



IN  
THE  
WORDS

CSUMB  
Literary Arts  
Journal

California State  
University,  
Monterey Bay

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# In The Ords

Literary Arts Journal  
at CSUMB

Fall 2021

California State

University, Monterey Bay

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Finally, we would like to thank the creative artists who have contributed into the makings of this issue.

IN THE ORDS ASKED CSUMB  
about family....

Who has kept you **strong**?

Kept you **alive**?

Who feeds your **soul**?

How do you **define family** to yourself  
and others?

Whether or not you were born into a  
support system,

we all have the **power** to find it.

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# a barn that's never empty

*ELIZABETH WILES*

These walls were built around me.  
They bow and split,  
wood cracks in the chipped paint.

Shades of red and white  
through double doors  
beside troughs and stalls  
but horses no longer live here.

These walls were built around me,  
even before I was born.

In my mother's footsteps,  
my grandfather's art.

Maybe I was built  
out of these walls.

But the foundation slips  
from beneath me,  
mere real estate.

I have to leave  
what built me.

# Tainted Memories

*ALANAH HUNSDORFER*

I look out of the window that sits next to my bed in my room and sigh. Water droplets race each other down the glass, some colliding into each other, others disappearing altogether. Rain is thrumming against my window pane. A melodic rhythm. A sign that it's officially winter. A reminder that I hate the cold. My fingers start to move with the sound, picking up the beat of the song that the clouds are playing. The honking of traffic masks itself as trumpets in the storm's symphony. And the whistle from the wind in the leaves creates a sort of flute-like sound. As beautiful as it is, I frown to myself as a shiver runs up my spine. I used to love the rain, being completely drenched, stomping in puddles, opening my mouth up at the sky for the raindrops to be absorbed on my tongue, breathing in the smell of rain on the pavement. It was happiness. It was serene. It was a girl that I didn't recognize. Not anymore.

I smile out the window as I see the little girl I used to be, giggling as her clothes get soaked and the rain pelts against her skin. That girl found beauty in the darkness. Where was she now? I couldn't say. Shaking my head out of my thoughts, the orchestra that I was composing from the storm quiets down as well. The familiar sound of warm air coming through the vent in my room makes me groan in frustration. I wish I was somewhere

in the sun, maybe on a beach in the middle of nowhere, or perhaps in a field of daisies. I close my eyes, yearning for that feeling of warmth.

I can see myself on a beach in Lake Tahoe, giggling with my brothers as they try to do yoga poses on the paddle boards we had rented out for the afternoon. The water glitters in the sunlight, creating an impossibly perfect picture that no camera could ever capture. Surrounding mountains have traces of white snow in the dips and crevices of the terrain that hasn't quite melted yet, even with the sun beaming down on the month of June. I can see myself throwing my head back in laughter as my brother lets out a whine. He stares down at his ore, slowly sinking down to the bottom of the lake, drifting into darkness.

"You have to dive down and get it, you know," I spit out through my laughter.

He groans at my giddiness, giving me a glare mixed with a hint of regret.

"I don't wanna get wet," he whines with a pout on his face.

As the memory fades I am brought back to my room, but I force my mind to shift the pictures in my brain from that trip to Lake Tahoe to another summer when we were all kids, back when we actually had a lawn out front. It was lush and green, and it used to make my skin itch, but it was perfect for all the sports and games we used to play. Visions of my front yard now start creeping into my brain, the vibrant green grass being replaced by what is now woodchips, but I shake my head so those thoughts dissipate. I want to go back to the summer, so

many years ago, as I lay on our lawn with my siblings. My legs grow little red bumps as the blades of grass irritate my skin. A sleeve of ice cold otter pops catches my eye as my mom walks out of our garage, her sunglasses pushed back on her head, keeping the hair out of her eyes. Remnants of our water balloon fight are strewn across our yard, colors of the rainbow shining in the hot July sun. My clothes are soaked, and I glance over at my brother who is completely dry from head to toe. I roll my eyes at his athleticism. Somehow, he had dodged every single balloon I had lobbed at him. He is either the luckiest person I have ever met or just really skilled at everything. I could never tell.

I smile up at the sun, taking a bite of my blue otter pop, letting the flavor burst on my tongue. Blue raspberry had always been my favorite flavor, but it was always the first to go in our house. My brother finds an unpopped water balloon in the gutter, bringing a finger to his lips, silently telling me to be quiet as he runs over to smash it on my other brother's head.

"Hey! What the hell!" My brother yells, fury in his eyes.

"Oops. Sorry," my other brother snickers at his despair.

I tilt my head forward as a fit of laughter takes over my body, and the sun cascades down on my face, leaving a reddish tint to my cheeks.

The monotonous sound of the heater pulls me out of my reverie, and I open my eyes back up to reality.

The memories creep out of my vision, as my room seeps back into my line of sight. I glance back outside as the raindrops turn to hail. Little pieces of ice scatter the street and pound so hard against my window, I am almost worried it will shatter. My eyes wander to my closet door, where I painted a large sunflower in the summertime. I wanted something yellow, something to remind me of the sun, to be the center of my room. Something I could look at in times like these, times where the sky casts an awful gray color and ice plagues the streets outside of my house. Right now, it seems like a silly thought. The sunflower isn't helping me feel any happier, any warmer. Goosebumps rise up on my arms, my hair standing straight up from the cold. As I get lost in the sunflower's petals, I hear the heater turn off. I close my eyes, wishing for it to kick on again. I need the warmth, as artificial as it may be.

What happened to the girl that used to love the rain? The question presents itself again, my brain grasping for an answer that isn't there. I hadn't seen that girl in months, maybe even years. I wasn't quite sure when I had lost her. Sometimes I wonder if I ever even really had her. Maybe it was all just a facade. The mask that I had worn, the mask that donned the smile, had melted off my face. I sigh, running a hand through my tangled hair.

She grew up. I guess. I don't really know. It's the best answer I can come up with. Because, truthfully, I don't know the answer myself. I guess there's always a time where someone has to grow up. I just didn't know I would be doing it so drastically. I close my eyes again,

trying to bring back the warm feelings of summer.

*Think happy thoughts. Let the warm feelings come to you.*

My mind wanders to a summer day just a few months ago. I am sitting on one of my backyard lawn chairs and soaking in the sun. Rays of sunshine poke through the lemon tree behind me and cast a golden light on my honey colored hair. Birds sing songs all around me, a prettier sound than the rain had composed. No, a softer sound than the rain, but not prettier. They were both pretty in their own ways. The warmth of the sun feels good against my skin, but something isn't right. There's a gray filter that rests over my memory of that day. My mind shifts through the memories of the trip to Lake Tahoe and the water balloon fight. These memories do not have that same gray filter on them. In fact, they are glowing, a golden hue sits around the edges of the pictures in my brain. I scrunch up my nose, shaking my head of the gray filter, but it doesn't budge. This memory feels dark, not quite warm, however bright the sun was shining.

The wind from outside brings a gust of raindrops pounding against my window, and I open my eyes in fright. My heart seems to pick up on the rhythm of the rain because I can feel it harmonize and synchronize with the beat, stammering in uncertainty.

I raise my eyes to a family picture hanging on my wall. My eyes are glowing with laughter, leaning into my brother's embrace. A tiny smirk plagues my other brother's face, his dimples deepening for the picture. My sister's cheeks are hinted with a warm shade of red as she waits for the camera to flash. My mother has her

arm wrapped around my brother's waist hastily. Moments before, she was running towards us as the camera's timer counted down the seconds until it would capture the moment. That photo seems like it's from a different lifetime at this point. I have not seen my siblings in months, only speaking from the occasional phone call or text, and the last time we were all in the same place at the same time was years ago. I smile at the picture, even though sadness grows in my chest. But, the photo has that same golden filter over it, the edges sparkling with what I can only describe as happiness. The vision of me sitting in the sun a few months back flashes across my brain, wrapped in the gray filter, and my heart finally falls back into its normal rhythm as I realize why that memory is tainted. The sun might have been there with me, but my family was not.

I shiver at the thought, and the gray filter falls over an empty house.

# Her Shadow

*MARISA MCCORMICK*

I remember following you around  
ever since I could remember.  
An inseparable bond - forever attached to you. Roots that  
encourage our tree to grow.  
Your shadow - everyone would call me.

As I reminisce I catch myself waiting for things to stay  
the same.

One of my favorite memories  
with you is when you read aloud. Sitting side by side  
exploring the depths our thoughts held,  
and unlocking secrets that we once never knew existed.  
I sat calmly and curiously  
listening to your soothing voice.  
Being blind to the reality  
of this moment being temporary.

Forever mesmerized  
by the light you so effortlessly  
draw to those around you.  
The most beautiful person inside and out A mirrors  
image.  
Shadows  
slip away like your memories.  
No matter how strong the sun beams. I'll remember this

for you  
for when you don't.

As your memory leaves you your shadow will remain.

My grandmother ~  
Engrained in me and my soul. Like this disease is to your  
brain. Your shadow.  
But with ease you endure it  
Like with anything.  
So I will cherish our memories for the both of us.  
And as I have before,  
through anything  
I will follow you.

# Like Always

*ELIZABETH WILES*

**My grandfather is 90 years old today.** We are throwing a big party at the golf club. The theme is “country,” and everyone arrives in bandanas, flannels, and cowboy boots. My grandparents are rather popular within their senior circle, so there is a great turnout. Papa greets everyone by their first name. He hugs and takes pictures with funny looks on his face. He makes all of his jokes and, like always, manages to be the brightest in the room.

After Grandma, Papa asks my mother to dance. She smiles, both sets of beautiful green eyes shining brightly. The voice of Willie Nelson carries them to the dance floor, and Papa leads Mom in a Two Step. They laugh and Papa spins his youngest daughter, both grinning toward me as I lift up my camera. When the party starts to die down and everyone has filtered out of the country club, Papa follows them out to the parking lot and, like always, waves them goodbye as they drive away.

**I am 17 years old today.** We have a family dinner planned tonight to celebrate. Like always, Papa picks me up at the bus stop. His black truck is visible through the trees and much larger than he preferred. But it fits more family than his old red Frontier, and he seems to be okay with that. Papa waits outside of it, leaning against the tailgate to greet me. He makes comments to my peers as they step off, joking with them like always. They are

kind, laughing in return. I step off the bus, say hello to my grandfather, and hurry into the passenger seat as inconspicuous as I can. It is embarrassing, but I suppose that is the point.

**I am graduating from high school today.** Everyone is bustling around my grandparent's house, getting ready and charging their phones for pictures. I am wearing a dress, black lace covering golden silk. Papa is wearing a light blue button down, tucked into his jeans and the belt buckle I gave him for Christmas. But he has been sick the past few days, battling nausea and stomachache. He walks up to me, hugs me, and says he is sorry that he cannot make it. I understand. With the way he has been feeling, he would most likely miss my walk anyway. Still, my eyes water.

Papa makes a point to feel better for my graduation dinner, which takes place a couple days later. We take photos, my mother cries, and I do not realize how special this meal really is.

**I am going back home today.** I moved to Monterey for college a couple months ago, and I am just now driving to visit my mother and grandparents three hours away. It has been too long. I don't recall where the time has gone or why I have not strived to spend more back home. I am caught up in my studies, my boyfriend, and all the new things college has exposed me to.

When I arrive, I learn that Papa has been having some trouble remembering things. I learn that he is now unable to drive, the new truck sitting in the garage, large and unused. He greets me with only a small curve in his

lips. His green eyes do not shine and barely meet my own. While I was busy becoming something brighter, he began to fade away. But I am here now. While he is right next to me, I have never missed him more.

When the weekend comes to an end and it is time for me to head back to Monterey, I hug Papa goodbye. I tell him that I love him and promise to come back every other week. He asks me where I am going. I gulp, fighting the tears that tempt the lids of my green eyes. I remind him that I go to school in Monterey. I tell him I work in the college admissions office and am planning on becoming a teacher. He smiles and says that sounds like “a pretty good plan.” We walk out together and, like always, he stands in the driveway to wave me goodbye.

**Today is an ordinary day.** Months have passed and I continue to visit home almost every other weekend. I received a call a few days ago. My mother told me that Papa had fallen, and he now has to use a walker to stabilize himself. Only his ankle was hurt, and I am relieved. When I arrive, he is asleep on his recliner. I lean over, waking him to let him know I am here. He looks at me kindly, gives me a hug, and asks where I have been. I take a breath and remind him that I go to school in Monterey. I tell him I work in the college admissions office and am planning on becoming a teacher. He smiles and says that sounds like “a pretty good plan.”

When the weekend has gone by too quickly, I hug Papa goodbye. I tell him that I love him and that I will be back the following week. He nods. My mother and I walk out together. We look at each other for a moment, and then the empty space beside us. I hug her goodbye, but we do

not part. Instead, I hold onto her, letting the tears flow and sob into my mother's shoulder. She holds the back of my head, crying too.

**My grandfather is 95 years old today.** I have driven from Monterey to visit almost every weekend. On the way and every time, I worry that I will arrive and Papa will not know my name. I worry that he will not know my face that I have made a point to display pictures of on the coffee table near his recliner. I worry that I will break down, begging him to get better when he does not even remember that he is sick. But when I arrive, I wake him to say hello. He looks up kindly and, like always, smiles back at me.

The family comes to my grandparent's house. We celebrate 95 years of the greatest man in the world and, for the first time in a long while, his green eyes shine. Later that evening, I walk into the living room. Papa is sitting on his recliner, hooked up to oxygen and sleeping. I halt. My mom tells me he is fine and just uses it before going to bed. But amongst the ticks of the meter and rough inhales of the oxygen canteen, I think back to Papa's 90th birthday. I think back to him laughing and dancing with my mother. I think back to him picking me up at the bus stop, and how I would give everything I had for him to embarrass me just one more time. I think back to my high school graduation, the empty seat next to Grandma, and how it will most likely remain empty at my bachelor's commencement. Papa is not fine. I am not fine. I am watching him fade into nothing and into someone I do not recognize.

**Today is an ordinary day.** I am packing to go visit my

mother and grandparents. I worry that, when I arrive, Papa will not know who I am. I worry he will not recognize me the way I struggle to match him to the photo I took at his 90th birthday. I worry he will not be around to take another with my diploma and I, and that he will not make jokes to my college friends after the ceremony. Still, I continue to visit almost every other weekend. I still say hello to Papa and remind him where I live now. I still hug him goodbye and, like always, he smiles back at me. I still walk out with my mother, and we still cry sometimes. I still know that, even though Papa does not shine as bright as he once did, he is still the greatest man in the world. I still know, and will never forget, that he loves me like he always has.

**Today is my grandparent's 75th anniversary.** I am in town. I have been for a couple days. Papa isn't doing well, and the hospice nurses estimate five days before he passes. I stare at him on the hospital bed in the living room, and I don't believe any of it. Papa isn't fine, but he will get through this, just like he always does.

Family members come in and out, and everyone is crying, but Grandma cries the most. She has had 75 years with the greatest man in the world, and he is slowly fading from it, leaving her alone. Of course, I tell my grandmother that she isn't alone and that I love her like I always have. I tell Papa that, too. I hold his hand and his hazy green eyes open. I smile down at him.

I am 22 years old today. It's morning time, and Papa is gone now. He lays still, and I think about how he never once forgot me. Tears burn my tired green eyes, and I lean down to place a shaky kiss on Papa's forehead.

I thank him for everything. I tell him that my college friends would have loved to meet him. I tell him it's okay that he can't make it to my bachelor's commencement. I promise to smile and make my own green eyes shine like his. But as the pain in my chest wells, as I try to say goodbye to the man who has always been there, I tell him that I love him. Always.

# Learning to fly ~ Don't hold my hand

*ZOE ATLAS*

Name<sup>1</sup> - noun

1. A word or phrase that constitutes the distinctive designation of a person or thing, a word or symbol used in logic to designate an entity
2. A descriptive often disparaging epithet
3. Reputation
4. Family, clan
5. Appearance as opposed to reality

Name, you

Name, me

Name, us

Here we are, together in name

Name this moment

Name our love

Name your home

Name my soul

Name the silence

Name the song ||: life | this pulsing rhythm | we play  
together :|| What's your

name?

Name your truth so it can't be stolen

Name your secrets and whisper them to the night breeze

Name your gods as drawings in the sand so they are

reborn with the tide

Name the child and she may rename herself in time

Names to touch the ineffable

Names to tame the untamable

Names to dismember and remember

Names to call upon ancestors who never stopped  
speaking if only we would turn down the noise and  
listen

Names are lies

Names are stories

Names are connections

Names are constellations

Names are contradictions

Names are legacy

illusions

possessions

projections

Names are wild creatures with sharp teeth

Names are acknowledgments

Names mortify and names honor

My name is Zoe Lillian Atlas.

My name was a gift my parents arranged for me before  
looking in my then purple eyes or seeing the capital  
letter Z inscribed in blood vessels on the skin between  
my breasts. I was born on a new moon, branded by the  
first letter of my first name at the center of my body.  
My body. My vessel, my home.

But it's not mine and I don't belong here.

At least that's how it's always felt. I come and I go. This body feels more like an airport hotel room I long to check out of for good and quietly return home— to my real home. Except I'm stuck in the airport, cringing watching the sluggish conveyor belt of people and luggage while dreaming of flying. My flight is grounded, but I still take off on my own sometimes.

Many of my childhood memories are dreams. I insisted to myself that's what they were because nobody ever told me, while I am "awake" my body could be one place and I could be somewhere else. Dreams are an acceptable way to speak of personal experiences outside the body with the divine, the non-material. I used to dream of cloud people who glowed in different colors, of insurmountable masses of substance and energy, a grandmotherly presence guiding and protecting me, and a home I felt in my marrow but was too deep— I could not reach it, I could not name it.

"That which cannot be named is a disturbance." <sup>2</sup>

It is Kol Nidre, the eve of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. I am 15 years old, outwardly impenetrable and aloof, and I just sat through services centered around the power of our word, naming our broken promises and asking others for forgiveness, forgiving the self, and deciding how we choose to live as we enter the new year. To close services, we are invited to walk a

labyrinth laid out in a grassy field under the few twinkling stars that can be seen in Venice Beach. I enter the maze behind my father and begin walking at a steady pace. He is singing a prayer on loop that always makes me want to crawl out of my skin. One foot in front of the other, round and round, Here I Am, at the same place but deeper inside, Here I Am, the singing continues, breath is shaky and shallow, stars blurry, Here I Am, walk the path, there's one way in and the same way out, we go round in circles until we break our cycles, Here I—

I am not breathing.

My body is hyperventilating. My body is laying in the center of the labyrinth. My body is leaking my disturbances. My body is now empty and surrounded by my father who finally stopped singing, and the rabbi, chanting my name as she did the prayers that haunted me and chased me from my body. “Zoe”

“Zoe”

“Zoe”

my name is a three letter song  
everyone sings to their own tune  
a roundup call  
summoning home this ostensibly incidental muss  
of shadow and light  
which becomes  
my constellation  
my torn labyrinth  
who can spiral me against myself  
or dance me to the center of beauty



Lillian, my mom's mom's mom who left Earth a year and a half before my birth. "Lil, Lily", who "would've never let go had she known you," says Grandma in a tender, small voice, now talking down to her hands after reliving stories of summers they ran free on their farm in Toms River, New Jersey, raising chickens and picking wild berries, and how she used to interrogate everyone about what they wanted her to make for dinner while they ate breakfast. My great grandmother makes sure I know her loving presence as the wafting aroma of fresh cut lilies that live and die atop my bookshelves and bedside table.

Great Grandmother's essence  
fragrant presence  
an olfactory  
incarnation  
of  
Shalom,  
Hello, Goodbye, Peace.

The scent of lilies mixes with my breath greeting me at dawn, lulling me to sleep, and offering moments of familiar joy in between. I've gotten to know Great Grandma Lily in dreams and dreams. She is goofy; she plays with the piano music box my mother gave me after a piano recital, and while I am eating she nudges me to plan my next meals. I hold no doubts that she is always here since a 3x5 photograph I nor anyone

else had ever seen before of her and Great Grandpa Moishe at my parent's wedding in 1987, arms linked and sharing a smile from his ear to her's, appeared in my passenger seat the day after cleaning out the whole damn car. Growing up, I did not have a language to understand my out of body experiences nor did I have anyone I felt I could confide in. I like to think of Great Grandma Lily as my flying mentor. As my left hand forms these words, my right hand grasps the gold and enamel butterfly necklace she once wore that now rests above my heart, reminding me it is the women like her who give me wings.



Atlas reminds me I am both part of and here to carry forward on my shoulders Earth and the heavenly bodies. Atlas, the Greek Titan god of strength, endurance, and astronomy; my last name calls on me to persevere and dedicate myself to this physical life. To follow my soul's map and the map of the stars to understand and transcend detachment and anguish. Those feelings obscure my vision and insist I am too lost for a map to do any good. Detaching and leaving my body, ignoring my map, is how I have learned to cope, escape, and protect myself from the brokenness, loneliness, and suffering in the world.

The story of Atlas shares that we have it within ourselves to carry the burdens of our worlds, but we need others to offer a hand and help cushion the weight of our load.

I interpret the story of Atlas as a being who was neither here nor there. Since he was tasked with holding up the worlds, he was not in a world but in some space around or between. This place between that is neither here nor there is, for so long, where I have been most comfortable and most alone.

Letters are maps of sounds.

Names are maps of souls.

My being is a living atlas, a book of ancestral maps— a gift passed down to me and of my creation. To name is to shape breath to describe inherent meaning, individual existence, bridging presence with sounds to establish a relationship of caring.

A map reflects features with symbolic depictions to emphasize relationships or themes. To map also means to plan or chart a course. Mapping and naming. Our names given at birth are our first personalized map, blank but for a small star indicating now you are here. With that map, we carry forward our unique human selves born from and never lost to the oneness of all life.

Why Am I Here?

What is *the* purpose?

What is *my* purpose?

Tikkun Olam: do something to improve this world and all of time,  
have the bravery to  
create harmony  
from cacophony  
to reveal what is  
concealed  
in Creation.

Hineni,  
Here I Am,  
Present, eyes wide open  
grounded feet deep in Earth, extended arms reach for Sky  
my hands find each other and meet at my heart  
to unite broken pieces  
in the name  
of creating  
Peace.



Notes:

1. "Name." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/name](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/name).

2. *When Women Were Birds: Fifty-Four Variations on Voice*, by Terry Tempest Williams, Picador Usa, 2013, p. 186.

# I Look For Her

*BIANCA MEDINA*

i was born and raised  
to be afraid of him  
owner of the sky  
controlar of my life  
he who dictates  
who is wise  
but do not worry  
he loves all  
when he doesn't  
he'll send you  
to the other guy  
are men in control of everything?  
can i be a man?  
oh shit- i'm sorry  
let me start over-  
our father  
if he loves all  
why does he not accept me?  
i also love all  
is that not what I'm supposed to be?  
now i'm confused  
we're all his creation-  
he is loving to all -  
yet i am unlovable  
am i capable of love?  
can anyone ever love me?  
i guess i do love

but i do not love him  
I love Her  
I look for Her  
wherever I go  
She- who too- runs the sky

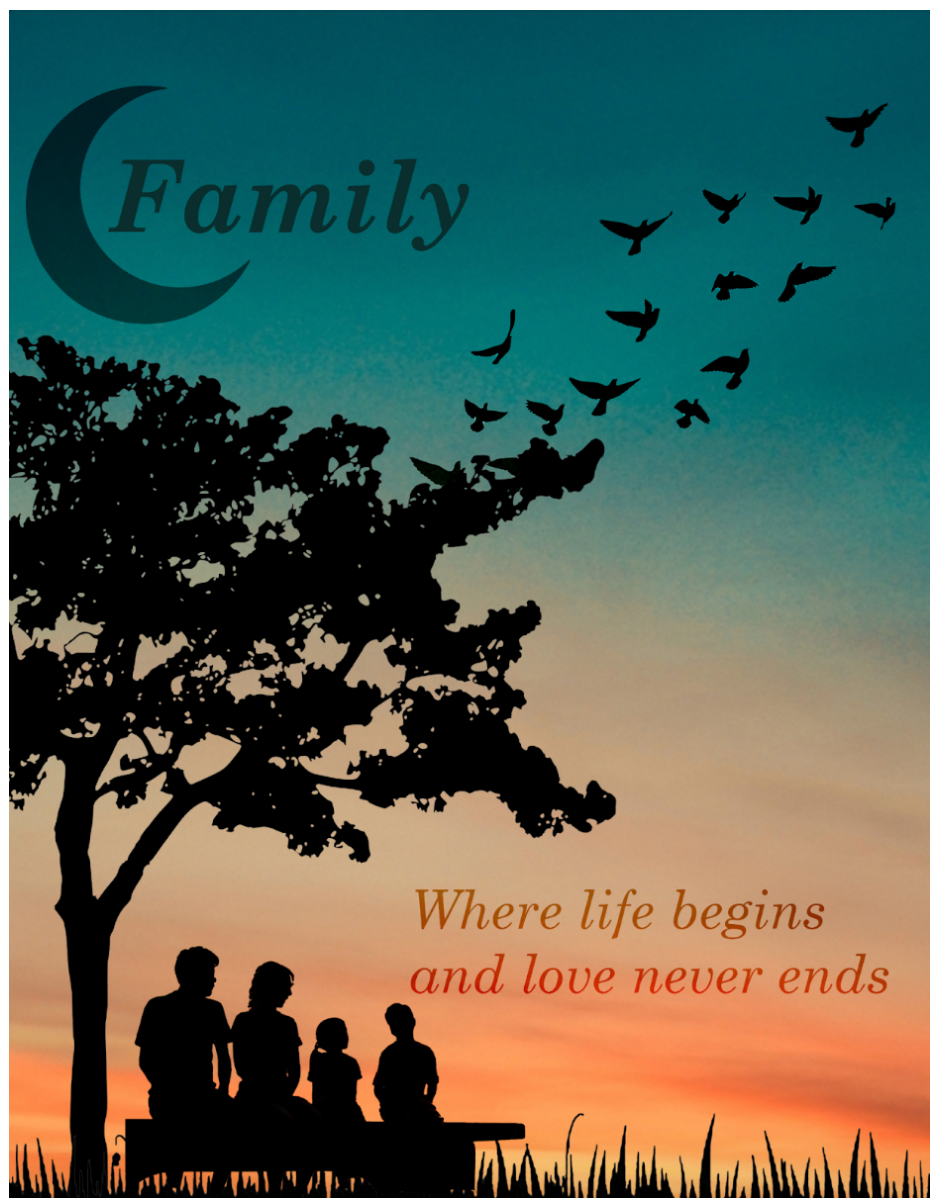
is everywhere I look  
She, contralor of waves  
that I dive into  
with water that splashes washes  
and emcompases me  
water that crushes me  
with Her voracity  
with Her permission  
She which I walk on  
with my bare feet open toes  
so that I advantageously  
feel Her in every nook in every crevice  
She who sparks my light  
blows my candle goodnight  
before she sings me a lullaby  
and showers me in affirmation validation  
I look at the sky  
and see Her everywhere  
for how could I ever love him  
controlling, abusive, demanding  
when She exists  
and Her love is limitless  
Her love is everywhere I go  
waiting for me open arms  
my god, I can love

it is Her  
who fills my heart  
on the day I won't wake up  
She will greet me with a smile  
She will hold my hand  
it will be then

together  
we will love  
one another  
purely  
Endlessly.

# Always There to Care

MARCINA DOOLAND



# My Family

*DAUPHIENE PARKS*

My family has big dogs and tiger cats,  
Northern breeds a little bit wild.  
Stairs on stairs and home birth,  
Screaming bloody murder in the living room.

My family entertains ghosts in the pantry,  
Our favorite words: are you bat shit crazy?  
Beauty is painful, wax like honey,  
And mixing the serious with the funny.  
There is also I love you to infinity.

My family comes from steep hills and tall trees,  
and gently petting honey bees  
with the back of our nails while whispering softly  
Let's go look for faeries.

My family likes those sour green blades  
you suck on by the dozen,  
and crab on Yulemas and blueberries in cream.  
My family are salmon swimming upstream.

We are the lazy and the hard working,  
My family goes from laughing to cursing,  
In two minutes flat.  
We will always have each other's back.

My family mourns, and celebrates,  
Even in Pandemic days,  
We love and grow.  
Despite the snow,  
My family is the reason  
My heart continues to glow.

# finding myself

*ALYSSA HEMLER*

I find myself  
smoking by my open door,  
flicking ashes on the floor  
on a freezing spring night.

Sitting here,  
the wind is washing me clean  
in the streetlamps faint gleam,  
smoke fading in the light.

All the while,  
a storm rages to the left,  
I drag each heavy breath  
under nothing but the plight

of my thoughts.  
What I am meant to be  
demons standing in the streets,  
shaking in their fright.

But not myself,  
smoking by my open door,  
knowing I can hurt much more  
than I could ever write.

I find myself

in the smoke that never ends  
starting new with no amends  
loving nothing but my spite.

# The Day I Met Her

*JOSÉ ARZOLA*

The day that I met her it was already known.  
The day that I met her she was already home.  
The day that I met her I was no longer alone .  
The day that I met her I knew what I wanted.  
I knew I wanted love. I knew I wanted care.  
I knew that I wanted her hand brushin' through my hair.  
What else can I do, I don't know because all I have to give  
is all my love and all my care.  
The day that I met her she looked like a delicate, little,  
flower so rare.  
The day I met her I knew we balanced each other out like  
Yin and Yang.

The day I met her I can confess that when my heart  
skipped a beat... I heard a bang!

# Who Am I

*ALANAH HUNSDORFER*

Sometimes I think I use people  
to drown out my thoughts  
My friends and family,  
used as props

A how-to guide  
for avoidance under pressure  
Self-deprecation so loud,  
no decibel could measure

How naive of me to think  
I could be me  
When no one is around  
to tell me who to be

Who am I  
when I'm left alone?  
When my family is gone  
and my friends have grown?

Who will be here  
to show me the way?  
Who will be left  
when thoughts lead me astray?

# when you have nothing left

*ALYSSA HEMLER*

break it down  
to your deepest foundations

open it up  
to your withdrawn desires

be you  
be you

tear it apart  
from your historical sins

tie it together  
with your newfound dreams

let them  
let them

take all they can from you  
you'll be broken, vulnerable  
shattered but free

because you still have

you  
you.

## AUTHORS

### *ELIZABETH WILES*

Elizabeth (Lizz) Wiles is a lifelong poet and current senior at CSUMB. She will be graduating with a bachelor's degree in Humanities and Communication and a concentration in Creative Writing & Social Action. Writing has always been Lizz's avenue for contemplation, solace, and growth. She hopes to move onto a master's program, using poetry as fuel for change.

### *ALANAH HUNSDORFER*

Alanah Hunsdorfer is a third year student at CSUMB and is majoring in Humanities and Communication with a concentration in both English Studies and Creative Writing and Social Action. She loves reading and writing, primarily with a focus on poetry and fiction pieces, but she also enjoys the behind-the-scenes processes of editing and publishing.

## *MARISA MCCORMICK*

Marisa McCormick is a senior at CSUMB and graduates after the Spring semester. She is studying Creative Writing and Social Action. She has been interested in creative writing since she can remember and is drawn to it because of its ability to connect with others. Marisa is very passionate about her family and chose to write a poem about her grandmother who has Alzheimer's. Through her writing she shares important issues and topics in hopes to inspire others, to spark thoughts, and to exemplify through words that we are not alone and all matter.

## *BIANCA MEDINA*

Bianca Medina is a transfer student at CSUMB, and they are majoring in Psychology with a passion for creative writing and artistic expression.

## *ZOE ATLAS*

Zoe Atlas is a 3rd year HCOM major studying Creative Writing and Social Action. She is a lifelong musician, poet, horsewoman and lover of all creatures, yogini, runner, and loves cooking, hikes in the redwoods, swimming in the ocean, theater, reading, and taking her cat George on walks at the beach. She is currently working on her first book: a collection of poems and personal essays.

## *MARCINA DOOLAND*

Marcina Dooland is a junior at CSUMB, having opted to major in Kinesiology, she works towards her goal of becoming a Physician's Assistant in the future. She is determined, hardworking, encouraging, kind and is often caught with a book in her hand or a cup of coffee to ease her nerves on the days off from school. Her family of four moved from India and have settled in Monterey. Marcina looks forward to the future she envisions.

## *DAUPHIENE PARKS*

Dauphiene is a senior creative writing major at CSUMB. She loves to read, write, cook, hike, and do anything creative. She graduates in May and is pursuing a career in publishing.

## *ALYSSA HEMLER*

Alyssa Hemler is a senior at CSUMB, majoring in Cinematic Arts & Technology and minoring in Creative Writing & Social Action. She uses writing as a tool for self-reflection and a way to reflect the world around her.

## *JOSÉ ARZOLA*

José Arzola is a 4th year Molecular biology major at CSUMB. He likes to spend time with family and have a good time playing baseball.