Literature Major

I lost her in the wind.
Passing my faultless self
through the stolen laughters
hidden in crevices
to avoid the caresses of time,
we feared they would take us
far away from each other.
Drinking heavy from a wooden bowl,
I swallow splinters:
There will never be another throat
beyond the serious fortress we face.

I lost her in the wind.
Then it is that we lost ourselves
to one another: I tend to peer
into a pool of laughter in the morning
for one gaze of your fresh, faultless
pink white skin.

I lost her in the wind.
Simultaneously, I hold
our Pulsing Heart in my shivering hands.

¹Inokashira Park (井の頭公園) is the location where this poem was written

Death With Dignity

By *Jaqueline Raetz*

Associate Professor, Family Medicine, UW School of
Medicine

Michael glowered at me from his hospital bed, his distaste of doctors palpable. He'd avoided them his whole life and ignored alarming symptoms for two years. Now he had little time left.

"I want the drugs," he said curtly, "and I want to go home."

"I understand," I replied, trying desperately to come up with a strategy in my head to connect with this clearly private and unsocial man, "but the state requires us to have a discussion about it."

Years earlier, I'd sat in a coffee shop contemplating this moment while staring at a person across the street who for over an hour had been collecting signatures to get an initiative on the ballot. So lost I was in my own thoughts, I can't remember a single feature about that person, only that they had caught me off guard on what should have been a quick ten-minute errand.

I'd always signed the clipboards held by the do-gooders standing in the cold, outside the market. I admit I didn't always listen to why they felt compelled to gather enough signatures to get the initiative onto the ballot. However, this one hit me like a freight train. This law, if passed, would ask me to do something I didn't want to do and in my youthful naiveté, didn't think should ever be necessary. As a family doctor trained in geriatrics—the care of older adults—I'd just recently agreed to supervise the palliative care service at our hospital for a few weeks out of the year. While palliative care involves caring for anyone with a severe, potentially life-limiting illness, it also encompasses end-of-life care. With satisfactory comfort care through hospice, I argued to myself, no one should ever need physician-assisted suicide. Yet there I was, being asked to sign a petition to get the Death with Dignity law on the November ballot.

There are always exceptions, I finally thought after an hour of silent deliberation. I kissed my table, walked across the street, reluctantly signed the ballot, and bought my eggs.

Now, I and a two-week waiting period were Michael's only barrier to accessing the new state law.

"Tell me a little bit about what you enjoy doing when you aren't sick or in the hospital," I began. Slowly, and reluctantly, Michael began to answer my questions.

The type of people who access the Death with Dignity law, tend to be those who fiercely value independence and control. Michael fit that bill, and while he didn't fully personally open up with me, he met the requirements for the prescription. He agreed to enroll in hospice to help him manage at home during the required waiting period, but he declined a home visit from me the day he ingested the prescription.

In over ten years, Michael is the only patient I have agreed to prescribe the medication to, who lived long enough to have obtained it and chosen to end their lives with it. I feel sorrow when I remember Michael and although I appreciate he was an intensely independent man, I wish I could have been with him when he died. I can't imagine what making such a choice must have been like for him, but I do believe he deserved to have that choice. I've gained a great deal of experience in palliative care since the day I sat in the coffee shop contemplating this weighty issue for the first time. Since then, I've heard hundreds of patients' stories and learned from them what they fear, value, and hope for. And while I still wish physician-assisted suicide was never the right choice for anyone, I learned my initial instinct was right. There are indeed exceptions.

Author's Note

The Washington State Death with Dignity Act passed November 4th, 2008 and went into effect March 5th, 2009. This act allows terminally ill adults seeking to end their life to request lethal doses of medication from medical and osteopathic physicians. These terminally ill patients must be Washington residents who have less than six months to live.

Lifeline

By Zichuan Han

Interdisciplinary Visual Arts Major



Why do I drink you?

By *Billie Featherston*

English (applied creative writing) Major, Global Health Minor

I don't understand what you want from me? Love? Lust? Honesty? Please enlighten me I am lost at sea, floating around in your blissful bath, coursing your lazy river blinds my path. But tonight, you're the calm bathing in brown, saying "quick, drink the liquid so that you don't drown." Tonight, you're the spotlight on some lucky guy that otherwise, sober, would only elicit a sigh. Tonight you erase every burden of doubt that when it's light out I care far too much about. Tonight, I'll comply to your blurs and your tricks cause your spinning spirals me so close to bliss, but even if I'm lucky enough tomorrow to forget, the morning always promises the feeling of... When I wake, don't worry, every memory's still there so I can spend today cringing in bed with despair, the important stuff always seems to slip my mind but you make sure the drunk nights never get left behind and thank you, by the way, I think it's your fault, that nothing stays – the thoughts and scenes that I wish to remember, but by New Year's Day I'll have forgotten December and by New Year's Day I'll have lost one more friend because one drunk night I brought him to bed and he'll wake up and think it wasn't a mistake but I'll insist it was and that's

when I almost break,

Because now you're not just hurting me, I've spilled too much, you're oil at sea and I know exactly how to clean up but I can't stop using cup after cup. I'm floating, I'm stranded, I'm lost out at sea, the sharks circle round as I bask here and bleed. I know that I should shout out for help as my body gets tangled in oily kelp but to aid my stress, I must then confess, that you're not the problem,

it's me who's the

Does it count as assault?

By Billie Featherston

English (applied creative writing) Major, Global Health Minor

Does it count if consent expired only towards the end?
Does it count if tomorrow, I still consider us friends?

Does it count if I never said “no?”
Can my hands not say what my words didn’t show?

Does it count if I said “no,” but did not speak the safe word?
The absence of “pineapple” was all that was heard.

Does it count if he never got his fingers inside?
Or when he does, does it count if he apologized later that night?

Does it count if I still see him every day?
Though our friendship reeks of words we no longer say.

Does it count if I chose not to take time
Before I got into bed with some other guy?

Does it count— the events happened two weeks apart?
Does it count, because I never let the healing start?

Does it count if I let both of them off the hook?
Convinced them I’m not as hurt as I look?

But I am—I am broken, but still, does it count?
If I don’t feel I’m broken the appropriate amount?

If I ignore it, does it count?
If I feel “fine” does it count?
If he is kind, does it count?

Really, they’re nice guys, it was just a mistake.
So does it count if it’s not one they’d normally make?

Does it count if I'm making excuses?
Does it count? Well, I'm covered in bruises.
Does it count? I sort of feel like crying.
Does it count? I mean, I guess I'd be lying

If I said I wasn't different now.
If I said I wasn't a little more scared in a crowd.
If I said the thoughts weren't sometimes too loud.
If I said when I walk I don't only look down.

So does it count if I admit that this body is broken?
Does it count as long as those words are spoken?— I'm broken. I'm
broken.
Does it count?
Does it count?

Is it sexual assault?—
I can repeat the words as much as I want,
But in the end,
It still feels like mostly my fault.

The War in Peace

By Eric Yang

Philosophy Major

I only come away wondering, *“What are the things that we choose to live for during times of crisis, and then how do we transition this same focus during times of supposed peace?”*

To me, I feel like that’s the true question that’s responsible for the attainability of this utopian ideal of positive peace. This concept of personal fulfillment, of feeling empowered... is there a way we can encourage and spread this towards others, is there a way we can maximize the innate tendency of human curiosity (that may even manifest itself in deviance) to disseminate towards others what it really means to live with passion, to engage in acts of love?

To me, these seem like the quintessential questions to ask, especially considering the current absence of negative peace in the country, yet also because of the mass influx of mental health issues going around the youth right now. Because at the end of the day, what are we on the Earth to do?

Is it to survive?

Is it for the thrill?

Is it for the longing of working towards something bigger?

Is it for the continued expression of positive energy towards others?

It seems as if we have an innate survival instinct that kicks in during times of violent conflict, but what is this survival instinct a broader representation of?

After the peace agreements get signed, after the negative peace begins to dissipate, why did these people survive to begin with, what do they want to do so badly now that they don’t have this crutch of survival as the source of their meaning?

Regardless, I think the failure to wonder about these questions can potentially perpetuate the continued cycle of war, as it seems to me that besides art (sports, music, dance, etc), war is the only time when our body's full capabilities are being utilized, where all of our senses and body parts are utilized and engaged towards a common objective of survival. And you know, with that in mind, I'm not too surprised to see that *The Art of War* is one of the most popular books of all time.

But in the end, I guess this is why we study topics like war and peace, to better understand the instinctual tendencies our minds express in an effort to find meaning amidst this struggle that we call life. As of right now, it seems that we live for the ability to have our mind, spirit, and body synchronized with reality in order for us to serve what we deem to be a larger objective. Now, what is this larger objective? Well, who knows... to me, that seems to be the question that is probably driving our existence right now.

What is Poetry Anyway?

By Rachel Reed

Associates in Arts, English Major

I.

The feeling of my body is foreign

I don't feel like myself

Not that I know myself, I've been searching.

When was I complete?

Have I ever been?

Will I ever be?

Is there something beneath this doubt?

Can't I break free?

If I don't is it bad?

Would I disappoint someone?

If I did would I care?

II.

Her hair was on fire. She was standing at her sink, facing the sunset. She glowed. Nothing will ever replace the summer. Humid days with a high of 90•.

If I stayed, could things have been better?

I see these memories in sepia; the ugliest color is sepia.

Do the roads tie me there? What is it that I can't forget?

I love me - then. The girl was so fragile. Young and alive.

Do I think of that summer as the best year of my life?

The independence I once had.... I can feel it still.

Hot air, palm trees. The beach I miss most. I still hear the waves crashing, I can still taste the beer.

The salt is invading my skin.

I will never be as happy as then.

III.

If I saw you, would you still feel the same?

I've been hoping

I'll always feel the same.

My heart skips at the prospect of seeing you
again.

Would you still love me?

Could I remind you

You were mine for a short time
Would you feel like you did then?

IV.

I see your face
In everything
Do you see mine?
Love me and I'll love you
You'll never be alone in the comfort of your home
And I, mine.

V.

What would it mean now?
To see you?
If you're my blood, and my heart, would it feel this way for you?
My hair is short
My personality changed.
What's your favorite book?
Is it closure that I need?

Is it you?

Let me know, I'll be here.

This breeze does it mean anything?

You do.

VI.

Things never stay the same

And it was naive of me to think they would

And it's my fault that I feel this way

I built a family in my head

But it doesn't match reality

I wanted to believe we would be all we needed

Never changing

Staying the same

Happy at home

Never alone

Best friends forever

Best friends for never.

Down is the Only Direction

By Billie Featherston

English (applied creative writing) Major, Global Health Minor

So I am the “thing that
keeps you alive?”

The “purpose”

Yet “torment” that without,
you’d “die?”

Thanks, for telling me but I wish you
would not.

Thanks, for the memories but I
wish you forgot.

I want you to talk— share me your
pain.

Even tell me what lies at the
base of that crane,

You said it would claim you,

But that I wasn’t to blame, well
you

lied.

You told me not to but
I cried with you.
Please, don't go away.
I need you to know that you're on
my mind every day.
Maybe it's not in the way that
you want.
But We tried.
And We failed.
We just missed our shot.
But I'm tired
So I bailed.
You did not.
And now, without me, you say
you cannot
go on.
You're wrong.
You say
"Down is the only way off of
this crane."

“Down is the only direction
drains drain.”

I cannot talk you away from
the drop.

I cannot wake to make
this nightmare stop.

No matter what words I will
try to say,

You only see what I can't
not convey:

I no longer want you in that
same way.

But please

Despite that, please

Choose to

stay.

I Can Continue (By the Grace of God)

By Nikolaus Bautista

English Major

How do you care for She who has brought you into the world? How do you ease her daily struggle? How do you comfort She who comforts, and gives you words of wisdom? How do you become a source of strength, to She who taught you about Faith, to accept Grace from God? How do you care for your mother?

* * * * *

Where to begin... What do I say to the Woman who nurtured me, cared, raised me, to ease her pain? Where do I begin, to find simple pleasures to distract her, from this reality? Dollar Tree's nail-polish section, and Polish-made dark chocolate bars -are a start... Finding good colors She'd like, is a worthy cause. Just remember, no Raspberry jelly-filled bars, and 100% Acetone.

What do I do, to vent love, joy, outrage and frustration? To all of the shared smuggled snacks, the laughs from old sitcoms and "Walker" reruns. To all of the shrieks and cries of pain, when She has to get out of bed, to take care of human functions, go to appointments, or just to sit up or lie back down. The Opioid Crisis harms her - as blanket damnation helps no one - at all... Just takes some Pot; NO! Pot helps her not; She's not an addict. Heavy Relief - is the only effective way - for her to barely function. Heavy Relief is the only way- She can be barely functional.

Seven back surgeries, and the last two went wrong. She didn't take care after six, which was to fix errors long ago. Goaded after only two months of recovery, to go back to the back-breaking work of family, by family, set up the Seventh. Seven was the wrong surgery all-together, and legal documents, a compromised immune system, and changes in family life, make Eight a distant fantasy. Quacks, Hacks, Government Edicts, the Love of Family, and her own Immune System. If anything, I pray and wish, I could take her pain away, seven surgeries of pain.

* * * * *

How has She been a source of strength, of wisdom, of Faith, as my Father and I falter, as Grandpa wobbles, and as despair creeps like invasive vines? Our family's source of spirit and faith, is the ever-flowing well She has been, shall be, and still is. Her faith is unwavering, her strength is that of mountains, her resilience is that of a Studebaker V8 engine. How do you care for the strongest person you have ever known? A woman of faith, strength, and mercy, imparted in serenity, by grace?

Why are we dealt the hand of cards we are dealt? What purpose does all of this tempering, forging, forming, and shaping, serve? What does God intend for us, with these trials? A Studebaker V8 was made of forged, cast, and tempered everything. Not even a timing-chain to snap under stress; gears drove the valves of the engine. Its weakness was that it was tough from heft, but if man can draw 800 or more horses, from engines not made in decades; if heft was a weakness, it certainly wasn't detrimental to potential. What can God draw out of us, for our own betterment and good?

Where does a son go, to care for a woman who broke herself, for her mother, her father, her husband, and her son? What grace can God give me, to be ever-filled with love, compassion and empathy, to give and carry on... Carry on... How, Heavenly Father, can I care for my mother, when I am exhausted, strained, ache and hurt myself? How God, can I care for the woman I came from, when even my Earthly Father is taxed to depletion too? How...? How...? HOW?! Show me, God? Show me, please? Show my Earthly Father and me, your grace, mercy, patients, and fill us with them, so we can care for Mama, her Earthly Father, and fulfill the promise my Father made to Grandma, years ago, on her little girl.

* * * * *

Grandma, on my Mother and Father's wedding day, went to my Father, and made him promise to take care of her little girl- forever and always. Unknown was this to Mama, until Grandma's funeral, six weeks after her first two back surgeries. If my Father can work beyond depletion - by grace and sheer will, for the love of his life, fulfilling his promise to Grandma and Mom, then I can care for She who brought me into this wondrous, wonderful, wonder-filled life, then I can too. I can continue, by the Grace of God, to keep on caring for my Mother.

Withdrawal

By Raquel Gordon

Dance and English Double Major

I no longer wait for the second ring before declining their plea for my life saving blood. I don't want them to have it, it's all I have left. What will my feet do with even less liquid, the synovial fluid has been almost completely leached out from my haphazard failed attempt to put all the tiny bones in order after you pried them apart with the head of your hammer. Then you cast away the fat and sugar coated fragments in the broken garbage disposal clogged with my other fibrous pieces that you pulled apart from the rest of me like string cheese. I can't pull apart my first toe from my second toe and the bone on the other side keeps growing because the body's solution to too much bone is to make more bone, so I stick around and keep dancing your dance until I'm frozen in calcium. I can't absorb with nothing left but the desire to dance with you more.

Life Ring

By Sidney L. Ching

Biology Major

My mom and dad are always giving me good advice; it seems that the older I get, the less they become parents and the more they establish themselves as my life advisors, dabbling in certain aspects of my life regarding finances, education, personal relationships, and future careers.

My dad grew up on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, so his childhood revolved around water, in which he accompanied my grandpa on spearfishing expeditions and surfed his problems away as a teenager. So, many of his anecdotes are vaguely sea-themed, including a fan favorite: “When saving a drowning man, swim up to him and throw a life ring, but never, ever swim within arm’s reach, or he will panic and pull you under with him.” At face value, this proverb means nothing to somebody who would only develop hypothermia after swimming in the Puget Sound, but the more I have grown into and out of relationships, the more relevant this piece of wisdom has become.

Living in Seattle for the past three years, I feel like I’ve met as many people from different states or countries as I’ve met Seattleites. I always try to sneak a poll into conversations about what people from out of town think of the city, and the responses are a mixed bag, the best sitting at “It’s great, but I could do without the rain” to the worst, which is usually prefaced by a grimace that says, “Do you *really* want to know?”

To elaborate: my hairdresser, a young and heavyset Korean woman hailing from the Bronx, gave me a loaded look through the big mirror in front of us while lobbing off generous sheets of hair when I asked her what she thought of Seattle. It seemed like a benign question, but I soon realized that I had opened a writhing can of worms.

“The thing is,” she started off, “it’s impossible to make friends. Like, everybody has their tight circle of friends they made when they were four years old, and then they meet other people through those friends. But coming in from another state?” She shook her head and snipped at my bangs. “Hard to meet anyone. Hard to make friends, hard to date... people aren’t friendly because of the rain, I think.”

“Yeah, that sounds like... Seattle,” I offered, but it was empty. The thing is, I was exactly the person she was describing. And I wasn’t even ashamed, either—how else are you supposed to make friends? Go to a café and talk to the person next to you in line? Hand out pamphlets?

In fact, most of my best friends from kindergarten are my best friends now. It seems that I have known the handful of people I was assigned at birth for so long that it would almost be petty and unnecessary to lose connection with them. Among those friends is Brooke, who doubles as “My Best Friend ” and “That Friend With A Lot Of Problems”. Everybody has those, but usually they come in two different shipments. I buy in bulk. (What a steal!)

Brooke is exceptionally bright, with a prodigal talent for writing and boundless vocabulary, and I think that if she were not trapped in a life-long battle with mental illness, she would have been more academically and professionally successful than the rest of us. However, a great deal of this promise is out-shadowed by her “live fast, die young” mentality fueled by unnecessary risk, self-sabotage, and acute existential boredom that unfortunately does not allow much room for school, work, or a loving family and caring friends.

“It’s not healthy to hang around sad people too often, Sid. Why don’t you let her go?” my mom suggested, over the sound of the stove fan and the chopping of root vegetables. I responded, “It’s not like that, Mom.” It wasn’t simple like that, and I think she knew it. Or, perhaps not, because she’s prone to basing big life decisions on logic rather than empathy.

Along with the inflated cost of college and the concept of “memes”, my parents can’t seem to grasp the idea of mental illness, and I don’t blame them. My generation’s problems are not the same as my parents’. For instance, one glaringly obvious difference between our generations is technology, and everything that comes with it.

Social media is my generation’s safety net; it can make the world seem smaller than it really is, bringing loved ones frighteningly close and making it possible to curate tight circles of friends while protecting your feed from bad news, opinions, or thoughts through the simple application of a filter. This ability to pick and choose what you hear and see is both impressive and horrifying—it enables communities of people with the same thoughts and feelings and lives to escape into a blissful echo chamber of affirmation. But unsurprisingly, life on the internet does not translate perfectly into real life. We rely on the integrity of this safety net, but it’s an illusion. We become entangled in our carefully woven community, as the people we choose to surround ourselves with have their own problems and mental illnesses that spread like the common cold, and we soon find that it’s emotionally exhausting to play Atlas by bearing the weight of the community’s problems on our shoulders while maintaining a life of our own.

My generation was given the gift and curse of being the self-help generation, which is a step up from my parents’, who merely dealt with their problems by “sucking it up and moving on”. My generation drifts through the sea of life on a raft of pills, therapy, and social media. But when that raft dissolves, what other life ring can you throw? What do you do when you receive a text at 2:00 A.M. from Brooke’s mom informing you that your best friend is in the ICU with a breathing tube? She was stable, luckily, but despite the antidepressants and Xanax and countless hours with her therapist, Brooke continued to hurt herself, knowing full well how deeply her friends and family cared for her. Did she know that it hurt each time I got those calls? Did she care? Or maybe that was it—maybe she had no room to care for others because she was too busy trying to care for herself.

Sometimes I wonder how people get to be so unhappy. Maybe the pressures and expectations of modern society have tightened their chokehold on my generation, or maybe we use social media to create an unrealistic standard of happiness—the formula for the perfect life that very few of us will ever reach. Perhaps it can be attributed to Seattle, like my hairdresser said. The weather isolates people and makes it permissible, even appropriate, to be sad. Maybe the rain is what drowns people and not the sea. In the end, the main goal of life is to stay afloat. Life can be easy like still water in the morning, and sometimes it can be a storm, pounding you over the head with tall waves and pulling you under to drown. Some people were given ships, some canoes, and some inflatable armbands. Some never learned how to swim. Maybe the smart thing to do is to throw a life ring and hope for the best; maybe the right thing to do is to dive in and trust that when you surface, your family will be waiting on the shore with open arms, ready to pull you out.

The Discovery of Self

By Eric Yang

Philosophy Major

I've noticed that I'm only able to experience a sense of engagement with my writings while I'm either acquiring knowledge in school or acclimating myself to new environments (although I eventually notice myself returning back to my original state of consciousness).

And it's always really interesting with my writings because this sense of engagement only comes from the feeling of *"Oh shit... these thoughts seem to be within me my whole entire life - how am I just now capable of actually articulating them... holy shit, I feel like this has lifted up an incredible burden off of my chest."* It's almost like hitting an artery where I'm chipping away, I'm chipping away and then... bam! I stumble onto something where everything just feels natural, all my resources are directed towards engaging with and eventually expressing that one particular thought, and I gradually find myself lifting up all these unconscious thoughts of mine that represent inconsistencies towards the general ideals that I presently hold of myself. And then sometimes I find out that those ideals either lack purpose or serve towards my mental detriment.

I swear, these writings... they're like a discovery of self - or I don't know, kinda like a constant battle against myself. At this point, that's just how I feel every time I find myself being required to do a reading for my classes, so I might as well approach it as if it's some sort of war. I guess that makes sense - it's almost like a conflict of ideals, right? I have this vague ideal of myself being able to immediately engage with the text at a moment's notice - I assume I'll be able to retain every single bit of information to profound effect. I figure that I'll be able to crank out the assignments to rhythmic effect and then... I don't. And I guess this conflict between perception and reality constantly plants an internal dissonance in my mind.

Am I explaining to you, or am I explaining to myself? Quite honestly, I don't know - maybe it's a little bit of both. All I want from school is the ability to keep my mind sharp, the ability to

understand what it takes to be great at what I do, what it takes to be innately curious, what it takes to live in the moment, what it takes to be engaged with the reality I'm in, what my current pressure-points are... how to loosen up my mind when I feel paralyzed under the weight of my personal expectations - and man, I guess I'm learning not only how complicated this process is, but how much I find myself searching within myself.

Like... I'll feel these blissful moments - maybe it's after I complete an assignment, maybe it's after I do a reading... I feel on top of the world. And then maybe I eat something, maybe I have a random encounter with someone, maybe I fall to my vices... and then it's like, *"Fuck! I hit rock bottom... again!"* And it's these rock bottoms that hurt the most, even if it means I may have just returned to my normative state - shit, I can't go from being on top of the world to being paralyzed over a philosophy assignment, you know? And then at that point it's like *"Do I gradually work myself out of this, or do I just resign due to the futility of exerting effort where the end result is a sensation which I've already experienced?"*

And yeah... this balance of free will and natural course of action - I never seem to get that, either. And... maybe that's another thing I try to look out for while I'm here - when do I push through, and when do I relax? When am I stalling and stagnating my reality, when am I allowing things to naturally happen? I don't know... I just want to be proud of myself... assess the progress I make, be grateful of the progress I make, feel myself beginning to relax out of the personal gratitude that arises within me, and then project that confidence out to wherever I see fit - that's how it works, right?

Regardless of the case, I just want to grow... what's that shit DC Youngfly said on The Breakfast Club again?

"Grow with the game, don't let the game outgrow you."

Yeah, that sounds about right.

Now, how I go about accomplishing that...yeah, no clue. I guess that's what philosophy is about...maybe that's what life is about, too: *conceiving an ideal reality, understanding why that reality is attractive to us, and then figuring out the means by which I can gradually move myself towards that said reality.* So I guess that works... for now at least.

Self

By Linda Wang

Business Administration Major, English Minor

Growing up:

life is a *cluck-cluck* zoo,
of fun fried chickens.

there are

loud humans,
with gooey, crunched-up hair.

and

funny dead pasta,
for bright teddy bears.

YET-

**a burnt blanket
unravels pretty flowers.**

AS DRIFTING SKIES
BRING CHANGING COLORS.

Healing_Self:

Emma is a girl. She has brown eyes, bright yellow hair, and likes oranges.

*People don't like me.
I am not enough.
I am hard to love.*

She had been left out,
one evening in the cold.

Emma has vivid flashes
of words that stay in her blood, circulating
her body.

Kind, warm, and caring.

Spirited and open-minded.

Emma learns
to speak her truth. Her mind
begins to collapse,
collapsing
to be

Free.

Transcendence of I:

infinite
is
self-less

Weathering

By William Phillips

Professor Emeritus of Family Medicine, UW School of
Medicine

Breathing grows harder
On descent from the summit.
Winds chill winter bones.

* * *

Picking at bedclothes,
Memory's hands fold laundry.
Dry, rustling leaves.

* * *

Glistening tissues,
Angry at the universe,
Searing solar flares.

Editor Bios

Alice Ranjan is a senior studying Microbiology and Molecular/Cellular/Developmental Biology with a minor in English. She aspires to become a physician, conduct research, and to continue finding ways to honor the narratives of her community members through writing and art. When she is not peering at cells under a microscope, she can be found reading and listening to Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 on repeat.

Miriam Mayhle is a sophomore studying Biology. She is on the pre-med track and would love to attend the UW School of Medicine after she graduates. In her free time she enjoys drawing, reading, and making her friends watch *Derry Girls*.

Nikki Talebi is a sophomore studying English with a potential minor in Political Science. She is considering pursuing a pre-law track or a career in Publishing. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing poetry, listening to music, exploring Seattle, and attending as many concerts as she can.

Peachyapa Saengcharoentrakul is a sophomore studying Philosophy, and she intends to also major in Informatics. Peach hopes to work as a data scientist. In her free time, she enjoys reading, playing piano, and writing, although she does not particularly enjoy writing about herself in the third person.

Jiana Ugale is a sophomore on a pre-medicine track. When not studying, she can most likely be found at Seattle Children's conducting research in their Bioethics Department, or spending time with her family. She hopes to become a physician who melds together medicine and the humanities in her research.

Kristy Lee is a senior studying English and minoring in American Indian Studies. She is pursuing a career in writing. In her free time, she enjoys crafting, reading, puzzles, and exploring.

Sumaya Ali is a senior doing a double major in Creative Writing and Education. She is passionate about writing and has a deep love for poetry. In the future she hopes to write children's books and create educational content that empowers and inspires children from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Mariya Haveliwala is a sophomore studying neuroscience and plans to pursue a career in medicine. She also loves art, reading, poetry and baking.