



the owl

2018

OHIO WESLEYAN'S LITERARY MAGAZINE

O Me! O Life!

WALT WHITMAN

Oh me! Oh life! of the questions of these recurring,
Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd with the foolish,
Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I, and who
more faithless?)
Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects mean, of the struggle ever
renew'd,
Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and sordid crowds I see around me,
Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the rest me intertwined,
The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these, O me, O life?

[Answer.](#)

That you are here—that life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

5 Medusa

by Riley Ross

12 A Few Temporal Distinctions

by Michael Barr

15 Los Andes

by Adrian Burr

15 Spilling at the Seams

by Emily Shpiece

26 I Feel Like I'd Lick Them Raw

by LeeAnn Celapino

27 Identity

by Adriana Rodriguez

FICTION

6 Ocean Kisses

by Emily Shpiece

16 In the Woods Somewhere

by LeeAnn Celapino

NON-FICTION

1 Genesis

by Nicole White

9 Lost in the Music

by Kayla Rondinelli

13 For Your Entertainment

by Anna L. Davies

22 Stitches

by Riley Ross

29 Dear Reader

by The OWL Editors





LIST OF IMAGES

PHOTOGRAPHY

CORRINE RACE:

Cover

List of Images

Page [8](#)

Page [11](#)

Page [13](#)

Page [15](#)

Page [16](#)

Page [21](#)

Page [22](#)

Page [25](#)

Page [26](#)

KAYLA ADOLPH:

Page [4](#)

ALANNA EASLEY

Page [11](#)

ARTWORK

SARAH-FAITH STRAIT:

Table of Contents

Page [27](#)

SHAYLA SCHEITLER:

Page [5](#)

Page [7](#)

GENESIS

Nicole White

“In all the years I’ve been a therapist, I’ve yet to meet one girl who likes her body.”

— Mary Pipher

The woman sitting in the window seat next to me on Flight 2624 has developed a fascination with my weight. I’m used to hearing comments about how little my figure is, but this woman continues to mutter questions about how much I must diet, or stores I must shop at to suit my small frame. Despite seeming transfixed by my girlish body, this woman has her DD breasts pushed up enough to catch the eye of the flight attendant that stopped to offer us peanuts.

Her well-pressed blazer doesn’t show a single wrinkle and the shirt she has underneath it is low cut enough for me to tell that her brassiere peeking out is a red hot and lacy piece. I wish I hadn’t worn a high neck shirt, but I also feel thankful that my pale chest is covered. We probably look silly sitting next to each other. A pale, petite, blonde girl and a curvy, tan, dark haired woman.

She realizes that I’m no longer paying attention to her questions and turns to stare at the open sky.

I wonder if her nipples are brown.

When I used to shower with my mother, before I could wash my own hair, I would stare at her olive-toned skin. I had assumed that eventually my skin would stop being pale and pink and that one day I would have naturally tanned, olive skin and dark, thick hair like my mother. I didn’t know then that other women shaved away their dark V, but my mother kept hers. All of my hair was light and thin. She’d tilt her head back underneath the shower head like a goddess giving her body, an open offering to the heavens. I watched her. I loved her. I wanted to be her.

I used to wonder if men preferred dark red or brown nipples on top of naturally tanned skin. Or maybe men preferred snowy white skin with pale pink points.

I assume, now and always, that Eve, the First, the original woman would have had brown nipples with olive skin because that’s probably the way God would have liked it. I think God had brown nipples. God was perfection and Eve was beauty. I don’t think I’m a descendant of Eve. Or of God.

“I’m not going to buy you alcohol,” the woman says to me. I glance up at her from the drink menu and I can’t keep my eyes from stopping at her chest for a moment.

“Of course not. I’m twenty-one, I can buy my own.”

I sit up a little straighter. My soft, blonde hair is tucked behind my ears and I have the urge to bring it around to frame my face, to push my chest out. More woman.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I thought you were fifteen or something.”

The woman laughs and I turn my head back down to the menu to stop from watching her chest bounce. My hair falls over my shoulder. I wish I had put on lipstick this morning.

“I get that a lot,” I say. I put the drink menu away. Ordering a beer won’t make me look older. I turn her questions around from earlier, and I wonder how much she weighs with her curves, where she bought her low-cut shirt, her black jeans that smooth out her thighs and her hips. I sink my own bony body into the seat and pull the tray table down from the back of the seat in front of me. I lay my head down. I feel like I’m inside this woman’s head and I think it must be easier to be small framed, to be able to curl up and lay my head down on an airplane without having to worry about breasts creating a barrier, or being too tall for my torso to bend and not bang into the next seat.

I open one eye and peek at her to see what she’s doing. She stares out the window. The afternoon sun transforms her tan skin into liquid bronze. I wonder if she is Eve. Maybe God put Eve on the plane in the seat next to me so that I could understand why the perfect woman has full lips and long dark hair and brown nipples. Eve in the seat next to me tilts her head up like a goddess offering up her body, a gift, to the open sky around us. I think she must be more beautiful than any God that has ever existed.

But God was kind of sexist, wasn’t he? 1 Timothy 2: 12: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, she must be silent.” I can’t help but smile. I wish God would come down here right now, middle of the open sky, and tell this bronze woman, breasts exposed, that she must be silent and that she is not permitted to teach or to have authority. I think this woman could teach God a thing or two about women. I think God might even find a piece of himself in her, a piece of perfection.

I wonder if God ever found himself in my mother. She’s almost fifty now, with about thirty-three years of tobacco inhalation under her belt. Her tan hands now look more like a dirty yellow color, and nicotine stains her fingernails. Her vision has gone bad and she wears trifocals. I don’t think she can really see how stained and yellow her teeth have become, though. She now dyes her brittle hair a bright red color every few months and keeps it chopped short.

She doesn’t really resemble the dark haired, tanned skin goddess that she once was, but I don’t think a woman has to be beautiful in order for God to find himself in her. Maybe my mom smoked out God many years ago.

After trying somewhat successfully to sleep for about half an hour, when my neck begins to ache, I sit my head up and push the tray back in.

“You’re such a little doll. I could never sleep like that,” the woman sitting next to me says. I look over at her and smile.

“I got a lot of practice from sleeping through my ceramics class in high school.”

She grins and the sunlight glints off of her white teeth. We are fascinated by each other.

The plane is circling over Los Angeles and I feel knots in my stomach. I want to know her name. I want to ask her what her name is and I want her to tell me that her name is Eve and that she knows God and why God put her on the plane next to me. I don’t want to hear her tell me that her name is anything else. I think anything else might be a lie.

I wonder for a moment, if she has a daughter. I wonder if there’s a small girl at home that stares at her in the shower and wonders if she came out of the perfect, original woman. I never wondered if my mom was Eve. I never questioned whether or not she could be the perfect form of any woman. I think this woman’s daughter might. Unless her daughter is like me: pale, thin. A girl like that wouldn’t come out of Eve. Not from God’s version of woman.

“Hey, sorry, I didn’t get your name,” I say to the woman. She looks over at me after grabbing her purse from between her feet and setting it in her lap.

“My name is Angel.”

“Were your parents right, then? Did you turn out to be an angel?”

She laughed.

“No, definitely not. And my parents didn’t name me Angel. My parents named me Robert.”



"I wonder for a moment, if she has a daughter. I wonder if there's a small girl at home that stares at her in the shower and wonders if she came out of the perfect, original woman."

- *Nicole White*



Medusa

RILEY
ROSS

When I was still a girl, the goddess found me
in her temple, terrified by a man twice my age,
suffocated by the violence of taking what he wanted.
I met her eyes; she saw herself reflected in my ruined body.
There was anger, tenderness, transformation:
she made me bulletproof.

These days the lazy mornings begin with her.
I will owe her forever, I think, as I move my fingers
inside her. The goddess of wisdom and war
kisses me, gives me a way to fight back.
She has made me into a many-mouthed embrace,
wild-headed, sharing coffee in our statuary garden
of cracked stone men.

I wander the city late at night, oversized hat
and dark glasses. I look for girls in tenant bodies,
paying rent to men with cheap aftershave.
Do not be afraid, I say, he can't hurt you again.
Together we push his body like a tombstone into the river and walk,
hand in hand, wreathed in snakes and the glow of streetlights.

OCEAN KISSES

Emily Shpiece

The ocean air smelt of oversaturated salt, and the feeling of the gritty sand under my feet didn't help to ease my mood. My soaked hair hiding from the wind in my oversized sweatshirt stuck to my neck and made my scalp itch. I didn't bother to take my hands out of my pockets, though. I was glued to the spot, staring ahead into the sky reflecting off the water.

A streak of light grey where the sun should have been traced the train of a gown for Sara, who was in the water. I imagined her hair flying out around her, golden and lovely, halos of light caressing the crown of her head. The waves rolled over her body, over her dark legs.

Each lap of water was like a series of gentle kisses, pecking and shushing her thighs. Gentle and cool, they rubbed her, exfoliating and leaving each patch of skin softer than before. Its insistent scrubbing washed over her, coaxing out quiet sighs and gasps.

I watched her become softer by each wave's loving embrace. The waters reached up and caressed her face, swaying her back and forth as if they were dancing. Her train of light flittered in the water as she was rocked back and forth. The ocean gave her a gentle kiss on the cheek, then her forehead, and she immersed into its arms.

She washed up on the shore hours later, aside the feet of running children rushing to protect their castle from the water. Amid all the upset and the police, I saw her. Her beautiful hair was stained with the salt, with traces of green algae adorning her body like small hickeys. She was swollen, saturated with love to where she could not contain it. As they took her body away, I remembered the moment of hesitation. The moment she had asked if it was normal.

It was a moment of quiet confidence. We were studying in the library, at the same table. We weren't working together, but there was a solidarity between the two of us as we nodded a hello to one another and set to work.

She got a series of text messages, each one resulting in a sigh, a slam of the phone, a forceful return to her textbook, rinse and repeat the process. I glanced over once, but kept seeing it in my periphery, hearing it, feeling it in her energy.

I started to close my book when I finally mustered out a question about how she was doing. Her face scrunched up, and she looked at me in the eyes. They pierced through me, and I couldn't look away.

"Is it normal if your boyfriend gets mad at you for not riding the bus with him? Even if all you're doing is studying until your mom picks you up?"

I remember saying yes. I remember seeing her face falter, self-reflective realization creeping in.

“Okay,” she said solemnly. She picked up her phone; I picked up my textbook.

Thinking on it now, when I stood watching the waves pull her under, was I saying yes to the way the water grabbed her forcefully? Gentle in its contact with her skin, oppressive and thrashing in nature?

There was another time when Sara was with her boyfriend. He had his arm around her waist and was with his friends. He had a hold on her, pulling her along with the tide he created wherever he went. Meek and small along with him, Sara melded to the flow: a babbling, energized riptide.

I remember not rushing in to save her. Not saving her when I saw her disappear in the embrace of the group, or the cool clutch of the water.

Seeing her go under, seeing her with her boyfriend. It was the same situation.

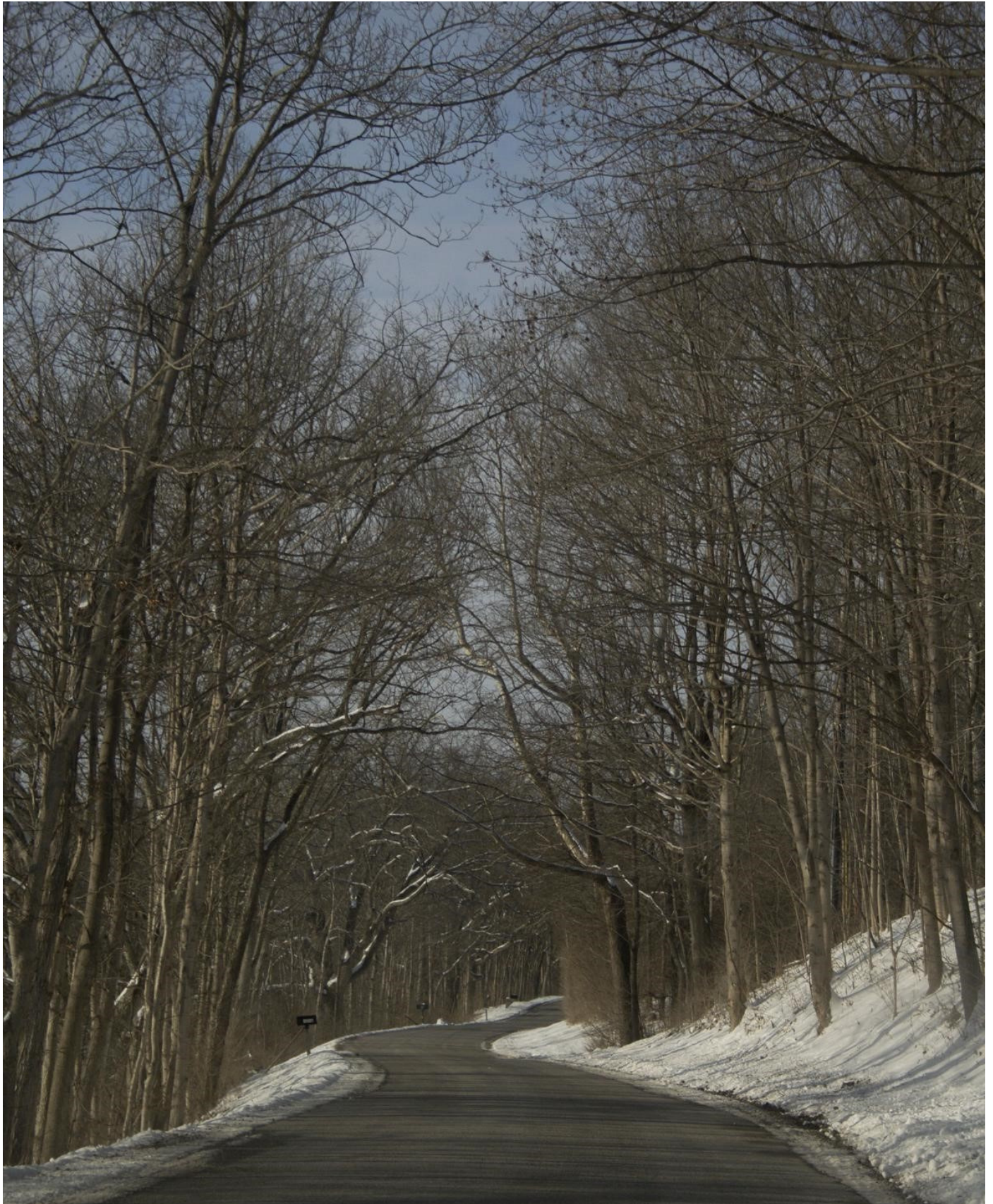
I remember staying silent—for both. Silent as her mind when her lips met his. Silent as her throat when the ocean’s kiss stole her speech.

I remember my complacency. Complacent to the thrashing that I knew existed beneath the waves, his hands, out of the sight of public eye.

They will hold a funeral for her, and display the work done by the mortician to make her presentable. Whatever trace will have been left on her body by her mourning boyfriend will be misattributed by the crowd to the rocks on the shores. But I’ll know. And so will her boyfriend.

I’ll never forget the day Sara drowned to escape becoming a Jane Doe at the will of her boyfriend. I’ll never forget the day I didn’t rescind my “yes” that day in the library. I’ll never forget the day I helped lead a girl to her self-imposed death.





"Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)"

- *Walt Whitman*

LOST IN THE MUSIC

Kayla Rondinelli

She gets so lost in the music, one earbud in and one earbud out, swaying in and out of the world. She taps her fingers on the leather seat in front of us. “Can you hear it?” she asks as she moves her hands across the sticky surface, making her own piano on the leather.

“We will make it there one day, you know.” She smooths down the calendar picture tacked to the wall. Ilulissat, Greenland in blue swirling letters across the icy tundra, the only interruption are tiny colored buildings standing out against the white. “We’re going to move on to the bigger and better things,” she says.

She says, “Let’s play songs that are so beautiful they make people want to cry.” We had to learn each other’s music so we would know when to start playing together. I clutch my violin to my chest and I can feel the vibrations of the piano through the wood, gently bending and swaying to the sound.

I haven’t thought about our days in that yard for a long time now. Running to catch the leaves as they flew from the big oak being pelted with rain and wind. “Wind, wind,” we would scream. Wind, wind, catch the leaves before they blow away and the only sound to be heard above the weather were our raincoats swishing together as we ran.

She knew that this slope only started green. She knew that just behind that pine tree with the snapped branch was a small drop off. “Watch out,” I hear her say muffled underneath a ski mask. She laughed as I flew off the mound and landed in a knot of poles, skis, and powder. Play that song again for me. It’s so much better live. Play it louder, play it so the sound carries from her grand piano through the dark floorboards only to be carried up through the cabinet and rattle the dishes. I asked her what song she was singing. She shrugged. “I don’t know.” She laughed. She’d sing to any song, just humming along until she could come in again loud at the chorus. She didn’t care if people heard her sing.

We sat in the parking lot for hours to get good seats. We laughed when I tried to take a picture with a bagel and ended up with cream cheese on my leg and people staring. And when the music finally started playing, it rained. And while everyone scrambled for their ponchos and umbrellas, we sat and listened and let the music in, the bass so loud we could feel it in our chests.

I’m having trouble seeing the stage. I can only picture you at a piano, your long fingers tapping the keys with more emotion. That man now is a just a man at a piano and when he hits

that high C, the key doesn't make that clinking sound the way yours did. The worn wires inside a living instrument were tired out from hitting those beautiful high notes over and over again.

—

This picture isn't right. The trees don't look like they're on fire. The yellows and oranges are too bland and look like regular fall trees. The snow piles look dirty. The white doesn't glisten when the sunlight arches overhead. And, you don't look as happy as you did then. The hike through a burning mountain didn't look like this, but I think I'll keep it because it's all I have now. Your name is still etched into the wood. When I walk down the stairs, my hands grab the railing, my fingers bending to feel the carving below. Your name is still there. I can feel each groove cut hastily with a huge kitchen knife that we weren't supposed to touch. The lines are fast and sketchy because we were trying to stifle giggles before we got caught. I wonder if anyone will ever notice them under the banister.

I can imagine you staring out at the frozen water in Ilulissat. You'll only have one earbud in and I will be there too, and our raincoats will swish when we move closer and we'll laugh.



"She gets so lost in the music, one earbud in and one earbud out, swaying in and out of the world."

- *Kayla Rondinelli*

A Few Temporal Distinctions

MICHAEL
BARR

the single, eternal
expression of our Being.

Compacted, reduced and encompassed;
a coordinate within a plane.
Within only the immediate in

which recollections are also moments,
without, perhaps, the binary
of truth or falsehood.

I take comfort only in the infinite
doing this only
in language.

An exit always recalls an entry.

The “x” of the infinity always-already
marking the overlap
of exactly where I am not; neither past nor future
but always-already presented as



FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT

Anna L. Davies



When I see Will Toledo’s Instagram post that he’s signing autographs at the F.Y.E. tent after Car Seat Headrest’s 3 p.m. show (side-by-side headshot of him and Andrew Katz, caption: “Want an autograph from these beauts?”), I think it’s only right that I go meet him. Because for one, I’m not in the mosh pit, and two, I [deserve](#) to be in the mosh pit more than any of those basic Lollapalooza bitches.

All year, I’d fantasized about my chance to meet Will Toledo. It’d happen in Chicago. Preferably in a coffee shop. Very casual encounter. I’d ask him about his favorite books and he’d be impressed by my wealth of literary knowledge. We’d probably get married. But I figure I can settle for a corporate-driven, thirty second meet-and-greet that I have to buy a copy of [Teens of Style](#) to get into.

I tell Dad I’ll meet up with him afterwards and position myself in line, trying to relax. I begin a rehearsal in my head: What’s your favorite book, just like I’ve practiced all year in the bathroom mirror.

rehearsal in my head: What's your favorite book, just like I've practiced all year in the bathroom mirror. I fix myself forward, trying not to look around, trying not to think too much, trying to be calm. A guy slopes up behind me and starts ruffling through his backpack. His name is Jeremy. He's from Chicago. He wears the Car Seat Headrest space cadet t-shirt and points to my CD.

"I have that album on vinyl. It's really good. I like it better than [Teens of Denial](#)."

I verbally agree fully, even though mentally I only half agree. [Style](#) over [Denial](#)? Bold choice. I'm intrigued. He keeps his sunglasses on the entire time.

I have a thing for gangly guys with big noses from Chicago. He's no exception.

I crane my neck to see Will slump into a black plastic chair behind a heavily branded F.Y.E. tablecloth, sheltered from the sun by a matching branded tent. I'm high on a combination of the performance I just saw and the possibility of this interaction with a genius.

I decide to make some verbal passes on Jeremy from Chicago.

"What's your favorite Car Seat Headrest album?" I venture.

"My favorite," he says—in between explaining where he got the postcard he brought that he wants Will to sign—"is actually [Nervous Young Man](#)."

Bingo. I'm gone.

"I really like 'Dreams Fall Hard' off that album," I offer. He smiles.

"'Plane Crash Blues' is a good song."

In the moment, I interpret this conversation as deep.

"'I Can Play Piano' is great," I say, insightfully. In front of me, a tanned 24-year-old pontificates about his music major with an obscenely short woman.

A few more people have joined our line; a chatty maybe-teenager pondering the lo-fi of [Teens of Style](#) and a person on the masculine side of androgynous who clutches their record like a three-year-old with a blanket. I get this weird swell in my chest, and think that I am finally among "my people."

The sun starts to sink slow over the Chicago skyline, dusky vermillion long shadows thrown and cast about over the scenes of all us performing the exciting role of biggest fan. From the distance I can hear the feedback and warbles of the BMI stage and the overproduced booming of the Samsung Galaxy stage.

I crane my neck to see how far forward the line stretches.

"Wow," Jeremy says, following suit. "I can't believe that's actually him."

"I've been waiting for this all year," I hear some part of myself say. "I'm actually gonna meet Will Toledo." The screaming drunk twentysomethings and wannabe garage rock and aggressive Chicago traffic cursing Lollapalooza with each passing car melds into a barely-perceptible din behind me.

I try not to notice how close we've gotten to Will. I try not to think about how I screamed along to 'The Ballad of the Costa Concordia' last year when all my housemates were out and I was alone. Screaming, "How was I supposed to steer this ship!" so loudly I was sure my neighbors worried.

Jeremy chatters on nervously about the brilliance of Glass Animals' stage design during their show yesterday. I can't tell if I'm annoyed by this. It'd be charming if we weren't steps away from a man who wrote the album I used to cry to in the parking lot of the grocery store while on my breaks.

I try not to think about how the first time I heard 'The Ballad of the Costa Concordia' was last year at Lollapalooza 2016 in Joe's hotel room through a bluetooth speaker and a Spotify Premium account on Shuffle Play mode. I try not to think about how I was so freaked out by the end of the song that I couldn't tell if I loved it or hated it and said, instead, "I think I'm over Car Seat Headrest" for about two days until I remembered the song 'Drunk Drivers/Killer Whales' and how that song kind of convinced me to stop feeling sorry for myself the first time I heard it.

I especially try not to think about the moral implications of me praying to God about meeting Will Toledo, whose new album says the f-word at least five times. In one song.

Jeremy suddenly smiles with no teeth and somehow brings up Cage the Elephant. We are steps away from the Great Holy Toledo and I am not focused at all. I am violently conflicted if I want to tell Jeremy to shut the fuck up or profess my undying affection to him. Probably the latter.

Next thing I know, I'm being hustled in front of Will Toledo and Andrew Katz and their touring trumpet player who I think is named Steve, and I'm calling the F.Y.E. employee hustling me "sir," and words are falling out of my mouth before I can stop them—"Your album changed my life! I'm sorry that's cliché but it's true"—and Will looks at me with inquisitive indifference and says, "Well, I hope it changed your life in a good way," and I'm weirdly upset he said that because of course it did—right? And the only thing I can think after I pose for a photo and stagger out of line is "Can't I get some closure with Jeremy?"

Frantic, I look backwards and see Jeremy loping along, dazed, smiling in disbelief. I want to yell his name and my mind wonders if he's looking for me, but then I find Dad leaning against Buckingham Fountain, Chicago splashed behind him, casting brilliantly blinding light over Hyde Park and I realize I can't remember the last time I watched the sun set.

Los Andes

ADRIAN
BURR

Black
Trails and muddy
Footprints lead deep
Into los Andes. We Names
Followed them by daylight, Scraped from
Now memories guide our bones. Paper tree trunks drift
Free as ash on grasslands. Songs
Paths ripped through fog Lost among the
Mirages entice our aching souls. Wetlands, consumed
By silt and beetles, Dreams
Grow fuel for future fires Plucked from icy
To burn the ancient words. Marshes catch trout in
Inky sky pools. Hearts sliced like
Mirrored faces bloom scarlet in the sun.



Spilling at the Seams

EMILY
SHPIECE

I have
so many things to say
they're pouring

out
of
my
b
r
a
i
n

& I can't get ahold
of water droplets
once they've
fallen onto the

f l o o r

