



Why do we write?  
For fear we might burst  
From everything inside.  
For fear we might be forgotten  
And then cease to exist.  
For fear that what we lived  
Will become only dust  
In our careless memories.

Untitled // Catherine Lynip

## Fear of the Dark

Who are you? I ask.  
But not aloud, no.  
For I am afraid that  
The darkness will answer back.

Anonymous

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## Letter from the Editors

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Thank you for picking up our first issue of the Lantern for the semester! We are so grateful for the hard work and dedication of all those who submitted their work. We were very impressed with so many of the pieces we recieved and look forward to working with so many talented students in future issues.

The subject of this issue is a little unconventional. Doubtless, both the title of the issue and the cover art may elicit very different feelings in all of the students (and even members of faculty and staff) here at Houghton. We want to stress that our intention with this issue is not to be a direct critique of the college; rather, we are calling attention to something that feels important for Houghton to acknowledge as a community: many students are unable to feel as fearless as the College assures us we should be. There are many different reasons for this, whether those reasons stemmed from insecurities surrounding the pandemic, problems with friends or family, or concerns surrounding academics. We have all felt fear in some way this year.

Unfortunately, there were those last semester whose fear was cruelly and knowingly inflicted by members of our own community. It is for those students that the idea of this issue came about; we want to highlight the fear that has been caused to these individuals in the hope that we, as a community, will see their hurt and come together to envelope them in unconditional love. But the purpose of this issue goes beyond just those individuals. This issue of the Lantern speaks out for any student feeling fear—we see you and we love you. You are not alone in this.

With all our love,  
Zach, Alex, and Rachel

Why so scared? (2021)

Fear is felt to keep us safe, biologically.

An innate fear might keep us from tumbling down braved Cliffs  
to the consequential splat of brain on stone. Fear is essential to  
safety.

My fear is a riot shield from the  
Man handing back my change.

Fear that rips through my skin at the brush of his Fingers on  
mine in the Wegmans checkout; the Panic of my heart in my ribs  
pulsing behind my eyes.

My fear protects me from my friends and  
“Trusted” adult men whose friendly pat on the back Or excited  
hug of congrats must be

A sign of the oncoming train of betrayal and harm. I am protected  
from their... love?

My fear protects me from something  
Someone that man

Whom no one could protect me from at 6, 8, or 10. But great. I  
am safe now?

Mary Chichester





I am

Fearful I have been  
like locking eyes with the open mouth of a loaded gun  
like cat calls and whistles from strange men in an empty parking lot  
like the world shutting down from an unknown virus  
like having nowhere to sit in the cafeteria despite numerous open seats

Fearful I am told to be  
in the presence of God  
but if that God is loving  
as she says she is  
how can I fear?

Fearful I am  
when you would use words like pastoral care  
to make an outcast of me  
when you would dissolve spaces of solidarity  
to resolve your discomfort  
when you would tell me you love me  
then take my right to love

Fearful,  
I Am.

Sarah Halvorson



## Midnight Thunderstorm

When the wind propels the chairs across the deck  
And the windows creak and groan and crack;  
When the rain beats against the front of the house,  
Sweeping under the eaves until everything is doused;  
This is when I wake in the dim dark of my room.  
I hear footsteps in the hall, but from whom?  
I am the only one conscious at this early hour...  
It is only the house, which the storm greedily devours.

I sit up and stagger down the ladder of my bed,  
Clumsy from the half-formed dreams in my head.  
The tiny room is suddenly filled with a light,  
Cold, white, and--like the sun--blindingly bright.  
I am dazzled and awed, but at the same time, afraid.  
Nevertheless, I watch it as if it were some great play.  
It is the highest form of entertainment--  
Captivating and powerful, wild and ancient.

For one brief second, though it seems to remain  
For longer across the sky's never ending domain,  
A white vein of light divides the heavens in two,  
Exposing the whole wide valley to conspicuous view.  
Then it is gone, leaving my eyes momentarily blind.  
Seven seconds later, thunder booms, as if to remind  
Us that the light was not just our imagination,  
But, instead, an animated conversation.

When the wind has blown itself out to a breeze  
And the rain has decided finally to ease,  
I am there still, waiting for the next bolt of lightning,  
Each is the same, and each is still as exciting.  
But, deep within me lingers a sort of dissatisfaction;  
With only myself, the joy of a storm loses some attraction.  
These moments of bewildered beauty are best shared.  
With someone else, you can look with new eyes and truly care.

Anonymous

[ROYGBIV]

When I line up my fears by colour of the rainbow,  
when I try to make symmetry and sense of all the shades I feel it  
looks something like this:

Red - I'm afraid of disappointing you.

Orange - I don't need you to fix me.

Yellow - Please don't judge me.

Green - I don't need an excuse to be me.

Blue - I can't ignore it anymore.

Indigo - I hope you'll just hug me.

Violet - Maybe just love me.

Will you? Will you still love me when I'm not who you thought?

Will you still hold me in my brokenness?

Will you sing to me that lullaby you used to hum?

Will you tuck me into bed and kiss me goodnight?

It's late and I need you to turn out the light.

I'm too tired

of trying to be the perfect daughter,

of hiding from myself,

of fighting monsters in my closet that you told me to fear.

So just hold me tonight.

I need my Mama's strong arms.

I need my Papa's warm embrace.

Red - I love you.

Orange - Will you love me as I am?

Yellow - I love you.

Green - Will you hold me like a lamb?

Blue - I love you.

Indigo - Will you?

Violet - I love you.

Sarah Halvorson





Letters I May Never Send

Dear Reagan,

We were just 13 when you told me your secret.  
You were so scared you could not summon words  
so you wrote it on a crumpled piece of paper.

I was afraid too.

I knew if I didn't push you away  
you would confront the thing in me that I feared the most.  
So I pushed you away—  
couldn't bring myself to look you in the eyes again  
and see  
you.

Forgive me,  
we fear in others what we fear most in ourselves.

Dear self,

You were 15 I wrote your secret on a crumpled piece of paper,  
and you were terrified.  
Your pen shook as its ink bled onto the page  
threatening to expose you should it be found.  
You could not look at it  
you distained it  
the truth of it unpalatable  
and so you put fire to it  
praying flame would absolve you of the condemnable words.

Forgive me,  
I only feared what I was taught to fear.

Dear church,

I have since learned that God is not afraid of the things she created.  
The complexity, the nuance, the uniqueness of each person  
is what distinguished us from the rest—  
“very good,” God says,  
and so I ask you to behold me how God does  
with loving, gentle hands,  
in awe and reverence  
of the created whole person.

Forgive me,  
for my anger toward you who claim the key to salvation.  
I was hurt,  
but it was once said,  
“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”  
I pray for you.

Sarah Halvorson

Accidental. (2017)

The accident wasn't her fault.  
The look in his eyes when he glanced at her,  
And the way he slowly winked  
Filled her with immense fear.  
She lost control of her entire body.  
Running with her pants slowly warming,  
Tears streamed down her pale, lifeless cheeks.  
In the bathroom she covered her sunken, sleep deprived eyes  
and sobbed/ The shudders tore her spine in half,  
While the urine cooled on her itching thighs.  
No one knew how bad it hurt to see him roaming free  
While she is trapped in her own mind

Mary Chichester



“What Happened?”

What happened?

I could have sworn, not one week ago, I was real. I had a physical body. I could be seen. I could be heard. I could interact with the world and it could interact with me.

What happened?

My voice dries up inside my throat, my ambitions wither inside my head, my connections snap! and once again, I'm lost at sea.

What happened?

They stare through me, they smile blankly. I try to return it, knowing it's useless. They can't see me, they can only see the husk, the corpse sitting in my chair.

What happened?

The person I could trust most, at the time I needed that trust most, left me. Pulled the rug from under my feet and even though they claim nothing happened, something did.

But what?

It's familiar, that's what stings most. Like a painful memory tied to a joyous tune, a sweet smell, a soft touch. Twisting it, corrupting it, burying the good to act as fertilizer for this new evil growing.

What happened?

It hurts to smile again, the darkness clouds my vision and my mind. Even the words I command are rebelling against my wishes, twisting themselves into something I never wanted to see.

What happened?

I slip through the door, out of the room, hearing the joyful noise behind me, always behind me, no matter where I turn. Where is it coming from, and why do I remember seeing it once?

What happened?

I stumbled. I fell. I hit the floor hard. My dreams and joy rushing out ahead, not noticing I wasn't with them anymore, or maybe they just don't care.

What happened?

I let Hope lie to me again. And I deserve every second that comes after

Christian Welker

## Fear and Reprieve (2021)

I met the love of my life at a Christmas festival In my hometown.  
The place I grew up.  
The place I still fear. In that moment,  
Nervously reaching for Dev's hand for the first time, I was less  
afraid. Less afraid than the summer events Where HE was  
handing candy to children, how cliché.  
That night I wasn't worried about the picture booth Outside the  
theater where HE was Santa.  
HE had someone's child on his lap, immortalize In a frame on  
someone's mantle.  
That following summer, the same streets, I did feel the fear. An-  
other town wide event.  
Another glimpse at HIS comfortable life.  
I ask Devyn, now my boyfriend, if he  
Thinks the devil goes to therapy.  
This past summer, home from college.  
I stand behind a counter,  
Blue apron covered in mess, wondering if HE will show up.  
Devyn can't protect you here.  
But then he does. My now fiancé does  
Walk through the door, smiling, my  
Future mother-in-law behind.  
The safest customers I could ask for.  
I am still afraid, but now in the  
Midst of reprieve. The safety of a trustworthy man.

Mary Chichester

## Girl in the Mirror

I burned you out of my journal when I was fifteen.  
I acknowledged you with written word  
then set fire to your name.  
I did not want you,  
did not ask for you,  
and I thought I could cure you with flame,  
thought I'd never have to hear your name  
gain  
and again you came back  
until I could no longer deny  
that you can't split atoms  
without extreme impact.  
You can't burn a part of yourself away,  
it doesn't work that way,  
and I'm starting to accept  
that you're here to stay.





In March, I shaved my head. It felt like the right thing to do. The world was shutting down as a pandemic spread rapidly across our globe, and the next day, my best friend Zach and I would start driving across the country from our school in rural New York, unsure of what kind of America we would find, heading “home” to live with his family in Washington. My extended family lives in Washington too, but sometimes it’s easier to accept the kindness of strangers than to rely on the people you love.

I looked at myself in the mirror the morning we left, and I didn’t recognize the girl I saw. I had momentarily forgotten that the night before, my friends had gathered to cut chunks of hair off my head, piece by piece, until Lael finally buzzed it smooth. It was almost a ceremony, a ritual of sorts. And looking back, there will always be a physical reminder of the time before COVID and the time after. I put my hand to my head, the remaining hairs prickling my palm, and I felt distant. It was a bold thing to shave my head, but I did not feel bold that morning with so much unknown looming before me.

I felt exposed without my hair, my bare head on display for the wondering eyes of the few classmates that remained, nothing to shelter me from the cool morning air that hung heavy that day. Heavy. My head was lightened of its burden---long hair, or in my father’s words, “a woman’s beauty.” Yet I still felt heavy. Heavy with loss. It was so sudden, the breaking away from friends I thought I had more time with.

“It’s so you,” Chelsea told me as she hugged me goodbye. “Hella gay,” Mary told me with a wink, and I smiled sheepishly, feeling both validated and yet uncomfortable with my sexuality, a journey that was still so new and scary to me. Going to a conservative Christian school where most people, including myself at the time, are closeted, you learn quickly to show your “gayness” in subtle ways. Suddenly shaving my head didn’t seem subtle.

Our school passed slowly by my window as we drove away, “Unchained Melody” by Lykke Li playing over the speaker. I wanted to reach out with one desperate hand to grab hold of it, this place that I held so close to my heart. I wanted to stop time, to have some semblance of control. Grief spilled over not in tears,

but in nausea. I could have vomited. It turns out there is little we can control in this life. Few things are constant.

As our journey across the country began, I was surprised at what insecurities shaving my head would unveil. I suddenly felt like the last piece of my femininity was stripped away. I found myself scrambling for ways to defend and prove my woman-ness. “So, you’re going for the butch vibe?” my older brother asked, to which I responded defensively, “Don’t call me that. I’m not butch.”

I’ve always hated gender norms. When I was a kid, we would play a game. “Look at your nails,” we would say to each other, and depending on if they inspected their nails by straightening out their hand, back side up, or curling their hand toward their palm, they were either a girly girl or a tomboy. “I’m just a girl,” I would say. But I was the girl who played sports and ran around in the mud and wrestled the boys, so naturally, I was thrown into the tomboy category. And I hated it.

But in high school, when all the girls were wearing makeup and cute dresses, I did too. It didn’t feel natural, but this is what you should want to wear, I would try to convince myself. I put on the dresses, the makeup, the smile, until one day I looked at myself in the mirror and decided I couldn’t, I wouldn’t, conform to these “rules” anymore. I stopped wearing make-up. I stopped shaving. I stopped dressing up to impress people, finding myself more and more often in jeans, T-shirts, and slides. I made a pact with myself, that I wouldn’t do anything to alter my appearance unless I could look myself in the mirror and know that it was something I wanted, not something they expected.

So here I am, looking at myself in the mirror in a McDonald’s bathroom in the middle of the Midwest, on my way across a country that is shutting down, contemplating how I will ever FaceTime my parents and show them what I’ve done (maybe I’ll only call them by audio for the rest of my life), and I have to make myself a promise. I made the choice to shave my head because it felt right. It was the most genuine thing I could have done, and to try to “defend” my femininity would be to give in to the world and their boxes. I shaved my head to unbox myself, and I wouldn’t be boxed again.

“This is me.” I said to myself. “You are enough, you are so enough.” I got my to-go McCafe coffee, got back in the car, and as we drove into the COVID ridden world of unknown that lay ahead, I chose to be bold.

Sarah Halvorson

### The Peoples' Song

You try to quell our voices  
You try to stop our pride  
But we will not be silenced  
Until we turn the tide

The system here is broken  
You fear the truth we tell  
Until the world's awoken  
We'll fight the lies you sell

We are the people  
You cannot silence us  
We are the youth  
You cannot censor us  
We are the church  
You cannot quiet us

Sarah Halvorson

Special thanks to this issue's featured artists

Mary Hannah Kennedy - Interior art

Sarah Rocha - Cover art

Sarah Halvorson - Poetry & Prose

This issue is dedicated to Noah Hodgkins, a great artist and an important member of our community.





THE LANTERN