

The Lanthorn

May 2021



“renewal”

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from the editors

Dear Reader,

I am happy to put into your hands the last issue for the 20-21 academic year: “renewal.” As spring gradually makes its way in with more and more confidence, I suspect that renewal is something on many of our minds, in the form of the world renewing its buds and flowers and, for many of us, in the form of renewing the necessary library books for that final paper.

For many of us this is a time of renewal as we think forward to the next school year, to renewing our time here at Houghton. For others of us (myself included) this is a time when we think about renewal in a slightly different sense: remaking our lives into something different and new.

For this issue we are also renewing an older Lanthorn tradition by having some of our authors write their poems in their own handwriting. When I was looking through our archives earlier this year I came across handwritten issues like this from the early 2000s. I find that seeing someone’s words in their penmanship is a more personal experience, like reading a note they wrote specifically to you. We thought that personal experience would be perfect for this final issue. This is our collective note to you.

Farewell, dear reader. I have loved serving you for these past two years.

Love from,

Ally and The Lanthorn Staff

“Moss Lake in March”

Anna Judd

After this morning’s rain,
the hedgehog mosses are swollen with water,
clusters of round green sponges
growing between the rocks on the trailside.

I crouch down and touch one,
finding the velvet tendrils saturated,
the lightest pressure squeezing out clear water
that wells around my fingertips.

I wipe my hand on the edge of my shirt
and walk on, past pin-oaks red at the tips of the
branches
with the promise of buds;
over dirt as dark as black coffee,
releasing that living muddy smell into the air.

The hedgehog mosses and everything else
are saturated, swollen with warmth and rainwater,
ready to overflow.

[Untitled]
by Ryan Nickelsen

目の涙
憂鬱な江
死の鱗

Translation:
Tears of the eyes
A melancholic river
Like scales of death

"Turning"

by Hope Barnes

You wake up
and see the sky so warm and blue
how the buds are so small
the trees bursting with life
the world so new

But soon, suddenly
and too slowly
it fades to a glow of gold
and you can see it dying
why so soon?
don't leave—

The field is cold
gone
where is the green? The blue?
only barrenness and jagged stumps
where once was joy and beauty
who will remember what it once was?

One day, something will grow in its place
perhaps.

“Communion”
by Johanna Florez

He met me in the greenhouse
with two pear halves, purple grapes, and
the pit side of an avocado
on a brown paper towel.

We sat on the bench that circles a tree
—a bench with less than a year’s weathering on it—
and split the grape bunch and the brown pear half.
I scraped the last avocado flesh from the skin
with my teeth
(sour after grapes)
and asked how I can help him
stop making me feel the way
my dad did.

Can the trinity save us?
—my counselor, his counselor, and ours?

Or maybe a bundle of fruits
on a sunny March day?

After dinner he held out the green pear
and I kissed it goodnight:
our first kiss in four months.
I took a bite
and we went our separate ways
with the bittersweetness of vulnerability
still on my tongue.

“Real Analysis”
by Betsy Stone

Real Analysis

Let a_n and b_n be convergent sequences:

a_n = true, substantive, actual, authentic, certain, evident,
concrete, genuine...

b_n = deconstruction, evaluation, anatomizing, scrutiny
inquiry, investigation, reasoning, study...

[Untitled]
by Rebekah Toews

I saw heaven now
Golden celestial light
Can - e - ah - de - ah

By Seneca named
This land does not deceive us
Heaven met the earth

Onion Snow

by Ally Steiner

Little winter.

I wake up to a postcard view of snowy branches,
Startle in my bed — April morning touched with
Taste of candy canes,
Hope for Christmases to come.

The snow is stretched out comfortably
In the hammock where I lay just weeks ago,
Soaking in the tentative spring sunshine.

Have to miss the sparks of disappointment,
Heavy eyes raking the ground
Without finding what they want.

"Don't worry," I want to say.

This is an expected surprise,
Constant as any saint's day.

It's just the onion snow:

Winter's last little kiss on her way out the door.

"I Can Do This all Day (I Think)" by Phoebe Mullen

God please make me Harry Potter brave and superhero strong
God please give me Luke Skywalker hope and Lucy Pevensie faith

I want to be
Breaker of rules
Reformer of schools
Keeper of histories
Solver of mysteries

God please make me Harry Potter brave and superhero strong
God please give me Luke Skywalker hope and Lucy Pevensie faith

They seem
Un~~defeatable~~ Indefigable
Unshattered fragile
Imperfect but able
Unbroken Unbeaten Impregnable

I want to be like them,
But I feel small
Not untried, but
Unmade Undone

God please make me Harry Potter brave and superhero strong
God please give me Luke Skywalker hope and Lucy Pevensie faith

Though I suppose my heroes
felt fragile too.
Each chose
To get up again
again and again.

“In the Staff House Before It’s Demolished”
by Anna Judd

The porch steps are buried under six inches of snow.
When I pull the door shut behind me,
I stamp off my boots, brush off the cuffs of my jeans;
there’s no reason now not to track slush across the blue
carpet.

I can see my breath in the living room air.
The old brown couch, saggy cushions spotted pink with
bleach stains,
still slouches in its corner; the armchair, brown flowers on
beige fabric,
its arms as hard and awkwardly angled as the limbs of the
young people
who used to live here every summer, still sits there stiffly.
Where the ancient tube TV used to stand,
a stack of mattresses, thin foam with ripped plastic
coverings,
reaches toward the ceiling. A dolly, a shop-vac,
two wooden headboards leaned up against the wall,
speak to what’s being done, the efforts to clean up and
clear out
and empty what can still be used before the shell goes up
in flames.

My fingers ache with the cold. There are window A/C
units stacked
by the door - like our suitcases used to be - but they
never did much;
by July each year we were melting across that brown
sofa,
flinging wide every window with a screen intact
to keep out the flies.

In the kitchen, the fridge is gone, and the cabinets hang open.

The sink is on the floor with its pipes disconnected, next to a discarded hand saw and a trash can full of demolition detritus.

The dining table, where I ate so many cold leftovers and one-dollar Walmart instant dinners and once baked a pie from wild blackberries picked along the horse trails, has disappeared entirely.

My wet boots make slime of the drywall dust on the linoleum.

Down the little hall that runs off the kitchen, the bathroom is gutted and cavelike, with no windows and the lights stripped out.

Past it, the little blue bedroom, my favorite, under the stairs and slant-ceilinged, is filled with more mattresses and so many miscellaneous chairs I can barely set foot inside.

It looks like they never did get around to cutting into the ceiling and taking out what's left of that beehive.

It's more of the same upstairs, drywall and wood chips,
pieces of panelling pulled from the walls,
and stray furniture - a side table, a dresser with a missing
drawer,
a crumpled curtain matching neither the blinds nor the
white lace
adorning the other windows. The bunks,
with their back-aching wooden frames and graffitied
beams,
are already gone.

I spent my first summer in the room at the end of the hall.
West-facing, taking the brunt of the afternoon sun,
but without it now; I blow on my hands
and thrust them back into my pockets as I walk in,
breathe in the smell of the house, a smell I could never
put a name to.

To my surprise, the plastic stars sticky-tacked up on the
walls and ceiling
haven't been moved in the intervening years.
I stand where the head of my bed was, look up,
try to remember the constellations I invented
as they glowed above me in the sweltering nights.
I take one and put it in a pocket, a dollar-store memento.

If walls could talk, they say;
I run my hands over the grain and want to ask:
tell me the stories once more before I go,
others', and all my own that I've forgotten.

The cold is beginning to get to my toes, even in heavy boots,
and I hadn't realized how far things were already gone;
this isn't the last image I want.
Not the gray sky and the empty rooms and the broken things,
but the smell of pie in the kitchen,
and the sunrises dying the air pink every morning I woke
for breakfast shift,
and the moment of dropping my suitcase every May,

feeling the walls and the air embrace me
like an outline embraces its shape.

Before the current sights can stick too deeply,
I make my way back down the stairs and out,
pulling the door shut, finding my footprints already half
filled in again;
I descend the porch steps a final time and walk away.

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