

THANAPATHY



hi, everyone! my name is coraline ismael karim, but most folks know me by “cora”. i first want to thank everyone for taking the time to read this magazine and absorb the message that cars kill. but what is this subject of “cars” representative of? i actually do not inherently mean a literal “car” but rather the dark symbolism it is attached to: environmental destruction, unhealthy air quality, heat islands, racism, lack of community, de-connection, classism, and overall something that ultimately hurts our world. think of freeways being built through black neighborhoods. think of streetcar railways being covered in asphalt and the only option is a car that one can’t even afford so they’re stuck, never able to cross the street again because that street is now a 20-foot highway structure full of fumes, carbon exhaust, asthma, and respiratory illness. and the trees? well, there’s a parking lot where the lake and animals used to rest.

the point of this piece is to teach others about the wonders of figurative language. do cars kill? that’s up to you ultimately. i can’t answer that for you. you’re gonna have to use that noggin’ of yours and increase your media literacy skills. but why is it that heat islands are more present in black and brown neighborhoods? why is it that public transit, once a sprawling network of subways and buses and streetcars in baltimore, now just road systems and a highway and parking lots that a third of baltimore doesn’t even use. that’s right! almost a third of baltimore doesn’t even own a car! so why are they being forgotten? why do we have such vapid respiratory illnesses and asthma?

transportation inequality relies on the few variables every other inequality does: race and class. the dysjunction of the two must always be in tandem with the other to succeed in separating us from ourselves. do cars kill? well, let me ask you this: does the poor deserve to die because of road systems designed to fail them? let’s tackle the core of all of our issues. it isn’t the drivers fault or cyclists fault or the transit users faults: it’s the fault of the city and system who refuse to design a home that is safe, clean, and equitable for all, regardless of race and income. do cars kill? that’s a question to ponder for minutes, not centuries.

thanks, again, and, without further ado, i present to you the limited issue of “Thanatopathy” in partnership with bikemore and the chesapeake bay trust for my 2025-2026 capstone project with the chesapeake conservation and climate corps.

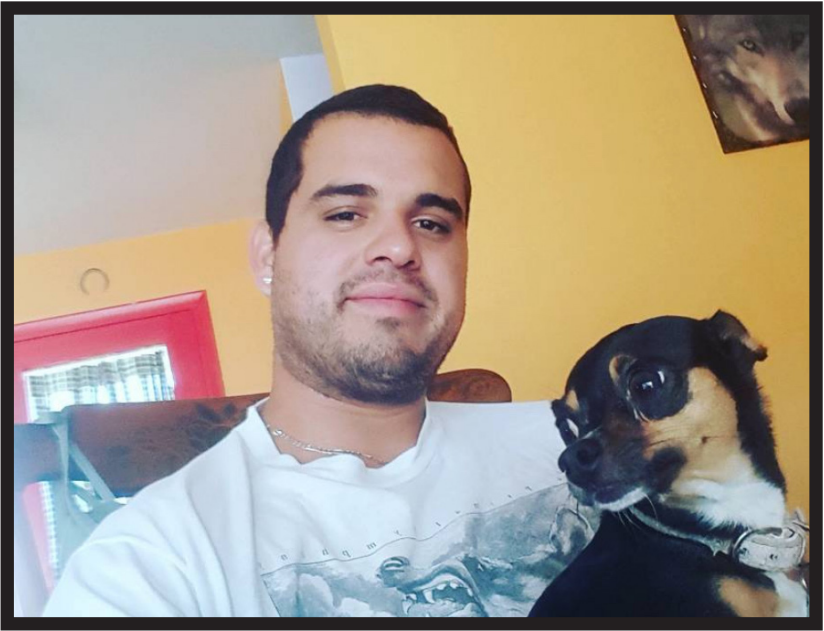
xoxo,

cora (she/her)

p.s. i dedicate this entire project to my late brother, Josue Adam Vallejo, who was killed on the highway in tampa, florida, March 19, 2018, at just 24 years young, due to lack of transit accessibility, poverty, design failure, and car dependency.

i love you, joe! wish you were here, forever and always.





my brother Josue with his chihuahua Chiquita. Can't pronounce Josue? Sound it out with me:

HOH-SUE-WEH!

not so hard, now, is it?

Josue holding the Ecuadorian flag with our cousin Sandra many years ago.

fun fact: I'm half Ecuadorian!



from left to right:

me, when I was a wee teenager in high school many years before starting hormone replacement therapy; my brother; our cousin Sandra.



a couple of cyclists, by Nancy Fishel in Baltimore

Baltimore's Child

by Rachel Wilkinson, Baltimore

Growing up in Baltimore City in the 1980s was a blast. When you visited an auntie or moved to a new house, you'd glom onto whatever roving group of neighborhood kids ruled the block, learning names at random if at all—instant friends.

We'd play Smear the Queer, sandwiching a body between a bombed rubber ball and a garage door. Back then I didn't know what a queer was, nor that I was one. Under a pear tree that never made pears, we played Narnia, and an alley cat/recent stray named George was Aslan. He didn't have the gravitas, but he did have long absences. We'd ride bikes for hours and build trash-heap forts in alleys. Don't believe we were feral? One time, six of us got food poisoning from the burger patties we sat on a lead-paint peeling railing all afternoon, put back in the freezer, and grilled up the next day. I mean, we were ten—everyone was. Another time, we built a treehouse in someone's yard. Everyone brought hammers and nails. No one brought wood. A softball-sized bouquet of nailheads bloomed from the lone 2x4 rung we whanged into the trunk, so in a thunderstorm the whole tree toppled onto Stuart's house, collapsing his roof, crashing through the second floor, and shouldering into his first. I had an unsettling feeling that this was my fault.

Today I'm a certified Baltimore-city Treekeeper and Weed Warrior—I think from guilt. Perhaps you've heard of unintended consequences? All Gen X knew were untended ones. Every winter, we'd dare each other to slide down Dead Man's Hill, skid onto the icy alley, and zoom into the traffic that sluiced down Cold Spring Lane. Anyone who couldn't stop would die! One kid did! I didn't know him. In fact, I didn't know anyone who knew him, but that was the lore. Turns out, every neighborhood has a Dead Man's Hill.

But mine was the first.

When I was twelve, we moved. You don't know trauma till you've transitioned from Baltimore City alleys to Columbia cul-de-sacs. In the alley, bikes ruled, and we wore cut-offs and crappy shoes. In the cul-de-sac, cars prowled like big metal cats, and every day was a red-carpet run, sartorially speaking. I didn't know Kmart was classless until Wilde Lake Middle. When an entire school gives you the silent treatment, you know you've misstepped. (The computer suggested "misstopped" for that, and landing in monied Howard County sure felt like a mis-stop for me.)

But still we'd bike for hours, this time on the shady paths in woods near streams. Once, we journeyed far enough to see horses and farms. Another time, I saved my sister from quicksand. We retrieved her leg but lost her shoe. (Knowledge was half the battle.) In the summer, we'd nap on the island in Jackson Pond and study the four white geese as they cheapened themselves for bread.

Still feral, if I got tired of listening to teachers who barely knew my name, I'd just duck out behind the band room and slip into the woods for a stroll that eventually led to my bed. This was on the same path that I once followed my crush to learn where he lived. We never spoke, but I could point out his split-level beige house with the blue shutters today if you needed me to.

Columbia was built for cars pre-GPS; despite that, it bewildered. I kept finding



myself lost. Parking lots were vast plains. You could get a lot of miles in just by pounding white-lined asphalt. I kept feeling like I was walking towards something more than I was being at something. The other thing about Columbia was the roads were dumb. They dead-ended and they spiraled and they labyrinthed. One wrong turn, and you could spend a good thirty minutes driving around a series of increasingly menacing cul-de-sacs. Or if you accidentally merged onto 95, 70, 29, or 40, you'd end up two counties away. It's why Columbia felt like a place that led to other places instead of just a place.

It was in Columbia, after college, that I worked at a bookstore. You'd know it if I named it. I read C.S. Lewis' Great Divorce in the breakroom. I can still now feel his description of Hell sitting in the base of my cells, like a virus:

"You see, it's easy here. You've only got to think a house and there it is. That's how the town keeps on growing."

&

"Leaving more and more empty streets?" "That's right."

&

"They've been moving on and on. Getting further apart. They're so far off by now that they could never think of coming to the bus stop at all. Astronomical distances. There's a bit of rising ground near where I live and a chap has a telescope. You can see the lights of the inhabited houses, where those old ones live, millions of miles away. Millions of miles from us and from one another. Every now and then they move further still. That's one of the disappointments. I thought you'd meet interesting historical characters. But you don't: they're too far away."

I had a hard time finishing the book. It reminded me too much of where I was. In Hell, Lewis said, Where you could walk was limited. The grass cut like glass. That rang true too: in Columbia, the lawns were micromanaged, with "Keep off" signs. Absent sidewalks and cruel lawns meant that we walked in the road. My neighbor, who reported us for drying our swimsuits on a line in our backyard but hung two 10-point bucks that he'd shot with a crossbow in his, drove 50 mph on our 25-mph street. And, also!...Middle-aged ladies with clipboards wandered around checking off problems with your property. We had to repaint our door in 1989, propping it open for 24 hours in a frigid January, because it wasn't the correct color. We'd picked from a list of 5 prescribed options but skimmed the fine print. Maybe it was my Baltimore blood, but I couldn't brook it.

I moved back to Baltimore as soon as I could. I can't say for sure why; it got in my blood, is all. It feels good to walk. To jostle my neighbors in a bar, push through a clutch at a club, or sit comfortably close in a humid coffeeshop to escape winter's chill. All that

humanity pressing up against my psyche, reminding me of otherness and others—it feels good: all of us strangers, none of it strange.





Asphalt

by Graham Coreil-Allen, Baltimore

Aggregate bits melded into an emulsion
of sand, stone, and heavy

Soiled mix for sealing and shelter, but mostly,

Pavement,
rolled
voluptuously across
a continuous horizon
for people and cars pounding

Hard across the solid,
viscous concrete set
into an ever slow motion of exhaust.

Acting along a behavioral array of aging;
pressed on, hot and steamy
coursing solid in the breeze
stretching out languid under the weight of lurching buses
buckling bitter in molasses waves
cracking into its own faults
pinching tires and rims
plotting holes of our own demise.

Loosening as such under the gnashing
parade of modernity sprawls,
entropy progresses in masticating
pieces of this concrete cookie

Traveled under time
and in relaxation of sunburning exposures
its disintegration approaches a solid
waste state matching in greyness
muted emissions wafting above.

Smudging Links

by Graham Coreil-Allen, Baltimore

Out of the gate, I was rolling along faded lines—

unthinking, just joints pumping,

bones in sockets,

seesawing cartilage,

while my chain whirrs below.

Caked in the microparticulates of this hardscape realm suspended

in that vantablack cocktail, continuously crushed,

between pins and links pedal pushed.

A collapsed universe of hardscape Harmed City,

a lipid smoothie of dust and bituminous binders,

smashed by cars and trucks, and wheels on the bus.

Going round and round, doomscroll,

shedding the dust that erasers do

across fickle, lime-calcified pavement pages.

Big urban erasers, no so gently eroding

layers of thermoplastic tattooed macadam,

tar and tiny stones polished by a river of assholes:

Tinted Virginia vanity plates, impatient student drivers, FOP loving absurdities.

County yahoos exfoliating themselves,

getting shredded into the grooves



of textured blacktops raveling into crusty dry greys.

Where they mix with seasons of leaves turned moldy and composted.

Each green cell and vein smashed by cycles of weather and rubber.

Pestles abound on this continuous X plane mortar,

accordingly they endlessly uncoil.

peppering the atmosphere with a touch of exhausted seasoning.

Toxic dinosaurs, from La Brea made breathable
asthmatic of fact, this is an utmost delicate spice mix.

Dune membranes mixed in the chain, insanely.

That gently baptize this Catholic wayward's

ankle with street ash painterly grease.

A respectful tribute to the Infratrin Gods of Gears and Movement

whom I revolve and worship for a continued existence of not getting smashed,

I may crank chainrings caked in the dust paste of history,

but I'm not quite ready to be splatted down and dirty yet.

Until then I'm moving along,

always mixing that ethereal drive train concoction:

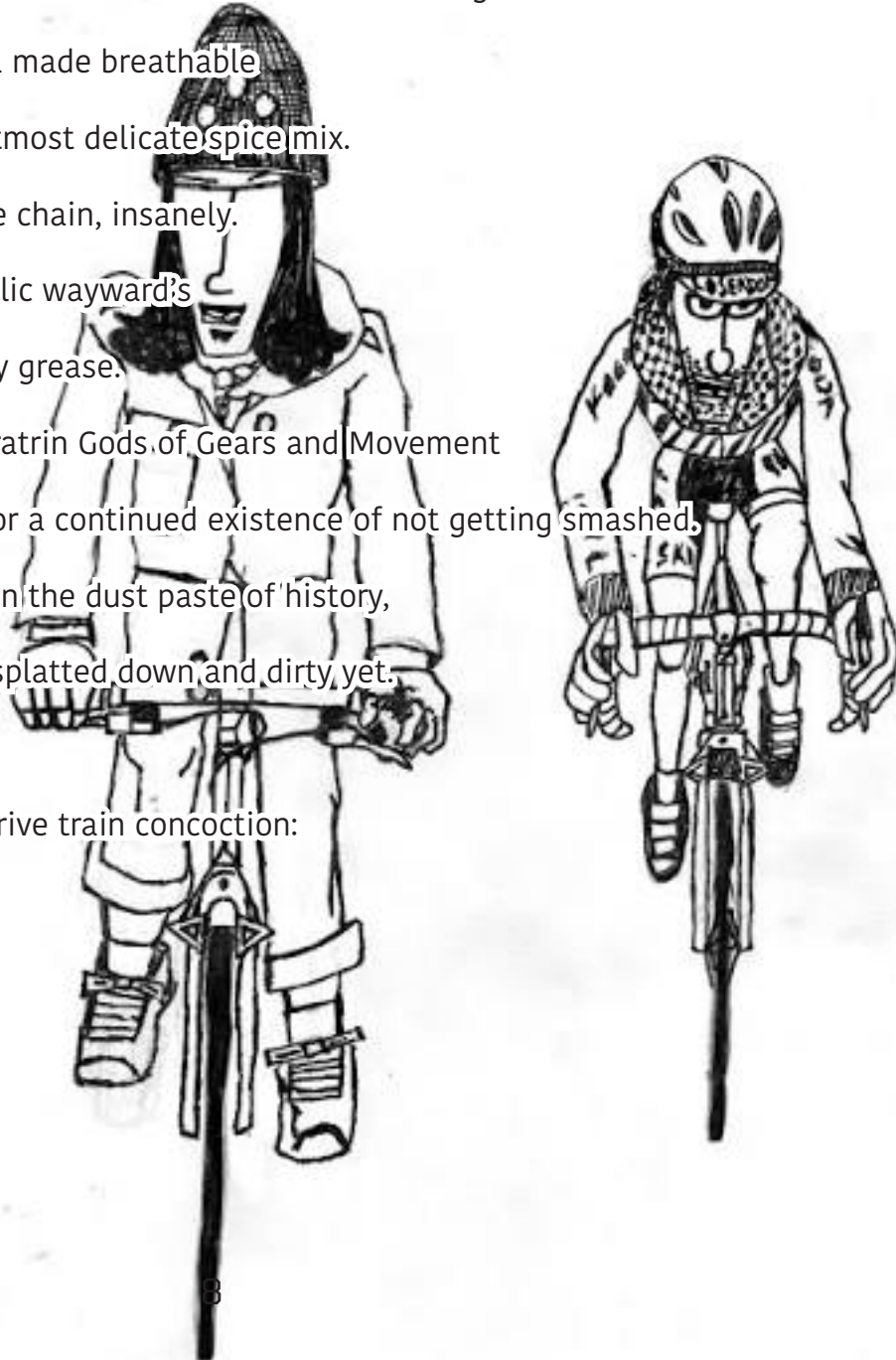
Aggregate crushed

Asphalts dissolved,

Leaves composted,

Emissions concentrated,

All Tri-flow suspended.



Lungs lumbering aloft

that most worshipful midnight lubricant,

It's all downhill from here.

Sawdust Prayers

by Edward Michael Supranowicz

The destruction was quick. When I went to work that morning, the neighboring house was intact. A little disheveled and aged, but intact. But by the time I had completed my shift, bare rafters, studs, and joists stood skeletal and stark.

Somehow, I felt pity for the house. There had been at least two families that lived in it that I knew of and more that I did not know about. The rafters had echoed with the giggles of children and the arguments of adults.

Shouldn't there be a priest of wood to perform a requiem service? A final echo of ...

From 2 x 4 to sawdust,
From shiny to rusted nail,
From a home into a parking lot.

Amen.

car

by Hugh Findlay

flying car barker---
dead dog, middle of the road
bitch was my best friend

hood

by Hugh Findlay

parkway in full bloom
flat squirrel in the gutter---
the Tao of roadways





Apology to a Turtle

by Paul W. Burgess, Lexington

Two pairs of prehistoric stumpy pegs
protruding from a checkered carapace
(distorted soccer ball with head and legs),
you struggled inch by inch to reach a place
where ancient kin had also dared to tread
in search of fertile land and teeming bogs
to find a mate and share a muddy beg—
your prize for endless treks and grueling slogs.
But modern times had turned your route to read
for roaring metal giants full of wrath,
and there's no way I could have stopped or slowed
or swerved to save you with a change of path.
Tonight, again, I'm sure I'll turn and toss
and wish I could have helped you get across.

Bike Shark

by Michael Shank, Baltimore

Riding along on my bicycle
I'm going fast but my time's stretched slow
Balancing her beneath my feet
My bicycle is a part of me

Always forwards on my bicycle
Only direction that she knows
Last thing I want is to sink on the street
With crushed car underneath my feet

Buildings get bollards and people get flexposts
Tonight I'll ride like I really don't care
If I die I'll get a great white ghost bike
Then I'll ride these streets forever



spokes, by Nancy Fishel in Baltimore



Impatience Machine

by Michael Shank, Baltimore

gotta get out of here
gotta go real fast
everything's on fire
and time just won't last
feeling uncomfortable
in my climate controlled
artificial dome
it's my own little globe

can you tell me
where i pick up my prize
beating you to the red light
5 blinks of the eye
my dog eat dog world
eminent domain
if i can touch it
i will lay claim

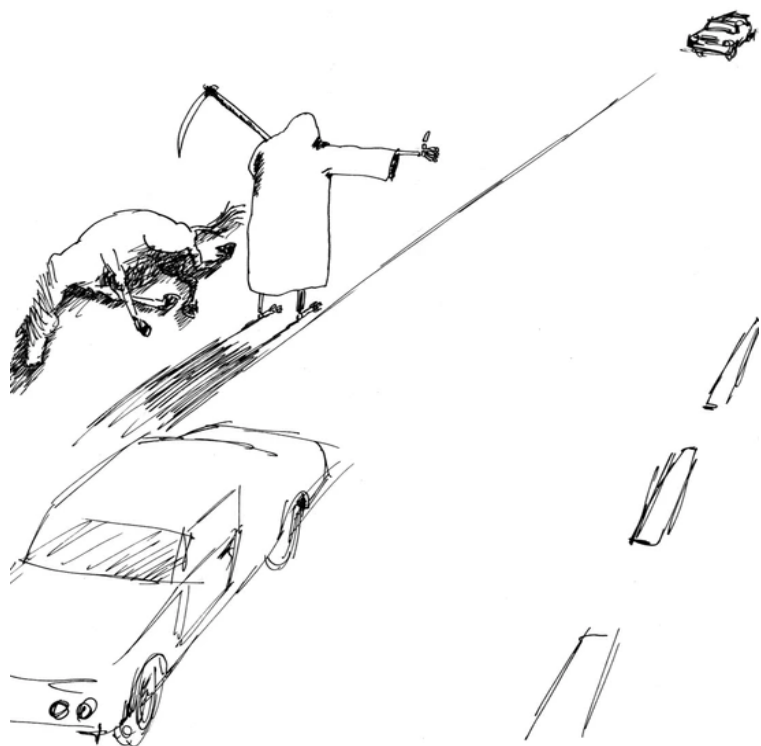
it's all about freedom
from inconvenience
it's too hard to turn off
i'd rather poison you idly
it's all about freedom
from consequence
hit and run, baby
ample evidence



Roadside Romance

by Liam Eichberg, Tampa

I first met her on the highway—we ran into each other
at what seemed like a hundred miles an hour.
She and I introduced ourselves rapidly,
falling into an embrace that rang
through our frames.
God, I’d never felt so connected!
We explored love’s road together,
sharing our hobbies—
we both liked to run, driving our engines to empty—
until we were almost one tangled shape.
Our hearts bled
for each other,
tossing gushing pillars
from severed arteries.
Everyone who saw us seemed to clap and cheer
from their cars,
as if we were royalty.
Even the lights began to swirl around,
dancing in halos.
We painted the road
with our love,
staining the asphalt
in that aching, human way.
We painted that road
with our love
until the sirens sang for us.



To The City Planners

by Jennifer Weigel, Rural Kansas

I’d rather walk.
Why are you surprised by that?
I’d rather get some exercise and get my blood pumping.
I’d rather be able to look in all the windows of the downtown shops on my way.
I’d rather consider the wild animals and pets at risk, the children, the pedestrians, the
cyclists...
I’d rather feel the warmth of the sun on my skin, or the cool of the breeze, or even a light
rain.
I’d rather feel that much more connected to my environment and everything in it.
I’d rather experience the world as something other than a blur.
But more than anything, I’d really just rather not have to drive.
So why isn’t there a walking lane on the fucking bridge that connects the two sides of
town?

please visit the digital version of Thanatapathy at www.thanatapathy.com for a full list of educational sources on how car dependency affects the environment, health, and well-being of people throughout baltimore city and the world.

if you'd also like to share the magazine to friends or family, this magazine can also be found online, for free, within the website to any and all to absorb.



Thank you to my family for everything you do for me.

I love you, mom, my partner Patrick, my friends who couldn't fit the page, and most of all, my brother Josue.

I hope I'm making you proud.



baltimore bicycle works worker-owner Alia!! Trans rights!!!



Final editor's note

i want to give one final thanks for everyone who's helped me get to this point in my life, most especially the bicycle community in baltimore. i have never felt more at home. moving here from florida was the best type of culture shock that i welcomed without hesitation. i felt so isolated in suburbia, forced to drive because our governments refuse to benefit the people with public transit and healthcare, and i was just at my endpoint. suburbia really is the dogma of melancholy, and a north american city like baltimore is a far better alternative than the hanging man's game.

still, there's so much more baltimore city can do. the people of this city deserve so much better. our transit funds should be used to increase the wellbeing of our lives, not be funneled into highway infrastructure that so many folks are forced to use when our public transit is forgotten and abused. we deserve road dieting, wildflower medians, shade brought by vibrant canopies and trees, reliable buses and multimodal infrastructure that creates an obsolete car dependency and finally---finally---allows the air to be breathable.

i want to breathe air! Not microplastics. i want tire pollution to become so diluted from the absence of car dependency that my lungs are no longer in constant pain from my respiratory disease and asthma. i want the noise pollution to come to a halt, the raging echoes of burning car tires muted and replaced with humming subways, buses, trains, lightrails, and the dings of passing bicycles. we deserve these things so much. all of us in baltimore do, and everyone in the state of maryland especially. Our society is so fueled by a cultural divide that we're suffering from the indifference of the upper class that wants us to suffer in our labor all for their profit.

this doesn't have to be a faraway dream. the environment in baltimore city can and should be filled with vibrancy. we are obsessed with the machinations brought to us by corporations and suits, artificially installed and demographically displacing black and brown folk tenfold.

i want the most poor of us to be the safest. i want them to be able to cross the street and walk through a bed of wildflowers, on their bikes, and make it to a bus stop that takes them to wherever they want to go because connection is prosperity. transportation should be a damn right, not a privilege. community should be a basic priority, not a rare caraway discovery.

and, most of all, i want people to live. traffic violence is one of the most normalized methods of murder in this country, and it is all due in part to propaganda from rich car and oil corporations who depend on constant car use all at the expense of our well being. my brother would be alive today, in some manner or another, if it weren't for traffic violence and car dependency being perceived as simply wind moving through time.

one day. i dream of this baltimore for everyone. i dream of this world for a generation. i dream of this future for us all.

with love,
cora

in partnership with
the



&



art by
Mike Thomas



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TAK