LOW RESIDENCY MFA PROGRAM

around the bend



ISSUE 14

Kindness, Gratitude and Hope

It's December 7th, National Joy Day according to the wide world. This day encourages random acts of kindness, but I prefer to practice gratitude first, which ultimately leads to kindness for others and for myself. Having just read my fellow grad student, Jamie Zimmerman's essay, I felt it appropriate to share it on this first page of our last issue of the year. This time of year is often stressful for many, and I am grateful for the pause this piece gave me.

I am grateful for the narrator's vulnerability, insight, and confession regarding long showers. I am guilty of long showers too. It's hard not to feel guilt when the Water Police circles our Vegas neighborhood every other day. In my defense, long showers don't occur every day, and my husband does water our garden with the bathwater. The narrator's words, like long showers, are transformational. There is a lightness in her cadence that carries the burden of her experience. Her writing is gratitude in action.

Jamie's words gave me what I didn't know I needed today. Hope.

Anniversaries

by Jamie Zimmerman

I see a lot of "happy" anniversaries. Wedding anniversaries, dating anniversaries, pet adoption anniversaries. I see these anniversaries on Facebook and Instagram, pictures of a couple smiling, his arm wrapped around her shoulder, her arm snuggled around his waist. Every so often, I see these anniversaries in real life, too. Sometimes I'm even the person taking the picture for the couple, and occasionally, although this feels rare lately, I'm the one in the picture.



What I don't see flooding social media or in the greeting cards aisle of the pharmacy are the non-celebratory anniversaries. I've never seen a card that says, "Break up Anniversary! You did it babe! You made it through a year!" With an inside inscription like, "I know this season may bring up difficult feelings but remember how far you've come. You are loved and supported, and when this damn life feels like an underground rollercoaster with no seatbelt, know I'm right here, ready to throw my hands up with you and scream until we laugh!" I've never seen a single card like that. I've never seen one of those singing cards, you know, the ones with a small device that plays music when the card is opened, that doesn't say something like "Happy Birthday you old fart!" while it plays Bad to the Bone either, but I'd like to.

Maybe it's due to the societal silence around less attractive anniversaries that I don't notice the other anniversaries when they arrive, at least not until they scoop every drop of air out of the room, or in this case, the car. Then, of course, I remember them.

In the small bite of time between Thanksgiving & New Year's Day last year, surrounded by Christmas songs and walls decked with the shimmer of tinsel trees, I lost a battle with my mind.

It felt a lot like losing my mind completely or at least losing access to all the healthy parts of it. We call what I had Depression. I like to call it Shower-Sits though, because that sounds much cuter and it's exactly what happens when depression sinks in. I sit and sit and sit for longer and longer in the shower and aimlessly wonder why I won't get up. I imagine the shower wonders too. "Why is this lady sitting with my shower spout on? I have a bathtub. Why didn't she fill it? Hmmmm, humans are weird!"

Now, it is five days after Thanksgiving, 370 days later, and it is my one-year Shower-Sits anniversary. One moment I'm driving down the 101, windows down, music up, Taylor Swift's "It's me, hi! I'm the problem, it's me!" lyrics bouncing off my tongue, sea salt smell caressing the air, and the sparkles of green in my eyes are basically making out with the endless ocean view. The next moment, I am sitting right there in the very same seat with the very same windows down, the very same music up, the very same sea salt air, the very same ocean, and I can see none of it. I can smell none of it. I can hear the music but now I'm not singing. Now, I'm silently repeating. "It's me. Hi. I'm the problem, it's me."

I can still drive. I can still see the cars in front of me. I can still use my turn signal properly. I function in the mechanical ways a person is trained to function. But in the instant my body remembered my anniversary, memory ripped the warm glow of sunshine I've become accustomed to lately out of my chest. And now I am scared. Scared of myself. Scared of my mind. Scared of losing my mind, again. All while still repeating, "I'm the problem, it's me".

It's been six days since that car ride. I've cried. I've showered and not sat. I've binge watched Law & Order. I've baked muffins. I've eaten those muffins. I've had dreams with such a blow they rattle me to tears. I've attended two yoga classes. I sobbed in one, laughed in the other. I've sat in my fur-filled apartment and surrendered to the actuality; I cannot control Depression. There's absolutely no guarantee it won't button itself to my sleeve. And that still scares me. A lot. But I surrendered to something else, too. Something to make me a little less afraid. A little tweak in sister Swift's lyrics. "I'm not the problem, it's not me." And so, if Depression returns and breathes its melancholy breath into my lungs, I will not blame myself. I will reach out and get help. I will utilize my community.

But for now, I will remember I am here, not there. I will smile, and mean it, and who knows, maybe I'll start creating those other anniversary cards I want to see.

-Jamie Zimmerman



SOCIAL | TIMESTAMP

It's 2002. Spring term, second year of your BFA in Photography. Some guy from the 'fancy' camera store on Queen Street East in Toronto is visiting your digital imaging class and showing off his Adobe skills He's brought all the latest Apple gear, the iMac G4 wired to a monitor (bigger than your TV if you could afford one), along with a Hasselblad medium format camera, attached to a \$40,000 digital back. You're still happy with your analog sytem, your polaroids, but you'll stop and listen. He's talking about the future of the Image Arts. Your future!

You wonder whether you'll buy groceries this week or choose rolls of Ektachrome and a box of that sexy 20x48 Kodak print paper they can't keep in stock, and you need to finish your camera-less term project on 9/11. It's safe to say you're happy and hopeful about your creative process and the endless potential of your career in photography.

Tickled by what's about to happen, he displays a landscape image. You immediately recognize it as one of your peers'. It's a Spring landscape with all the traditional elements. "Pay attention," he says, "What happens if your client doesn't like it. No problem." He clicks the mouse, and the photograph transforms into a snowy white Winter scene. He scans the room, excited by our defeated faces. "Don't like Winter? How about Summer" *click*, "or Fall", *click*, "or who needs trees?' *click*!

You hear the air seeping out of the bodies in the room. The excitement of new possibilities? Non-existent. Suddenly you wonder: is it necessary to know how to bracket for optimal exposure, to dodge and burn in the darkroom, to compensate for low light, or to wait for the perfect natural light. Defunct, passe, obsolete?

Everything you thought you knew, thought was necessary, thought you understood, has just been demolished by the mere click of a plastic, wired mouse. That moment stays with you.

Twenty years later, you're very close to completing your MFA in writing and you can taste the printed paper. You're excited and hopeful. You open your browser, and this thing called OpenAI, *ChatGPT* falls out. 'It may mean the death of the college essay,' *The Atlantic* states, 'This is a great triumph for the chatbot, an unflattering reflection on the average American college student, and a real conundrum for teachers everywhere.'

You delve deeper for greater clarity. You give the 'Chatbot' a writing prompt based on your thesis, and are somewhat amazed and abundantly terrified by the result.

You remember that moment in 2002. You will not let this sway you. You hang with the chatbot a little more. Confirm your purpose. With resolve, you think, "okay, this is an interesting tool, but it will not replace me."

Like anything that appears threatening when new or unknown, it requires attention. You listen. Eventually, you decide it's fun to play with. You decide it can be useful in the formulation of pointed questions. The more specific and detailed your question, the more profound the response (here, the use of profound is disingenuous).

Then you remember you speak German. You glance at the ol' chatbot sideways and type a question. Of course! It composes a lovely sonnet about the state of being German in your mother tongue, which tugs at your heartstrings ever so briefly. You ignore that the bot completes a verse faster than you can string a compound word together.

You repeat: "ChatGPT will not replace the writer." Just like all the pixels did not replace the photographer. Someone still must frame the information, gather it, light it and love it. That's the truth.

You consider how this could be a tool to use for good. You smile as you type your request.

Dear Husband,

I hope this letter finds you well. I wanted to remind you that the garbage needs to be taken out tonight. I know that you have a lot on your mind, and that it can be difficult to keep track of things sometimes, but it's important that we stay on top of the household chores.

Taking out the garbage is one of those tasks that can easily slip through the cracks, especially when you're dealing with ADD. But it's important that we make a habit of taking care of it on a regular basis. Not only will it help keep our house clean and tidy, but it will also prevent any unpleasant smells or pests from invading our home.

I know that you're capable of remembering to take out the garbage, and I have faith in your ability to make it happen. But if you need any help, or if you need me to remind you, please don't hesitate to let me know. I'm here to support you, and to help you in any way that I can.

Thanks for being such a great husband, and for all that you do for our family. I know that together, we can accomplish anything.

With love, Your Wife.

FACULTY | JOY MANESIOTIS

Joy Manesiotis is the newest faculty member of our Low Residency Program. We welcome her and are thrilled to have her talent, skill, and insight. Joy has joined the faculty to teach Poetry, but her experience and knowledge go far beyond that.

Joy Manesiotis is the author of three collections of poems, *A Short History of Anger*, chosen by Brenda Hillman for The New Measure Poetry Prize (forthcoming, Free Verse Editions/Parlor Press), Revoke (forthcoming, Airlie Press), and They Sing to Her Bones, which won the New Issues Poetry Prize.

Poems and essays have appeared in literary journalsand anthologies, including The American Poetry Review, Poetry, Massachusetts Review, Virginia Quarterly Review, and Poetry International, as well as in translation, in the Romanian journal, Scrisul Romanesc.

Manesiotis has received fellowships and residencies from New York Foundation for the Arts, the Graves Award, and Ragdale Foundation and her poems were dropped over Nicosia, Cyprus as part of Spring Poetry Rain, an international cultural event to help foster peace in the last divided city in Europe.

Can you talk about your upcoming book, A Short History of Anger?

The story spans centuries but the events this piece explores began during World War I. After the war, the rising powers in Turkey, didn't recognize the treaty brokered by Britain and France, which granted territory, including Smyrna, to Greece. Nor did they recognize the arriving Greek army, which pushed inland from Smyrna and set about destroying villages and laying claim to territory. The ensuing conflict ended in the Turkish army's takeover of Smyrna and the brutal massacre of Smyrna's Greek citizens, known as the Destruction of Smyrna, or in Greece, simply as The Catastrophe. Few Greeks escaped the Destruction, as the city burned and they were driven into the sea, literally, by the Turkish army; the Allienaval fleets at anchor in the harbor offered no refuge, and instead, broadcast music to mask the sound of screaming. Subsequently, all Orthodox Christians were moved to Greece and all Muslims to Turkey in a mandatory population exchange brokered by the Greek and Turkish governments and supported by the international powers, creating a humanitarian

nightmare of unprecedented scale.

One of the first state sponsored ethnic cleansings and forced migration in Europe in the 20th century, The Destruction of Smyrna is an event about which the world has remained strangely silent. Smyrna was a model of how people of disparate cultures and religions—Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews—could coexist peacefully and build a vibrant culture. Today, that culture does not exist.

The story also draws from my family's history. Many members of my family were lost in that massacre: my great uncle buried alive, another cousin dismembered; and those in my maternal grandparents' families who did survive forcibly exiled from their native Smyrna.

Given its hybrid form, the book lends itself to adaptation in dramatic form, spoken aloud by many voices. I have adapted the text into *A Short History of Anger: A Hybrid Work of Poetry and Theatre*, composed of a Speaker and Greek Chorus, which has been performed at various international festivals and universities in Europe and the U.S. The live performance, with readers drawn from the local community, is a stylized poetic reading with some basic theatrical elements and simple stage movement.

Share something about your work in the visual arts, theater.

I've already talked about adapting my book for the stage. In addition, I have a BFA in visual art and I worked as a film editor for many years before beginning to teach. So, I tend to bring all those influences—theatre, visual art, film—into my writing and my teaching.

What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I was given many gifts by my teachers (and by my brilliant friends), so I am compelled to pass on the gift, as best I can. Also, in teaching, we become ambassadors for art, which especially in this culture, seems a radical, political act. And of course, I love to watch my students grow, to witness their discoveries and to help them through the more difficult passages.

Share the most important thing for a grad student to do or remember when completing their MFA.

This time of being able to focus so fully on your work is a gift. Remember that this is a fluid process,

FACULTY | **JOY MANESIOTIS** CONT.

one that will buoy you beyond the earning of the degree. Think about establishing habits that will carry you into your writing life and cultivate friendships with other writers so you can hold hands once you fall through The Great Post-Graduation Trap Door and make your way into your writing lives.

What do the words 'writers block' mean to you?

All writers experience what we call 'writers block' at some point in their writing lives. But I think perhaps in using that term, we misunderstand some-thing fundamental about the creative process. We seem to have applied an industrial model to the mak-ing of art. I am not sure is it helpful, or even desir-able, to be pumping out art as if we were literature-ex-truding machines. Fallow times, silence, not-knowing, darkness all seem to me to be essential in cultivating an inner life that feeds the writing process. When we are not putting words on the page, it does not necessarily mean we are not working, that some less-than-accessible part of the self is not, in fact, 'working' or developing the next thing Photo Credit: William Vasta we will make.

Amen to that! What advice would you give to a writer working on their first book?

One of my graduate school mentors spoke a lot about locating the ambition in the work, not for the work. In other words, keep focused on the page and what it requires of you, not what the book might, or might not do, if it is published.

Do you have a regular writing practice? If so, please describe what it is?

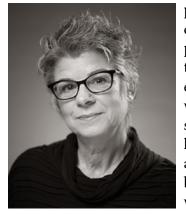
I am not sure my particular writing practice would be useful for anyone else. But I do think it im-portant to discover/create a set of rituals that signals to the psyche that writing time is beginning, i.e., a set of rituals that brings the writer to the page. And it is important to show up, in a regular way, whether we want to or not. And to stay there, even if it is uncom-fortable—or maybe precisely because it is uncomfort-able—to see what that space will yield. And stay there, too, through the exhilarating moments.

What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I was given many gifts by my teachers (and by my brilliant friends), so I am compelled to pass on the gift, as best I can. Also, in teaching, we become ambassadors for art, which especially in this culture, seems a radical, political act. And of course, I love to watch my students grow, to witness their discoveries and to help them through the more difficult passages.

What's your favorite and least favorite thing about publishing?

Everything? Okay, that was a joke. It is im-portant, at some level, for work to find its audience. And there are whole theories about the work being com-



pleted by its audience—but that discussion is for another time. perhaps. Publishing, in this country, has become a very difficult endeavor, all the way around—for writers and publishers, at least small publishers. The smaller houses really do the work as an act of love which we should all be grate-ful for, in that they keep work alive in the world that the larger, com-mercial publishers

can't, or won't, handle. The interface of capitalism and art is most often not fruitful for art, unfortunately.

Tell us about Argentine Tango. What do you love about it?

Do you have endless time? I can talk about Argentine tango endlessly! So, I will try to corral myself here. At its best, Argentine tango is a nonverbal conversation between two people who come together to create something beautiful—and ineffable, ephemeral—together. Like all art forms, it is bigger than any one of us, so there is endless opportunity to keep growing.

The dance contains many metaphors: each dancer must maintain their own axis—and so, dances their own dance—yet together, they create a third, larger expression; it is not a mirror dance but a con-versation of invitation and acceptance; we dance the silence as well as the music. And Argentine tango is the dance of duende.

How delightful. Tango as 'an endless opportunity to keep growing.' That certainly inspires the writing. Thank you, Joy.

RESIDENCY RECAP | STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Residency is filled with accelerated learning, new ideas, insight, unexpected realizations, and the strengthening of our writing relationships.

With that in mind, I reached out to the collective who participated and asked them to share some teaching moments. Here's what was shared:

Ellen Waterston, as always, a true advocate for community, taught:

"You must never forget the community aspect of writing. The gifts that each of you in this program have with words and how you can tell a story leaves you with a great responsibility to keep creating and bringing voices to your experiences. They matter."

Chris Boucher on structure in the Narrative Design class:

"We know the tree. Let's go out onto the limbs and see what's there to learn."

Beth Alvarado asked the prompting questions that move the work forward:

"Who is your work in conversation with?"

Geronimo T. Johnson on not over-writing a serious scene or character:

'Be cold to be cruel!"

Kaui Hart Hemmings, on dialogue:

"Sit in a cafe and eavesdrop. Real life is a great place to draw inspiration. Every sentence (not just dialogue) should have at least two jobs" and "trust the reader, by not giving away any more information than they need in each moment."

Irene Cooper on

-writing poetry:

"Use everything. Write what it is about, not what it means. Start with the political and arc with the personal (or do it in reverse).

-performing poetry:

"Teach people how to be an audience for your work."

Quotes collected throughout residency:

"Sometimes you start with the inventory." - Shelby Edwards

"After all the shit in life, we suffer together." -Chris Robb

"We can only do what we can do, but we damn well better." - Unknown

"It doesn't matter when or where you were born, you are hinged to your history." - Imke Wernicke

"What is our work, in this wounded world?" - Kathleen Dean Moore

"Poetry happens in the body." From Irene's poetry workshop

WRITING | ORIGINAL OFFERINGS

For our final issue of 2022, we have a number of students who contributed. Ella Beyer a first year grad student has offered the piece below. She explained that it was inspired by a writing prompt from Kaui's Fiction class, based on Lorrie Moore's, 'How to Become a Writer.'

An Excerpt

You learn to read the summer you turn thirteen. You devour the anemic selection of fiction at the public library. Redwall. Mossflower. The Chronicles of Narnia. Your favorite place to read is the woods behind your house in a stand of pine trees that smell like earth and rain. You scavenge for more books. Peeling paperbacks from a garage sale you pay for in stolen quarters from the ashtray where your parents keep change. The Lord of the Rings series from the Church donation bin where your mom also gets your clothes for the new school year. The only clothes that fit you are boys clothes. Your mom says you look cute but your sister is too virtuous to lie to you, but it doesn't matter because you spend the next year living in Middle Earth. Soon there are too many books per square foot of floor space. The Wind in the Willows. The Call of the Wild. 10,000 Leagues Under the Sea. You need shelves. Decide to build shelves. You have no power tools, no materials, no money. You draw up a plan in your notebook, in the margins where you rewrote the final page of a story you loved, but decided the ending was unsatisfying. Scavenge wood from a dumpster behind a cabinet shop. Wear a black hoodie and throw whatever you can into your mom's hatchback. Your heart is pounding because you are sure that the next car you hear is going to be the cops ready to arrest you for burgling a dumpster. You are pretty sure this is a crime. Dig up the bricks your dad is using to border the garden. Assemble. Stack the books three deep. Sleep with no less than five books in the bed beside you. This is safety. Dune. Ringworld. The Count of Monte Cristo. East of Eden. A Mid-summer Night's Dream. Tangled up in the sheets and inside your head as the words seep from the page and into your brain as you sleep. Ignore your sister when she complains. Discover poetry. Teasdale. Whitman. Neruda. Your first heartbreak will be e.e. cummings. Mourn that you will never get to read all the books in the world since one lifetime is not enough.

Go visit your grandmother in Italy when you are fifteen. She teaches you how to read Tarot and cheat at *Scopa*. She sends you to Gabriella to learn how to make the best *gnocchi*, to Nicolina who takes you into the woods to forage for mushrooms and *verdura*. Elena reads your future in the grounds at the bottom of an *espresso* cup. Christina whispers to you that hidden inside the germ of a garlic clove is poison you can use against your enemies to give them the *malocchio*. Your grand-mother explains how the women survived the Nazi occupation despite the unspeakable things war did to them. None of these women can read or write but they pass their traditions down through language that transcends the written word, in a dialect that will die with them. Learn there is magic in things lost to time.

-Ella Beyer

WRITING | ORIGINAL OFFERINGS

During the Creative Non-Fiction Workshop, there was a writing prompt based on the poem, 'Neighbors.' Shelby Edwards shares a poem, 'Tables," based on that prompt.

Neighbors by David Allan Evans.

They live alone together,

She with her wide hind and bird face, he with his hung belly and crew cut.

They never talk but keep busy.

Today they are
washing windows
(each window together)
she on the inside,
he on the outside,.
He squirts Windex
at her face,
She squirts Windex
at his face.

Now they are waving to each other with rags,

not smiling.

Tables

On Thursdays

she sits at the table in the corner back to the wall, a four top, papers spread, notebook, the kind that opens flat, a computer which often stays shut, she writes with black ink

he sits at the table across the isle, diagonal adjacent, back to the corner, a two-seater, graceful hands with long fingers, type-typing, efficient but intermittent, forehead often in concentration

she drinks chai in a blue ceramic cup with a saucer

he drinks a hazelnut latte with cinnamon in a mug

this Thursday it is raining and he is sitting facing the corner adjacent

- Shelby Edwards

In her Poetry Workshop, Irene Cooper said, "write what it is about, not what it means." It sounds pretty simple, but it can be quite challenging. At this point in my poetry journey, I am aware when that happens, the flow, the quiet elegance of the words, effortlessly arranged. Shelby has achieved this here with her poem.

WRITING | ORIGINAL OFFERINGS

At the student reading, Tava Hoag, a second-year Creative Non-Fiction student, read this excerpt from her growing essay collection.

'Baths in the Bucket'

"My mother would sit on the edge of the dock, legs moving absently through the water, watching me swim out to the buoy where the weeds grew taller and caressed my legs. Legs that had begun to grow their own weeds of hair, dark against my pale skin. The coolness of the water slipping between my thighs felt invigorating, an invisible barrier being broken. Skinny dipping made me feel part of the lake. I would escape beneath the surface, twisting, writhing, turning, letting my body do all of the things adolescence seemed to be stealing from me. One summer day we planned to take a family photo. I was wearing a blue bikini and climbed onto the deck railing to sit with my other cousins. My aunt motioned me aside. "Hide those" she gestured back and forth between my breasts. I folded a towel tightly around my body, slouching away from view. Bowed by the weight of my womanhood. The picture was framed and set on a table with others. Each time I see that towel I swallow my shame."

- Tava Hoag

A Sonnet from a collection on Loss, by second year student, Imke Wernicke.

I saw

Mnemonic jellyfish everywhere — underfoot, sand-covered, this the price of admission to the Mallorca seaside, where I find cradled by the sea the swollen indigo corpse of a man in the middle of his life, and still I relished the sweet plump purple onion at the beach cafe, since we had biked brakeless down the hill, me only five, breath barely holding; and then a little older, my still tiny hands, pressed to my chest, as my eyes caught a blade, like the sun a mirror, as it entered a man's frame, collapsing like the folding blue bicycle I got for Easter the year before; and then a decade later, I waited for the paramedic to resuscitate the body of the customer, I'd instructed in the art of cruise control, a man who in the sunset of his life had crossed an ocean so he could behold the Rockies, their icy glaciers deep blue like his skin; then this ripple effect: my skin, thin and unguarded, endured my lover's plane crash, a father's overdose, a noose for her husband's willing neck. Is there a heart prepared enough, to keep grief brief?

- Imke Wernicke

RESIDENCY | PIXELS OF COMMUNITY



FORWARD - OPEN CALLS

KENYON REVIEW

The staff of **New Limestone Review**, the literary journal of the University of Kentucky's MFA in Creative Writing program, is pleased to announce we are currently open for submissions. If you, your colleagues, your students, or any others engaged in creative writing work would like to submit, we'd love to read your work! **Ends on December 31, 2022**

New Limestone Review considers submissions of fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, and art in the fall and spring for publication in our online literary review. We also consider work that defies, bends, and hybridizes genre. Please see our <u>detailed submission guidelines and access our Submittable page</u>.

Established in 1986, New Limestone Review (originally Limestone) has published work from internationally-recognized poets Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon and from many noted Kentucky writers, including Wendell Berry, Gurney Norman, Ed McClanahan, Frank X Walker, Maurice Manning, Nikky Finney, and Holly Goddard Jones.

At New Limestone Review, we seek to bring groundbreaking works of literary art to the web and to a national audience.

Please feel free to reach out to us limestone.uky@gmail.com with any questions.



SPECTRUM LITERARY JOURNAL

at UC Santa Barbara is excited to share that we are accepting submissions for this year's edition, Volume 66. If you know of any students and/or colleagues currently engaged in creative work, we'd love for you to pass along our submission call to those who might be interested!

Spectrum Literary Journal is an annual publication of art and literature based out of UC Santa Barbara's College of Creative Studies. For the past 65 years, the magazine has celebrated a spectrum of voices, genres, and topics reflective of the wide range of human experiences, from both new and established writers. We're particularly passionate about work that defies, bends, or manipulates genre, and we welcome submissions of prose, poetry, visual art, and hybrid literary forms.

Volume 66 will be published in June 2023, and we will be accepting submissions until midnight on **December 31st, 2022**. Visit spectrum.ccs.ucsb.edu/submission-guidelines for more information and to submit your work.

To learn about our past volumes and stay up to date, check out our social media! You can find us at <u>@spectrum lit</u> on Twitter. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us at spectrum@ccs.ucsb.edu with any questions.

We are so excited to read your work.

