



An Editor's Note is a daunting task. To write something that is both remarkable enough to precede the distinguished art throughout this issue and relatable enough to pull someone in, still seems impossible-even as I am writing now. So I hope that when reading this Editor's Note, you can extend some mercy and take comfort in the fact that it only gets better from here.

I would like to tell you that I had a clear vision for this issue and that everything fell into place exactly as I thought it would, but that isn't (and probably won't ever be) the case. Who says that has to be a negative thing? Some of the most valuable lessons that I have learned my first semester as Editor-in-Chief were through failures and mistakes. Most days I felt like I was keeping my head above water, while the waves of self-doubt and anxiety rolled over me. I just knew that one day someone was going to realize that they made a mistake by putting me in charge of this journal- but it never happened. As time went on, I learned more about the publishing process and how to communicate better with my team. Most importantly, I realized that I didn't have to feel alone, because I had a whole organization of wonderful, passionate people who wanted to help this journal become reality. No one achieves anything alone, and this issue is a testament to that.

This issue encapsulates the hard work of members within a special organization and the artists who graciously allow us to showcase their work in our journal. Without those two components, The Eckleburg Project wouldn't exist. So, I am grateful. Grateful for the people in this organization and for people who strive to create.

If I had to give this issue a label, I would probably say that it's made up of experiences, much like most creative endeavors. Except these experiences are not vague or distant, they are present and active. They exist all around you on this campus in the forms of classmates, professors, advisors, or friends. The pieces in this edition reflect the simple fact that every individual has a story that is only tied to them-unique in nearly every way-and when someone chooses to share even a small part of their story, we as readers can learn from both the similarities and the differences. We can appreciate the similarities and respect the differences, or vice versa. The Eckleburg Project hopes that someone will look into the writer's experience and feel something, or maybe even see the world through unfamiliar eyes.

So with that being said, thank you for sharing and thank you for reading, because both are essential to the purpose of The Eckleburg Project. You keep the dream alive.

Yours faithfully,
Sasha Adams

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Contents

01 Marianne

Isabelle Cross

02 Fractured

Nathanel Ayers

04 Sweet Duality

Hannah Walls

05 Red Blue & White

Natalie Coleman

06 Haptic

Madeleine Jenkyn

08 Should We Eat Here?

Ben Schoenekase

09 Gandalf the Grey

Haley Heartfield

10 Triptych

Margaret Clark

12 Lost Mine Trail

Christian Walsh

12 A Ten-Year-Old's Eternity

Jo LeGare

13 Reaching Out Letting Go

Jihyeon Joung

16 The Frosty Tips LP

Ignacio Mata Cordero

17 Reflections

Lyndey Strese

18 School of Athens

Ignacio Mata Cordero

20 A Social Flight

Rachel Bernardo

21 Decontextualize

Ben Schoenekase

22 Yonder Awaits

Jeff Zhao

23 Hamartia

Hannah Philibert

25 Metronome

Amanda Cockrell

Marianne

Isabelle Cross

i wake to empty space and her standing at the door. the lights are out and i ask her, "marianne, where are you going?"

"another realm," she says. she's sick of it here and she wants to go. she says here is killing her, and maybe there can save her.

"but marianne," i say, "i don't think it works that way. the ground is solid and beyond the sky is fire, so i don't think you can just slip so easily away." *marianne*, i want to say, *can't you find a way to stay?*

her eyes are full of dying suns. *i tried everything*, they say.

i know she tried being a bird once. she liked the way they just flapped their wings and off they'd go and she liked the way the air was so fond of them, holding them up to glide high above everyone's heads. i think she thought that if she could get that high too then everything below her would shrink and then maybe she could be free. but she was always afraid of heights, and when she fell out of the sky i think that was when she realized that people aren't meant to fly. that's okay, marianne, i tried to tell her back then. i'll find you a new set of wings and then make us a sky that's all our own.

but she had her arms crossed firmly over her chest and said she didn't want to watch the birds no more.

i wish i had told her back then, that's okay, *marianne*, *i still know you can soar*.

a while later she decided to be a horse. she liked the way they were strong and spirited but fragile, and she liked the way they all ran together, and i think she thought that if she could run with them too then the loneliness and everything would just fall off her back and then maybe she could be free. but she never had the strongest legs and after they snapped right under her, i thought she was like a horse, because they are so alive that they break so easily and then they'll never run again.

that's okay, marianne, i said to her then, i'll walk beside you for the rest of your life and we'll take it step by step, even if it takes a long, long time.

but she had tucked her legs up inside herself and said she didn't want to go riding no more.

i wish i had told her then, *that's okay*, *marianne*, *you're still just as alive as before*.

after that she wanted to be a flower. she liked the way they wore their essence on the outside and she liked how they always seemed to glow and i think she



Fractured

Nathanael Ayres

thought that maybe if she could glow like that too then she would be able to burn all the dark and everything away, and then maybe she could be free. but flowers need roots and nutrition to grow, and she always said that she never had no roots to begin with and she can't put some down now and i wish i could change that for her but i can't.

so i told her instead, that's okay, marianne, i'll plant a garden for you right here and together we'll watch something new grow.

but she had her fingers clasped tightly together and said she didn't ever want

to pick flowers again.

i wish i'd convinced her then, *that's okay, marianne, you still bloom
the most beautifully of anything that's ever been.*

the last thing she tried was to be a star, because that was what she loved most of all. she loved the way stars were completely soul, and i think she thought that maybe if she could be all soul too then that would mean her mind had gone away and then maybe she could be free. but stars are stationary and nothing ever changes with them, and she ended up just feeling cold.

that's okay, marianne, i promised her back then, i'll buy a telescope and use it to show you all the galaxies within yourself until you know that you are your own universe that breathes.

but she'd already closed her eyes and said that them stars she never again wanted to see.

*oh, marianne, i should have told her a thousand times
over, you were always the brightest star to me.*

today there is an empty space beside me and marianne is at the door. she says everything is burned behind her and my mouth tastes like the ashes of all the things i wish i had said. of everything i could have done i never was able to build her a bridge back to here and now she's gone to another realm and she said she don't want to see me no more.

but oh, marianne

i would have been any realm you needed me to be.

Sweet Duality

Hannah Walls

You are a drive through
the country at sunset,
the warmest golds and yellows,
the wind tossing it all about
in gentle waves.

You are both the passing rows
and the haphazard wildflowers,
you are the soothing order
along with the unexpected joy.

You are the ease of routine,
and the pleasure of surprise.
Like a drive through the country
at sunset,
your repose is effortless
and your allure
the most natural thing
in the world.

Red Blue & White

Natalie Coleman

Bold, brown, and burnt; I was crouched at the edge of America. I sat on top of a dirt hillside where some patchy green spots were trying but failing to grow. The heat was merciless, and there was not a trace of humidity or wind. The arid atmosphere warmed my body like an oversized blanket, reminding me that the sun was constantly watching over me. I lined my fingers at the edge of the slope, grasping onto the thin imaginary line between two countries, fighting that subconscious urge to catapult myself into the cold river below.

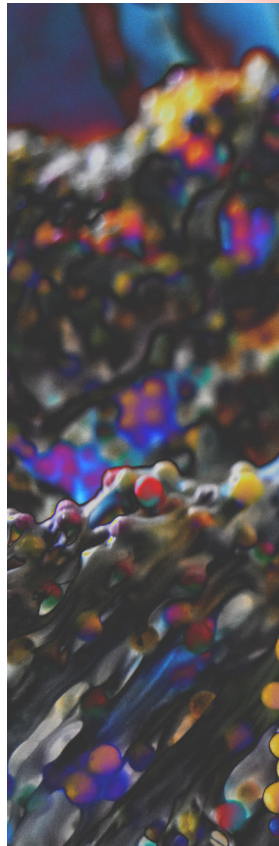
"I could make it," I confessed out loud. Well, I could try.

I heard your cheery laughter, and you took your usual spot next to me. You were itching for a debate, and you said that I was being ridiculous and overtop. You argued how the river was unforgiving and how it wouldn't accept me so easily. But people passed through this river all the time. People like you.

I tried covering my face of disappointment behind my knees, but you noticed like you always did. And against your common sense, your pity corrupted your judgement. You lead me to the shallow river bank and told me to dip my feet into the murky water. The mud squished between my toes. I felt the water rise up to my feet to my knees to my thighs. I was getting closer to home.

I saw those red and blue lights flashing between the dead trees and the large white suburban crushing the brown grass. As I screamed for you to run away, anywhere far away, my voice was drowned out by warning sirens. They were coming. They were finally coming for you. I stood there, shivering and trembling, knowing how stupid we were for coming too close. But we were selfish. From that hill top, we could see the grayed-out buildings and the faded-out lights in the distance. And we wanted the carnival signs to shine; we wanted the bridge to be packed with cars; we wanted a reality only found in old photo albums. I found that frozen reality torn up and scattered across our bedroom floor. In those frayed out pieces, your smile missed a couple of teeth and you carried me in your arms.

My last name was my first saving grace, a title you could never earn. And as soon as the border patrol officer heard my perfect fluency, spoken with only a hint of my first language's



musical sounding flair, he seemed more at ease. His day wasn't going to get ruined by sending some teenager across – at least not yet. I kept glancing back at your shadow imprinted on the ground about thirty feet away. I prayed that God was blurring the officer's vision so that you remained invisible. I think the officer saw you move, just slightly, but convinced himself it was just the sun's spotlight moving across the sky.

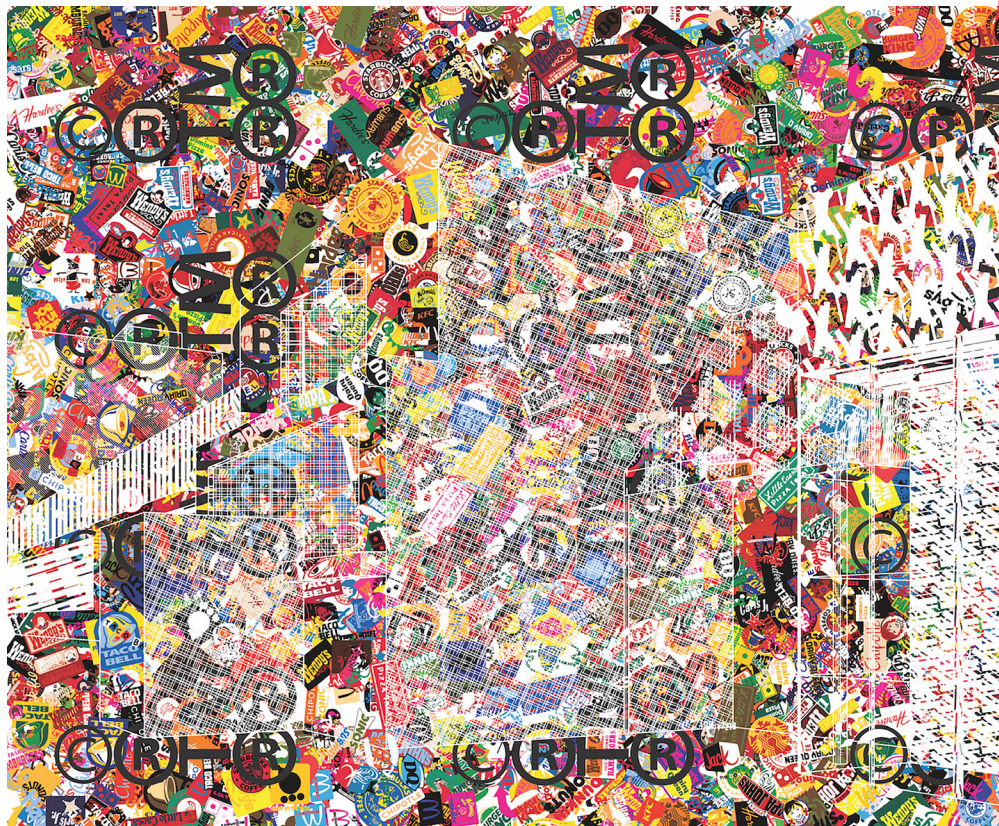
I found you, kneeling beside your hiding place. You were scratching into the ground; the dirt was embedding deeper into your fingernails and was coating your fingerprints, until you finally saw a hint of white: a seashell. You told me how

Haptic

Madeleine Jenkyn



this place used to be unified under thousands of gallons of water millions of years ago. No lines. No edges. No borders. But the dinosaurs were dead and the bugs weren't big anymore, and the only remnant of that time that remained were these shattered seashells. They were spit across this bank like an exploded time capsule. A reminder of a time that we could never go back to.





Should We Eat Here?

Ben Schoenekase



Gandalf the Grey

Haley Hartfield

Triptych

Margaret Clark

Ramen

My depression dinner this year is a packet of soy sauce ramen noodles, sautéed brussels sprouts, and a soft-boiled egg. It's more involved than previous depression dinners (peanut butter straight from the jar with a spoon and a carrot; Red Bull and a protein bar) but it hits every food group and I have cooking it down to a science. It takes fifteen minutes to cut the sprouts, plop an egg into boiling water for exactly eight-and-a-half minutes, watch the noodles writhe in the water like little snakes, and squirt enough Sriracha that eating it will make my lips sting. I scrape the sprouts into a bowl and peel the egg while the noodles squirm.

I eat the whole mess in my room. When I'm done and washing the dishes, the bottom of the pot stares back at me. The pot is shiny and silver and empty and used up. It's not the sad that gets you, it's the empty.

Maraca

My favorite instrument is the glockenspiel. When I was a kid the glock sat proudly in my elementary school music classroom, all honey-stained wood and small, shining aluminum keys. Rubber mallets pounded out melodies that dotted the tops of percussion pieces like a candle on a birthday cake. Glockenspiels make their music in the cavernous spaces underneath the keys. When played skillfully, the bells fill with tangy vibrations that ring out as fast as sound can fill a space. I rarely played the glockenspiel in school. But even though I never had the chance to learn, it still felt like failure to be handed a pair of maracas instead of glock mallets.

Maracas help you keep the beat. The repetitive impacts of little beans inside their gourds give music a much needed heartbeat. And I'm not a musician, I don't have real maracas. But I do have a pair of pill bottles, their beans yellow cylinders or red triangles, and they help me keep my beat, hitting serotonin transmitters instead of gourd walls. But if the meds keep the beat then I'm on melody, and I'm no good at that. I lack the skill to fill those empty spaces. And when there's no melody, the spaces can only grow until they swallow everything up. Not even the strongest rhythm can stave off empty forever.

As in percussion, the timing matters. Stomach full of ramen and eggs, I swallow down my meds with a glass of water and leave my house behind me for a walk.

Frogs

Close to the ground I see a flash, and I half-turn to look at it. At the top of a vertical white drainage pipe stuck in the concrete is a little frog. Until he moved,

I thought he was a leaf; I supposed the shadow of my foot, so much larger than him, threatened his life, so he was forced to take action. We regard each other, me and the frog, until he waddles backward into the safety of the pipe. I turn fully. Flicking my flashlight on to see more clearly, I bend over the pipe. We make eye contact.

How astonishing this all must be to him, this tiny bright sun in front of a creature so much bigger than he could dream of being. I think about reaching down and picking him up. I've never held a frog before. Would his skin be soft or rough, or smooth like silk over his warty back? Would there be slime? What would he feel like, squirming in my hands, little bones and stringy muscles struggling in my grasp? What would it feel like to squeeze? To choke the thing like that empty is choking me? What would it feel like to drop the frog and see it not hop off? Would I feel anything at all?

I flick off my flashlight and start back home, walking faster. My flip-flops make an odd sort of sound that chases after me, *fwap-squeak-fwap-squeak fwap-squeak*. As if I can move faster than those thoughts. As if I can outrun the empty. I move so fast that the straps have rubbed blisters into the arches of my feet by the time I get home.



Lost Mine Trail

Christian Walsh



A Ten-Year-Old's Eternity

Jo LeGare

I pump my legs across galaxies upon galaxies of St. Augustine. Pump, pumpkin, pumpernickel, running reminds me of drinking from a well. I pump the water up and it explodes. Just like my feet across the grass. Skittering skillfully down a hill of a mountain—mountain of a hill—my skeleton judders sharply under my skin.

Squish, squish, squish go the millions of bugs trampled under my pink-sandaled toes. Crunch, crunch, crunch go the acorn planets and pine-shaving moons. The sun is my feet and I scorch through the earth. My pigtailed hair slaps the nape of my neck as if it wants to punish me for all the murders I commit.

It is quite a life to live as a little girl with ribbons in her hair!

I am only a few hundred yards from home—I can see the blue-brick house stand out among the shiplap and shingles like a sore thumb slammed in a car door. Stretching my scabby legs, I sail over the blueberry bush and stick the landing! I am heading home to the land of broccoli and freshly-baked cookies, Winnie-the-Pooh, newspaper flowers, and neon-green boogers.

“Run, run, run!” The cerulean Sky bellows his never-ending chest. He exhales a gentle spring breeze that tickles my runny nose. The Wind picks up speed just as I do, and we race together like two wild fillies. I ask her if I can be an Appaloosa and she a Dun. Joy swells in my chest, right under my tissue-paper-thin training bra. The smile on my face is so wide a bug smacks on my crooked front teeth. I slide my tongue across my pearly whites and crunch down on a fly.

This is what it feels like to be a bird! Freedom and flying and soaring! Nothing but the sound of Wind whipping my ears and River’s bubbly laughter. My pounding heart will burst—I hope it bursts—it absolutely bursts! Inside? A swashbuckler’s treasure. “Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!” echoes like a steel drum, a battle cry for the great Unknown.

But my knobby knees aren’t as wild and fast as Wind. A shadowy hand presses on my forehead, I slow, slow, stop. Like an Appaloosa, something is stuck in my



Reaching Out Letting Go

Jihyeon Joung

frog. Wind whistles goodbye through the tree leaves and filters away unseen like an imaginary friend. Even River, my oldest friend, ceases laughing and becomes still. "Wait for me!" I cry through heavy panting. While my ephemeral body stops running, it seems as if joy keeps on the race.

All is quiet but the omniscient noise of Traffic, my arch-nemesis. I have little attention to notice gnarled oaks and their pollen that spins like little brown banners or graceful caterpillar acrobats that curl and purl on tightropes. Bugs of June, with their glistening green, polka-dot purple, mottle brown shells are no longer doubloons to save in a jar but fat ugly cockroaches. My beloved sunrays that sprinkle through the leaves like cupcake confections are barbs from a stingray.

All I hear is noise of evil Traffic: distraction wasp-buzzing, car horns honking, happiness shutting the door.

No more Wind. No more River.

My la-vie-en-rose glasses shatter.

Through the painted-red front door of my blue-brick house between the shiplap and shingles I slip. The paint job is chipped yet cheery, and all I can say is I am chipped. I shut the door to my wondrous outdoors and thank the soft carpet for soothing my burned toes. My shoulders sag like Atlas. I feel I am carrying the terrestrial globe yet I cannot feel a thing. My chin trembles.

Pat-pat-pat my heart goes pat, pat, pat. Unknown ceases and Known crowds in. My papa sits in his faded blue recliner, his reading glasses perch on his nose like a parakeet on a pirate's shoulder. He does not move, but his smile does and it kisses me on the cheek, a silent "I love you," amidst the noise. I tuck it away in my heart's pocket, where I would later take it out with some hoarded fuzz I found in my bellybutton, a silver coin with a dragon's profile, and a glass beaker I stole from science class.

Buoyed by my papa, I decide that next time, I will run a little bit faster and get a little bit stronger. I want to live in eternity's joy. Appaloosa!

The Frosty Tips LP

Ignacio Mata Cordero





Reflections

Lynsey Strese

School of Athens

Ignacio Mata Cordero

I know a place
where the tavern keeper pours bourbon
like muddy water on the Memphis delta

and conversation lingers
as chocolate-tobacco smoke
dances through evening air.

populated with veterans and poets,
filmmakers and businessmen alike

a grand library of living knowledge.
stationed not in New York City,
Tennessee,
Rome,
nor Washington with its boisterous politicians.
rather all these places alike.

I stumbled into that holy place one night
a weary traveler
seeking warmth by fire:
a place to hang my hat

but what I found that night
offered not necessary hospitality.
rather

a grand hall
loud with conversation
air thick with cigarette breath

the scene was all towering bookshelves
spiraling mahogany staircases
and hefty wooden beams

dust settled on the floor
and oil lamps glowed with rustic charm

scarlett women romped to and fro
as the men sat at their candle lit tables

they drank from hearty mugs
and weary flasks

gathered not for folly,
they dueled in lively jousts of conversation
each one dodging and parrying
in bouts of his own spoken poetry and prose

they were all beaten trousers
weathered suits,
and worn, leather jackets

among that lively crowd I witnessed
Twain with Hemingway
Fitzgerald and Whitman
Kubrick with Coppolla
Presley and Cash
and
Eastwood with Ford

Men who feared God
and rivaled Him all at once

Men who sang America
as whiskey danced in their beards

Men whose wrinkles whispered secrets of
Golden Eras

and their scars sang of great fall and triumph at
Normandy
Saigon
and New Orleans

in the corner,
Hoagy tickled Ivory
as Louis led on his faithful trumpet



and as I watched them quote Socrates and Freud
my heart grew warm with knowledge

in my admiration,
gratitude overcame me.
for the Universe had beset this uncommon sight
upon myself.
an undeserving stranger

A Social Flight

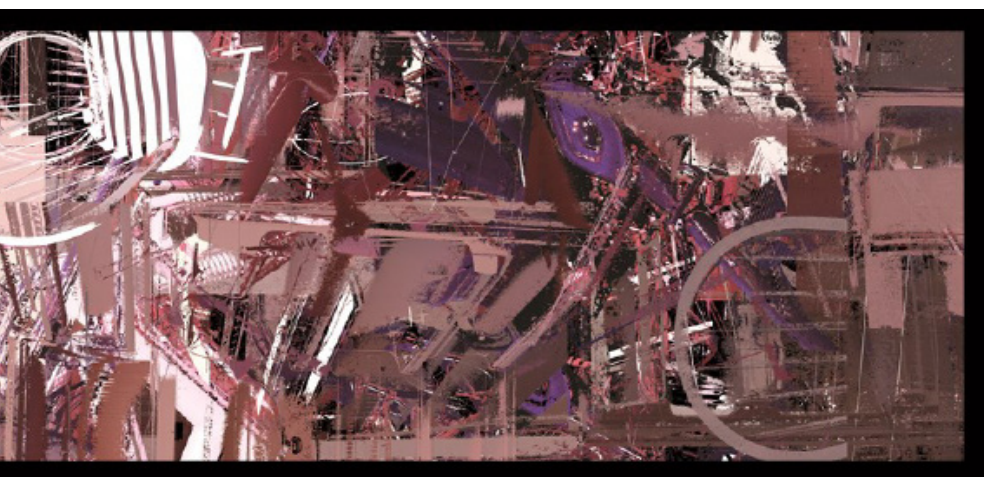
Rachel Bernardo



Decontextualize

Ben Schoenekase







Yonder Awaits

Jeff Zhao

Hamartia

Hannah Philibert

I've exhausted all my options for surrogate addictions
Suspended somewhere in limbo between excess and restriction
Any sense of normalcy is a fleeting apparition
And it's enticing to define myself by nothing more than my condition
But my apathy is too contrived to escape my own contrition
So I beat myself up and beat myself down
And beat myself into submission
Acting before thinking, or thinking without action?
Constantly seeking fulfillment through external distractions
Flaunting my skeleton to my own reflection
Haunting me, taunting me, begging the question
Have I ever been in love or simply seeking validation?
That I'm worthy of being loved;
Not some burdensome abomination
My body's Galatea; my mind is Pygmalion
My physical existence feels painfully alien
I want to carve myself into my vision of perfection
I wish I could feel comfortable showing signs of affection
Like a recovering alcoholic, but with no hope of sobriety
Because you can't go {x} months sober from that which is necessity
You can't abandon something fundamental to society
An addiction and obsession disguised as mere propriety
I've tried channeling my impulses and compulsions into piety
But it seems no surrogate stimulates—or even simulates—satiety

m-e-t-r-o-n-o-m-e

It starts with an alarm
And three nine-minute snoozes.
Almost the same as
The rest of the world.

(but this is where it differs)

It's an inch of toothpaste
Squeezed onto the brush,
Ran under the faucet,
And tapped seven times.

(tap tap tap tap tap tap tap)

Six scoops of coffee grounds
Go into the filter,
And six cups of water
Go into the tank.

(one two three four five six six six six s-i-x six)

It's locking the door, then
Twelve steps to the car.
The radio knob goes
Up two down two.

(up up down down up up too loud too loud down)

Eighty-five steps to the office
Step over a crack
Step on a crack
Step over a crack

(lopsided lopsided l-o-p-s-i-d-e-d l-o-p-s-i-d-e-d step step step l-o-p-s-i-d-e-d)

It's typing a progress report
And your finger sticks
On the 'L' key
LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL

(backspace, LLLL, backspace)

It's meeting for lunch at
1 o'clock
1 o'clock
1 o'clock pm 1 o'clock pm

(what? 1 o'clock pm)

It's tapping your foot to
The rhythm of voices.
Everything has a tempo,
Everything is a metronome.

(one-te two-te three-te four-te)

Metronome
Metronome
Metronome
M-e-t-r-o-n-o-m-e

From all of us at Ekeleburg:

The Eckleburg Project would like to thank the University Writing Center for their continuous support and funding of the magazine. The staff there helps make all of this happen, and we are truly grateful.

To Florence Davies, thanks for being there as our advisor and friend when we needed it the most. You have been invaluable to the success of this magazine.

To Lowell Mick White, our newest advisor, whose additional guidance will only continue to strengthen TEP.

To our great University, its faculty, its students, the creative community of Bryan/College Station, and every brave soul who shared their creative work with our screeners, thank you for your support of this project and its creative vision.

To all the hands and hearts that have influenced the work we've published here:

Cheers all around.

It truly takes a village to raise a creative project.

- *The Eckleburg Project* Staff

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