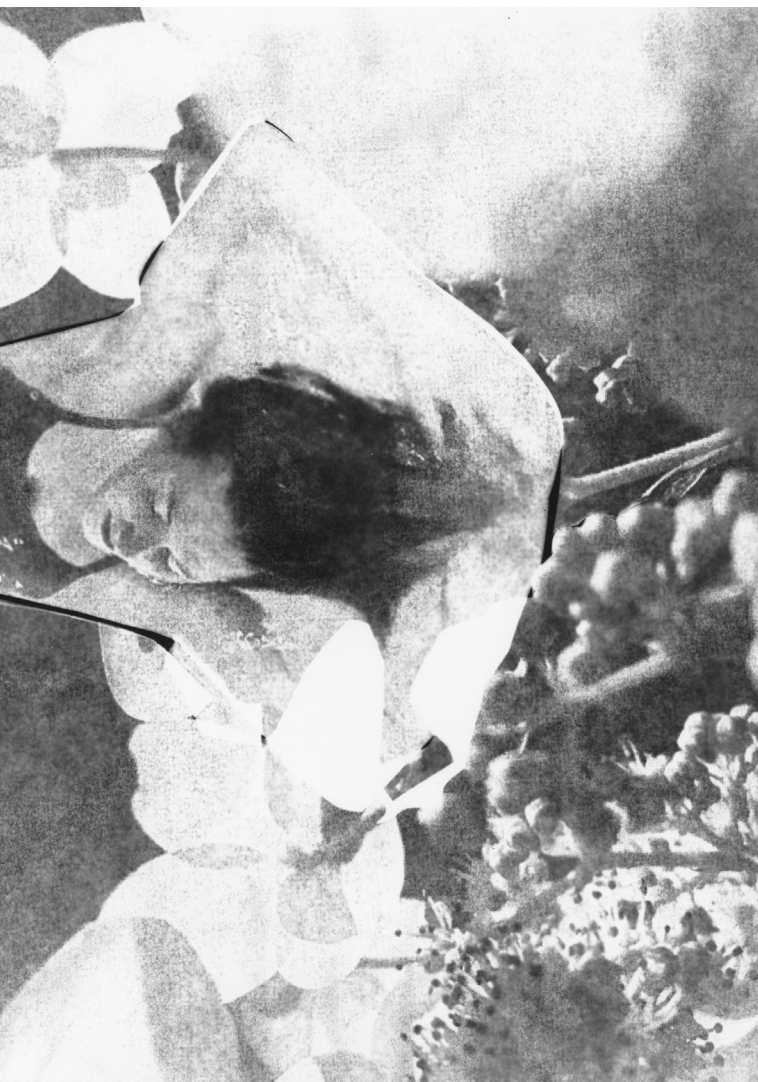


coup



THE COUP

2025

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- 2nd **sadie weninger**
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- 3rd **sage diesen**
not yet corpses, still we rot

literature

- 1st **elana churchill**
evidence of absense
- 2nd **caleb blaze**
black excellence
- 3rd **patrick baker**
love as war

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our hope

caleb blaze

They say you are black like coal.

They are right.

Because one day, you'll burst into bright flame

And heat the furnace

That forges tomorrow.



viva guadalupe

ashley vargas colima

native to you

valeria de la villa

Teach me to dwell within your voice,
to speak the syllables of your home,
to let my tongue lose its way
in the roots of your story.

I was not born in your land,
but let me sow my shadow in its streets,
become an echo in its hush,
a pulse within its song.

Let me learn the rhythm of your days,
the hush between your sighs,
the weight each word carries
as it blooms from your lips.

Wrap me in your language—
a cloak woven of suns and silent nights—
let your verses claim me,
your breath turn my days into yours.



I am not from here, yet I long to stay,
to be rain in your fields,
laughter in your tongue,
a whisper of us in your yesterdays and tomorrows.

Let my voice mirror yours,
make me a guest in your stories,
a wanderer of your metaphors,
a native to your love.

Teach me your tongue,
and I will learn to call you home.

i can't be dead the campaign

amadis amaya

"Things that I regularly battle with internally is my memory and a constant question of if I'm already dead, or if I can't be dead."

The nature of memory itself and how memory affects the past, present, and future. The ability of being able to recall memory and more specifically the quality of the memory recollected and how it affects the present moment and time. As well as the very perception of time and memory as they exist in the first place. My memory is heavily affected and probably even distorted because of my mental health and my perception of my own memory. Before even knowing that the concept existed, going through life I thought of Nietzsche's "Eternal Recurrence" - the very same idea of what would happen if when you die, you are destined to relive your life again and again, for eternity.

How would one know if they haven't already died? How would they know if it is their first time living through the same life? What if they subconsciously or consciously felt they have already lived the same life before? How would these questions affect everyday life - their cognitive process of memory, and how one experiences time - and how this perspective could affect one's life in general? For me, I believe the theological concept that over time because of the very fact that I am alive, constantly experiencing the present moment as a conscious being - I can't be dead - as a necessary truth. I maintain this ideology even though I'm very much aware of the fact that I technically can and will die.

I see it as a necessary truth that that I can't be dead because as a conscious being I'm constantly experiencing the present moment, whether I am in a dream state or in this reality - whether I have already died or am still alive, or am living the same life again. For Aquinas, God is a necessary being that must exist but as finite beings we cannot grasp God's existence all while time itself doesn't exist.

In the same way Aquinas views God, I view life and inevitably death. I see it as a necessary truth that I cannot be dead and that as a finite being, I cannot grasp or understand what it means to be dead. I cannot grasp what it means to be dead not out of choice but out of the simple Manichean dichotomy of what it means to be alive experiencing memory and the present moment perpetually. What it means to be dead, with your conscious experience of memory becoming a context of being technically dead.

How does one define the present moment? How does one not know if they are in the past, the present, or the future? How does one know if it hasn't already happened because of the sheer statistical possibility of it happening in the first place, as if a fraction of eternity?

If one has the concept of a memory happening before it happens what's stopping a blur between cognitive memory and the present moment? How does one's memory change over time as one has more and more memory to serve as context as the scale of memory grows larger? A common conception of death is that when you die "you see your whole life flash before your eyes". If this does happen what's keeping you from knowing the difference between the first time you live your life and a possible infinite regress of your life happening over and over in your death?

Life and death operate in a very Manichean nature, and this begets one of the aspects of "the problem of evil", but with the context of the perspective of death. Life and death. Without death there could be no understanding of life because of not having context to any kind of memory as it would have never existed.

This, I relate back to "Pascal's Wager" and an existentialist point of view. Instead of betting on God's existence, I choose to bet on my existence - to believe that I can't be dead, no matter what repercussions that might hold and to ignore the fact that I could very well be already dead in some abstract, metaphysical way. I can't be dead - simply because of the

fact that I am still in the present moment, perpetually - no matter if that moment has happened, is happening, or will happen again.

Life is constantly determined by constants and variables. When we make our choices, we make our choices. And in a way, we forever make the choices we make. Whether only once, or again and again, for eternity. Or even through fractions of eternity, through memory - and perpetually living the same memory as it happens, for forever.

At least let me write a letter to myself.



hold my hand

valeria de la villa

I promise to see you once more,
like sunlight that cuts through the mist,
as if time never wounded before,
and forever was something we kissed.

I promise to silence the past,
to melt every winter we knew,
to let fear and sorrow drift fast,
and wake in the gold of your view.

If you dare, don't let go of my hand,
we'll dance through the shadows, unshod,
fill silence with laughter unplanned,
and break every chain that was flawed.

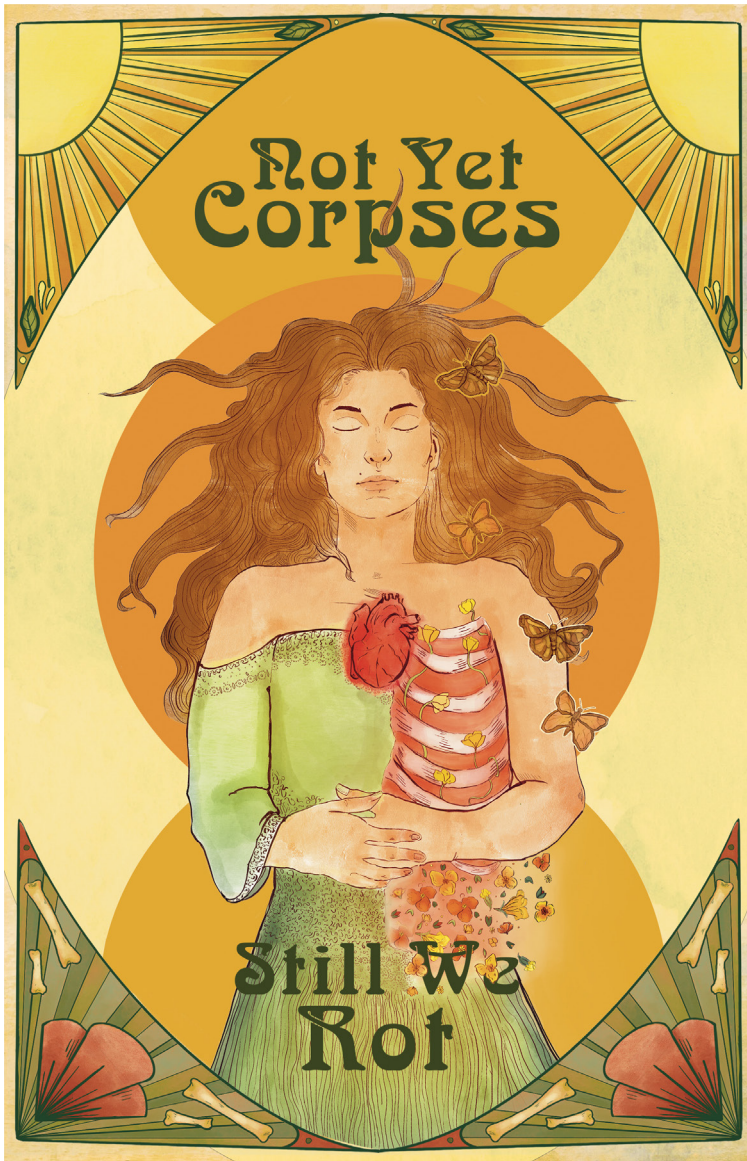
I'll shed all the weight and the cries,
the doubts that grew quiet, then cold,
the names that dissolved in goodbyes,
the ruins of stories untold.

I promise a place without time,
where hours can't measure defeat,
a house where the dreamers still climb,
and waves never break at your feet.

I promise no distance remains,
that fate still has room for one chance,
that silence can't shatter the veins
where memories still softly dance.

We'll waltz with no fear of what's near,
no yesterdays stealing our air,
a forest will bloom past the clear,
and winter will vanish with care.

If you dare, don't let go of my hand,
we'll burn like a spark in the night,
two heartbeats that carve out the land,
a story that circles to light.



not yet corpses, still we rot

sage diesen



happy borth

gabby reinhardt

the forest's hum

lars jeannotte

One day I was walking in the woods when I heard a rustling sound. I hoped it was my dog, Sparkie, who made that noise. He tends to run off on his own, no matter the weather or time, and today was no different. I was working on my English essay that was due at midnight, when I noticed that the sliding door in my office was cracked open. I sighed, knowing that Sparkie probably escaped. Usually, I would just wait for him to return home, but after hearing a rumor that there was some sort of big animal roaming around the woods, killing multiple deer and some pets, I decided to go out looking for him.

I whistled and called out his name and was greeted with a deafening silence. The hairs at the back of my neck stood up and the feeling of something watching me became overwhelming. I stayed in one place, looking all around me. A shiver ran through my body, not sure if it was from the biting cold or the thought of eyes on me. All I saw were beautiful trees that held orange, red, and yellow leaves, preparing themselves for the upcoming winter.

The sound of a twig snapping, followed by a low hum, made me jump. The deep song flowed through the woods, becoming louder by the second. I tried to move, but I felt myself starting to sink into the mud, fast like quicksand. I desperately tried to remove my feet, shoving my fingers in the ground to dig my way out. As I dug, the wind picked up, making all the leaves fall off their branches. They circled around me like a tornado, making it hard for me to concentrate on the task at hand and I couldn't see past it.

Then, suddenly, all the leaves dropped to the ground, and I was no longer alone. Twelve figures surrounded me, all dressed in black, had deathly pale skin, and no face. They stood there, not moving for what felt like hours, though it was probably seconds. Finally, they started to separate and faced toward one side of the woods. I turned to see what

they were looking at, my heart beating rapidly. At first there was nothing, just endless naked trees and dead autumn leaves scattered all over the forest floor. But as I looked closer, I noticed that one of the trees looked different from the rest. It was a darker color and smoother, not rough like tree bark. Then it moved and I no longer knew how to breathe, panic wrapping around me like an unwelcome hug. The tree was no tree at all. It had skinny, long legs and arms, and as it went on all fours, I saw its head. The beast's entire head was bones, like its skin melted off its face. Large, branch-like antlers sat on top of its skull, and its eyes were beady black dots that watched my every move. It was like a gigantic moose.

As it looked at me, my body froze, and my head ached. My brain filled with the familiar low hum from earlier and it felt as if the creature was trying to communicate with me, but I couldn't understand what it was saying. Then it started moving towards me, its steps thunderous on the ground, shaking me from my trance. I screamed at the top of my lungs for help, please, someone help me. Hands started grabbing me, touching me all over. It was the faceless figures. The hum was all I could hear, and I started to smell something that made my stomach churn. Rot. Death. It was all around me and I couldn't breathe. The monster was now right in front of me. It ducked its head down and opened its mouth. Sharp, razor-like teeth layered its mouth, and the back of its throat was a dark abyss. I tried pushing the faceless figures away from me, but the creature got a hold of my arm, biting down light enough not to tear it off, but still hard enough to rip me out of the mud and carry me high up into the gloomy sky.

It slowly turned around and started walking away from the group of worshippers, with me dangling from its lips. Blood was soaking my coat sleeve and was traveling down the side of my stomach. I didn't feel its teeth sinking into me. I didn't feel anything at all, actually. The last thing I remember seeing before everything went black forever was Sparkie running in the fallen dead leaves, panting with excitement.

There is a gap
In the place between
Love and fear
Bridged by hands held together, tightly
clamped down
Over needy mouths

One hand is gentle
And soft
The other bruising
And calloused,
Both rendered
The same in feeling
As they stifle,
Differences negligible

They make a life
That many consign themselves to
The grip of fear,
no relief
From the hand that
Should be feeding
Your heart
And soul;
instead bound in
A crushing fist

But you cannot love
Promises
Broken with every bruise:
That you cannot understand
In either origin or departure
The difference that
Makes the spirit unknowable
And the flesh
Inferior

A "perfect form"
That makes orphans of us all
In anger and disappointment
Knowing we cannot be perfect
And that we
Should die for it

An unending manipulation.
Believing tender words
Over cutting actions
That subjugate each person
To their
Broken heart and
Unspeakable doubt about
Where the breaking occurred
And what caused it

Doubt that is not reflected
In the self-serving belief
In perfection and superiority over life;
Humanity is not the same
As it was in the beginning
Strength derived from numbers
And hope,
The weapon that will
Kill control through fear

Because no one is free
Until everyone is free
And how we all long
To be free



hollywood blvd - 3rd st

sadie weninger



king blue

tamara young

time's accordion

elana churchill

I am the girl
who counted Mississippis between lightning,
and the woman tracking time by pill bottles.
I am scraped knees on hot concrete,
and the ache of joints mapping every fall.

Time folds inward,
pleating moments together,
each ripple carrying
the first step, the fade of stars.

Years coil in my DNA,
spiraling through generations,
threading the needle
between memory and dream.

My child self plays hopscotch
through tomorrow's uneven ground,
while life carves canyons
between my smile lines.

I am all my ages at once:
like rays through prisms,
past and future bending
into pure light.

black excellence

caleb blaze

I am flame.

Where I walk, my steps leave embers in my wake.

I breathe white-hot Truths when I open my mind.

I am air.

I fly without effort.

I rise above all who try to ground me.

I am water.

I will adapt, fill any space that will hold.

I will flow and drown all those who oppose me; don't try.

I am earth.

Ancient and raw; I hold the soul of my people.

I am the bones of the world, the foundation of the future,

I am elemental life.

When I speak, the cosmos quakes.

lipped

elizabeth chapman

Alone I watch the cars
They pass and cross
Lost as they follow directions

Moving, there are people
They bump my shoulders
I look at my feet and think

How am I here?
When did I leave my apartment?
The one with the broken lock

I think about these cars
These people in the street
What do they want?

A man raises his head
Looking through my skull
As if feeling my thoughts

A smile, how I enjoy smiles,
Shines under his mustache
I used to have a mustache

I shaved it off on a Tuesday
I don't think I missed a single hair
Then, but now I miss them all

I didn't realize I had stopped walking
People keep moving around me
I don't think they've noticed either

Would turning around feel better?
Would driving on the street work?
How much I question every step

So I stop taking steps
I stop watching cars
Has the man already passed?

Looking up, I see he has also stopped
He is touching his mustache
I am touching my shaven lip





am i fixed yet?

sadie weninger



fourth of july

gabby reinhardt

your eyes

fredrick harig

Your eyes

If eyes are isles to the soul

Then yours are the libraries of Alexandria

Dappled in golden light

You'd swear you were the first to discover them

Some people fall in love with the beauty of a sunset

But my downfall was your eyes

What a cruel kind of beauty

They remind me of the golden leaves in autumn

Of old books aching to be read,

or the taste of tea in the silence

I see in them a beauty that burns

swallowing the ashes of all who look

So have mercy for those eyes are lethal

They steal the breath I don't mind losing

Every time you look my way I swear

I fall all over again

ink and water

elana churchill

9 across asks "what remains"—
five letters. I write TRUTH,
scratch it out, try FAITH.
Neither fits with 3 down.

The clues mock my need
for clean edges, perfect lines.
Sometimes I leave squares blank,
let the spaces be.

I stare at 12 down—
"Life's meaning (7 letters)"—
and write NOTHING, testing
how the crosses align.

The hint says "See 4 across"
which points to "See 27 down"
and back again—an infinite loop
of questions asking questions.

The grid makes promises
it can't keep: that answers
converge, that every space
fills precisely, that black

and white divide themselves
with geometric symmetry.
Some days I solve
in ink, tempting fate.

Others, I write in water,
letting each guess slip away
before it sets, knowing
tomorrow's grid comes empty.



family

misaki ishiwata



midsummer nite

tamara young

When I got my schedule for eighth grade and showed it to my older friends they groaned and told me to be ready for Hippie Jesus. I asked them what they meant and they said that Mr. Sigg wasn't a bad teacher, just a little strange.

Curious, I left school for summer break knowing nothing about the single most influential teacher I've ever had, except that he was apparently Hippie Jesus. Mr. Sigg is an eighth grade U.S. History teacher at my home middle school, Mount Logan Middle. Sigg wasn't always teaching History, he began as an Art teacher (and can probably still be considered an Art teacher), but filled a vacant spot he felt would have a greater impact.

Whenever a new student enters Sigg's class, they are greeted by his massive syllabus. A typical 2-5 page syllabus is nothing compared to the masterpiece that is the introduction to Sigg's eighth grade History class. One of the most important and frequently noted rules amongst his novel of a syllabus is the need for colored pencils. Nearly once a page he mentions the fact that the students have to have them. Sometimes he would recommend where to get them, sometimes it's a full page breakdown of all the needs for them in the classroom, and sometimes (most notably) it was a threat to make kids pay him for one of his packs he kept in a big black box in the back of the classroom if they showed up unprepared. As far as I know, there's only been two students forced to buy one of the boxes. No one else somehow missed the memo that colored pencils were a requirement for his course.

One of the uses for the pencils were his beautiful maps that he would create for us. He would draw a map on the board as he introduced a new subject, filling it with trees and mountains and other topographical details. Then he would take a picture of it and print it out for us to use in our study. As we went through the unit we would have to include details of important landmarks and, sometimes, events.

We also had to use full color to cover the page with details of the land. It helped ground us in the material as we saw how the physical space played into U.S. History. It gave us insight on the drive of many different factions as we saw mountain ranges and dry open plains, trees and rivers, ports and craters. We also had to create our own pamphlets with illustrations often and the best of the best got to hang on his wall of fame.

The connection that he built between us and the material was phenomenal. We all left that class with enhanced understanding of conflict and the purpose of land rights and natural resources playing a role in fighting. He didn't teach in a way that excluded people or wasted anyone's time. The kids who picked up on things fast had plenty of drawings to add to their maps, and the kids who struggled to understand the information were able to show what they did know and that was enough. We could sit and have coloring time while he rambled about a depth of complex ideas and events.

In order to get the syllabus and know what an important role colored pencils would play in his class, I had to go to Back To School Night. The day before school was starting the fall after my first time hearing about Hippie Jesus, I was in his classroom waiting in a long line that stretched from the only window in the back corner to the door. He spent plenty of time with each student, which was a stark contrast from most teachers who barely looked at the students as they came in. Most teachers had a stack of syllabi on a large desk between you and them. Sigg was sitting on a student desk, personally handing a syllabus to each student and getting to know them. At first, that was really annoying to me. I didn't want to get to know him that night, I wanted to get the syllabus and go shopping for school supplies. But I stayed. Because my mom made me.

When we finally got to the back of the classroom, I met the weird dude with long hair slicked back into a ponytail. He was wearing "grandpa clothes" and swinging one of his legs like a toddler. He was tall, even sitting on the desk, and would have looked intimidating if he didn't also look like he did community theatre.

When he started talking, his southern drawl immediately caught my mom's attention.

She grew up in Virginia and started using a (very bad) southern accent. Of course, this embarrassed and annoyed me, especially when they started talking about the south and seemingly forgot about me. Many of the people in my life up to this point had been like that, overlooking me because my mom liked to be the spotlight and I was one of her tagalong kids. But Sigg seemed to notice my frustration, and his attention changed. No one had ever spoken to me like an adult before, and he did. Caught off guard, I didn't know how to respond when he asked me my name, so I let my salty frustration out in a single word, a rip on their obnoxious conversation about accents. British.

He could have taken that any way, I even tried to laugh it off like a joke so that my anger wouldn't be so apparent, but he just accepted it as my name and moved on, a hint of laughter in his eyes telling me what he thought of the angsty kid trying to mess with him. He called me British every single day in class and I've only heard him call me by my name twice since then. Whenever I visit his class and he's not there I leave a note that says "British was here" just to let him know that I was thinking about him.

I've always been specific about my name and hated when other people gave me nicknames, but British was something I leaned into and loved. It was a joke, and I like to laugh, but it's also a reminder that Sigg cared about me as a person, not my grades or how cool my parents are. Just me. Just British.

I remember the first day of class, I walked in and he called me British. He called everyone else by their names too. He didn't take role because he didn't need to. His room was indicative of how he felt about us as a group. He had it set up cozily, like a living room. He treated us like friends and would sing songs and ramble about fun things and inside jokes. He had posters covering the walls and had his own antique desks that were small but beautiful. He had fairy lights and

rugs and no clock on the wall.

It felt like stepping into an entirely different world when you walked in and he was just plinking out Beatles tunes on his guitar in the back corner. The room was dimly lit and there were thick curtains over the blinds. It felt pretty magical and made it really easy to feel very comfortable with the people in the class. We all had our own little things about us and they were important to him instead of distracting.

The closeness that his well-curated ambience grew made for a perfect place to create one of the largest inside jokes I have been a part of. As we talked about George Washington becoming the president, we started joking about how Sigg would make a great president because he had a ponytail like George. This little joke continued to grow as we made more points about how good of a president he would be, and honestly he would be fantastic in the position. He understands cause and effect and has a super in depth knowledge about foreign affairs and basic human rights and needs. We built his campaign: Mr Sigg, Putting the Ponytail Back in the White House. We made logos, tried to convince him to run, and grew tighter as a class.

He once talked about how he felt like a bit of a disappointment because he doesn't plan on ever running. I wish that I had expressed how much his position as a teacher is more important. We loved to kid him about it, but the bonds we made and the growth we all made as individuals was far more influential than any president has ever been in our lives.

Near the end of the school year, we had a substitute for a day. The difference was palpable from the moment we stepped into the room. Instead of the low lighting we'd become used to, stark bright whites gave the once comfortable space in an eerie, sterile feel. The posters looked wrong, the holes on the wall where a clock had once been screwed in were gaping, and the curtains were drawn back, exposing the dirty view just outside the windows.

The biggest difference was the lack of sound. The intense lighting seemed to illuminate everything, a once safe space quickly morphing into a place full of scrutiny and self awareness. The feeling that if you opened your mouth you would break something was immense. The substitute didn't start class off by plunking around on the guitar or making us laugh. He started it with a textbook chapter and a blank stare. We echoed his gaze and shut down.

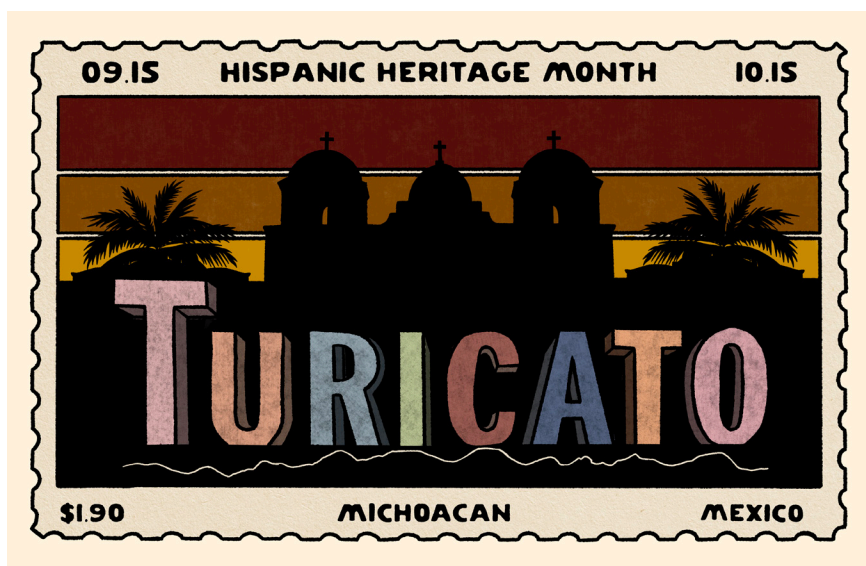
It felt like a hospital room where all of the joy and musky Sigg air had been surgically removed. Stepping into his room the next day was refreshing and alarming. I couldn't believe the difference that the effort he put in had made for all of us. I regretted never thanking him enough or applying myself more to the work he had made to help us actually learn.

I still haven't thanked him nearly enough. I'm in college now, a step I didn't think I'd be taking. Every time I use colored pencils I still think of his inviting classroom. The things he taught me haven't left, but even more, the way he treated all of us hasn't left my mind. I've had many great teachers since him, but his class had a greater effect on my life than pretty much any other person or event has. I hope I can tell him one day how much it all meant to me and how grateful I am that I got Hippie Jesus on my eighth grade schedule.

children should be seen, not heard

caleb blaze

They tell me to leave
Say I do not belong at the table,
That I will never have a seat.
But while they shout, I reason
Until my mind grows strong like an oak.
'Til my resolve stands tall,
'Til my truth is Bright.
Then I will speak,
While they sit
And listen well.



turicato

ashley vargas colima



crosswalk

misaki ishiwata

cartography of you

valeria de la villa

I love your brown eyes—
the color of sleeplessness,
where midnight lingers in its hush
and dawn unspools like an unanswered prayer.
They hold the weight of all you've lived,
the breath of stories still unwritten,
the echo of what the stars have yet to say.

I love the map etched across your face,
a landscape where time has wandered,
where the sun has pressed its lips to your skin
and left constellations in its wake.
There is no fixed horizon here,
only paths that drift like quiet rivers,
the trembling light of all that was,
the shimmer of all that may yet be.

And your smile—
wide as an open harbor,
where shipwrecks find their rest,
where storms learn the language of surrender.

It is a silent truce,
a refuge for the weary,
the place where the world exhales
and time forgets to move.

You are no miracle—
and you need not be.
You are the man who walks
with a map upon his skin
and dawn-colored eyes,
carrying in every quiet gesture
the poetry you do not know you write.



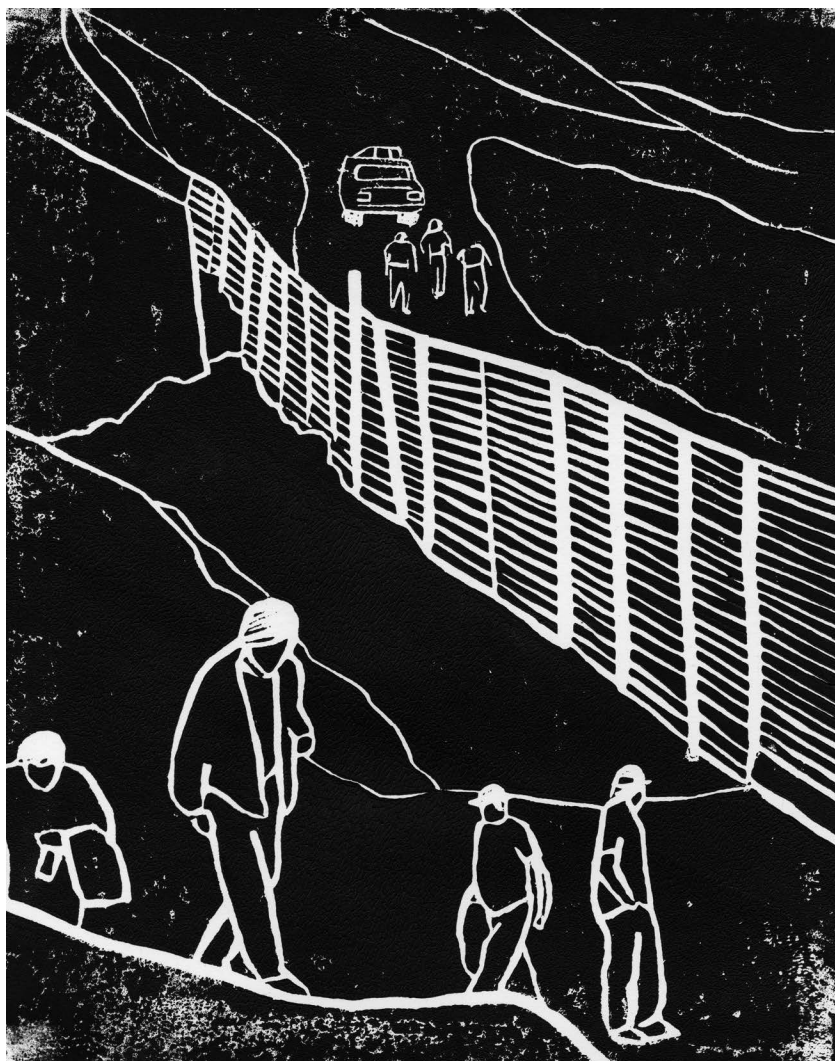
from my house

misaki ishiwata



blinded

sadie weninger



para una vida mejor (for a better life)

ashley vargas colima

evidence of absence

elana churchill

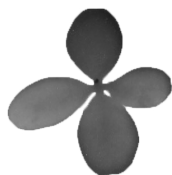
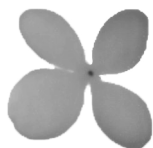
Time slides sideways.

I collect remnants of
what never was,
what might have been,
knowing neither exists.

Every morning,
I sweep more of it
into neat piles by the door.

Funny how you can drown
in what never happened.

a special thanks to
all who participated
in this year's coup.



coup

2025