

An aerial photograph of a vast, turbulent ocean. The water is a deep, dark teal color, with numerous white-capped waves breaking across the surface. The perspective is from directly above, looking down at the churning water. The text 'becoming' is centered in the upper half of the image in a white, serif font.

becoming

brigitte gong

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*Every beginning  
is only a sequel, after all,  
and the book of events  
is always open halfway through.*

- Wislawa Szymborska

## introduction

I decided to take this class my final semester as an undergrad student for a number of reasons. The biggest reason is that, before this class, I was in one of the longest creative ruts I've been in recently. I had filled my schedule with extracurricular activities and found no time to sit down and really think through the ideas I had, so I ended up not making anything all semester. It was frustrating, and maybe it was also stress, but not doing anything creatively for such a long time made me feel incomplete. I didn't really "need" to take this class, since I had already met my graduation requirements, but I definitely needed it in a different way. I hoped it would pull me out of this rut and give me inspiration to create something I could be proud of.

Of course, I should have known it would give me much more than that.

Throughout this class, I gained a much better understanding of writing as a craft and not simply as a means to an end (i.e. research papers for class, mostly). I've always considered myself a decent writer but stopping to consider my choices was something I had rarely done before, and this class challenged me to do that frequently. The prompts in this class also forced me to be more personal than I had any intention of being, but if I'm being honest, I don't know any other way to write. The pieces in this collection essentially serve as a time capsule for my time in Boston - a time I'm sure I'll always have mixed feelings about but nonetheless played a significant part in allowing me to become who I am today.

Aside from the quality of my own work, this class helped reinvigorate my love for all art, not just writing. In the class I took with Ellen previously, I distinctly remember her saying that "everything is a poem," which is something I've always felt I half-understood at best. This class not only helped clarify that statement for me, but also made me realize how inspiration can truly be found everywhere - in your phone's camera roll, in music, in the news, and most importantly, in each other's work. In fact, the best work I produced for this class came directly from borrowing/translating/stealing from other people, and in the process, made me think about what it means to be an artist more generally. To quote John Green:

*“Art-making is not optional for humans, and it’s not reserved only for certain kinds of humans. We’ve made art during every crisis, amid every kind of deprivation...we were painting on walls before we could make walls. We made art before we domesticated animals or planted crops...you are an artist if you make art. Any kind of art, at any time.”*

Which to say - this class has been a beautiful reminder of what it means to be an artist and to have a place in this long lineage of humanity, to converse with others through art, to make yourself and your work better through exchange and careful observation, and mostly - to pay “an extraordinary kind of attention to life.”

## becoming

i.

*What is REAL?*

What does it mean to be happy?

*Does it hurt?*

What does it mean to be home?

*What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known and loved because it is known?*

*Real isn't how you are made. It's a thing that happens to you.*

To be happy is to no longer want, to feel the warmth of the sun on your face like a gentle caress, a promise of tenderness.

*Sometimes. When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.*

To be home means you can 把心放肚子里 (put your heart in your stomach) and not mourn the passing of time. The sounds of your mother's tongue wrap around you like a hug. Wherever home is, you know you will always return to it like a river flows into the ocean.

ii.

What does it mean to be young?

Did we ever feel young, anyway?

What is love?

*Don't you think maybe they are the same thing? Love and attention?*

Have you eaten already?

Aren't you going to be cold?

*How do you share your life with somebody?*

To be young is to feel like every sunset you see is the first, to believe with unwavering doubt in the existence of a tomorrow, that the world will be here for you when you return, that there is nothing you can't do if you only tried hard enough.

Yes. It wasn't enough.

It is the steadily burning fire that keeps you warm throughout the night.

You must tend to the fire to keep it going but it will, in turn, keep you alive.

Yes. It was enough.

No, I'll be fine.

**iii.**

What do you know about pain?

*Does it happen all at once... or bit by bit?*

Do you understand?

*What do you know about cruelty?*

Not enough to keep me from touching the stove when it's hot.

*You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.*

I hope so.

## dear boston,

I'm bad at goodbyes. I've never been good at saying them to people, let alone places, and I've rewritten this assignment about seven times by now trying to figure out what I want to say. I don't like Boston - I know this for sure - but trying to write honestly about my experience here has proven more difficult than I had imagined, mostly because it didn't feel overwhelming good or bad. The highs were high, yes, and there were a number of lows, but they were all scattered among many, many regular days. Too many days where I complained about how cold it was, sure, but otherwise nothing to write home about. Or is that simply because I had grown used to it? I know I've had life-changing experiences here but at this point in my life, it feels like all of that was just getting me ready for now, for my real life to begin. I'm restless thinking about it, and that restlessness has made me eager to move on, to run away from it all and not look back until it's too late. I know I will miss Boston. I don't know exactly what I will miss, but I fear it will be my youth, whatever that means, and more importantly, the many great people I've met here.

I still remember the day I moved into my freshman dorm. I had stayed with my mom's sister-in-law's sister or something like that - let's just call her my aunt - in Medford, and in the morning, we took a taxi into Boston because my aunt refused to drive in the city. She was the only person who helped move me in; when I left California, my dad was working in China, and my mom had to stay home to drive my sister to and from school and swim practice. I was too excited to feel sad, though, and a small part of me was even relieved my mom wasn't around to fuss over me. On the way up to my room, I shared the elevator with someone who immediately introduced himself to me. My suitemate, who I had never met before, treated me like we were old friends - she yelled my name with delight and gave me a huge hug when I arrived. Suddenly, all my nervousness about making new friends vanished. This was college, I thought, and it was different. It was easy.

People thought I was funny and cool, and I fed off that validation like it was a drug. It's unsurprising then that I was overwhelmingly selfish my freshman year, but understandably so - I had never experienced such freedom before and wanted to make use of every moment of it. Everything was within reach, and nothing was impossible; I could be whoever I wanted to be, go wherever I wanted to. I was drunk off the possibilities and quickly lost sight of what was important to me. I treated people poorly - my sister called me a lot that year, and I did a shitty job of keeping my promise to call her back. Years later in a bout of loneliness, I would finally understand how it

must have felt to be her, to have your only sister move across the country and seemingly forget about you as she made new memories.

If there was ever a year where I loved Boston, it was during my second year. I knew the city well enough to find a few favorite spots but everything else still had its novelty - the snow, the cobbled roads, the view of the city from the red line as it crossed the Charles. My best friend from home also visited me that year and getting to see the city through her eyes made me fall in love with it all over again. There was a certain charm in the old brownstones, in the architecture I never saw in California, that made me feel like I had finally found my footing. I had made friends too that year - actual friends that I cared deeply for, and the love I felt for them made me realize I didn't need to live a remarkable life as long as it was a good one, surrounded by people I cared for and who cared about me.

The next year, I started dating a shitty guy, mostly because I felt like I had to be dating someone, and we broke up before my fourth year and served on the same executive board immediately following the break-up. My heart wasn't broken, but I still cried, mostly for all the time I wasted with him and how I let myself be treated. I guess post-breakup was when Boston started to turn sour for me, though there were a multitude of things that made me start wishing I could leave it. I began to realize my moods were heavily informed by the weather; grey days induced sadness into me like I was a sponge, which would have been fine if those days hadn't lasted for months. But they did, and I didn't know how to deal with it. I went through a few friend break-ups too, which were just as bad as the romantic break-up.

Over time, I found myself overcome with the weight of the memories I had made whenever I tried to go anywhere in Boston. I didn't know how to parse through all the good and bad memories I made, and instead of sifting through it, I started to just hate the city instead. It was easier, and Boston certainly didn't offer me many reasons to stay. I found the choice of food lackluster and getting around always seemed more difficult than it needed to be. Mostly, it just feels easier to package my entire college career up into one place and move on. Maybe that's cowardly, but I can't mourn my past self and try to develop my future one at the same time. I'm scared I'll get trapped down a rabbit hole either wishing for the past or wishing for it to stop haunting me, and the only way I know how to escape is to leave altogether.

## the past is always here

If you think about it, we can only really be sure of the present. We can't accurately predict the future and the shape of the past shifts as quickly as the present ends. And yet – I find myself returning to past moments in my mind like a shark drawn to blood. Sometimes I get lost in the past, trapped in my longing for something simpler, easier, happier (maybe). Call it nostalgia or sentimentality or a completely pathetic inability to let go – point is, the past is not finished because it's always here. I can't escape it, or to be more precise, I don't know how. Or maybe I don't want to. Or maybe – it passed before I was ready for it to be over, and now I'm left chasing its shadow like a dog chases its own tail, round and round in a kind of pointless but nonetheless humorously foolish, infinite loop.

█ think about it, █  
be sure of the present. █  
predict the future and █ shape █ the past  
█ as the present ends. █  
I find myself returning █  
my mind like a shark drawn to blood. █  
█ lost in the past, trapped █  
longing for █  
simpler, easier, happier █. █  
nostalgia or sentimentality █  
a █ pathetic inability to let go █  
the past is █ finished because it's █  
here. I can't escape it, █  
I don't know how. Or maybe █  
█ it passed before █  
█ and now I'm left █  
chasing its shadow █ a dog █  
█ in a kind of pointless  
█ foolish, infinite loop.

## rice cooker

THE PAST. EXT. SCHOOL. DAY. 2014

Open on the exterior of a high school, no students in sight. The last bell rings and students pour out of classrooms, chatter filling the air as they discuss after-school plans. In the crowd, we see BRIGITTE (17) walk out of class with her best friend KELLY (17) and head towards their hang out spot. They clearly go to high school in California - the leaves have already turned but they're wearing few layers: t-shirts, flannels, and jeans.

BRIGITTE  
Library later?

Kelly nods. It's barely a couple months into the new school year but they've already created a routine of studying at the library after school. They round the corner to a row of tables under a big tarp, where a group of their friends are already waiting. VICKY (14), Brigitte's sister, walks towards them.

VICKY  
You ready?

BRIGITTE  
Yep.  
(turning to her friends)  
I'll see you guys later!

Her friends shout back their "see you's" as Brigitte and Vicky head towards the parking lot. They weave through the cars waiting in line to exit and stop at the car Brigitte drives - a silver Toyota Prius named Louis. It's not exactly hers but she drives to and from school everyday in it, so it might as well be.

VICKY  
Hey, Louis. How are you today?

BRIGITTE  
Louis!! Our boy! How are you?

INT. CAR. DAY. 2014.

They throw their stuff into the back seat and get in.

BRIGITTE

What should we listen to...

VICKY

I dunno, maybe /play that  
new Taylor Swift song.

BRIGITTE

OH I KNOW! /The Lorde  
concert is coming up, we  
should prepare for that.

VICKY

Ooh yes. Good idea.

Brigitte turns on “Ribs” by Lorde. They immediately begin to sing and dance to it. They start pulling out of the parking lot and onto the road. As they wait in the line to exit, Vicky pulls out her phone to take a Snapchat video of them dancing to the song and posts it to her story. We let the music play the rest of the time. The drive home is short and not very exciting; they pass multiple strip malls on the way and they all look the same. Brigitte clearly knows the drive well; she drives with one hand the entire time and is actively dancing to the song.

BRIGITTE/VICKY

(singing the lyrics)

And I've never felt more alone, it  
gets so scary getting old!

It's not a joyful song per se, but they find joy in this moment together. Later in the song, they split up the vocal parts, one echoing the other, like they've been doing this for years, which they have.

INT. GONG HOUSE. DAY. 2014

BRIGITTE/VICKY

(walking in from the garage door)

We're hooooome!

Brigitte and Vicky throw their things down in the foyer and walk into the open kitchen/living room/dining room area. They see their MOTHER (49) standing by the island, cutting up golden kiwis. Their mother doesn't look much older than 35, save for the roots of her hair, which are growing in grey instead of black.

MOTHER

Hey girls, how was school?

BRIGITTE

Eh it was okay. /Ooh golden kiwi! My  
favorite.

VICKY

/Fine.

MOTHER

Lots of homework?

They both nod. Mother finishes cutting the fruit and hands the two bowls to them.

MOTHER

(in Chinese)

Ok, eat this, have a small break.

BRIGITTE

Ok, I'm gonna go to /the  
library later.

VICKY

Is my /blue suit dry?

MOTHER

(to Brigitte)

Sure. You'll be home for dinner?

BRIGITTE

Yes.

Vicky opens her mouth to ask the question again, but before she can -

MOTHER

(to Vicky)

Yeah, I washed it yesterday.

Brigitte takes her bowl to the living room, plopping down on the couch and pulling out her phone. Vicky shoves a few bites into her mouth and runs off to change into her swimsuit.

MOTHER

(in Chinese)

Have you finished your college essay?

BRIGITTE

Nooooo...I'll do it this weekend.

MOTHER

Ok, well the deadline is soon-

BRIGITTE

Yeah I know I know.

MOTHER

You're the one that wants to go to  
Harvard, not me.

BRIGITTE

I know. I just don't know what to  
write about.

MOTHER

What about your ice skating?

BRIGITTE

Yeah...

Beat. Brigitte chews.

BRIGITTE (CONT.)

Oh, we're having a senior dress-up day  
on Friday. I'm gonna wear Dad's "no  
rain, no rainbows" shirt.

MOTHER

Ok, it should be in our closet.

INT. CLOSET. DAY. 2014.

Brigitte fishes around her parents' walk-in closet for a maroon shirt her dad

bought years ago on a family trip to Maui. He still wears it sometimes. She finds it and holds it up - the back of the shirt is a list of old adages but with a twist to them, e.g. “the best things in life aren’t things” and “never judge a day by the weather.” She smiles and folds it up.

INT. KITCHEN. LATER THAT EVENING. 2014.

Open on close-ups of someone cooking. Slicing scallions, onion, dicing up garlic. We cut to a wide and see it’s Brigitte and Vicky’s FATHER (50), a stout man deftly using the same meat cleaver for all of this. He opens their fridge and pulls open a drawer, well-stocked with different kinds of leafy vegetables. He picks one out and washes it, putting it aside for later. He throws a bunch of sauces into a bowl, measuring them all by eye. He dips a finger into the sauce to taste it and adjusts accordingly.

As this is happening, Brigitte walks in, home from the library. She puts her stuff down and throws the keys onto the counter.

BRIGITTE

Ooh, what’s for dinner?

FATHER

(without turning around)

Chicken! And yu choy.

BRIGITTE

Nice.

FATHER

Did you finish all your homework?

BRIGITTE

No, I still have to do French, but  
that won’t take long.

FATHER

Ok. You want to help me make rice?

BRIGITTE

Sure.

FATHER

You remember the trick I taught you?

BRIGITTE

Yeah, a few drops of olive oil, right?

Close-up shots of rice being poured into a bowl and washed. Brigitte fills the water up to the correct line in the bowl and walks it over to the rice cooker. She plops it in, carefully adds a few drops of olive oil and closes the lid. Interior shot so it looks like the lid is coming down on us. Cut to black, then cut to:

INT. DINING ROOM. EVENING. 2014.

The rice cooker lid opening and steam rising from it. Brigitte inhales the scent of fresh rice and carefully scoops it into bowls. She brings them to the dining table, where her sister and mom are already seated. They're talking about her upcoming swim meet schedule. Her father brings over a dish of steaming chicken in a teriyaki-like sauce, sits down, and they start to eat. Everyone at the table is busy, but never too busy for this - a family meal. We cut to:

EXT. GONG HOUSE. EVENING. 2014.

A shot of the family from outside. The warm glow of the light softens the hard edges of the window through which we see them, laughing and eating together. We slowly zoom out, the sound fading into...

**THE PRESENT.** EXT. SCHOOL. DAY. 2016.

...The final bell at school. Same exterior shot as before, students come pouring out. We see Vicky in the crowd, older and less energetic than earlier. She waves to a few people but keeps walking straight towards the curb, where-

VICKY

BRIGITTE???

Her sister is waiting in Louis (the silver Prius) for her.

INT. CAR. DAY. 2016.

BRIGITTE

What's up bitch?

VICKY

I didn't know you were gonna pick me  
up today!

BRIGITTE

Yeah well, Mom's stuck at work.

VICKY

Good. Now I can blast my music.

BRIGITTE

Fine. Just don't play 5SOS.

VICKY

Ugh, ok. They're good though!

They pull out of the pick-up area, and Brigitte hands her phone to her sister. She may not always agree with her taste but she's the older sibling so she has to say yes. Vicky gleefully takes the phone and doesn't put on 5 Seconds of Summer, her favorite boy band, but instead puts on the Les Mis soundtrack, specifically "I Dreamed a Dream." She starts singing along to it, not for fun but like she's practicing. Brigitte is skeptical at first but then tries to join in. It's obvious she can't carry a tune and Vicky shuts her up quickly. Brigitte feigns hurt and goes back to driving.

The route is different this time - instead of going home, they're going straight to Vicky's swim practice and Brigitte isn't as sure of where she's going.

VICKY

Oh, you can turn at the next light for  
a shortcut. Are you gonna pick me up?

BRIGITTE

Yeah.

VICKY

Good. We can get boba!

BRIGITTE

Yes! Ugh. Boba in Boston is just not as good.

VICKY

Yeah, you should just not go back.  
Just stay here.

BRIGITTE

You know I can't.

The song ends and the next one plays - another Les Mis song. Vicky goes back to singing as Brigitte thinks about why she went to Boston in the first place and how it has become harder to leave.

INT. GONG HOUSE. DAY. 2016.

Brigitte walks in through the front door, carrying all her sister's stuff in. She places them in the foyer and throws her shoes off.

BRIGITTE

Mom!!

No answer. She walks to the garage door and opens it - it's empty. Her mom is still at work. She sighs and walks back inside. Brigitte heads to the kitchen, opening the fridge and peering inside. Unlike before, it's not as well stocked. She opens the bottom drawer and pulls out an apple. She heads to the sink and washes it. She contemplates cutting and peeling it for a brief second (as her mom would do) before deciding to just eat it as is. She plops down on the couch and turns on the TV.

INT. LIVING ROOM. LATER THAT AFTERNOON. 2016.

Brigitte is sprawled out on the couch, asleep, apple core on the coffee table. Her mother walks into frame, throws the core away, turns the TV off, and pulls a blanket over her daughter.

LATER:

Brigitte stirs awake. She yawns loudly.

MOTHER (OFF-SCREEN)

(in Chinese)

Oh, she's awake!

BRIGITTE

Mm? What time is it?

She looks over to see her mother in the kitchen, preparing dinner. She's not as deft with the knife as her father was and generally seems more out-of-place in the kitchen. She's also clearly following a recipe, though it's written on a sticky note.

MOTHER

(in Chinese)

Almost 5. You should leave soon to pick up your sister.

BRIGITTE

Okay. We're gonna get boba.

MOTHER

Again? You'll still have room to eat?

BRIGITTE

Yeah, it's just boba.

Her mother looks skeptical but doesn't argue.

MOTHER

Ok, don't forget to bring her shake.

Brigitte gets up off the couch and walks to the kitchen to take out a chocolate protein shake from the fridge.

BRIGITTE

What's for dinner?

MOTHER

Chicken. And (in Chinese) bean curd.

BRIGITTE

Nice.

Brigitte grabs the keys from the table and walks out the door. Her mother goes back to cooking - her brow furrows as she measures out the spices for the chicken. Similar montage as before of Brigitte preparing the rice, but

now it's her mom and she's making quinoa. Same rice cooker though. The lid closes. Cut to black, then cut to:

INT. DINING ROOM. EVENING. 2016.

The rice cooker lid opening and Brigitte scooping out the quinoa.

BRIGITTE  
I miss rice.

VICKY  
You miss rice? How do you think I  
feel??

BRIGITTE  
Sorry. You really can't have any?

VICKY  
I mean I could, but then I wouldn't be  
able to breathe at practice.

BRIGITTE  
Right, ok.

The two of them bring their bowls over to the table and sit down. Their mother brings over the chicken and they start to eat.

MOTHER  
(looking at the clock)  
Mm, your dad should be awake now. You  
want to call him?

VICKY  
Yes!!

She pulls out her phone and FaceTimes their father. After a few rings, he picks up.

BRIGITTE/VICKY  
Dad!!

FATHER

Hey! You girls eating dinner?

BRIGITTE

Yep!

VICKY

We're having Mommy Chicken!

They turn the camera around to show him their food.

FATHER

Nice!

Vicky props the camera up on the table against the napkin holder so he can see the three of them at once.

FATHER

B, when do you go back to school?

BRIGITTE

Next week.

VICKY

Yeah, she's leaving us! Again!

Brigitte rolls her eyes.

FATHER

You ready?

BRIGITTE

I guess. I don't know.

FATHER

Your second year! Exciting.

VICKY

Hey, what about me! I'm in my THIRD year.

FATHER

Yeah, the busiest time. You have  
recruit trips coming up?

VICKY

Yeah, for Brown, Cornell, and Penn.

FATHER

Nice!

MOTHER

Yeah, but they're all back-to-back.  
Three weekends in a row. When is she  
going to have time for homework? I  
told her not to go to the Penn one.

VICKY

Ai yah, I can do it on the bus.

MOTHER

You'll want to sleep /on the  
bus.

BRIGITTE

I thought you wanted to  
/stay in California?

VICKY

(shrugging)

I mean, I might as well look at Ivy  
Leagues too.

They continue talking, and we pan out again. It's still a family dinner but it feels different - emptier than before. Maybe it's just that Brigitte and Vicky's father is in China, or maybe it's the reality of this discussion hitting them as they realize these family dinners will become less and less of a normal occurrence.



## notebook fragments

i.

2.18.20

*Tell me the name of god you fungal piece of shit*

*Can you feel your heart burning? Can you feel the struggle within? The fear within me is beyond anything your soul can make. You cannot kill me in a way that matters.*

1.24.20/1.27.20

how fucked up is it that anyone has to write an obituary for someone younger than 20\*, let alone your own child.

\*i checked later – he had turned 20 earlier that year actually.

no one tells you how to do this because young people aren't supposed to die. i don't know.

1.29.20

feeling young is to feel like every sunset you see is the first; to believe with unwavering doubt in the existence of a tomorrow, that the world will be here for you when you return, that there is nothing you can't do if you only tried hard enough.

3.4.20

*life cheated us all & i'm full of angst.*

i find it so difficult to describe this angst but it feels like some deep kind of restlessness with life, some inescapable desire to be anywhere else, to forget everything you've ever known for a little bit.

2.3.20

feeling kind of tired of being myself today, of being known by people.

i understand why people feel compelled to pray.

2.5.20

if i learned to want just the right amount  
then maybe i would never be hungry again

**ii.**

2.10.20

I miss the way the holidays make me feel,  
of waking up late and feeling like time is infinite,  
that there was never a rush to do anything,  
that time just existed for us and us alone.  
Time no longer feels like that any more,  
it's always moving too fast or occasionally too slow.

2.24.20

60-degree weather today, feels like hope.  
or maybe spring. maybe both?

1.12.20/1.15.20

the best days are the ones where  
i can rejoice in the simplest of pleasures:  
the wind in my hair, the sun on my skin,  
feeling like it's a goddamn miracle  
to have anyone to love in this world,  
let alone more people than you can  
count on your hands.

3.9.20

what is growing up but just learning  
how to say goodbye to people?

3.3.20

in the shower this morning i thought about  
what it's like to be young and i'm not sure  
i've ever felt young? is it a feeling anyway?

another abnormally bright & warm day in  
Boston for March and everything looks so  
beautiful. i'm starting to think maybe  
my love for this city is conditional,  
like maybe all love is conditional.

## a perfect goodbye

in my perfect goodbye,  
everything is neat and tidy, the way  
it should be. the sweater I threw  
onto the ground after a day of wear  
folds itself up into my dresser again.  
the books I piled on my windowsill  
organize themselves alphabetically, or  
maybe by color, depending on how  
they feel and what the weather is like.

the goodbye comes at the right time, too-  
there is no dilly-dallying, no feet-dragging,  
and certainly no counting of chickens before  
they're hatched. it comes when both  
parties are ready for something new, or  
perhaps something more familiar.  
there is no remorse in becoming strangers  
again, no regret in letting time do its thing,  
which is - make archaeologists of us all.

in my mind, the perfect goodbye leaves  
just the right amount unsaid. Schrodinger's  
Cat is both alive and dead, and maybe we'll  
never find out what happens to him.  
and isn't that preferable? isn't it better to  
stop the story before its inevitable messy  
end, to preserve hope as it is -  
pure, clean, honest, infinite.

but - who are we kidding? we all know  
better, and better is complicated, raw;  
a tender heart violent with emotion,  
overflowing with...something else.  
call it a soul, or a spirit, or star dust -  
it is everything but perfect. no  
goodbye is forecasted accurately. no  
will or science can change the  
fickle winds, the indecisive current.

# appendix



## a perfect goodbye - video



## becoming - video

## notes

The John Green quote in the introduction is from his video on the Vlogbrothers channel titled “I am an artist.” uploaded on April 7, 2020.

“becoming” borrows lines from *The Velveteen Rabbit*, *Little Women* (2019), *Lady Bird* (2017), *Her* (2013), and *High Life* (2018).

“dear boston,” was written after Joan Didion and Eula Biss’s “Goodbye to All That” essays.

“the past is always here” was written in response to this line from Kazim Ali’s book *Bright Felon*: “I use the present to understand the past is not finished.”

“rice cooker” was inspired by the structure of Greta Gerwig’s screenplay for *Little Women* (2019).

The photos on page 23 were taken by me on 35mm film in December of 2018. My dad attempted to teach my sister, my mom, and me how to make hand-pulled noodles.

“notebook fragments” is after Ocean Vuong’s poem of the same name and is a collection of thoughts I jotted down in the Notes app on my phone.

The photo on the front and back covers was taken by me on 35mm while on a boat in the Boston Harbor in June 2018. Text is set in Filosofia OT.

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