



The Trinity Review

Poetry | Prose | Visual Arts



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The Trinity Review is crafted and published at Trinity College, University of Toronto which is on the traditional lands of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and Mississaugas of the Credit River; we are immensely grateful for the opportunity to operate on a land that has been under the care of First Nations for thousands of years. We would also like to draw attention to the fact that the land Trinity College is currently on came to the University of Toronto through government land grants made possible by the disposition of land from original First Nations caretakers. For those of us who are settlers on this land and members of Trinity College, we recognize our responsibility towards reconciliation with both Indigenous peoples and the land itself.

As a literary journal we would also like to express our gratitude for the stories which Indigenous storytellers, authors, and peoples across Turtle Island have shared with us. Our editorial board commits itself to listening and learning from these stories; we ask our readers to do the same.

In Tkaronto, these stories might have been told in languages such as Wyondat, Seneca, and Anishinaabemowin. Many of these languages need greater protection and UNESCO has declared 2022-2032 the decade for Indigenous Languages. We call on the University of Toronto to fulfill call to action #16 of the TRC.

Table of Contents

Malavika Selvaraj	A Grand Design	9
Allison Zhao	Screwdriver	11
Zayd Diz	Root Beer Floats	12
Glenn Howard	B for Boy	13
Yasmin Ameri	Catty Picnic	18
Isabella Vella	AIM. 61	20
Taban Isfahaninejad	Odyssey	21
Jun Ying Wen	The Horsehair Ring	22
Nina Katz	Udi	23
Victoria Li	Divorce Me Later	24
Boško Balfour	Sir Bathurst	27
Liz Sayers	The Minotaur	29
Milena Pappalardo	Gene at the bar	40
R.T. Castleberry	Closing Down the Sky	41

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As we stand on the threshold of the changing season, we welcome you to immerse yourself in the words within these pages. Our literary journey through this edition of the journal is an exploration of themes both timeless and contemporary: of things lost and found; of mystery and revelation; of journey and discovery—a testament to the enduring power of storytelling.

We hope the words contained in this journal will allow you the space to navigate the intricacies of the human experience. Within each piece lies a realm of possibilities, inviting you to step into uncharted territories where stories unfold. As you read on, we hope you find joy, comfort, insight, or transformation. As you turn the pages, expect revelations that may mirror your own moments of clarity and self-discovery.

In the spirit of the written word's ability to offer solace and provoke introspection, may these themes be a guide, a companion, and a source of contemplation for you. We would like to offer our sincere gratitude to our editorial team, our contributors, and of course, our readers. Here's to embracing the magic within these pages, where the universal and the distinctive converge, and to finding peace in the art of reading and writing.

Jessie Wu and Freyja Moser
Editors-in-Chief

A Grand Design

Malavika Selvaraj

From times eternal, the ashy residue of which lies in ornate pots,
It has been said, and known, and written, and told
That though your boat may be hemmed in now
There is a grand design it contributes to.

the stability of your boat
smooth, like a pebble
sturdy, like a wooden house
safe; like home.
right now, so still that you do not notice.

It is a good boat.
In wicked seas it has tossed and turned and come out unscathed.
Ah, yes, it is a good boat, and just as good are you, who know how to
take care of it.
To mend it, to keep it clean, and to repaint it when it becomes faded
It is a good boat, but it will not remain that way
You will not notice when it stops
It will seem at first like a trick of the light
(But that's not quite right;
sunshine makes water look like diamonds;
this illusion has less appeal)

It begins when dark seawater enters the boat.

the moisture permeates the wood
it creaks, it groans, it sounds as if it's in so much pain
You pretend not to hear it

(What choice do you have?)

in comes the water
a menacing flood
swilling, spilling, rushing inside
terror, panic, utmost disarray!
an orchestra, a chaotic cacophony reaching a crescendo
but it never stops, never quiets down,
the ship sinks, rights itself, sinks again
there is no limit to how many times it can sink
just when you think that it's over, it's back
every moment, every hour a battle
every battle is deciding in the war to stay afloat
it never stops only pauses
maybe it pauses when you're asleep
or when you forget
It pauses and restarts
It pauses, and it restarts
It pauses. And then it restarts.

Memories of old shipwrecks dance in the moonlight
Bid them bye, they are not welcome here
Everything happens as it should,
And you can either believe that or stew in what-ifs for eternity.
Blue boats in a crowded harbour, jostling for space
Strung together, a coral necklace for seagulls to admire.

Come, lay your anchor here, just a little while
before you set sail for another isle.

Screwdriver

Allison Zhao

It was the first tool my father taught me to use,
followed shortly by a hammer, a handsaw, and a wrench.
A ten-year-old could aspire to things as great as

hacking tree limbs apart and replacing clock batteries.
They were laid out in a row like a dentist's instruments,
later thrown haphazardly into the hull of a toolbox

pointing up every which way like porcupine spines.
Precision screwdrivers came gifted in a little case,
interchangeable heads for one handle.

No creature swaps out limbs for its particular prey
and the bite of fangs is not nearly so discerning
as I was, counting star points and choosing from

my uniformly arranged arsenal, intent on disassembly.
My father cautioned me with the story of an alarm clock
he had taken apart as a boy, younger than I was then;

sensitive, spring-wound, reliable till the mechanism
was dislodged with clumsy hands, irreparable
in the burst of a moment.

Root Beer Floats

Zayd Diz

I drive past the forest near the school parking lot
Where we ran among the trees with our wooden slingshots
Talking about nothing until you asked me
If we could make root beer floats before you went home
A question so inconsequential then
I could never have known
One day I'd cling to that vignette
After placing scarlet petals on your clean, clasped hands
You. There.
Forever a 20-year-old man.

B for Boy

Glenn Howard

After high school, he dropped off the map, as if he was a sunken ship or downed airplane, Anne said to Beatrix, and he deleted all his social media, according to Ben, because he wanted to be erased or forgotten, whichever came first, and you knew that was the truth, Chloe told Carmen, because if you posted a picture of him, he would message you on one of his friend's accounts, asking you take the post down, which always seemed super suspect, thought Connor, as if he was trying to hide, but there were pictures of him, like on Carla's Instagram story in first year, and that was when everyone was still, you know, connected, checking in on each other, so although the photo turned out to be an anomaly, no one screen shot it, because it seemed inconsequential.

Which I guess it was, Carlos told Daniel, the picture would have been just one more drunk fuck boy who looks as if he's slurring, get that camera away from me, while inviting it on, and what did he bring into his life, Daniel asked Ezra, when he pushed away good people, like Carla, who was the last person to *really* know him, and I feel bad for Carla, Daniel ended by saying, because she's *so* sweet, and although everybody wants to know the tea on if he and she were screwing, like, consistently, nobody asks, but Carla isn't *oblivious*, Ezra texted Elizabeth, she's well aware everyone knows they were *fucking*, it's just that gossip makes the truth, about even the basic details, impossible to find, like was he in college or not, Elizabeth Snapchatted Ethan, because the last word on that came from Fernanda, who said she saw him in a bar months ago, approached him, and, in the short conversation which ensued, he gave off the impression he was out of school but happy.

He was clearly depressed, Fred shouted at unsympathetic

Greg, we could all see it at the reunion party, where he was black out and apologetic, and that was embarrassing, Gina told a coworker on her smoke break, because when he drank he talked forever, and his rants became a recurring bad experience, like a tax you paid whenever you happened to see him, but consider this: lots of nineteen year olds, including me, drank like it was the end of the world #hewasn'talone, was how Hanz replied to Greg's Facebook status, but after the first day, after the initial shock and "outpouring of support," Ian admitted to Jazmine, I stopped following the feed, because my life didn't revolve around his, we hardly knew each other, and Jane was of a similar mind, conflicted about thinking what she thought, which was that he probably would've loved everyone talking about him.

He would've hated everyone talking about him, Jeff wrote in his diary, because before he became the poster child for Lives Gone Wrong, you couldn't find the guy, and I don't know about you all, Jenna rhetorically asked her book club, but I don't know many people who actually live out their depressed fantasy of removing themselves, sure, most twenty-somethings will tell you they're packing a bag, buying a ticket, and starting life anew, but most of them settle for a six month stopover in Asia, wherein they discover their inner pattern, the hottest pepper they can handle, and three to five thousand dollars worth of credit card debt, before returning to the safety of their familial home and rehashing the friendships they've had for decades, but he wasn't the Year Abroad Guy, Jeremy said over a beer, he was as they say, in his own lane, and by the mole on the Father's blessed ass, Jared started to get loud and sarcastic, aren't we just all so sickeningly lucky to have had, by piss-shit chance, the orgasm-inducing honour of knowing the boy who was, down to the rare Amazonian fungus on the bottom of his teensiest toe, Capital D Different, OK, that's enough, Jared's roommate interrupted, I understand the irony.

I understood the genuine urge of his, Terrence said into his hands-free bluetooth microphone, to fight his demons in the privacy of the real world instead of the no-holds-barred boiler room brawl that is the internet, and he went to therapy, said Xander (who had heard it from Carla), so I guess where he really went wrong was not giving any sign of how he was doing, because that put a lot onto Carla, and she was just trying to live her life, but was constantly asked about him, like how/where is he, or what pushed him off the face of the earth, like was it allegations or near death by alcohol poisoning or what, because the mind of course goes to the extreme, or when do you think he'll reappear, and when Carla finally stopped answering all that, put her foot down outside of a club in Montreal and shouted, stop fucking asking me about him I don't know I don't know I don't know, the questions changed, they didn't stop, just changed, because people have no shame about these things, so they would ask, softly, when they could get her alone, at a smaller function, what attracted her to him in the first place, or would she ever date someone so troubled again, and when they asked me that, Carla told her therapist, they were asking if I was the kind of person who took in wounded birds like him regularly, probably wondering to themselves if I had Daddy issues or a history of abuse, but in fact, she wrote in the journal the therapist gifted her, it had everything to do with his art.

If ever someone had a talent, it was him and it was graffiti, Laurence recalled at a board meeting, he was very anti-portrait-painting, always trying to make his art "relevant" which I guess by his definition meant "confusing" and "self-indulgent," but I did like his designs in the highschool washroom, Jordan said over Facetime, he would sharpie flowers, city scapes, women (who always looked like Carla) onto the stalls, and then he began spraying garage doors, brick walls, tagging the city like he owned it, Toronto, or at least the part of it which cared about street art, took notice of his big loopy signature,

like two circles colliding, and at first his pictures would only be up for a day or two, wrote Lorenza in her BlogTO article, and then be painted over, but, when the city decided to promote graffiti instead of remove it, he got a call from a city clerk, according to Kwesi, and then he muraled the wall which stretches the underpass walkway, but yikes Karly said in her sharing circle, when you look at that mural now, the injured clown in front of a mass of computer screens, it's creepy af, because the screens display teenage faces distorted in twisted smiles, teeth missing, tongues lolling, their hands reaching out and pointing, and then there's the clown, thought Lyle, undoubtedly the artist himself, sitting on a white plastic bucket, illuminated by the blue electric glow of the computer monitors, wearing smeared makeup, blood on his hands, hands in his mouth, pulling his cheeks unnaturally far apart to force a smile, so that his yellow teeth show.

I always thought he was handsome, Liza tweeted, I'd go as far as to say he was my high school crush, which was probably true for a lot of art hoes, Lexie thought as she liked Liza's tweet, and I'm sure his ego was way up there because of that, Moses wrote to Marlee, and when Marlee's phone dinged and she rolled over in bed to check, she recalled him walking across the highschool campus, a canvas bag over his shoulder, probably filled with paint cans and absent a notebook, his shirt off, to reveal an upper body skinny yet muscular, wet with sweat, and pronounced blue arm veins, his expression a relaxed calm, cheekbones high and red on his face like blush, although, Marlee's brother Maurice said at the dinner table later that night, when you see how he ended up, you sort of just wonder how important any of that stuff really is, like how you are, Marlee asked, or how you look, oh, Maurice replied, I hadn't been making the distinction.

I separate, Max ended his vlog by saying, the hide and seek, now you see me, now you don't, game he was playing just after high school, and the major depression he was caught in later on in his

twenties, a depression exemplified by his constant presence at the train station, where he would smoke weed, tag, and not speak to anyone unless it was to ask for money, and I understand his sadness, or at least I think I do, Nathan confessed to his girlfriend, because who wouldn't be upset with all that wasted talent, one day being consider maybe the next Haring, or Banksy, or, Nessa corrected, just a new talented and trendy painter, and turn out to be the one dead before thirty.

I was worried as soon as the live stream began, Carla said, he didn't have social media for years, and he had been off the wagon, so when he added only his closest friends, and started filming himself recalling old memories, I thought it was unusual and troubling. Then I saw where he was, she said, and I got even more worried because his dark fantasy had always included trains, and there he was, walking towards the station without a guard rail between track and platform, retelling important parts of his life, as if it was the last time. He wouldn't stop talking to answer any of the questions in the chat, which varied from look who's back online, to where you headed bro, to call me now. He kept walking and ranting and I could hear the train coming and then the feed stopped.

One time we went to the beach, Carla remembered. He was dressed totally wrong, black skinny jeans and a wool sweater. He was always unprepared. We sat in the sand. He had cans of cheap beer and I had cider. What are you afraid of, he asked. Heights, I said. He laughed. Would you jump off that pier, he said, pointing to the suspended jumble of concrete and wood that reached out over the lake. Of course not, I said. I would hate that. Up he gets, leaving me behind, to walk to the end of the pier. I remember his outline becoming smaller and smaller, him waving before he jumped.

Catty Picnic

Yasmin Ameri

Watermelons, crackers, baby carrots, ham,
pretzels, dips, grapes, strawberries, olives, cheese, and croissants
pretending to be bread next to the wine—
charcuterie boards displacing birthday cakes,
as we all airbrushed our kneecaps green on summery grass.
For the first time, a stack of soda cans indented
the white blanket with shadows
of fallen parentheses,
where his Dr. Martens would have been
staining it with dirt, cross-legged
the way he sat in front of his lola.
For the first time, a heap of pili nuts left untouched
by habit.
Perhaps if we stared at them long enough
they'd camouflage with the wooden board
and the disinvented crunching would leave us be.
But when silence is passed around like a slice of cake,
Nothing cuts through the icing smoother than sharp obscenity:
Fuck him.

She said
fuck, like a dog's bark there in Stanley park.
fuck without her teeth pressed down on her lips, like piano keys.
Unlike the way he used to say it:
a fermata of frizzling f's deflating a balloon.
I wanted to say,
no, that's not right.
What he did wasn't a catty piece of gossip to snicker at

With spit-takes of cider sprinkling the air
like a pouting can of spray paint.
Nor was it an “aha” moment,
victorious enough to close in
the cave of your mouth on its captive shock
and strip the white cast off your cheeks
with the yellow solace of caution tape—
A criminal caught.

I saw her a few days later, eating ice cream with him on Robson street,
their tongues striking at their cones like viper fangs.



AIM.61
Isabella Vera

Odyssey

Taban Isfahaninejad

To slip through the keyhole is to misunderstand me.
Likewise to have pride. There is nothing to be proud of.
Survival is one option. Death is another.
Each has its decor, its costume, its gestures.
Both are performance. To keep your teeth bared is to misinterpret me.
To join hands, likewise. You misunderstand.
Do not expect kisses: do not expect fists. Only prepare.
Empty yourself so that when they tip you over, nothing spills out
And becomes every crevice, and becomes the mortar of the wall
And the champagne sea, light and fizzy in defiance of Homer.
Do not occupy the grave. Become it.
This is nothing. This is everything. This will never be destroyed.

The Horsehair Ring

Jun Ying Wen

The filly from which it came
flits through my head, a streak
careening through puckered hills.

Would she shrink away or relish
the toothy snap of her maw?
What summons would sweep by
her frond-ears, trifling as wind?
How would she look, coat snuffed
in the rumble of nightfall?

This ring keeps close-lipped with
its gilded frame, teasingly wrought.
A smirking museum display.

In a different year, grandmother left
like any other animal—face-down
at the dinner table, satisfied. Though
she's still here making her rounds
in the laundry, suckling up heat.
In a feisty boil of ginseng tea.

Oh, not to worry—this body is
made for carrying past lives.

Grandmother trails the filly,
two companions. Passing through
a spray of hands before reaching
me, here.

Udi

Nina Katz

The son is bent over the mourning cat,
Face obscured, ears red, shoulders crumbling,
And I cannot bear to look too closely.

I didn't know his father.
I barely know his cat.
Yet he places his head in my palms,
Trusting my touch.

My fingers brush his old, close-cropped fur.
I would not choose this style myself but
Who am I to judge the dead?

At the funeral, the son said
That his father loved animals,
That every pet he cared for became
His uncommonly kindness.

My hands try to loosen grief's grip
On my new cat and my mouth
Fails to find words for my old friend.

Divorce Me Later

Victoria Li

She flew 10,490 km here with all her life's possessions:
Shoes, clothes, a rack of comic books and
An old rhino soft toy that
You had plucked from the class bully's hands and '
Handed back to her when you were six-
Its cloth
Yellowed and cotton
Shrunken.

The humid summer heat of home fell over you
Like a blanket. She had asked,
"We can do this?"
You said, "Of course, it's been legal since 2003, plenty
Of people - my professors and colleagues -
Have done that."
You knew
This is not what she inquired after but
You would/could not bring yourself to say,
"Because I love you-
So much that I really don't care."

Now you have picked her up at Pearson and stuffed
Her luggages into
The backseat of the car (which
You bought from your aunt for \$2,000),
You drove past Etobicoke,
All the way to Nathan Phillips Square-
In a country once new to you and now new to her,

You traced familiar footsteps down a hallway
 With her hand awkwardly
In yours (your thumb had touched her wrist, slightly
 She jumped but gave in). You greeted
 People who'd politely say
"How are you," and stated, matter-of-factly,
 "My mother called us perverts (she did not) so
 We decided to elope-"
Two passports, one maroon and one navy-
 Soon they'll wear the same skin.

In their apologetic gazes you turned to her
 With a heartfelt smile, gently
 Tucked her strand of hair
Behind her ears, "Don't be nervous," you pressed her palm-
 The only day you could play pretence in the name
 Of convincing others
You were in love.
 You may not have
 The right face/body/love language/set of
Chromosomes, but you do
 Have an ancestral privilege.

You rocked the car up highways to Markham while she
 Sat silent for half an hour in
 The passenger seat,
Watching rainbow labels on shop windows one
 After another, passing like trees,
 (While luggages bumped in the backseat).
You fixed your gaze on the map, thinking how nice
 It would be, if, five anniversaries from

Cooking each other's meals and
Buying each other groceries, she would lean
 On your shoulder a bleak morning when snow
 Piles the front steps, "Can we stay this way-
As your wife and mine?-" But you only received
 A shaky voice and stolen rear-view glances,
 "I don't know how to thank you for this."
You smiled for you have calculated a thousand times a response
 Smart and dignified: 57 grams irony, 23 grams humour
 And 20 grams self-deprecation-
Confidently you answered, "Don't thank me,
 Divorce me later."

Sir Bathurst

Boško Balfour

Knighthed upon the exuberant steeple of holy lands tragic

Finds the man, known only through his voice, who declares triumph in battle,
Preaching to only those mindful of barren existence so truly

Terrible; all else does fail in attempt to recount a real magic,

One of his life beloved, no more heavenly than subliminal,
Though, gifted some could think through that divine power gleaming as mover—

Muse, I am, so this tale holy shall not be devoid of its being:

Prancing upon those there cobbles of yore did he manage a virtue,
Tailing those thinking of naught did he fire what he thought arrow faithful;

Dragon, however, did banish his self from her cavern, not seeing

Sly quick manoeuvres he forced on beast, as with fast arm he knew: "do
Not tame the beast, but take pocket of gold on the laying ground most dull"—

Slew he the greats who before him stood, yelling his might atop gravely;

'Course it was graves on which stood he, so demonstrates champion goldly;
Liquid was this metal, though, just as Midas had touched with grandeur,

Sought he this knight to ensure all did fear his exceptional, grandly

Might, so that witnesses far and afar would still know his life nobly;
Plundering all the unseen goods before watching eyes, so tenured

They were to actions unspeakable that none would ever comment—help them

Heaven!—but none showed strength to bystanders as rampage ensued there;
Fear was here always, especially sacked bags, looted in hands cold,

Warmth had not might to claim present in sacred our knight—ripped off hem—

Courage still prospered there: loot gone, passions gone straight to mind; hair fair
Which stopped not this man, devil from beast once again, as he dolled

Up into foe most formidable; battle arose, run upon worst,

Claiming his God-given name, from above he did say, was "Sir Bathurst"—

He was hit by a streetcar where he stood.

The Minotaur

Liz Sayers

Pasiphaë's head smacked the floor as she fell backward, recoiling in disgust. A midwife had lifted her head off the ground so she could see her son, swaddled in the finest blankets that Crete had to offer. Instead, through strands of stringy hair that clung to her face, she saw a monster. It had the hands and the belly of a human child, but thick, brown fur covered its legs, barely hiding the shiny black hooves that adorned each foot. Upon its neck stood not the soft head of an infant, but the bulky snout of a cow.

She screamed in pain. She burned with the cuts that lacerated her inside as the child's horns had scraped the inside of her womb, forcing its way into the world. Drops of blood splattered the dusty floor. A stifling silence blanketed the room. After the hours of agonizing labour, where Pasiphaë laid, screaming on a sweat-slicked mat, the room was quiet. All Pasiphaë heard after a beat of silence were quiet footsteps, the slamming of a door, and the beating of her own heart. A seed of guilt and horror buried inside her, unfurling slowly, choking her as she lay in that musty room, watching a beam of sunlight dance on the gritty stone floor beside her.

Pasiphaë let the roiling ocean waves of guilt wash over her, let them beat her again and again. Somewhere, in between the salty tears that drifted down her soft cheeks, lay the dim memory of a pair of brown eyes and the tawny bull to whom they belonged. Her body burned, yet she lay shivering in the sunlight of a humid summer evening. She rolled onto one side and vomited, trembling, desperate to expel the miasma that clung to her soul like the sticky juices of an orange stuck to the corners of her mouth.

Morpheus was not kind to her that night. He laced her dreams with visions of those piercing brown eyes, framed by soft, dark

eyelashes. She smelled the acrid scent of the oils and paints that stained Daedalus's workshop, felt the smoothly sanded wood of that decoy cow he had built for her. Her mind buzzed with the hazy memories of that whirring, frenzied lust that tore her mind in two. She thrashed at night, caught not in the tangle of damp bed sheets but inside that wooden prison, desperate to break free of the mania that had overtaken her that night, when instead of her marriage bed, she had hastened to the lair of a beast.

Days passed in a thick haze. Pasiphaë lay in bed as servants came and went, bringing fresh linens and leftover dinners that turned her stomach. Once, they had coaxed her into sitting up against the wall so they could comb her hair. They chatted about the weather, the festival next week, nothing in particular. Everything but the monster. Privately, they whispered secret questions to each other - had anyone seen her move? Blink? Speak? The answer was always no; the queen's mind had simply run off, leaving her body in the realm of the living as it danced over the River Styx.

Perhaps Pasiphaë would not have been so pained if it had not looked at her with the innocence of a child - if it had emerged fully formed as a monster, as bloodthirsty and violent and unpredictable as his father claimed it was. It is not easy to birth a monster, but it is harder to look at your child and pretend you have done so.

To cope, Pasiphaë neither nursed nor clothed nor played with her young son. For that matter, she did not curse him or spit at his hooves like some of the servant women. Hidden away in the servants' quarters, the Minotaur's first steps came unappreciated, witnessed only by the slave girl who dropped her laundry and ran in horror as the child toddled toward her. In response, the Minotaur tipped its bulky head in confusion, but the weight of its growing horns sent him keeling over again. Nobody heard his cries of pain. No one looked at his skinned knees with pity and kissed his snout.

It was her daughter Ariadne, born two years later, who became the object of Pasiphaë's affection. When Pasiphaë had first noticed her stomach growing, she had wept. She awoke in the middle of the night, screaming and shaking and clutching her stomach, picturing the intricate lacework of scars from the Minotaur's horns that decorated her womb.

She prayed as she gave birth. Please, Artemis, Eileithyia, Hera, don't abandon her again! Don't let another beast crawl out of her! Pasiphaë cried tears of relief as she felt the virgin goddess squeeze her sweaty hand, felt Hera stroke her hair and tell her stories of Minos. Eileithyia kindly guided the child out of her - and how normal a child Ariadne was!

And how blessed was Pasiphaë when Deucalion came! And Glaucus, Phaedra, Xenodice! So many beautiful children blessed the house of Minos in the years that followed! They were finally a family.

The Minotaur was not, contrary to his visage, a beast. What he was was lonely. As a child, he'd beg the maids for attention, chanting his own name in a desperate plea for them to notice him. "Minos!" He'd yell, and they would spit back "monster!". They would go back and forth like this until they met in the middle, and yelled "Minotaur!" day in and day out. One of the servants, a nursemaid of Pasiphaë, occasionally snuck bouquets of buttercups or orchids for him to snack on, but the rest of them? It was like he never existed.

For a while, he played outside with the other Cretan children. The Minotaur loved the warm sun on his face and the rush of the wind as it rippled through his fur. As the Minotaur grew larger, however, he began to be excluded from playing with the other children. It would be unfair, would it not, to have a beast twice the size

of the other kids participate in a wrestling competition? So, he'd spend hours sitting in the grass, picking flowers to decorate his tail with.

From time to time, the other children would let slip how their parents would shield their child's eyes from a royal procession, or would avert their eyes and mumble something about their mother wanting them home for dinner when the Minotaur would invite them to the palace. Eventually, through a patchwork quilt of rumours about the "incident", as Crete came to call it, the Minotaur came to understand the full nature of his birth.

It was then that the other kids began to throw rocks and bricks at him or wave skewers of meat in his face.

He began to primarily find solace in the friendship of his sister, Ariadne. She would blindfold him and feed him every herb she stole from the kitchen, watching in awe as he correctly identified each in turn. He would lie on the soft carpets in her room and listen to her play the lyre. But as Ariadne grew older, her world grew smaller. A man - let alone a monster - is unwelcome in the women's quarters, and it became increasingly improper for Ariadne to wander the palace unsupervised. This did not stop their meetings. Rather, the Minotaur became nocturnal, sleeping during the day and waiting for Ariadne to sneak through the palace after dark to whisper the latest gossip, to complain about Phaedra's proclivity for stealing and promptly losing her combs, to vent her frustrations at her inexorable father and catatonic mother. She would hum lullabies to him and braid threads of gold that she had plucked from the loom her tutor begged her to use through his tail. Once, she tied a loop of golden thread around his wrist.

"It's a friendship bracelet," she had said, raising her arm to show the Minotaur that she wore an identical one.

Ariadne began to arrive later and leave earlier. She began to slump on the Minotaur's nest of blankets and pillows in exhaustion,

and eventually the stories gave way to stargazing. From time to time, Ariadne would point out a constellation and explain the story of the hero it immortalized, but often they watched the stars in silence. Sometimes, she would fall asleep, and the Minotaur would stargaze himself and wonder what it would be like to dance across the night sky, to meet and fight and befriend the heroes of old. When the rosy-fingered dawn first stroked the morning sky, the Minotaur would rouse his sister and shepherd her back to her own room. She began to visit once or twice a week, then less, then never at all.

As he continued to grow, it became difficult for his parents to explain away his existence. Sure, Minos and Pasiphaë could distract themselves by caring for their other children, but it began to be more difficult for Minos to hide from the public the bundles of hay, dried grasses, and flowers that formed a constant procession into the palace. Difficult as it was, Minos could control the grain imports much more easily than the whispers. Each time a diplomat averted their eyes and referred to “the incident”, a wave of anger rose in his gut. His ears burned in shame at each and every euphemism they used for the creature that Minos had spent his entire career scrubbing from his legacy. To have his dignity stained by such an unnatural birth was a shame that kept him awake at night.

Minos hired Daedalus to hide the creature away, yet each time Daedalus led him underground to inspect his progress, bolts of lightning prickled the back of his neck. He prayed to the god daily, begging for forgiveness, promising to Zeus Xenios that the Labyrinth was a guest house, that the Minotaur needed his own quarters as he was growing too big for the castle. He trembled at the altar to Zeus, cold beads of sweat sliding down his face and dripping onto the stone

floors. Mist would blanket the temple each time he prayed and the wine he poured in libation to the king of the gods smelled too much like the ocean for his liking.

Despite Minos’s rationalizations, the Minotaur knew that the Labyrinth was not just a prison, but one hastily constructed for him specifically. It had none of the royal seals that dotted the walls of the Cretan prisons, and there were no guards to monitor his behaviour. Save for the odd rat, there were no other signs of life in the maze at all. The Labyrinth was where a man could kill his enemy without laying a hand on him - it reeked of death. But the Minotaur did not mind living there.

No longer would he huff in frustration as every door around him would slam shut, as every conversation would quickly end as soon as its participants spotted his silhouette in the doorway. He felt no pressure to wear a veil to hide his horns, his ears, his snout. He would not need to circumvent every servant’s entrance and backdoor of the palace to avoid casting his eyes on the temple to Poseidon in shame. And most importantly, he could avoid the cycle of hope and crushing disappointment as he waited by the door daily for Ariadne to visit, wishing that she might say hello if she ever returned home; the Minotaur could not find the exit after the first day he spent wandering the tunnels, and thus had nowhere to wait. Sometimes, a sliver of guilt would prick at his heart, as he wondered if Ariadne had returned and found his room empty.

The Minotaur found a slight alcove carved into the smooth stone wall near the centre of the Labyrinth. With its low ceilings and piles of straw lining the floor, it was as good a place to sleep as any. He fixed his shawl to a couple of stones, letting it drape down like a

doorway. Perhaps it is naive to create privacy in an isolation cell. Perhaps it is more naive to take the lot one has been given laying down - at least this way, the Minotaur could claim a semblance of normalcy.

He placed the odd piece of chalk and pressed flowers on the makeshift hearth he had created for himself. In the centre of this shrine to Hestia, the Minotaur placed his friendship bracelet. The Minotaur used the flames from one of the dozens of torches that lined the walls to burn the fat of a rat that lay dead nearby; not wanting to eat the animal himself, but having no other food to burn, the Minotaur thanked Hestia for the blessing of this new home and hearth, and went to sleep with an empty stomach.

After a day or two of hunger, the Minotaur stumbled upon bundles of hay that piled against the sealed entrance of the maze. This puzzled him. He felt the icy grip of Thanatos on his shoulders each night. He dreamt of the House of Hades that awaited him. Why, if the maze was a death sentence, would Minos keep him alive?

But the images of death faded quickly from the Minotaur's dreams, and he took that as a sign that he was not meant to die just yet; after two nights without the touch of Thanatos, the Minotaur began to eat.

And all was normal. Until the Athenians came.

Despite what the stories say, the first round of youths were not scared of the Minotaur. Rather, they roared with laughter as they boasted in an unfamiliar lilt that they would slaughter Minos's embarrassment of a son and return home a hero. They laced their crude insults with venomous patriotism and the unchecked ego of youth. They may technically have been pawns in Minos's vicious

revenge against Athens, but nobody had taken Crete seriously in years, not even the polis from whom it received tributes (tributes of fine young men and women to replace the son Minos had lost).

They found him quickly. A beast with massive horns is too hard to hide, even in a labyrinth. They approached from all sides and gawked at the beast before them, muttering insults amidst fits of laughter as they leered and sneered at him. The Minotaur could not understand their accent, but could interpret easily enough that their snorting and thrusting was a sign of cruelty.

One of the youths waved a torch in his face. The smoke tickled his nose. In the warm firelight, his eyes glinted with the burning desire to slay a beast and come home a hero. The kleos would be unimaginable. The Minotaur did not see heroes in their eyes. He saw reflections of the same children who'd asked him if the royal family cooked human children for dinner, the ones who spat on him or moo'd at him or wafted the scent of cooked beef into his room.

The Minotaur jumped backward in pain as one of them singed his fur with their torch. He kicked and thrashed and howled in confusion. He squeezed his eyes shut and backed up until he brushed against the rough walls, pressing his hands against the gritty stone. Searing pain shot through his leg as something kicked his shine. Hot, salty breaths tickled the fur on the back of his neck. Flashes of a man with waterlogged hair and a booming laugh that shook the earth assaulted his mind.

He was not a monster to be slayed, he was the son of Minos, a Cretan prince! How dare they gawk at him, assault him in his own home, on his own hearth. Why did they come here?

Zeus Xenios, protect him! What, as a host, had he done wrong that he deserved to be beaten, harassed by a collection of wealthy, bored children who wanted nothing more than to mount his head on their wall.

He thrashed his massive head; perhaps the sight of his horns, glinting even in the darkness, would urge them to back away, to sail away from Crete and return to wherever they came from. Instead, he felt his horn puncture something squishy. He heard a guttural cry of agony and felt hot drops of blood spatter his tunic. The crowd roared. In a moment, the Minotaur became the very beast that his mother believed he had been since the day of his birth.

He gored their soft tissue with his massive horns. He spat at them, bit them, but never did he use the human parts of his body to hurt them. Punching a boy was a greater disgrace to his humanity than letting an animal exact the same violence.

But how much humanity does half a man have?

In return, they punished him with a relentless onslaught of punches and kicks. Blood dripped from a jagged cut on his arm after one of the youths jabbed a sharp rock into his soft skin. They pulled his hair and slammed their sandals onto his bare feet.

But even the most arrogant of youths cannot beat a monster in a fight. One by one, they fell to the floor, with their lives and their dreams of immortal glory sinking into the Underworld, to be washed away by the river Lethe.

Piles of bodies melded into each other. Limbs tangled with each other as corpses lined the walls and blood painted the floor. Humans with one too many holes in their stomachs littered his home (Hestia forgive him!), painting a picture of unimaginable carnage. Dull-grey lips parted slightly in each of their faces, as if even after death, they tried to speak. He never wanted to see their shocked, frozen faces ever again.

After his heartbeat slowed and his head, full of the images of the violence he'd enacted, became too heavy for him to bear, the Minotaur curled up in a dusty corner of the labyrinth, tucking his singed tail around his legs, and fell asleep. Decayed corpses plagued

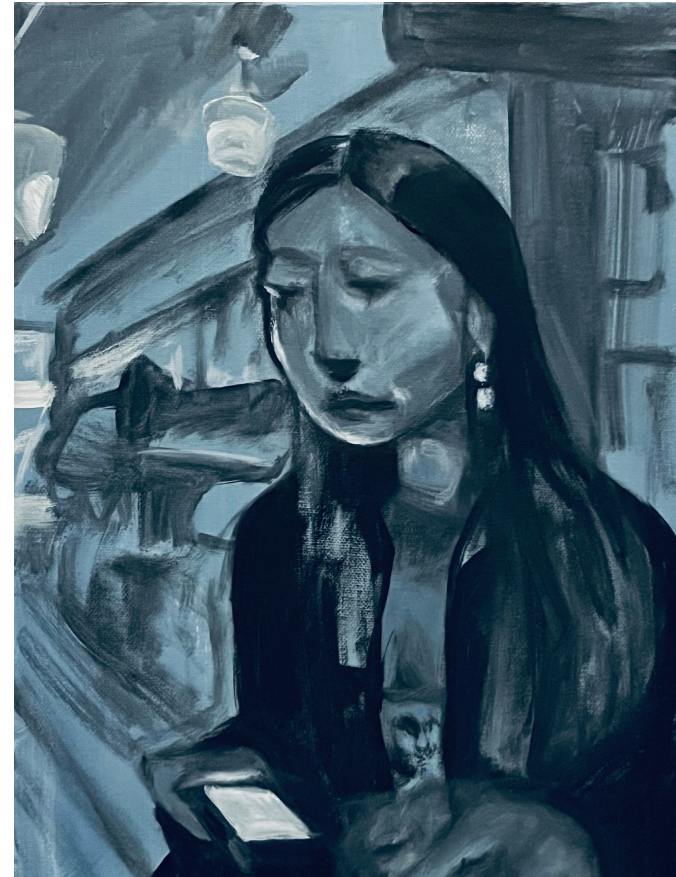
his dreams for weeks. Sometimes it was the faces of the Athenians. Sometimes they morphed into Pasiphaë and Minos. The dreams that hurt him most, however, featured Ariadne. He screamed and begged her for forgiveness, waking in a pool of sweat after dreaming of a day where he would have to face his sister as she discovered what a beast he truly was.

The stench of rotting flesh made him dizzy. He could not stomach any food for days after the battle. Everytime he heard a clatter from elsewhere in the cave, he wondered if a rat had scrambled over a rock or a femur. The worst day was when the chill of winter first set in and the Minotaur was forced to weave through the narrow hallways of the maze and return to the scene of the crime in search of his cloak. What a pathetic trophy he had earned.

When the next set of youths arrived, they stumbled quickly on the remains of their predecessors. They kicked shattered bone fragments and roared in anger that their peers were left behind without a proper burial, that they'd been wandering the banks of the river Styx, unable to be ferried across by Charon and had not, as Minos had earlier claimed, died in a tragic shipwreck just off the Cretan coast. No longer were they tasked with making a fool of the old king by killing this abomination; rather, thoughts of revenge dripped from every word they spoke as the fury of Zeus himself burned in their hearts.

The cycle of death, followed by miasma and later the chill of winter, was broken only by Theseus. Theseus was different from the previous youths. He came with a spool of golden thread, the sight of which sent the Minotaur keeling over in disbelief that his sister had lived above him for all these years. That she had simply chosen to stop visiting with no warning - she had fallen asleep before even saying goodbye to him. And now she had unwound her friendship bracelet and placed it in the hands of a man who intended to slay him.

It was with this revelation that the icy grip of death returned once again, and the Minotaur felt nothing in his heart but an impending sense of dread. A salty wave of exhaustion battered him and the Minotaur curled up on the tatters of his cloak. As the Minotaur lay pressed against the cold stone floor of the maze, blood spilling from the hole in his stomach where the weapon had punctured him, he knew Theseus would never admit to what he had done. Theseus would never achieve his kleos if Athens ever learned that he did not battle the Minotaur, nor had he slain him like a monster, but slaughtered him like an animal on this sick altar to the Earthshaker.



Gene at the bar
Milena Pappalardo

Closing Down the Sky

R.T. Castleberry

On the shivering edge of March,
fog-filled windows obscured,
I sit my car, listening as
the radio singer elides a last falsetto.
I'm thinking of leaving, of driving
the hills to a grazing field,
headlights staring down a valley river.

I take it backwards,
if you know the work;
away from communion
or commonalities,
the free divides that deny comfort.
No trust, no truth evinced,
I shape a narrative of evasion.
Cutting loose from anyone
who fails to follow through,
I know more than I'm supposed to.

When I see an open door,
my impulse is to close it.
Beneath the crush of a dark-pooled sky,
corralled beside winter-weathered fencing,
I'll take my chances with the fog.

Malavika Selvaraj earned an Honours BA majoring in Economics, with minors in Statistics and Women and Gender Studies. She can be found gazing up at trees or the sky, and generally not looking where she is going. The squirrels in Philosopher's Walk come to her with their existential questions and newspaper Kenkens.

Allison Zhao has recently discovered the delights of bookbinding and would describe her writing style as nostalgic. Her writing can be found in the UC Review, Mnerva, and Acta Victoriana. She herself might be a little harder to find.

Zayd Diz is a fourth-year student at Trinity College, majoring in Linguistics and Cognitive Science. He has worked as a senior editor for the Trinity Times and as a photographer for Salterrae magazine.

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Isabella Vella is an emerging artist born in Toronto, Canada. Her practice combines painting and drawing, utilizing various media including ink, natural forged pigment, acrylic, and gesso. Referencing medieval artworks and manuscripts, Vella illustrates narratives of intimacy between her female protagonists and their surroundings. Her paintings explore her imagined heroines amidst a

wealth of mismatched props, patterns, and scenery specific to feminine interaction with the environment. Find her on Instagram at @isabellagvella or on her website isabellavella.com.

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Nina Katz is a poet and playwright born and based in Tkaronto (Toronto), Canada. She has experimented with a wide assortment of poetic styles, from confessional contemplation to biting satire. Nina delights in imbuing her work with interesting sounds and rhythms, believing that the oral quality of a piece of writing is integral to its beauty and meaning. She is interested in feminist social critique but also in personal explorations of topics such as memory and guilt. She is passionate about the beauty of humour and loves exploring how it can be used to lighten or darken a piece. Her strong connection to her Jewish identity also informs and contributes to her work.

Victoria Li Victoria is an undergraduate English Specialist, originally from Hong Kong. She is published by the Hart House Review, UC Review and Švās Magazine, and is currently Co-Editor-in-Chief of Acta Victoriana.

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R.T. Castleberry is a Pushcart Prize nominee, has work in *Vita Brevis*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Trajectory*, *Silk Road*, *StepAway* and *Sylvia*. Internationally, he's had poetry published in Canada, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, France, New Zealand, Portugal, the Philippines, India and Antarctica. His poetry has appeared in the anthologies: *You Can Hear the Ocean: An Anthology of Classic and Current Poetry*, *TimeSlice*, *The Weight of Addition*, and *Level Land: Poetry For and About the I35 Corridor*.

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