

The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric landscape photograph. It shows a winding dirt road or path that snakes through a dense, forested valley. The terrain is hilly, and the vegetation appears to be a mix of trees and shrubs. In the distance, more hills and a small town or village are visible under a dark, overcast sky. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

peripheries

no. 3

a journal of word and image

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Cover art: *Border between Gevgelja and Idomeini (North Macedonia and Greece)*, 2016, Albin Millot

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editor's foreward

In this third issue of *Peripheries* (previously known as *Periphery*) we've gone plural, expanding both in bulk and in scope.

Peripheries gathers together literary and artistic works that are, broadly construed, 'peripheral' in that they explore the interstices between discourses, traditions, languages, and genres; or take as their subject the marginal, the tangential, the liminal, the borderline, the aperture or cleft.

Given this vision, Susan Howe is naturally the poet to showcase and you will find in our pages her collage-poems; at once both poetry *and* visual art, and so also exceeding these demarcations. We have included works peripheral to Susan's as well: Amy Hollywood's introduction, which commemorates the talk that Susan delivered at the Harvard Divinity School in Spring, 2019 and two Turkish translations by Efe Murad. You will see Susan's collages reappear within Amy's *Don't Touch Me*, which itself speaks in the metaxical spaces between poetry, autobiography, and theology.

Word and image meet in many other pieces, for example, we've juxtaposed Peter Sacks's earlier poems alongside his more recent collages within which words still float, becoming visual elements. In one idiosyncratic piece, Sharon Olds's notes to a craft talk, the form of a poem is diagrammed as a tree, its lines branching out, roots sinking down, and into the forest, just

beyond the left margin, lies the spirit realm.

There are many courses to chart through these pages. Ultimately, this will be the artwork composed by the reader who puts the pieces into dialogue with one another, exposes their tensions, and explores their peripheries. In charting their course, the reader will traverse narrative, lyric, creative non-fiction, photography, translations, dreams, pattern-poems, sculptures, spells, interviews, plays, instructions, and reviews; they will read new work from established writers, retrospectives of luminaries, and they will be introduced to upcoming artists and others fresh to their craft.

On any reading, one section of this edition will most certainly stand out—the special folio guest-edited by Joan Naviyuk Kane on recent Native American poetry, which features seven poets. We want to thank Joan for introducing and compiling this important collection and for agreeing to publish her own poem as well.

The editors also thank the center around which *Peripheries* proliferates: The Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School for its ongoing support, and for housing the poetry editors' workshop and hosting the Poetry, Religion, and Philosophy program, whose guests regularly contribute. Other contributions originate not so far afield in the Divinity School and, from there, the English department, but most especially, Jorie Graham's poetry workshops, from where so many new poets emerge under her expert guidance and where they love to congregate. We are indebted to other centers on campus, most especially the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and the Woodberry Poetry Room. And our scope keeps expanding beyond this remit to include the West Coast and then, beyond this, to an international arena: Australia, China, Korea, Germany, the Netherlands, and South Africa.

Sherah Bloor
Editor

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The Periphery

Zhang Zao

translated by Eleanor Goodman and Ao Wang

Like a tomato hiding at the edge of the steelyard, he was always lying down. Something flashes, a warning or a swallow, but he doesn't move, keeping watch over little things. The second hand moves to ten o'clock, the alarm fades far away, a cigarette goes too, carrying along a few pairs of distorted blue handcuffs. His eyes, clouds, German locks. In short, what wasn't there was gone.

Empty, expanding. He was far removed, but always on some periphery: a gear's edge, the water's edge, his own edge. He looks time and again to the sky, his index finger pointing up, practicing sickly, wild calligraphy: "Come back!" As expected, all those deformed things returned to their original shape: the windows in the new development are full of evening wind, the moon brews a big barrel of golden beer. The steelyard, tilting violently, there, infinite, like a calmed lion crouching beside a tomato.

Early Spring, February

Zhang Zao

translated by Eleanor Goodman and Ao Wang

The sun once illuminated me; in the morning in Chongqing, a small round
dewdrop's heart holds the images of flowers in its mouth
I detoured around layer after layer of air; the railroad
made the train ache to run away, leaving the cuckoo's soft song
I said hello to the mountain peaks, hibiscus, pine, and cypress
no matter how high or low, please let me love secretly
in Hunan, sunlight lit up childhood's eyes
my hands have matured, the road of caresses grows short
dust coils around the town and spirals up in a twirling dance
car horns were like younger brothers, wheels were kaleidoscopes
the soreness of teething became a scar on the ass
fruit pins me in the tree, then ruthlessly pushes me
toward the ground. Ah, today I still feel alive
living in a fake place made of paper; spring
is cooing, the sun is a fake doctor groping everything
touching this advanced or perhaps ever-deferred
age, stroking the world's Utopia
ah, a dragon beneath the sea has no use, a festering rope.

The Sixth Method

Zhang Zao

translated by Eleanor Goodman and Ao Wang

If all five kinds have been used up
still staying on the outside of the vastness
it can't be touched, it can't be shut
like a medicine that examines a chronic sickness
there's no hope, it's best to swim away like a comet.

So the fine dust on my face will startle me awake
I see clearly a strand of gliding drunkenness
and the long ice-melting wind of a strange land
blows the light into brightness, into darkness
it makes me turn hot and cold toward you

Going through the equally blundering landscape
the verdant rocks, the nestling on the other side,
the bright moon from morning to night illuminates yesterday
and the flowing water, the endlessly flowing water
makes the displays above and below change and change again

Letters Received in Spring and Autumn

Zhang Zao

translated by Eleanor Goodman and Ao Wang

1

The back of this hour, that is my home,
in another city it raises a white flag.
The sky hasn't yet lightened, sleep's sluice lets out a few
heavy trucks, like dinosaurs at the corner they
rip something apart, something that doesn't exist.
I wake up.
The green button on my body rolls off.

2

Our green buttons, perpetual little extras.
Clouds, constructing Shanghai.
The blueprint in my heart
is waiting for bricks and tiles. I move toward the bright spot,
and there, a crane, flashing into view. Your letter
stands in a column of sunshine in the center of the room, grooming its
feathers—
yes, no need for special pardon. One must find in bokchoi,
in peapod tendrils and winter melon, a kind of understanding,

so as to turn off fatness and machinery—

I am drawn deeply
into your conflict, and move to the window.

How is April so limpid, like a reflection in a stiff drink,
a street scene shaking into an incomprehensible proportion.
Yes, I can't shout reality awake. Yet your voice
catches up to as far as I can see: "I

really am you! I am also floating in this hour.
On the construction site, the explosions are ready, over on my side
I'll sound the gong in warning. Swim over here,
grab onto this gong, it is everything you've missed out on."

3

I lift the button from the floor, blow on it.
I start my day.

When I keep still,
the postman passing below the window mistakes me for a portrait of
myself;
sometimes I climb onto the desk sleepily,
and reach both hands into the air, like reaching into a pair of handcuffs,

where, where is our precision?

. . . green buttons.

An Introduction to Susan Howe

Amy Hollywood

In 1704 the English dramatist and critic, John Dennis—later the subject of Alexander Pope’s heated and characteristically cruel invective—argued for the confluence, maybe the identity, of poetry and religion. Dennis rehabilitates the language of Enthusiasm; he insists that “the greater poetry” “is an Art by which a Poet justly and reasonably excites great Passion” (“The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry”).

Since therefore the Enthusiasm in the greater Poetry, is to hold proportion with the Ideas; and those Ideas are certainly the greatest, which are worthiest to move the greatest and the wisest Men: and Divine Ideas, or Ideas which shew the Attributes of God, or relate to his Worship, are worthiest to move the greatest and the wisest Men; because such Ideas belong to Objects which are only truly above them, and consequently truly Admirable, Desirable, Joyful, Terrible, & c. it follows, That the greatest and strongest Enthusiasm that can be employ’d in Poetry, is only justly and reasonably to be deriv’d from Religious Ideas.

Through a slight of hand, a trick of the light, the greatness of the ideas is determined—known and felt—by the greatness of the passion and enthusiasm they elicit. And from this it follows, for Dennis,

...That as great Passion only is the adequate Language of the greater Poetry, so the greater Poetry is only the adequate Language of Religion; and that therefore the greatest Passion is the Language of that sort of Poetry, because that sort of Poetry is the worthiest Language of Religion.

All of this leads Dennis to Longinus' *On the Sublime* and—the point of it all for him—to Milton. *Paradise Lost* is “the worthiest Language of Religion.” It leads me to Susan Howe.

When I am overwhelmed by great passion—I don't know that's ever happened, so let's say instead rendered useless by an excess of feeling, when my emotions are too much for me, I read Susan Howe. (These aren't the only times I read her.) In some fourteen volumes, her poems contain feeling without constricting it. They create mirrors for what I often can't name, can't articulate, can't and do not want fully to understand. They give shape to sorrow and rage and terror—pleasure too, and joy—in their order (word lists or carefully spaced columns, spare lines of acute, often disjunctive images or of alliterative associations, precisely calibrated prose— “articulation of sound forms in time”) and in their refusal of order (cut up pieces of text scattered across the page, upside down and sideways, blurred and smeared, cut off at odd angles, sometimes creating mirror images between recto and verso, sometimes stoically singular). To be melodramatic—the favored tone of our shared Irish American forebears—Anglo-Irish or otherwise—I don't think I'd be alive without Susan Howe's poetry. (“negative infinity melodrama” *Debths*). Hyperbole aside, I know I'd be *less* alive, less able to feel and to feel deeply, less able to think too, and to inhabit the contradictions of my experience. I am in no way representative, and yet we are each of us in some way representative, so let me say not just the contradictions of my experience, but of American experience.

For Howe's poetry—especially *Singularities* (1990), *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (1993), *Pierce-Arrow* (1999), *The Midnight* (2003), *Souls of the Labadie Tract* (2007), *That This* (2011), *Debths* (2017)—and her prose, *My Emily Dickinson* (1985), *The Birth Mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (1993), *Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathies of the Archive* (2014)—all of this writing made me care, for the first time, about American history, brought it alive in all of its

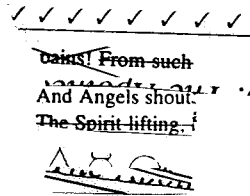
violence, contradiction, pain, and pleasure; it helps in the great project of rendering intractable realities visible, legible even as illegible, somehow even potentially livable. Her poetry—and her criticism, I often find it hard to distinguish, fully, between the two—is a refuge and a refusal, performing a contradictory doubling without which we can't survive, without which we probably don't deserve to (thrive).

For Susan Howe feeling—Passion—is always thought and thought feeling. Her critical restless mind and ear, eye and hand, inform everything she makes. Reading Howe is a lesson in how to read and hear and see both her own work and that of the larger traditions of which she is a part, most particularly perhaps for us, now at this time and here in this place, the American tradition. Last Spring, Susan Howe spoke to us in the Divinity Hall chapel where Ralph Waldo Emerson once spoke. (Henry James also lived, for a semester, somewhere in the building.) I want Divinity Hall to continue to stand so that a century and more from now, someone will remember, Susan how spoke here; Susan Howe made people feel, she made people listen and hear, she made people think, she made people believe— if not in Religion, then in poetry, poetry and its necessity for toward to with even perhaps against the future.

Susan Howe

the Infamy of Nations
Pressing on his apples close bet
.....
..long ; æ, ē, ī, ō, ū, ŷ, short ; ø, ø, i, o, u, y,

ΕΠΕΙ ΠΤΕΡΟΥΥΕΘΟΙ C
 I Along that ~~marge~~ There,
 I ←— There, —→
 I Full oft, when A magic s
 I ←— A —→
 whose surge vast sum.
 ←— vast —→



The Spirit's eager sympathy

Batı Sınırları

Turkish translation by Efe Murad

Ah eğer olmuş olsaydım olmuş olmam gereken yerde
Orada olmuş olurdum olmadığım yerde
Çünkü olduğum yerde 'olmuş olmaz mıydım
Ve olamıyorum olmam gereken yerde.

Tekerleme

The Western Borders

Susan Howe

Oh would I were where I would be!
There would I be where I am not:
For where I am 'would I not be,
And where I would be I cannot.

Nursery Rhyme

İbrahim'in Düzlükleri

Turkish translation by Efe Murad

Bakir alanlar çağlar boyunca bitkin hale düşmüş — sadece dalgaların yalaması
Her kırılğan deniz — kasvetli bir koy
Her sandal — yumurta kabuğu gibi ince
Camda yansımış — her şey yerli yerinde — ve huzur varmış.

Darılının hasadı boyunca ileride — süreğen gece —
Ya da ışık —
Ya da ne ise —
Ya da ne olacak ise —

Sonra savaş alayları durmadan yollara döküldü
Borazanlar, kişneyen atlar, derebeylerinin armalı kalkanları, kraliyet nişanları
İşildayan miğferler ürküttü kadim ormanı
Hazine bulamadılar ve sürekli dolaştılar
bir yerden diğer bir yere
Sanki öfkeleri keşfedilmemiş içseli savuşturabilecekmiş gibi.

Bir Yabancı kulübemin kapısını vurdu
Hayali saldırgan — elinde arkebüz
Arkasında gördüm
Rahibeler, rahipler, köylüler, haçlılar, işini bilir seyrüseferciler
Meraklı, malumat toplayan seyyâhlar.

DOĞUDAKİ KOMŞULARIMIZLA OLAN AMANSIZ SAVAŞTA
YENİ GELEN HACILAR VAZİFELERİNE KOYULDULAR
SIK ORMAN ORTADAN KALKMIŞ OLACAK
ANTİK BİR KOLONİ KURUYORLAR.

The Plains of Abraham

Susan Howe

Wilderness worn away for ages — only the wash of waves
Each fragile sea — a sepulchral bay
Each shallop — thin as eggshell
Reflected in glass — all things held in place — and there was peace.

Ahead through harvests of maize — perpetual night —
Or light —
Or what was —
Or what will be —

Then war parties continually went out
Trumpets, neighing horses, flags, feudal scutcheons, royal insignias
Glittering helmets startled the ancient forest
They found no treasure and wandered perpetually
from place to place
As if fury could explain away the unexplored interior.

A Stranger knocked at the door of my hut
A spectral assailant — arquebuse in hand
Behind him I saw
Nuns, priests, peasants, crusaders, practical navigators
Curious, knowledge-seeking travelers.

AT DEADLY WAR WITH NEIGHBORS TO THE EAST
NEW PILGRIMS HAVE BEGUN THEIR TASK
THE DENSE FOREST WILL BE CLEARED AWAY
THEY ARE BUILDING AN ANCIENT COLONY.

Don't Touch Me

Amy Hollywood

1.

Desire to touch the past. Tangible.

The refusal of history. History refuses. (History's refuse.)

A passion for (il) legibility.

2.

(Mary wants to touch him. Thomas doubts.)

3.

When I was four, I fell. I was carrying a glass, which shattered, shattering my left eye. My father heard my cries and ran to me. He was wearing a white shirt. I remember its shine. And the blood – his shirt awash with blood – drenched down the side on which he held me. He clutched me as he drove – or did he run? my sister said he ran – to the hospital.

I remember the wet floor – black and white linolium. Evelyn MacDonald, a black woman who came once a week to care for our white people house, who often cared for me and my brothers and sisters, told me to take care on the slippery floor. I fell. I saw my father's shirt, drenched in blood. He held me in the crook of his arm. In the hospital, there was a thin plastic tube. I was frightened of the small animals I saw scurrying through it as they tied it around my arm.

Spiders.

4.



A page from Susan Howe's, "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards," in *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, published in 2007.

"squashed everywhere like a spider." (Georges Bataille, "Formless")

Howe's shattered page.

5.

The eye, caught in a spider's web, haunts me.

His im his pure eye.

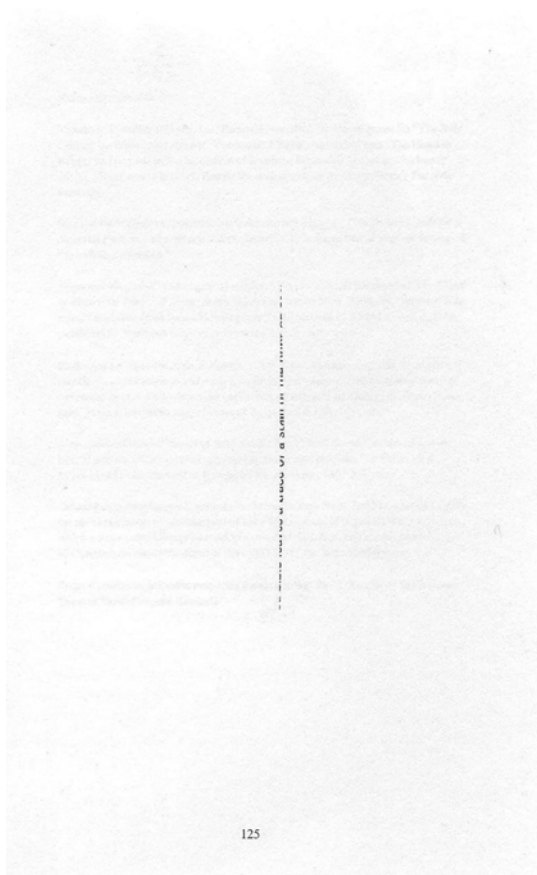
6.

There's no there there;
a surgically constructed socket:
flesh damp & mottled
like the underside of my tongue.

A plastic eye. Cut
from any semblance
of sight.

When you are gone, you're gone.
The black hole you made in my life
is nothing next to the
void you are now.

7.



i

8.

After years of looking at an image of Christ on the cross—
Christ awash with blood, the red of his blood dropping on the monk's
crook and the lips of the nun, the nun and the bishop who worship
at the feet of the cross—after years of looking at this image, I see my
father's shirt. Someone else sees Christ's leaning head as an eye.

9.

(You wounded my heart, my sister, my bride,
you wounded my heart with one of your eyes.)ⁱⁱ

(they gored his side with a lance)ⁱⁱⁱ

10.

There are hundreds of images of Christ's isolated side wound; the single slit stands in for Christ's body. Not only looked at; kissed, fondled, adored parchment worn away by the hands of the devout.

11.

"She ran forward to touch him
Alabaster and confess

Don't cling to me
Pivot

Literally the unmoving point around which a body
Literally stop touching me
Turns"^{iv}

12.

Noli me tangere/Don't touch me

Purification?

Or erasure effacement defacement disfiguration?

Informe

Effacement before the face.

Rescue me

13.

And Thomas doubts.

14.

Who took care of the floor after after I fell?

ⁱ Howe, *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, 125

ⁱⁱ Song of Solomon 4:9

ⁱⁱⁱ John 19:34

^{iv} Howe, *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, 11

Night Comes and Passes Over Me

Carl Phillips

There's a rumor of light that
any dark starts off as. Plato speaks
here and there of colors, but only
once, I think, does he break them
down into black and white, red,
and a fourth color. By then they'd
reached the California high country
where, knowing none of the names for
all the things that grew there, they

began to make names up. But to have
trained an animal to come just a bit
closer because here, here's blood,
doesn't mean you've tamed it. Trans-
lations vary for what Plato calls his
fourth color: what comes closest
to a combination of (since they
aren't the same) radiant and
bright – what shifting water does,

with light? Violence burnishes
the body, sometimes, though we
call it damage, not burnishing, more
its opposite, a kind of darkness, as if
to hide the body, so that what's been
done to it might, too, stay hidden,
the way meaning can, for years, until
some pattern by which to trace it
at last emerges. There's a rumor of light.

Anywhere Like Peace

Carl Phillips

He's unbuttoning his shirt, we've never met before, he says
last night he had a dream about me. A good dream,
he tells me; a strong one – meaning *I* was strong, and that for the first
time in years, apparently, he felt completely safe. To confuse
closure with conclusion is nothing new, I at first
want to say to him, but a

shadow-softness to his face brings out
a softness in me that I don't show, usually, it makes me
want to lean hard into his chest instead, the part where the hair –
faint, still, as if still filling in – looks like two wings
positioned where they shouldn't be, but on purpose, so that
flight means for once not seeing the earth fall away, but the sky
getting steadily closer, let the body

approach... Will I ever
stop wanting more than what I've already got, I used to wonder,
not realizing yet that's all ambition *is*, finally; I thought
humility would be a smaller thing, a quieter
thing, it seems I was wrong about that, too. I can't
decide if it's just my being so much older now, or if it's
always been true, that winter foliage
is the prettiest foliage.



Cruel Month, oil on canvas, 36x42" (2010), Vera Iliatova



Excursions, oil on canvas, 36x42" (2009), Vera Iliatova

North American Sequence

Vijay Seshadri

Not liberation, exactly, but at least a relief to know
that after another long, exasperating
journey into the self—
the meadows choked with pigweed,
the coppices deranged, the spinneys disheveled,
the fosses slimed and slippery,
the Chevy Impalas, their tires stripped,
rusting on concrete blocks in the front yards,
the roads sunk under mud,
the hills on fire, the crocodile deltas—
you can emerge and re-enter the public sphere
and make yourself presentable again
as someone other people can look at and look past
in the sphere they inhabit,
the globe of reason and sphere of discourse
pure and simple, where to observe and anatomize
its latest structural transformation
into an even more unthinkable strangeness
is a species of fun, and, also, a part
of the strangeness. And what a relief that no one
in the public sphere cares,
really, who or what you are;
they're all busy making gossip out of experience;
they're all indifferent to traumas, yours or theirs;
they're all fed up with the inner life;

and, besides, the thinkers of the public sphere
now say there is no inner life.
The inner life was a big misunderstanding,
with unfortunate historical consequences.
There are, though, some fine buildings here,
oblong, square, round, tall, short—
the tall ones very tall, the short ones short enough—
and the inhabitants, also, are
tall and short, square and round,
white and black and brown, denizens,
loving their geometries, their symmetries,
while their destinies diversify
in the dry, lightly scented air.
How anybody could love destinies like theirs
is something you don't
have to worry about. What is asked of you only
is that you listen to their voices—
their orisons, vows, shouts of joy,
their raging, hateful imprecations,
their love chats and griefs—
joining with other voices to form a stream
of voices, among other streams
that will unite in rivers blue as the sky is blue,
and flow to the cobalt ocean,
there to swell its waters until
the pressure of the swelling becomes so great
the waters particulate, evaporate
again, and rise, lighter than air, rise and rise
to come athwart the cold of space,
the killing cold, the touch of which crystallizes
their essences so that they fall as snow
and bury in concave blowing drifts another lost
neighborhood of the public sphere,
abandoned now to the blizzard and to you,
the solitary walker standing in an
itinerant pool of light below the single streetlamp
in the neighborhood where once,
fifty years apart, were born
Al Capone, Chicago gangster,
and Jennie Jerome, Winston Churchill's mother.

The Stag Beetles

David Ryan

They were talking about problems, the stage it had reached in their bodies, how it had metastasized, what it had traveled through, what had been removed, what the chemotherapy hoped to delay, all that could no longer be done, telling each other how far it had gone as if to say how far it would go before it stopped. They were all Stage 4 and it had made them conversant. But I didn't want any of it. I was in my curtained area just like them, we all faced each other with our chemicals hanging like dead sylphs from the chromium stands, yet I was nowhere near their Stage 4. I did not want to listen to them talk about their problems or how far it had gone but I couldn't *not* listen, and if I drew my curtain closed I would be shutting them out and the cruelty of that rejection felt as if I were closer to them and so I lay there half reclined in my unease and tried to shut them out of my eyes and ears. But the ears are impossible. The other man was not listening unsuccessfully too, and I remarked to myself just how different men were from women in this room at this moment, and always, because he too was not telling anyone how far it would go, where it was getting, though he had his mother beside him and, maybe because she was a woman or because this was a mother, when he got up and carted his wheeled bag of chemicals or saline or steroids into the bathroom down the hall, she spoke to the other women about his problems, how it had started in a kidney, how far it had moved through him, she told them about his

secrets, how his secrets were traveling through him, accelerating, secrets living the wild life.

She whispered and clicked and everyone said they were sorry, but me. I didn't. I'll say here that my heart was breaking anyway, but now it was breaking for the man who didn't know that his mother was betraying him, was turning him into one of the other people in the room, just another head bobbing on the surface of a still, limpid swell. And I was again the only one in the room, that's how it felt, just there alone listening to the voices that maybe in another time would have been talking about other things that sounded like gossip, that this was all they were trying to do was to bring back old times when you could do that. I was still trying to block the voices out when the man came back and his mother had already stopped telling the other women all about how soon he would die because his humiliation was a secret now all the women in the room shared, though for how long I don't know, and the other women continued talking about how soon they might die while the young man climbed like a much older man back into his programmable chair and made sure as I did that our eyes did not meet even as we glared. He left the curtain open because he and I had the same fear of entering the room. The women were talking about their problems as if no one in the room didn't have nightmares these days and no one in the room wished to shut off their ears and eyes, not just here in this room but most of the time, till something like the light either made up its mind to remain on or finally stop shouting, finally decided to send a blind charge so bright that your heart turned to vapor and floated away.

I was waiting for the room to tell me the meaningful questions for the empty answers in this room. I believed meaning was gestating here, a pulse of life that would soon rise up and reveal a genuine heartbeat. I had been having this vision of human beings, all of us, treading water in an oily sea deep at night where occasionally the moon would part from a cloud and shine down on tremendous swells and there were just all of us, these bobbing heads like pale and round fruit on the surface, shimmering in our joy up to the neck, and the water was God, God lapping at the place where our beautiful necks curved into the underside of our chins, God charging and swirling in a rip, trying to pull us under even as the water above seemed to be perfectly still, and I had hallucinations at night of shadows from the trees outside my window playing complex matches

with black birds' bones on the wall in front of me and above me with the moon. I dreamt of children I had never known and of deer scattering when they saw me and of deer swimming in the sky and of deer atomizing while their particulate made matter, and of children elemental at the edge of some forest and I rode my old horse where the saddle slipped gradually until I was at an angle that was untenable and at that moment I had a child's understanding that I was too young for certain problems, and that maybe I would always be too young. There was no light in these dreams, just a kind of tube breathing.

When I woke, my soul seemed to have aged but the rest of me felt no different because of the deer and stranger children in my sleep, and, well, I hadn't lost myself yet, it felt like the soul I could fix, the soul the soul the soul was there for me if I could keep my chin up above the God-line, the slip of viscous God's dervishing, his perverted celebrations tugging the undertow, as if I could turn it away from whatever heavier substance the dancing shadows on the wall the night before were pumping into the rip.

And, for instance, I knew that if I pulled my curtain closed I would just be another man who had shut them out, who had not come with them today to the outpatient ward to check them into this room, just another coward who'd left them braver out of the worst kind of necessity: I saw the line at check-in some mornings, all these woman alone, standing in line as if they were about to board a jet airliner or register for a procession, and it broke my heart how many people passed through life alone like this. With someone not home rather than having never been home when they came home, who had hands that would not hold them or words that would not enter them, who had maybe left them in a cowardice, left them alone to remark on a man's cowardice, and though I was none of these men my own cowardice filled the room with men, me and the man beside me, the man whose mother let them have all of him when he wasn't looking, as if saying here, you can have him for a while. And here were these women, how many of them were mothers? I don't know why I thought this but I did as a new woman from the church came into the room and asked if anyone wanted to pray and I thought you have to be fucking kidding me I can't close my curtain or else. And there was God, God had come dripping out of the water, and one woman said yes, yes I'd like that, I could use a prayer—but in my own head my head was

shouting about how soon I would *not* die and that I had a lot of chances the others didn't have—I mean, I'd listened to their problems and they were fucked—but it didn't blot out the sounds in the room, the loud rip as this woman drew her wheeled prayer table from the hallway into the middle of the room, which meant she rolled it out in front of me, as if to finally—finally—make me pay for never being there for them at check-in, for my absent hands and lips and eyes, for the love in my soul I was trying to hold onto so greedily for my own life, and every transgression I hid inside my eyes as if they harbored a living aqueous world of secret wrongdoings floating around in the womb of some surviving hope that we have that nothing will ever catch up to us. I closed my eyes as the two women sat at the table facing each other. They faced each other and began whispering into each other. It seemed how Sanskrit might sound in your lips if you took the slashes and turrets and hooks and loops and whispered them with sickles, bell curves, cap pistols that poofed in a cloud, and the glassy slobber of an infant or the destituted memory of a deer as its chest bled out on the snow in front of its fawn. Their speaking sounded like the delicate scarce lift of skinned breath, the raw heart of air in the trees, boats slapped on a pier, a flock of pheasant exploding from stalks of wheat or the sound of a first love in your throat as it catches decades later in the way you say I love you to someone you now know to be perfect. The sound of someone's hair in your mouth, the sound of how someone's leg tastes.

But here is everything: I heard the Sanskrit sounds from the praying women shift, the words seemed to click, I mean literally they were making clicking sounds with their mouths, these two women clutched between discernable words, and the chairs scuttled and scuffed as if a fight had broken out, and when I opened my eyes I found them each leaning over the table, wrapping their desperation around each other's shoulders and necks in an embrace with their violent arms, close and closer still like a vice or of a grappling hold or that of two stag beetles locking in a death match, clicking and grunting, trying to drag the other one down as if Death had animated them now, and now they were really just two beetles, huge and proximate trying to draw the life one out of the other, and I thought I'm the only one in this room who will get out of this prayer's hold. I hadn't told anyone that I was sick. I hadn't even told my mother, or my father for that matter, about any of this because I didn't

trust anything I'd say or their response to it. Like they might drive up and visit indefinitely and cry beside me as they did once when I almost died as a child. The women in the room were multiplying and by the time these two women finished whatever ritual I couldn't block out, by the time they'd shed their beetling and returned to the realm of death and prayer, the room was filled to capacity with women, and the man beside me just died from it. I can't blame him. We're all dying constantly, sorry to break it to us, and sometimes someone just admits it as honestly as is humanly possible.

By now there were women in my curtained area and on my programmable bed and on my head and chest and legs, the air was hot and then the prayer finished and the beetle-clicking stopped and one by one the women left the room and it cooled and became tolerable. I was always these days the last in the room. And, like I said, I hadn't told my mother or father. I'd already learned that mothers weep gutted in their womb while fathers' eyes swell as if to hide certain explosions in their blood and the repeated pulse of their brains bursting because their brains become their hearts but you can't say that without being cliché and you're a man after all, you can't say so many things that brush against love, so you sit there and feel your brains shotgunning your body and you lose your mind with this confusion between rage and what is probably love, a black and poisonous smoke that you want to reach out and eat you're so hungry. That's a father when he thinks you're dying. Like a twist, a confused nucleus of flaming tires. So I didn't tell them, the whole time. And I remember, when the nurses weren't looking, throttling the timer a little on the machine, the bag of chemicals, the machine that made the death slower, or faster, it was so hard to know. My father is an engineer, and this is, I realize now, exactly what he'd have done if he were alone in the room. I would throttle the machine every day when I knew the nurses wouldn't be checking for an hour or two. Some of them were new mothers, I recall. They were so kind, and I recall I was so happy that they could work in a place like this and have children they wanted to show you pictures of. Then they'd leave the room again and I'd throttle the timer, the rate of delivery, of deliverance, the dripping, just a little. I think for those moments it made me feel like I had more control over time, which I didn't feel I had these days in any other way.

In that pulsing chemical silence, I was without my mother or

my father and I was still childless. I didn't dare get up and leave the room for fear that I might see that time hadn't even yet begun, that somehow in this room that I'd left, something beautiful had been born and I'd missed it and would never get that back.

Messengers

Donald Revell

Why is only the one leaf busy,
As though it carried a flame inside it, while
All the rest of the branch lies heavy as paint
Shading the unseasonable heat indigo?
I am always drawn to frantic things.
The hurrying, naked boy in the Gospel of Mark
Is God himself to me. The yellow-jacket
Bewildered in an empty wine bottle
Makes a sacrament of helplessness,
And I shake him free. The least thing
Portals everlasting. Pause to remember:
The earth is sick with fever. Here and there
Things flicker into consciousness as Christ
Did for Judas, at the rope's end.
Insects blunder into devices and designs.
They cannot help themselves. They are the messengers
Of nothing more to read, the drunken
Indigo beneath a fire I found.

Sharon Olds

Craft Talk Notes

Cr 18 (1)

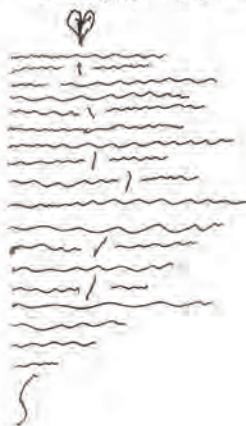
♪ Catbird eaten in the live of 9!

& the house is quiet. as
when the babes were babes -- other
consciousnesses nearby, dreaming,
& no one needing anything. But I'm on call;
I'm useful.

& I realized -- I learned to
write as myself* (no end-rhyme; all
ll enjambed; lots of caesurae);
The poem a one-sided cadence)

* Dec.
1, 1972

(Juan
Felipe's
craft
talk)



close
up
of
heads
- French
Cadensising.

(2.)

Short story, lost horse (Surreal)
- or the money lost to buy him back?
- Sat Eve Post style - age 120?

Play - The wheat is grey, why
do we now have grey wheat?! A crack
betw. Huis Clos (No X) & grapes of
Wrath - French absurdism & Amer. social
realism?

Sonnets! Romeo & J. & the
Sh. sonnets & 500 on the bus to Playland
at the Beach.

also poems à la cummings - playful,
entirely! Formal - Trad. form,
lower case.

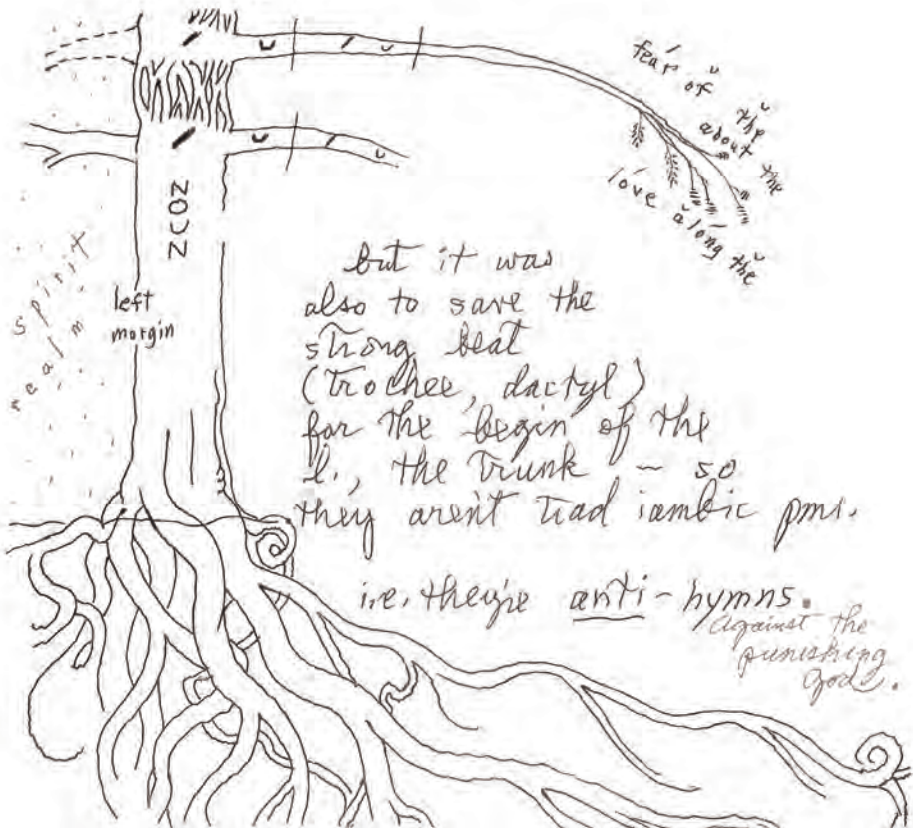
Parallel path - finishing Ph.D.
(Pms; "The defense")
"May 1968" (The swear to
Satan, pm - That
day!)



5.

and then, last June, revelation
of the anti-iamb!

I had that purp. of "The little
stuff, the junk, at the end," was to avoid
trad end rhyme.



Only In Stacking Books Can The Tree Feel Its Weight Again

CAConrad

I am so fucking sick of nations
and the men who love them
the number of suicides
this afternoon hiding
in bottom of a cup
I feel feral out here
found a man who likes me like that
found a man who lives the way I do
7 years on the road anniversary soon
you only have to destroy
yourself for love until it is normal
which makes love normal
and refuse to live a day without it
an inferno of it
at 16 sleeping with
my mother's boyfriend
I was overwhelmed with it
solids form around you until you
struggle no more beneath it
feel throat open in a word
naming new stars moving across
the ceiling from the disco ball
constellations with stories to
soften hardened hearts
we finish the night
reading poetry out loud
last night Erica Kaufman's
mind blowing *Post Classic*
poetry and love
sure know how to
hang a Welcome sign out
measure and transmit from
the pink and adorable telemetry
no more waiting between parenthesis
we now excel in the ether while holding hands

you must walk this lonesome

Evie Shockley

say hello to moon leads you into trees as thick as folk on easter pews
dark but venture through amazing was blind but now fireflies glittering
dangling from evergreens like christmas oracles soon you meet the
riverbank down by the riverside water bapteases your feet moon bursts
back in low yellow swing low sweet chariot of cheese shines on in the
river cup hands and sip what never saw inside a peace be still mix in
your tears moon distills distress like yours so nobody knows the trouble
it causes pull up a log and sit until your empty is full your straight is
wool your death is yule moonshine will do that barter with you what you
got for what you need draw from the river like it is well with my soul o
moon you croon and home you go

improphised

Evie Shockley

¹imagine peter, not nodding
over his palms that dawn,
but praying the vindictive
²prayers of the righteous,
drawing enough testosterone
up from his balls to light
³all the dew in the garden
afire, more than enough
to keep him awake, enough
⁴even to make him slap
judas's silvery lips before
they could kiss the sacrifice,
⁵causing chaos among the spear-
bearing romans : imagine
him alive with the fury
⁶of love and utterly blind
to the lacerated look on his
friend-of-friends' face, denying

⁷nothing, not his name, not
his faith, not his rage, hurling
affirmations at his inquisitors—

⁸yes, i am the man! : this peter,
all flesh and flood, imagine
him murderously steadfast,

⁹less rock than stone, a self-
made weapon, still weeping
at the cock's crow, every pre-

¹⁰diction re-writing itself anew
in his woeful image : human if
he did and human if he didn't.

fruitful

Evie Shockley

you grow my garden. no, you are
the whole of it: the beds of zinnias,
tiger lilies, begonias, petunias, in all
their taken-for-granted variety :: irises

waving purple flags from the tops
of long stalks :: daffodils and violets by
the bushel, rhododendrons and azaleas
by the bush. you are the greenhouse

in the western quadrant, the rainforest
inside, and the delicate herd of orchids,
strange by stranger, each out-thriving
the other. not just lovely, you're

the courtyard, central, complete
with benches for contemplating
the round, still pool, an eye gazing
back at the ones looking down. you're

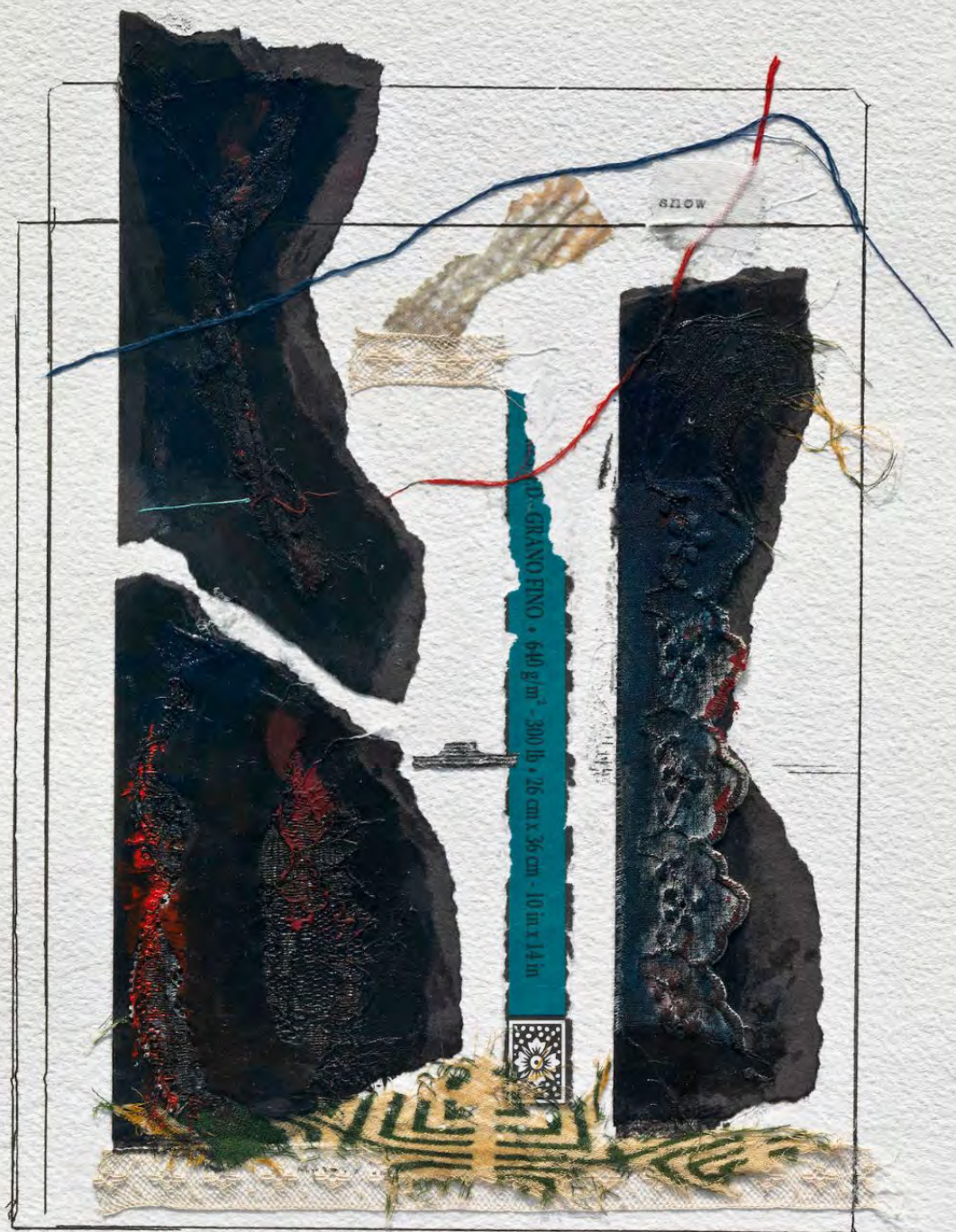
the meadow of tall grasses that hide
everything but the sound of the stream ::
the arched boughs of the peach orchard,
the rows of beans, corn, greens, gourds,

the root vegetables, the parsley, sage,
rosemary, and chives, oregano, basil,
and, yes, all the thyme in the world.
you're the stand of aspens waving me

on :: the grove of willows that arc
and cascade, but never weep :: the oaks,
maples, and birches encircling the verge.
here, i become my best self, i exist at

peace with birds and bees, no knowledge
is denied me: i eat the apple, speak
with the snake, and nothing as obnoxious
as an angel could oust me from this soil,

the plot where the best of my stories
has its genesis, and finds its end.



Purgatorio I-13, 15x19" (2015-2017), Peter Sacks



per la sua forma, ch' è nata a salire
là dove più in sua materia dura :
così l' animo preso entra in disire,
ch' è moto spiritale, e mai non posa
fin che la cosa amata il fa gioire.
Or ti puote apparer quant' è nascosa
veritate all'
no an

it endures longest in
so the enamoured mind falls to desire
a spiritual mover
object

Purgatorio I-2, 15x19" (2015-2017), Peter Sacks

The Reins

Peter Sacks

Many are the faces pressed against the wind,
strong is the wheel of heat, the ungloved hand.

Out of the cliff you made the fountain,
out of flint the dolphin in the wave;

why should you fear us—knowing how the cloth
slid from her belly, her mouth opened to my own

—unless desire is infinite, each particle
from the beginning driven from you

forcing its intolerable weight into the world.

Larkin

Peter Sacks

Pull back the lining of the normal thought.

Black moss. Old brick. Lopsided moon.

O Truth; O Grief; O Clarity! O.K.

Again. This time let's get it right.

The only memory worth savoring—

Your sour breath against the pane,

Wiped clearer for it—bright, unwavering.



False Bay 2, 22x30" (2015), Peter Sacks



False Bay 3, 22x30" (2015), Peter Sacks

Lady's-slipper, Red Eft

Adrie Kusserow

As a child I awoke
to the furiousness of bees,

All morning my mother and I combed the woods
for red efts, trout lily, trillium.

I learned young
the smell of God and soil.

The first time I saw a lady's-slipper
I felt embarrassed, the pink-veined pouches,

simultaneously ephemeral and genital,
floating toad-balloons,

half scrotum, half fairy,
half birth, half death.

Without the formalities of church and school,
lust and spirit first came to me

as one
through the potent hips of spring.

But flowers, like fear, once inside me

never lay still

amidst my restless
stalking of the woods,

I wanted something bulky to thank,
to name, to explain all the impossible grace.

So I dragged my thirsty body
over the hills, into the trees.

I let the plump red efts, orange fingers tiny as rain,
crawl across my neck, onto my cheek,

half reptile, half elf,
half earth, half magic.

Years passed,
spring after spring cycled through me,

again and again I arrived in heaven
through touch,

lust, even, for the wrinkled pouches of lady's-slipper,
the soft lemon-bellied efts

that waddled pigeon-toed across my palm.
Now I walk my daughter through April's black mud.

It's been a long winter,
she hasn't quite unfurled.

Still, she sticks her ear into the cacophony of crows
above us, the way a dog sniffs

at a tight current of scent.
Across the meadow the peepers

gossip in their giant cities,
salamanders toddle

over the black soil,
back into the cold ponds they think of as mother.

awake, awake

what if, what if

What if God is walking through us,
picking seasons, histories, humans off himself

like milkweed from a sweater,
wading through us,

a slow giant through warm ponds,
feeling the odd tickle of religious

like tangled weeds at his feet?
I watch Ana now in full bloom,

despite the rain, running outside barefoot,
setting up dolls' nests in the fields,

collecting moles, covering them in leaves,
naming them even though they're dead.

She skitters across the garden, singing,
she too is learning young

the restlessness of rapture,
the way beauty is hard to sit with,
the way it bends the body into prayer,
the way ripeness must be touched.

Soft black earth of the garden,
she and her brother all fists and toes.

I watch her digging into heaven—
soil, toads, bulbs, buds,

the craning neck of spring—
and all summer

the sweet long green meadows.

Night Poppies

Adrie Kusserow

At night,
the thick hands of day
tied back,
the yellow light, the chatter gone,
I watch you
lying on your side,
the broad plane of your back
rising up like a mountain,
your face sunk deep
on the other side.

Against the cool, lean body of night,
there is no argument.
I know what I want.
I open like a poppy
across the small tight hours,
there is no end to my color,
only width, only sky.

If there is a final stop,
a meaning or a truth,
I meet it here.
I do not question anything.
I just step off,
the red poppy butting
its head into the world.





Cliff

Yi Sang

translated from Korean by Jack Jung

○ 절벽

꽃이보이지않는다. 꽃이향기롭다. 향기가만개한다. 나는거기묘혈을판다. 묘혈도보이지않는다. 보이지않는묘혈속에나는들어앉는다. 나는눕는다. 또꽃이향기롭다. 꽃은보이지않는다. 향기가만개한다. 나는잊어버리고재차거기묘혈을판다. 묘혈은보이지않는다. 보이지않는묘혈로나는꽃을깜빡잊어버리고들어간다. 나는정말눕는다. 아아. 꽃이또향기롭다. 보이지도않는꽃이 – 보이지도않는꽃이

○ Cliff

I cannot see the flower. The flower is fragrant. The fragrance is in full bloom. I dig a grave in it. But I cannot see the grave either. I enter the grave I cannot see and sit there. I lie down. I can smell the flower again. I still cannot see the flower. The fragrance is in full bloom. I forget about it and dig a grave. I still cannot see the grave. I forget about the flower and go into the grave I cannot see. Ah, ah! I can smell the flower again. This flower I cannot see—this flower I cannot see.

Self Portrait

Yi Sang

translated from Korean by Jack Jung

◦ 자상

여기는어느나라의데드마스크다. 데드마스크는도적맞았다는소문도있다. 풀이극복에서파과하지 않던이수염은절망을알아차리고생식하지않는다. 천고로창천이허방빠져있는함정에유언이석비 처럼은근히침몰되어있다. 그러면이결을생소한손짓발짓의신호가 지나가면서무사히스스로와한다. 젊었던내용이이래저래구기시작이다.

◦ Self-Portrait

This is some country's death mask, rumored to be stolen. Its grassy facial hair fails to reach twirling adulthood in the far north, a mustache despairing and refusing to germinate. The ancient azure sky fell into the troughs of the death mask, now the final testament silently sinks into those traps like a stone monument. And then, foreign hands and feet parade past the death mask. The death mask is ashamed, having done nothing. The dignified meaning is crumpled.

ひ げー

(顔・顔・ソノ外ひげデアリ得ルモノヲ・皆ノコト)

1

目ガアツテ居サクレバナラナイ管ノ場所ニハ森林デアル
笑ヒガ在ツテ居タ

2

人衆

3

あまりカノ幽霊ハ水族館デアルガ非常ニ沈黙デアル
ソレハ陰鬱デデモアルコトダ

4

溪流ニテ――

乾燥シタ植物性デアル

秋

5

一小隊ノ軍人ガ東西ノ方向ヘト前進シタト云フコトハ
無意味ナコトデナクレバナラナイ
運動場ガ破裂シ龜裂スルベカリデアルカラ

6

三心圖

7

栗ヲツメタめりけん袋
簡單ナ須臾ノ月夜デアツタ

8

何時デモ泥棒スルコト許リ計畫シテ居タ
ソウデハナカウタトスレバ少クトモ物乞ヒデハアツタ

9

平凡ナモノハ非凡ナモノノ相對デアツタ
使ノ神經ハ娼女ヨリモモツト貞淑ナ處女ヲ願フタイタ

10

馬――

汗――

×

余事ヲ以テ散歩トスルモ宜シ

余天ノ青キニ地ク新ク隨順主義ナリ

1931.6.5

Beard

Yi Sang

translated from Japanese by Sawako Nakayasu

• Beard

(BEARD • BEARD • ALL THOSE THINGS • THAT QUALIFY AS FACIAL hair)

1

THERE IS AND WAS A LAUGHTER THAT WAS A FOREST IN THE PLACE WHERE EYES ARE
SUPPOSED TO BE

2

CARROT

3

American GHOSTS ARE AQUARIUMS BUT ARE QUITE ELEGANT
THEY ARE ALSO SOMBER AT TIMES

4

BY THE MOUNTAIN STREAM –
A DEHYDRATED PLANT-BASED
AUTUMN

5

THE FACT THAT THE SOLDIERS OF THE FIRST PLATOON ADVANCED TO THE EAST AND WEST
NEEDS TO BE A MEANINGLESS THING
BECAUSE THE ATHLETIC FIELD KEEPS EXPLODING AND FISSURING

6

THREE-CENTERED CURVE

7

Flour SACK FULL OF MILLET
IT WAS AN EASY FLEETING MOONLIT NIGHT

8

AT ALL HOURS I KEPT PLOTTING TO STEAL
AND IF THAT HAD NOT BEEN THE CASE AT THE VERY LEAST I WAS A BEGGAR

9

THAT WHICH IS SPARSE IS OPPOSITE TO THAT WHICH IS DENSE AND
THAT WHICH IS ORDINARY WAS OPPOSITE TO THAT WHICH IS EXTRAORDINARY
MY NERVES HAD HOPED FOR A MAIDEN MUCH MORE CHASTE THAN A PROSTITUTE

10

HORSE –
SWEAT –

X

IT IS ACCEPTABLE TO LIKEN A WALK TO CO-CLERICAL WORK
THUS TIRING OF THE BLUE OF THE CO-SKY LIKE EXCLUSIONISM

1931.6.5

Danses Sacrée et Profane (Debussy 1904)

Bin Ramke

The violinist's sinister fingers
a pale half-
spider wrapping a fly

the gods sharpen knives
at that angle of bow to strings
bowing a sound like laughter
where the mouth parts weave
text textures textiles
golden orbs

confess is to commit
as confection is to confine,
saith the preacher.

Ours as an age of truth
is why we lie
so readily, so well
the chosen animal
who lies beside us
and speaks when spoken to,

leaves webbish tracings
amid the dust after
and of.

Mute is to mutilate
as love is to levitate
saith the spider.

Secret Sins in the Light

Bin Ramke

To live in the garden for snails
and slugs under moonlight could be
a form of reading, script shining

but I do not welcome the homely
art of eating and touching light lighter
than any braille-reading finger the face

of the soil. *Soil* was as word once
the place where the wild boar wallowed.
His homely comfort.

They Are Like Grass

Bin Ramke

Would you if you could live
to be a thousand? Think of the candles.
Think of which windows will have broken.

I was remembering today
a path along a bayou I walked watching
snakes swim across, two snakes across water

gray, the snakes and the water, a gray
mud of watery light against the stars from
the stars that evening as I made a way home

thinking in spite of the snakes and the water
of only light like candles consuming
themselves wickedly wrong.

Pigs at the Door and a Riot Beneath the Skin

Brionne Janae

Eleanor Bumpurs to Deborah Danner

at a certain point there can only be your body
and what it can hold in its hands
scissors a butcher knife a baseball bat
sister how far you willing to go to keep control
they already think you so far outside your mind
you must be an animal
girl be an animal if you have to
we don't owe nobody our shame
comes a time you got to stop begging for mercy
and feel the ground firm beneath your feet
grip that bat girl wind it tight
like a spring trembling to come loose
hey batter batter hey batter batter
you won't get a second chance
keep your eyes open girl swing

Late Summer

Brionne Janae

for Jeremiah

it is not yet noon in suburban california
rows of palm trees line the road as if they could make an oasis

out of the dry desert heat outside the casino
the cement and mortar volcano bubbles

with the rage of house wives
forced into the shadows by coddled men

and your brother revs the engine of his top down mustang
so you can feel all that power

trembling in your bones as if the strength of a thousand horses
could be a symbol for freedom and not a measure

of what they must inevitably carry your brother is not yet
twenty one and already he is the envy of every man within eye shot

his sunglasses glitter in the sun and the length
of the corn rows your mother braided only days before

shimmie in the wind he smiles like a kid full
on himself and he is smiles like he's been behind the wheel



five white boys in the Lehman Wing (family portrait), oil on canvas, 30x40," Katherine Du



the moral concept of the impossible, oil on panel, 11x14," Katherine Du

Umbra

Jackie Wang

The dream was the way everything is related through the hidden points.

Grothendieck says every living person has a Dreamer who whispers their fate to them, that this hushed voice is proof of God. What does it do to you, to no longer have time to tarry? The dream is shade epistemology—what the water and the soil hold. Zones of void become verdant when subjected to time—it is the instability of nothingness.

In the tendency toward flow,
dust transmuted
preserves infinity
in the helix of duration.

By what principle—of restlessness?
From which: life.

Dogs in love, cursed dogs of the forest—desire without identity. The breath, what I could not feel, Mackey's son singing in the shower, and the water carrying something out. When the dream reverses, it folds, into itself, the fate that will forever remain obscure to you. But something was planted. The soil holds: what will be. The beans of an English breakfast eaten twice—Now a voice once beautiful (Billie Holiday's) holds everything she's lived through, in its lilting brokenness. The shards of the perfume bottle won't be stitched together. But archive is debris—matter, muttering with ropes, our Siamese souls as stitched as sailors'. Did not write of the synchronicity of "mu"—the fans—the ropes of poetry

from Kaliteli Organ/An Organ of Quality

Efe Murad

translated from Turkish by Murat Nemet-Nejat

transparency arrives from above.
skies shadow salt water.
as the angle changes,
in the cloudy water, limpid cove.
the weave of the surface is honeycombed, as the boy
climbs the rock.
his eyes in dreams – the surface of the water, the boy jumpin'.
splashing against the water, eyes in the water and cloudy shadow.
the boy's entangled in the cloud of salt, the salt water in the mouth,
invisible water creature.
what we haven't lived're our mistakes
our lives can't change.

are you jealous of those species you like?
green as far as eyes can see, green
ranges
rest easy, there're steppes opening.
to a place everyone wants.

the affair started there turning into love
with the fool-wanderer of the anarchic ocean, its supreme guide
restless sun that couldn't linger at any station -- long
leaving station after station at the flow of the red drop the true birth
came
epiphany came
like tea reaching its true color
and to reach their goal
inside the IkoN¹ the two oceans met
light'd fallen,
were despised wandering fools the sun
discovering anarchic ecstasy in the fertile boon of anatolia...

smell of diesel and semen.
the equilateral polygon and solidity of matter're
reaching a resolution.
protein... and LED daylight
two boys fucking in the bushes
spreading a mat... 'nd the door of the cage is opening
the holy black cube, meteorite...
that slipping under the blanket you wanted to touch.
the mass you a long time, a long time beheld
those were, they were once closed-up cliques, the flow of the butane
stopped
leaving a foam tissue of adenoid gland
the milky marrow of which
has its biting ways.

¹ Ikónion was the ancient Anatolian city (the modern Konya) where the poet Rumi whom this poem is about is buried.

A Skull Dreams It Is a Horse

Ashley Mayne

A skull on a stick dreams it is still a horse.

Parade ground, a misfiring cannon. An explosion: a horse turned inside out. A horse's body mingled with a coal miner come to watch the parade.

People separated them as best they could. The miner's name was Sumner. He had no sweetheart. He was young. They sent him home to his mother in Chipping Campden.

The old thoroughbred's name was Grey Shanks. The cavalry unit had an unofficial wake for her; some of them slipped out after dark. They drank all night at The Queen Victoria, raising glasses to the horse and to the portrait of Lloyd George, and they drank between the pub and the barracks, walking and singing in the snow, under pale stars. Grey Shanks. Grey Shanks. She's a jolly good fellow.

Someone put the horse's skull on a stick. A man called Rainbird kept her in his hayloft.

A long splinter of bone is lodged between the skull's back teeth. The two bones become one bone. Part of the cavalry horse, and part of Sumner.

Now the long skull dreams.

*

A skull on a stick dreams it is still a horse, and dreams it is a coal

miner.

A horse looks out of the skull's left eye. Sumner looks out of the right.

In the left world she's burned, an exploded horse, a warhorse that never went to war, set free from the cannon she's been pulling on parade, fire climbing up her side over the cavalry brand, all the way up to her right eye, pieces of her and the miner called Sumner and red confetti everywhere. On the other side, she is a workhorse chained to a machine underground, and Sumner pushes alongside her. His face is black. He wears a light on his head. These are Sumner's memories, but they exist in her skull together, one bone. Now she is a coal miner, and he is a horse.

When they are underground, the horse wants to know why there is no grass.

The miner tries to explain to the horse: In the world underground, there is no grass and no sky.

The horse thinks it isn't much of a place. But it's what Sumner knows. We die in France, he tells her, and we die digging coal.

The horse remembers being alive, and being dead. She remembers being Sumner, the coal miner, six years underground with the machines.

He says: machines are the future. She doesn't understand what "future" means. He tells her about howitzers and the Vickers machine gun, of weapons that can tear open a field and spill its guts like a wolf tearing out a horse's belly, how these new guns can mow down a line of cavalry. Won't be needing warhorses, he says. He says: drills and modern coal extraction. He says: won't be needing pit ponies to pull the carts up. Nor even boys. It'll be all machines.

Sumner is a strange animal.

Out of her right eye. Out of her left. She dreams for both of them, of two different worlds.

In one, there is fire, and a black sun over a white field. In the other, all the light comes from electric bulbs. She walks in circles, turning a machine.

Sumner thinks: my name. It's on these coveralls. He likes to say the same thing, do the same thing, again and again. Sometimes he says his name to himself, and the number that is stitched under his name on his coveralls.

Rainbird keeps the long skull in the hayloft and carries it down at Christmas.

The rest of the time, the horse dreams for herself and for the coal miner in her right eye, and Sumner dreams for both of them, too.

*

The burned horse looks out of her left eye. She canters down green lanes in the countryside, those tunnels of oaks and alders, Sumner's heels flopping by her shoulders. He isn't much of a rider.

They trot together where the cobbles ring under her shoes like teeth in a metal cup. She wants to give him the smell of sweat. The taste of a ripe pear. But Sumner likes places that remember pain.

Through London to the place of long-ago executions. To Smithfield, choked with traffic now. Through factories and docks and auction yards and tanneries, where blood covers the horse's pasterns. Through mills, butcheries, smelters, steelworks.

This place is ugly, Sumner says happily.

The horse wonders if Sumner is perhaps not an animal after all, but a machine.

Sumner says his own name. He says, 2467.

His brother was gassed in France.

He says: Slow down, why don't you?

He rides like a sack of flour.

The smell of smoke makes the burned horse think of a starter pistol. The smell of blood twitches in her hide and makes her itch. She wants to buck and bite. The coal miner is a lion on her back. But she was broken to stand through anything. So she canters to these places that remember human lives, her gait human pain, her gait the shock of the axe. The trace pain leaves is longer-lived than joy.

Afterward, she takes him to the parade ground where the cannon exploded. Most days it's a park. Sumner likes to see the children feed the birds. He likes the old couples with their little dogs. He doesn't know that even here it's the pain of the place, making him feel alive.

There's a gathering at the parade ground, a party after a wedding. The bride takes off her shoes and runs across the grass. Pink napkins wilt in the rain.

No one sees the two of them, the coal miner's ghost on the grey ghost horse.

What the horse loves is Christmas, when Rainbird takes her down from the hayloft. Everyone will be happy. People will sing about her: Hup, Hup, Hoddening Horse. The ghosts of her knees will jig up and down as if she's galloping in a ghost meadow, and her dry ghost teeth clap together, and the long hard maw bone grins.

Sumner whistles through their teeth.

Every day of the year but one, they keep the skull up in Rainbird's hayloft.

The horse longs for that one day, her special day; they bring her down from the hayloft. They put a hoop of holly round her neck, which to them is just a stick; it makes her think of the flowers they put on racehorses at Brighton By The Sea.

The horse tells Sumner how she was a racehorse at Brighton, before the cavalry brand, when she was a filly.

Someone's telling wee porky pies, he says.

People carry her through town. That's when she visits the places she likes, where joy leaves its salt. Once a year, in winter, she enters their houses dressed in green. Sumner goes too, though the place doesn't speak to him like a stockyard or a factory.

People can see the burned horse then, as a horse's skull with a stick for a neck and a blanket covering the wicker frame of her body. They can almost see the old skin covering her bones, dappled with light and shadows.

The Hoddening Horse's jaw is wired up, and she can snap it, or people snap it for her, ringing the bells, enticing the women of the house to let themselves be covered by her blankets for good luck. She likes their brandy-rum breath and songs of "Poor auld 'orse". She likes the way they touch each other.

A man and a woman press together in a corner when everyone else is gathered at the punch bowl. A bunch of paste holly berries fall out of the woman's hair, and her breasts rise up and down inside her dress. The horse leaves her skull, and goes into the woman's body. She feels the woman's excitement, and the woman's sadness, the way her heart is, and the way of the man holding her as gently as a blade of grass. That night, the horse's skull back in the hayloft, the woman dreams of fire.

Sumner retreats to the skull's right eye, doesn't come out for a

long time.

Sumner never held a woman, never loved. He puts his ear on his father's clotted chest in the hospital. The heart, so loud, so strong. His father is an ocean trapped and pounding from inside. His father is a line of charging hooves in Sumner's ear.

How can I be dead, he wonders.

*

Rainbird stops coming to the hayloft. The horse feels it's been a long time, but can't be sure.

London bursts from its skin and spills out into the country. There is a shock of fire in the air. Everything that happens, happens again. The living hide in shelters underground whenever the sky roars.

Sumner and the horse trot down streets where fields once were. They ride through days of heavy air, through nights of moonlight, every lamp gone dark. A woman drinks a cup of tea in the morning on top of a hill of rubble, legs crossed, dusty patent heels, a scarf tied over her hair. A milk cart is turned into a barricade. There are no horses in London now. Only rats and pigeons, people and machines.

Didn't I tell you, Sumner says. He rests his hand along the horse's back.

Rats clamber in the rubble, scuttle in and out of the rubble pile that was Rainbird's hayloft. Sumner and the horse take shelter in their separate windows. They watch the pigeons fall out of the sky.

In Chipping Campden there are shadows plastered to walls, big shadows and little shadows, black and delicate.

Sumner lingers for a long time by the shadows on the wall. Soot, like him.

*

The two ghosts lie with trash scattered around an empty lot. The trash blows away, crumbles away, is picked away by rats. Sun bleaches the long skull until the bones become as white as ashes in a kiln. The jawbone is long gone. Sumner and the horse wait together in the empty brainpan, in the vacant lot. Rain taps over them. Years strip paint off brick walls.

*

Sometimes the horse's skin is still burning, on the parade ground again, with the misfiring cannon. Everything is black and blasted apart. She runs through the black sparks. Embers glow from her nostrils. She

screams like a train. Her legs unfold in smoke. Her mane is a smear of fire, and she runs, an element, flying again past the bandstand and the walls and the bleeding mess of the field, past the racing sun, past light. She is faster than any horse alive.

She burns so hot she leaves their image in soot on a wall in Chipping Campden.

Sumner asks: why does it still hurt? Why does it hurt?

He takes the horse into the skull's right eye, where his dream of machines pounds the starless underground. Where nothing changes and the clatter of steel rolls in waves like a constant, calm, dark sea.

*

When she looks out of the right eye into Sumner's dream, they are no longer burning. She is an animal chained to a machine, a pump, an engine, the lungs of the world. She walks in a circle to power the machine, and Sumner walks beside her.

The track under her hooves has bitten deep into the pitch of the ground. It's Sumner's dream. A hundred years might pass away above them.

She pulls to the right, her good eye fixed now on the big iron lung, and the growling thing reminds her of the cannon on its side. She begins to dream within Sumner's dream. Painted railings of a racetrack corroded by sea, how they came together at the bend far ahead, jockey's trim weight perched over her neck, how it felt to run with other horses, the crack of the announcer's yell, the boom of an organ, the audience flashing by with their hats in the air. She remembers the cavalry brand on her left shoulder, the old mark rubbed smooth by a collar from years pulling the cannon. Sumner rests his hand there sometimes as they walk. He is calm, he does his job. His hand leaves soot on her shoulder. His cool ear presses on her neck, to hear the pounding from inside. She listens to him humming in the dark.

She is not this machine. She had a name once, ore and smoke and cloudy skies.

In the empty lot, a sapling is growing up through her eye. When the bone splits, the shock of it will wake them, loud as a howitzer.

*

A parade, a plan gone wrong. A boy smeared with coal reaches to a horse on a parade ground, fire and shattered artillery around them.

Confetti smolders in the air. The boy has taken off his hat. He holds his arms out. He wants things he has never known. A ripened pear, a stretch of grass. The color of a wheat field in the night.

Splinters open his cheek. He is still reaching.

The horse can see him through the smoke.

Grey Shanks, fire in her mane and tail. Grey Shanks alight.

Of Deer

Lauren Winchester

The brain is hot tonight, yes, hot. Water steams against its surface, rising in animal shapes. The vibration of a hummingbird wing, the wing of a bat drummed tight, a deer rasping the dead velvet of his antlers against a tree. An assemblage of beasts clamp onto and thread through me. On a hill we circle, eyeing each other warily. The deer is still scraping his antlers and will not stop. There's something urgent he must do, but what? The abraded trunk shows raw wood, the splintered bark is in a pile. Velvet gone, he grates down the strong bone of his antlers, smoothing the points into nubs. There's something coming for him. There's something coming, I agree. He rubs until there's only fur over skull. The rack in shards. The tree thin, exposed.

Carousel

Lauren Winchester

 Their euphoria is mechanical
and effortless. Mid-

 prance, heads thrown
back, their manes whip

 in imagined wind. I can see
the roofs of their mouths,

 their carved teeth
and lolling tongues.

 Bernini sculpted Teresa of Avila
in her rapture—

 her mouth parted
on a moan, chin tilted

 toward a cascade
of bronze rays.

 An angel had appeared
and pierced her heart

with a golden spear tipped
with fire. Of spiritual pain, I know

that the body bears
its portion. If only ecstasy

were as easy as the gliding
of these horses: Elated, ascending

toward the sky, guided
by the bell and animated

by the hand that rings it.

Reflexology

Amanda Gunn

I am another woman's daughter and
my godmother Mary's also. I have
Mary's smile and hypoglycemia, her arthritic
toes, her well of melancholy.
On a Saturday afternoon, we see red
and black velvet Christmas dresses
in the downstairs of the Macy's. Mary
smiles at me, mentions some
child I will have that she didn't have.
I frown, withhold a joke
about clocks, look off down the bright avenue
of housewares. I remind her
I had a birthday last week.
At the Zen Center, amid orchids
and red plastic wall hangings, Mary takes me
to see her healers. They nod
as she lists my complaints, then a woman
presses her fingers into my feet:
This is for bowel. This is for pancreas.
This is for heart.

‘A Long Ways from Home’

Amanda Gunn

My mother's father never knew his father,
but mornings he could see, as he would shave,
the bluer eyes and there, beneath the lather,
skin much paler than his own. His mother gave
her son what start she could from wash-work, though
she wouldn't name the man she'd met—or where—
in love or something darker. Not to know
that history bred a rage he seemed to wear.
He wandered far afield, from home to war,
to work, to marriage, out of marriage, gone.
He left the girls his cheerful wife had born,
still looking for a father, finding none.
In summer he slept days and woke by night,
humming “Motherless Child” in the meager light.

Monarch

Amanda Gunn

Of Grandma Jessie, little's left: a hymn,
her words like *hoo-dee-rah!* for heat, a gold-
and-rhinestone fritillary pin, grown dim,
a Bible bound with threads too thin to hold.
Her husband left young, his intellect a fire—
he burned. He thought her “country”: sweet, but cold.
Released, alone, she fixed to her attire
butterflies whose pearls seemed to flash, unmold.
Her flat, unpeopled land is still the scene
through which her favored monarchs fold, unfold
themselves from north and home to glorious sun,
their wings cathedral glass, unfettered, bold.
Our Jessie saw them, knew her kin and kind,
and, seeing, lifted skyward in her mind.



Hang in There, Shannon VanGyzen



Untitled, Shannon VanGyzen

CONJURE, PURGE, RELEASE

from *Eros A Killing* by Kristin Prevallet

“Capitalism is a purely cultic religion, perhaps the most extreme that ever existed” –Walter Benjamin

*Spawn of fantasies
Sifting the appraisable
Pig Cupid his rosy snout
Rooting erotic garbage
'Once upon a time'*

–Mina Loy

THE SPELL (SEDUCTION)

Step one:

Create a profile on the online dating website OKCupid under the username *SanguineMina*. Upload a sultry photograph that shows only mouth and cleavage. Insert various keywords (the algorithm is the matchmaker) to attract Bankers to the profile: *Sir, intoxicate, omnivore, paleo, fitness, passionate, ocean, red wine, Leonard Cohen*.

Step two:

Write a provocative hook. Clear the syntax, make it correct, and clearly state your intention:

Dear Banker:

I was standing with the occupiers of Wall Street while you were working there.

You passed by every day, pretending not to notice.

I don't blame you for the financial crisis. I know that you believe in Capitalism because you've worked hard and have invested your time and soul into making lots of money.

But doesn't the constant illusion of it get you down?

You know what I mean: the system causes many people who can't (or refuse) to keep up with it to suffer.

And you're suffering too.

Do you think we have something to talk about?

Sincerely,

Mina K. Loy

Author of *The Queen of Coins*

Step three: Wait for it.

Step four: The Banker emerges from the blue mist

Step five: Spend. Consume. Devour. Break open. Break apart.

THE DETOX (PURGE)

You had consumed the poisonous belief that you had found a protector, a benevolent patriarch, one who could obliterate and enshroud you.

The exorcism of that narrative from your body will be fierce and painful. Delusions of shelter and protection will transform you into a ferocious, mortally wounded creature.

They must wind like implanted viruses slithering just beneath your skin; you will quake and roar.

Your nervous system will feel as if it was violently pulled from an electric socket.

These delusions are deadly and they will consume you.

Get them out as fast as possible.

ERASE THE FORMULAIC GENRES THAT MOVE YOU TO DREAM ABOUT BANKERS

You thought you could write the perfect Romance, and make a little money on Kindle.

You called it *The Queen of Coins*. You claimed to have channeled Mina Loy as your pseudonym.

It seemed easy. But really, it was a portal into the rescue fantasy:

His chiseled chin. Broad shoulders, Rippling back muscles. Feathered thighs. His social standing and wealth. Upheld by the demons of his past as he willfully struggles against them.

The formula goes something like this:

She thinks that her beauty, innocence, and submissiveness will bring him to his knees. That her humbleness will transform him.

For a little while, the seduction and all its paraphernalia (perfume, jewelry, bras, lighting, vintages) whirled them into a cataclysm of orgasmic freedom, the kind that binds their love into a fantastically ornate co-dependence.

By submitting to his power, she learn self-confidence. By breaking her down, he experiences humility.

Her body becomes the rules of the game. The embodiment of the cult: the seduction en-trances and gives a sense of inner power; then it breaks down.

Watch (and profit) as they struggle to build themselves back up again.

Make them sick and then profit from the cure.

Pain paves the way for redemption.

This is the spiritual energy that marries their love with the divine.

ASSEMBLE ALL HIS GIFTS INTO ONE PLACE:

The crystal necklace. The lingerie. The Hermes scarf.

The antique book from his collection: *A Dictionary of Poetical Quotations: Consisting of Elegant Extracts on Every Subject*. Published in 1848, Ornate gilt black morocco binding, leather cover and vellum pages. Poetical quotations meticulously indexed into keywords: *love, death, words, hope, satisfaction, absence, solitude, longing, power*. Used as divination, these keywords will direct your mindset into alignment with the cult.

The only way to break the spell is to shatter the narrative arc of divine law.

Feel surging through every vein the beginning of a brand new story in which every moment is an ending.

LIGHT A CANDLE, AND RANDOMLY OPEN THE BOOK

Toss a small stone into the air, and where it falls, mark the key word in your heart.

At first, every poetical quotation will be a love song proclaiming the eternal flame of your addiction.

<p>Hope:</p> <p><i>Be thou the rainbow in the storms of life. The evening beam that smiles the clouds away, and tints tomorrow with prophetic ray.</i></p> <p>—Lord Byron</p>	<p>Dreams:</p> <p><i>Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?</i></p> <p>—Alfred Lord Tennyson</p>	<p>Loss:</p> <p><i>That though the radiance which was once so bright be now forever taken from my sight. Though nothing can bring back the hour of splendor in the grass, glory in the flower. We will grieve not, rather find strength in what remains behind.</i></p> <p>—William Wordsworth</p>
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But after awhile, the book will stop working, and you will receive the only message that matters:

<p>Reality</p> <p>At painful times, when composition is impossible and reading is not enough, grammars and dictionaries are excellent for distraction.</p> <p>—Elizabeth Barrett Browning</p>
--

The passages will begin to feel random and disconnected because you have lost hope that the cult can shield you from suffering.

This means you now have to find solace and strength within yourself. The illusion of protection is being dispelled.

CONSULT A TAROT CARD READER, SHE’LL TELL YOU THE SAME THING:

“I am hearing the voices of your strong female ancestors and they are saying, “LOYALTY TO THE SYSTEM IS FOLLY!!”

She will repeat this statement again, with even more intensity.

Mina Loy will chime in from stage left: "Leave off looking to men to find out what you are not."

**CRY HARD —IT'S ONLY NOW THAT YOU ARE GETTING THE
MESSAGE.**

You are free floating in the oilstained plastic trash dead animals refuse sea of capital with no one to rescue you or lead your through.

You must find that singularly masculine source of power within your own feminine body.

This means fire.

TRANSMIGRATE THE BOOK.

Wherever there is space, make a fire large enough to stoke the book with a long metal rod. As it burns, small fragments of text will wisp into the air.

Reach into the air to catch one.

"I must go. But I more than love you, and cannot cease to love you." - Lord Byron

Recognize that epiphpanic poetry is nothing but a fractal of text moving into infinity.

Don't believe a word of it.

Cry every tear from your body as you release the blowing fragments of text into the stream of heat moving currents skyward.

When the book has burned, gather the ashes and mix them with dandelion seeds and leaves.

Mix them with red paint.

Cover canvasses, and then slash them.

Call this art.

CONJURE YOUR TEACHERS

Remember the fire in you that was stoked after first reading Hélène Cixoux and Julia Kristeva; after seeing the performance art of Adrien Piper, Karen Finley, and Carolee Schneemann; after hearing the music in

the words of Tracy Morris and Anne Waldman.

Remember Benjamin: Capitalism "... is a religion which offers not the reform of existence but its complete destruction."

Remember Marx: Life is abstract; it's natural to want to believe in a higher order. When swayed by the opium of illusory happiness, we turn against humanity; against each other and the reality of human suffering.

CUT IT UP

Spread a print-out of the sadistic rape scene sections from *The Queen of Coins* all over the floor. Ground each page with rocks. Light a candle and place it in the center. Take the language of magic spells used to heal the pain of past lovers; cut out each word. Pile the tiny strips of paper. Sprinkle the words like glitter all over the manuscript pages. Obstruct the plot in random places. Ink to ink, charcoal to charcoal. The novella's every word is complicity with the violence of the cult. The novella — its smug conformity to formulaic romance: erase the narrative.

It was not so papers burn down light white candle
her stomach as fast as a sheep shearer rolls a ewe, he ties her two
wrists together, replace the rage with (peace self-esteem calm security)
out he whispers, new emotions energy fill you up write
Feel healing begin
he ties behind her head. He gazes at her wide and tearing eyes as
he rams himself into her very pliancy, she having been tricked to
open to the thrust of him as his knees press her thighs down. Down
even harder to the ground is she pinned unable to breath, unable
to scream. Say "circle, protect me and protect others from the energies
I plan to release."
heal me now
ritual quiet time heal: red candle, white candle, paper and pen.
metal tin and matches. set up quiet space.
Say "circle, protect me and protect others from the energies
I plan to release."

He stops when he is faint. When he is finished he unties her. She
curls her knees into his arms and cries. He unties her
gag. Kisses her back ever so gently.
now fire papers tin into burn out
chant, shout, screams sounds rage into red candle burns,
rage into red candle burns brighter hotter force anger fuels

“I’m so sorry. So sorry,” he whispers. “Did I hurt you? I don’t know what came over me. I want to know how to love you. I really do. Can you forgive me?”

comfortably calm again release circleenergy

And she curls sinking it back into the earth into his arms, he holds her for a moment. The tenderness of a lamb thankelements watching over me being led to the slaughter. Nothing is sweeter than thank HigherPowerinsight that.

“It’s ok...” she says, as she hungrily receives his caresses. “I want to know how to love you too.”

Let the candles burn completely out. tied up, shut up, shut down, raped, savaged—of playing small,

of giving their power away to men, of feeling violated, small

“Here, let me help you get dressed.” And like putting clothes on a doll he dresses her, attentively buttoning her dress and smoothing down her hair

Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels’ hierarchies?

“Can I stay with you tonight?”

AND EVEN IF ONE OF THEM PRESSED ME SUDDENLY

AGAINST HIS HEART?

“Not tonight,” he says, feigning tears. “Not tonight. It’s just too emotional. You saw my demon come out, and I’m so ashamed. I just need to be alone.”

ALLOW YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM TO CALM DOWN.

—Put your heart and face to the earth and sob. The Earth takes all the bile of humanity and filters it. Enter geological reality and reverse the field: feel *her* pain. Cry her toxic rivers and thawed glaciers. Breathe with the suffocated trees through *their* pained lungs.

—Go to Sufi singing circles and absorb the deep rhythms of the wailing women in black who mourn carnages of their dead lying in the rubble.

—If your dog escapes into the woods and brings home the skull of some creature—maybe a skunk—macerate it for three weeks in hydrogen peroxide; every day that you check on it, as the flesh has bubbled from the bones and turns the water putrid and black, meditate on the fate of those dying in vulture-preying deserts, spoils of a failed crossing.

—Speak his name out loud as you rub your palms with toxic silt from the nearest source of water, and as you struggle to wash them clean, know that there is no current that will heal you until the fish stop choking on oil.

—Drop down into your heart-center and breathe.

—Discard illusions. Regain your senses.

—Move around the heat of the true sun.

—Feel the pain of this exorcism breaking you open.

—To receive.

—To breathe. To be.

—To purge the rescue fantasy of Capitalism from your body before it breaks everything.

Break fast

Rita Powell

I served you
two cracked eggs
in a jade porcelain bowl.
Crushed red pepper in glass cellar.
No utensils.

You said,
'This is not a poem.'

I told you how I felt
that time when
I met the author
in the dark
and cried.

You said,
'Do you expect me to eat this?'

Our Hypervigilance Lapses Back into Pococurantism

Joan Naviyuk Kane

Do not
not doubt a woman's fortitude—
[there is] such danger
that wifely hate will not ~~not~~ face. We bleed into it as joist to ruin
gives rise to willow
birch
and lesion
where the graupel pools—
listen, learn not to listen forget [w/in] each rumble
does [/~~not~~] foretell disaster a temblor groans tonitruous
a long way off before [his] strike(-slip)/(thrust) resettles
[her] lands' [sub]surfaces—



TRACT

"*Alíya ská* = white ridge in Lakota. // Lakotas traveled the world. One group went north. They couldn't go further. There was a large white barrier that stopped them. They called it *alíya ská*. Drop two letters and you have Alaska."

—Trevino Brings Plenty



A house did seethe with drought, doubt, debt and creaking pipes.
Within it one refers (to?) abandonment and rejection, and without:
two actual eagles make glide overhead. To click your heels
together three times and recall the bourn as it forks over felled

logs, to be troubled yet by something in the aquiline doubling
(and the scrawled description of branches cosine with hagberry—
how old notebooks interpel from stanza to station to room to room).

Ostensibly reckless, we had so much ocean. Too much, then fear of it—
maybe shame— embraced by the surface of each wave.

And when did such martyrdom fail?

The mountains refuse.

The mountains would have been white,
but an inversion renders them blue under dun fog.

A queen (*secundum Qasuglana*) had a dream
that the sky could be any color. When she woke it came true
so she made it brown. Meanwhile, I mothered: wound
into a blanched cloud. Red brambles back through the birch-bare
night, though ambivalence *does not* retrogress into unmeaning.

I continue to care both ways in the course of using my desolate
hands to type this out. Were I writing, one would rest. However,
this or that erodes to episode—

[Nonessential] as archetypal chaos arising
from frictionless continuants sagged away.
How splendid, had the *bird* or *girl* learned *wyrm*,
not *church*— *murre*, not *myrhh*, neither *turtle*
nor *earn* nor *erne* but *cursor*. *Wife*, not *wife*.



Cutting the River

Joan Naviyuk Kane

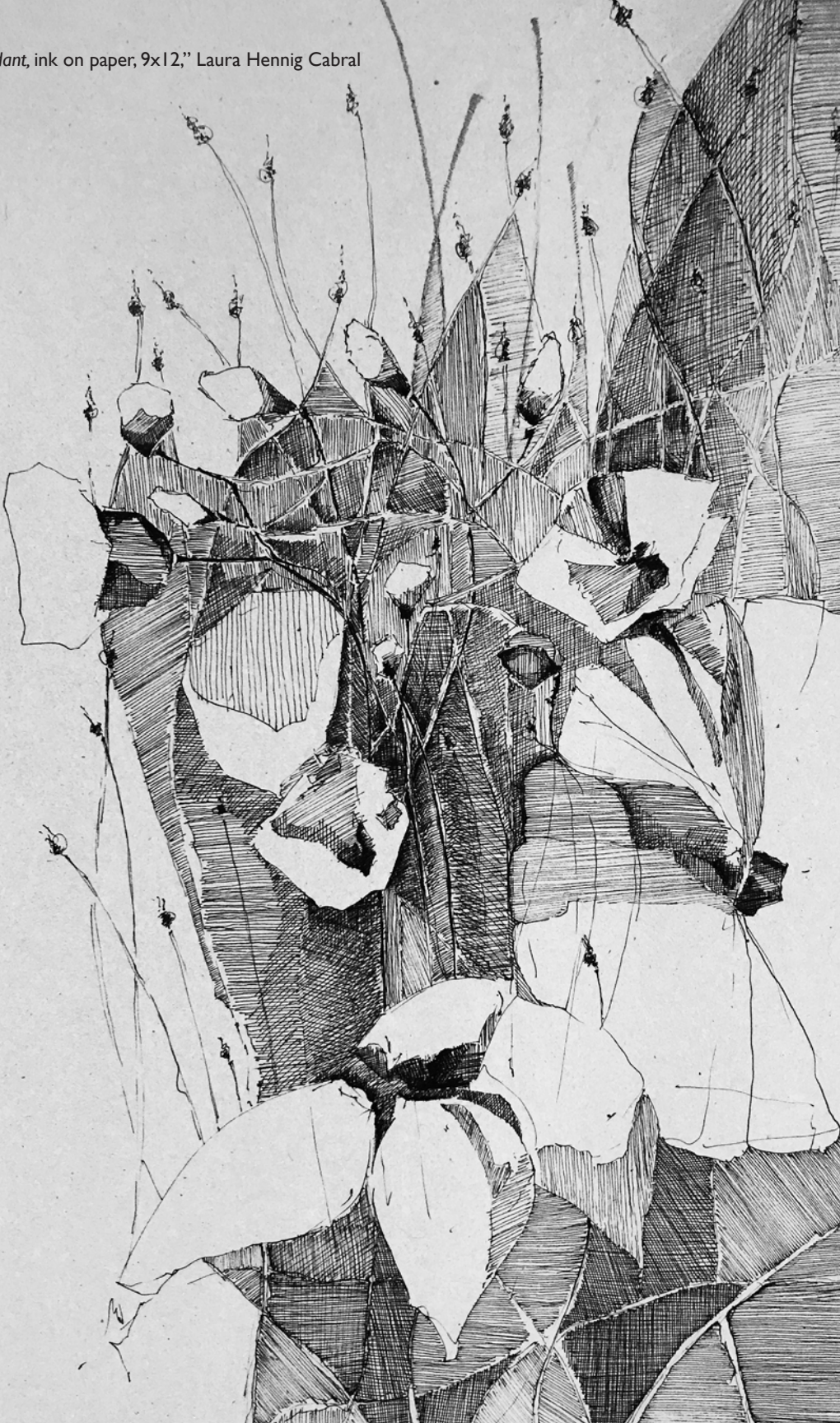
I woke up like this: on the shore
of a snow-beaten sea
during the dark part of a day
that will darken, like the others,
into the dark winter.

When the tragic figure
thinks of death, he
thinks of me. In this way
I become, at last, another
bright departure.

Haltlose and yet high-fed,
witness the mountain
I make of his grass widow
before her middle,
too, is worn away

with reckless weather.

Verdant, ink on paper, 9x12," Laura Hennig Cabral





Harvest, ink on paper, 9x12,"
Laura Hennig Cabral

Riiqtuṇa, susukpin? :: I'm reading, what are you going to do?

Joan Naviyuk Kane

Consider our indigenous poetry and cultural criticism. Consider our lives as we live them. The twenty first century has been characterized by a new era of Indigenous organizing (e.g. Idle No More, the Keystone XL protest, Unist'ot'en Camp, the #NoDAPL protest, and the #MMIW [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women] campaign). One effect of increased attention to these movements has been a new, broader political interest in indigenous cultural production, particularly as communities of all kinds seek new ways to respond to global environmental, political, and economic crises. In the context of contemporary poetry specifically, indigenous writers and their readerships have shifted their focus away from the questions of identity and cultural representation that characterize the work of yesteryear's prominent writers who exemplify that which mollifies non-indigenous readers. Instead, for this folio of indigenous poets, poetics contributes directly both to challenges to ongoing colonial violence and to continuities of indigenous social and epistemic relation. This approach to the politics of poetry also situates this cohort of indigenous poets within a broader movement by Black, diasporic, queer, trans, disabled, and writers of color that understands poetry as a powerful socially and intellectually organizing force—a way of remaking language and political community in the face of environmental and economic precarity on a global scale.

Consider the development of new Indigenous formalisms that animate the work of this folio of poets. While other contemporary U.S. and global poetics have turned back to lyric modalities (both to depict the experiences of subjects differently positioned by race and gender and to challenge the apoliticism of the 20th century white avant-garde), this folio examines evolving formal practices that extend vital continuities of tribal social and epistemic relation. Here, formal invention is neither a turn away from politics or a capitulation to mainstream U.S. experimentalism. Rather, rigorous reimaginations of form are ways of attending to social and intellectual relations irreducible to colonial ontologies. Language, land, and history are not artifacts to be represented by poetry, but are methods for making and remaking Indigenous thought in an evolving political and cultural milieu.

Consider contemporary indigenous poetry's relationship to the political imperatives of intensifying global concern. Consider how indigenous poetry takes on questions of environmental harm, economic insecurity, and unstable regimes of governance—questions that indigenous poetries situate in long arc of U.S. and European colonialism. And thinking beyond the politics of emergency, ask how indigenous poetics carry forward systems and practices of relation that have given and continue to give steadfastness to tribal ways of life across generations.

Consider the vital work of the six poets— Abigail Chabitnoy, Monique Sanchez, Michaelsun Knapp, Adrian Quintanar, Melanie Archuleta, and Rob Arnold— included in this collection, which I have guest-edited for this edition of *Peripheries*.

Joan Naviyuk Kane

February 14, 2020

traditional territory of the Massachusetts people

IN THE RENDERINGS OF WHICH THERE
ARE MANY, or EVERY OLD MAN WEAVES A
TALE ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LIKING¹

Abigail Chabitnoy

As to their origin, Davydov tells us, they had the strangest ideas.

There is a note.

Their origin had ideas.

They fell from the sky. the ideas or the people or

A bitch was the island, or

The island was a bitch, and or

brindled he swam; the old goat

Some hold both the dogs
descended there. still other. still

It is plain they regard [a girl] as
habit of the island.

That is, she was sent to the island,
the girl because / her sons
were dogs

That is, she was already an island.
(She is always already the island.)

// *There are so many small islands* [dismissive gesture, a wave] *I need a bigger map
to show you* //

None of them say anything (de)finite.

The people had doubtless forgotten the island, before
The people came to | be | the island.

The island was before.

There was always an island / a
Before.

Always she begins

at / sea

in a mouth

in a cave

a mother buried

in the deep.

¹ Lisianski 1812, II, 75

HOLES IN THE FIELD

Abigail Chabitnoy

The women are not there.

The girls are not there.

What if the sea were a mouth?

Imam taanga taryutuu'uq.

Empty.

Full.

Otherwise, “*imaq*.”

Otherwise, “a liquid contained inside.”

“Contents”

rising.

Take care, each
point of stress.

The word for the week is *Woman. Arnat peknartutaartut.*

This is only a test: how closely are you listening?

We must dive.

Everywhere I went to wash
my hands
there was blood.

Back bending
we dove

the words air in our mouths.

Without them you are not a whole person,
Eemaq said to me at the grave.

SIX LINES FOR CHRISTINE, MY BLACK-HAIRED GRANDMOTHER

Abigail Chabitnoy

Wind like this, Nikifor?

*He went to war
He came home
We were married.*

I never asked her what she dreamed
The nights before she told me to bury her
In the dress she wore to her only son's wedding.

Wind, like this?

IN THE FIELD

Abigail Chabitnoy

They asked me if I was a citizen.

They wanted to know what I had seen/
I had heard/
this was only a test:

Look at the mark and tell them what you see.



Akarngasqangcugmek pilirluku,
a woman said to me.

They want more,
she said.

I gave her a tooth from my mouth
to cut the skin stretched before her.

She dug. With her mouth
she dug enough holes
in the earth she divided
with her work.

She cut the skin even
into pieces she divided
in the earth:

this is for your mouth
this is for your stomach
this is for your hand
this is for your rib
this is for your table
this is for sharing
this is for later
this is for the others
this
is (for) you



I see a well,
I said.

I showed them my hands
clean under the nails and

open
swallowed the dirt
under my tongue.

They let me walk away

with the shine
in my eyes.

They don't look you
in the eyes, these men
these days.

I walked away with a garden
in my throat and seeds
on my tongue
to sow the earth
what I'd heard.

Postcard

Monique Sanchez

It's too hot for May.

Or maybe I forgot
what it was like
to stand here.

Instead I erased from memory
the heat, the flies,
the ghosts,
and decay.

Instead

I only remember the blue
and the mountains
papering the horizon.

Per Annum

Monique Sanchez

The aridness, comforting
blankets me

My hands shield my eyes
from sunlight made
more punishing by absence

Everything is dead

Our small square of grass
rattles in its dryness

The aster, aborted
a mercy granted by God
powders under my heel

The egg in the coop is empty
but for a scarlet film

I walk inside the riverbed
my steps throwing glittering sand

Taproots brush my ankles,
their brown limbs reaching out
as if asking for a gift

Here I am again
wanting

Pastoral, Muted

Monique Sanchez

Everything ice
Everything ethereal
Everything oil

slick black & bleeding
out from glacier

A hi|s|tory
written in the waterline

Tell me—

What burns in the boreal?

Ropes in the Pinkest Room

Michaelsun Knapp

Degas, Edgar. Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando. 1879

Pratt, Richard Henry (Capt.). Foundation of Carlisle Indian Industrial School. 1879

Heavy coil
of nautical manila
rope
through high pine truss
and shrunken
between my mother's raspish teeth—
rewind from this hoisted woman
in the pinkest room back
to cranes, mist, fish, and papyrus.
She clenches her jaw so.
Her breached infant,
toes pointed down,
shod now
in pine coos
a lullaby that is always
here, filling with water. Her open palms
pale, her tongue bitten out.
Garnet deltas
and grease
ants wind
around her
like a list of names
ground to braided
fibers.

Being Coming, a Brutalist Recollection of Six Burned Pieces

Michaelsun Knapp

After Liz Howard

Picasso, Pablo. The Pigeons and the Peas. 1911.

Unknown. Fire Destroys 2/3 of a New York Museum's Iroquois Collection. This event later used to rebut the justification Museums had long used to not return the stolen indigenous items and bodies in their collections, that museums could in fact not protect these things than the indigenous tribes themselves, then leading to the return of many such items and bodies to their tribal owners from museums and colleges which received Federal funding.

iii.

Two sailors' hemal inheritance sieve / through
my belly in ebb and charge / of aircraft, cardiac tick
carriers count in the fractions of a camouflaged series

Of maritime recipes sundered, / sundered
a hundred times / to anchor back

A thin blue house—the seawater / and splinters
on the shoreline of a familiar crescent sun / distant and cankerous

Between my lip and gum—this wet
dermal pain can get fucked / epoxying me / to apricots
and emery board, for drying me out / between the next

Pages of a book, a purple sycamore leaf /
and porcelain clover—think of me
as full: moonlit pride / of Eisenhower's bicycle

Models' filed 1040, a rowing team / misdiagnosed
as wolverines, smug, and green / carpet filling the cup

Of my palm where misery pools / pale
on the stone railing overlooking

The Seine / and into canoes, into the furrows of ankle
bones snapping / in the sharp air between bridge and cut-flowers /
in cellophane and promise—I slip a teaspoon / in the vase-water

—Sugar gathering / on earthquaked pavement—
they'll live just / a little longer, if only I could dig this ache
from my ear / the piped instrument dawn breaks

Over / thunderheads and jumper cables
sung into a render / mustered by a mother-

Board running / to close chasms: hazel
diamonds / erupting from the caldera of my molar—a heart beat by da /

Vinci, Modigliani, Haudenosaunee, Montgomery hazmat teams / pouring
turkey feather ashes into Manilla envelopes / to: Sid Hill—who alive can
refit carbon laminae, curled / like an infant's dozing fist?

iii.

Alive by olive oxygen tank and smoke aligning
by the horizon, a tennis ball / in a mastiff's jowl:
binoculars and absence / of hemoglobin—six rivets in a ship

For a husband / bound for recollection, reclamation,
exclamation—Lake Michigan / for a sidearm

Hold my hand like a goddamn man, elbows flat—/on the table
where the letters she's ashamed to have / written, which I am

Decoding for the first time, in blue /misspelled cursive slowly
unravel unkind ribbons—still / I don't know what to do
with someone who doesn't like me/ who loves me—by pain's

Greased shoulder joint, / custody of a folded quilt
in a dust mantle on a zipped-up duffel / which chips my mouth
open for water / like a brick path to the beach

Where robins / are relentlessly skinned from my arms—from deer /
born in the summer heat of knee blood—born in the grout / between epochs

Of ice: the singing mouth / beneath a palm,
the hot throat's rising stone / of bile and fries and I—leave my hand

On the cabinet door / until I stain it with human oil,
memory / of The Name of the Wind and a heart's
murmuring ululations bypass / seizures by one four-pronged

Lamp post / in a park afterhours, to another—a steering
wheel's destroyed speech / centers and I cannot stop
rubbing my eye / against what tree that made this

Paper which changed their names / into evening—wear
the newspaper printed on your wings / and the omitted obituaries

Of my relatives / piled behind museum ropes, posed
with babies and spears / of light—
old on my face at the borders

Of fresh / cartographers tattooing my skin
with skin / how I imagine skin should feel.

An Untitled Poem

Melanie Archuleta

Recall sage brush firm and bold round
yet sticking out. Crisp mountain mist cusps the atmosphere. Red road
& black tar, Mother's first scar.

I can feel the heat from her core. I
know the spots where she is sore.
Felt them myself once before. Burns
outlive their welcome, bring the
ugliest of scars & remind you everyday
they fall random as a deck of cards:
thumb & flip atop stack, fan down. There.
No relief here while the sun beats down black shade.

Jump
 dip
 water
 swish
with rapid flow

& I lay my mind to ground red dirt - Mother Earth. I am she, & she, me.

Handiwork

Melanie Archuleta

Cross stitch a rosary around clasped hands.
Criss + cross equal sides; we're all the same
flesh mesh sealed by scar. Thorn crown
summons frown, & fact of how life began.
Then, guilt weighs in & on. Repeat the next
three sentences. *Repent. Recover. It never ends.*
O weary eyes, wake my fist—

Chimera

Rob Arnold

Chimera, raw shadow, a chaos of the mind. Ribbons of wind at the door, the sound of something squalling in the yard. Moments you'll never know, the scarred moon drawing them near. Hoary nights, how many of them? And what of the persuasion, what of the bleeding in the bunk below, the terrible things you would come to do? The neighbor's cat yawling outside, oak trees crusted in ice. Remember this clearly. But what of the lumped flesh? What of the glistening shame, lit cigarettes searing rings in your skin, hot breath on your ass as his teeth bore down?

Chimera

Rob Arnold

Whore nights, how many of them? Nights when you would thrill in the proximal, in the fusion of body to body, to the carnal beds of youth, all the valueless coupling, pity-fuck nights when emptiness took seed. Now the chambered memories breaking loose, metastatic, metamorphosed: dry docks, the living detritus, this cast-off industrial squall, planes strafing the squat buildings clustered shoreside. Nights when you would sleep in a cavern of distrust, afraid of yourself, that what was septic in you would seep outward and unfasten the skin. Duplicate self, duplicitous self, self you would drown in the scripted waters where the lies have eyes, the secrets their secretions.

Chimera

Rob Arnold

A car rolls, a child is crushed. The uncle touches the young girl when she spends the night. The brother makes a list of the most fuckable family members. The young girl is your sister. The young girl is your uncle's daughter. The young girl is unknown to you. You do not remember whose child was crushed. The car slipped into gear, the child fell out. How much more is unknown to you? The uncle taught you *House of the Rising Sun* on the pawn shop guitar. The uncle's hands on your hands. The uncle's slack mouth, the uncle's enormous gut sagged between the legs. The brother likes the uncle's wife best, her *small tits, tiny fuckable body*. The young girls will grow to adulthood bearing their secrets. And here is a game you would play: Three boys are in a room. One is the brother, one is the cousin. The boy on the floor is the adopted one, the outcast, some amalgam of flesh and memory, too young to get hard. He is bearing this shame to the older boys. The shame of his body. The shame of inheritance. Years later, the uncle will be found dead in his apartment, partially eaten by his own dogs. This death will not be a penance. The crushed child, however, does not die. It becomes, instead, a parody of survival. An intubated, brain-dead life lesson. You thought you would have learned all this by now. You thought you had buried that boy you were.

Madrecuixe

Adrian T. Quintanar

A mezcal bottle, pronged on the face by lamp shine. Agave mash jitters atop the coffee table. Punching from Kenwoods, is an Isley Brothers' drum pattern. It ripples the living room. Musk blooms from steel wool chest hair. Smears of menthol reek. Their lips unlatch, moisten a shot glass. On laminated sofa, Newport smoke flexing toward the stucco ceiling. Armed with half-thoughts. They prattle. Something about a gold beveled canvas. Rose's syntax pummels uvula. Tongue. Throat muscle. A slurred tale of the painted man. Hair slicked. Molten black. Squared mandible flanked by sunk cheeks. Swabs of spit anchor their furrowed mouth. Brown as mud-brick. A familiar face reflecting in the Luger's pistol-thin glow. The muffled taste of dark. Quebracho ash. Dank Oaxacan dirt. As though spiced chocolate is at the rear of Rose's throat. It remind them how the older women would cup their grimace, rumpled hands squeezing.

Meridian

Adrian T. Quintanar

At Mount Baldy's brim,
the lace of salt white slush
puckers crumpled clouds:
 lint lined pocket nooks,
receipt paper pulp,
 chomped in the wash cycle.
Crawling sunlight
pools in this valley,
 hammocks orb weaver silk.
A moth, half cocooned.
Twitches. The meat of foothills
 gnawed by a downpour.
 Snails phlegmed on Route 66,
marigold dirt musk
 moaned through hulls
 unloaded.

Veduta II

Adrian T. Quintanar

Before the electric transmitters,
gray tufted owls dressed as palm trees,

the mint cul de sacs
of sutured McMansions

auto shops and dollar store,
the roach sick burger joints
and auroras of neon signage.

Before the cemetery, the old stone,
teeth flashing from a scowling mouth,

the high school football field
students, cars, curbside litter,

yellow-lined blacktop,
red reflective octagons,
citrus groves and library,

cafecitos, panaderías,
the Metro station, bohemian painters,

before rancheros,
farmers market,
county fairplex and swap meet.
Before yellow-pine spindles, the wirescape
like weft faced weaves.
Before goddess of fruit,
each skin peeled.



Folia, ink on paper, 24x36," Laura Hennig Cabral



Participles of Deserere

Ariana Reines

u let me pluck leaves
from yr hanging-down beard
clover gemmed with rain
wet acacias fragrancng the fine
young palms the mosses wet
over careful sons of julian complicating
my arousal the care i feel for this
creature unbombastic its fever now
making it tread quietly across the floor

virgin moss
 virgin bloom
revirginated forests boreal
pregnancy apogee of the virgin annunciation
full fathom five thy father lies

hawk red on a streetlight
sun temple in the form of a chariot
lariat grasses tender & green
leaves unshaven beards of rain
cooked chocolate
sun in mounds

i used my best bitch voice
to get more ceviche for tongo's
mother arlene just
back from six months in venezuela

 "cow's mouth
salivating in the street" tongo's
poem

strange car with its butt cut off
window selling a new blonde espresso
conspiracy born of the president's hair

looking at pine boughs
thinking up money
passing santa teresa boulevard
pines circusing the dark clouds
bolaño's cheek as turning light
on a distant hill faint rainbow before us

a note from the beautiful sculptor
email promised from smoky glasgow
polar ice screaming into water
tongo's lines past the xmas tree grove
glowing jane & bright layla
a palm beside a pine
unspooling the father's iridescent petroleum
green moss on all the ropes of trees

past the garlic of gilroy
clots of nopales & signs
for cherries hill covered
in yellow mustard flowers
& despairing of the instruction he craved
he withtook himself again to questing lines
rain drove down on bending cows

8-tracks of kalipooni
teacher awakened by a rat
spectres of our supposed collective
wickedness the lenten
technocratic churches of norcal
rain misting the wild highway
gasoline of the twentieth century
pooling at watsonville
where j once in the car with a pathological
liar saw a flying saucer

in the cold white light of my computer
my client called me a genius
cadence of twentieth-century alibis
cadence of gentle men to
whom i now loose my pen
it was just one way of keeping the promise
once made to me that i could be a hundred
thousand people nausea
at the sight of our flag
too big in the blowing rain
guns in the quiver of the state
tear gas eardrum destroying machinery
the gun of wrecked children the AR-15

a partial history of iridescence
gizzard like an abalone hid
among giblets in the holiday bird
day of mourning from hurricane
sandy to sandy
hook stand of trees
in the form of china
the great sand fire of 2016
hot wind over the water at big sur
jonah down in the whale
alien song chiming the trident seas

moon cloven by abyssal birds
twilight must be the darkest
hour on the highway, she sang
but tho her song rang true
it was not so

almost upon the sorrows
of coalinga where svp's "sexually
violent predators" are locked
in their hospital where cows
go to die past soledad
the crime with the beautiful name

industrial death from which all souls recoil
upon which we still sup
tongo said the oakland juvie broke him
boys locked in closets ringing the indoor yard

virgin moon
untouched by god
& man a buddha
dream everyone wearing a topknot
"you've already covered all the material"
bitter incarcerating angel

all my self-cruelty or my liver
accomplishing the churning
of waste into shit
whatever i did for guilt or duty
whatever i exchanged
for a brief anesthetizing season
in unthreatening beds

"pigs for sale"
"freedom is not free"
worm moon
moon of primeval emergence

virgin navel pressing out into the world
up from the wet soil
up from the ground
green eating glacier water
i don't know that you ever set foot in california
gentle scholar, searcher, poet
finder out of the secrets hid in "junk" dna
entertainer of the wilder ideas
true weaving, true intelligence, all gifts inadmissible
to the university, data uncorroboratable
virtues incomprehensible to high court
gifts of years conferred in a single spoken word
mystic radio of galena & clay
& other ingredients i cannot say
rubbed on the heel of the palm
& presented to the rising sun

An Interview with Ariana Reines

Daniel John Pilkington

Born in Salem, Massachusetts, Ariana Reines is an American poet, playwright, performance artist, and translator. Her collections of poetry include The Cow (2006), which won the Alberta Prize from Fence Books; Coeur de Lion (2007); Mercury (2011); Thursday (2012), Beyond Relief (with Celina Su, 2013), The Origin Of The World (2014), Ramayana (The Song Cave, 2015), Tiffany's Poems (2015) and A Sand Book (2019), which won the 2020 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award and which Hannah Aizenman described as "a psychedelic epic about climate change and forever war; capitalism and surveillance; gun violence and police brutality; fascism and genocide; diaspora, mental illness, gender, and the occult" for The New Yorker.

DANIEL JOHN PILKINGTON: Why do you think the occult has always been of interest to poets? And why more specifically might it be of interest to poets at this point in time?

ARIANA REINES: I can't say exactly. It's just always been our job. There's absolutely nothing new about poets being involved in what we're calling "the occult". What's new is that more of mass culture is now interested in it.

PILKINGTON: I was recently reading the book *Spells: 21st— Century Occult Poetry* that Ignota books put out. The editors Sarah Shin and

Rebecca Tamás connect the recent interest in occult poetry to movements of social justice. Do you see a connection there?

REINES: Sure, but I think it would be a big mistake to think that only those who care about social justice are involved with the occult—whether it be witchcraft, astrology, the tarot, paganism, divination, etc. There are plenty of right-wing and fascist occultists.

PILKINGTON: Yes, I've also been worried about this. Let us think about a good aspect. A lot of your poetry engages with trauma and catastrophe, do you think poetry has the power to heal?

REINES: I do. Reading it and writing it. As for “the occult”—I think one of the reasons that many of us go rooting around in other approaches to reality is that we are looking for some way to heal, some way to expand. My book *Mercury* studied the alchemical tradition, which ostensibly was about turning lead into gold, but in the deeper sense aimed to transform the very substance of reality, transmuting experience into something radiant and beyond superficial change—something unkillable, immortal and good. Alchemy is where chemistry comes from, but it's also a neglected history of love. It speaks to this hunger in the human soul to not only find some meaning in our experience but to plunge into the fullness of experience and genuinely possess something of it we'd actually want to preserve. I think this might be one of the most ordinary and universal longings there is—to discover some kind of treasure in the mess of our lives.

The difficulty is that you've got to be so truthful to the reality you're in. We have all kinds of transformation being sold to us all the time: a diet, an entheogen, a crystal, a horoscope, a meditation technique—and though all of these techniques “work” on one or multiple levels, the spiritual materialism (to quote Chogyam Trungpa) of the way change is sold to us tunes the matrix to the wrong note...you know? It's that fundamental groundlessness to our being that the various powers that are advertising to us and competing for our attention attempt to convert into addictions, and we can also become addicted to and instrumentalize practices and ways of knowing that simply cannot merely be “used”.

To the question of whether poetry can be healing, I think it can, but in a subtle and complicated way, something that goes beyond the fact

that writing poems is a pleasant thing to do, which is why it can be a positive addition to anyone's day—but in a tricky way only my best poems have been truly healing, because they go way beyond me—they turn me around, or inside out, or they do something truthful, which frees me from myself.

PILKINGTON: Do you think of yourself as bearing witness to that which is beyond your personal life? To the broader culture in general?

REINES: I hope so. The thing about lyric poetry is that it has that personality of the poet in it though. But one of the reasons that I keep stuff in my writing that I am not in love with, is because I want my reader to feel what these times were like for a person who is trying her best to be human, while so many forces are trying to distract and dissuade us from that. Our real task on this planet is to become human.

PILKINGTON: I think that connects to the idea of the poet as a time-traveller, which I know you have spoken about in other interviews. Do you think that's how poetry heals, by addressing ghosts that might exist in other temporalities, or do you think that poetry reaches towards a contemporaneous time, a presence to which we are all present, when inspired, which is I think the idea that Blake had?

REINES: I think it's both. Poetry is a temporal art, as Julian Talamantez Brolaski says—you are reading from top to bottom, relatively speaking. But it also addresses the moment, because you can write it down so quickly, it can all happen so quickly, and through that intensity it can stand in eternity, like Rilke's archaic torso of Apollo—"Here there is no place that does not see you / You must change your life."

Think of time on an X and Y axis. The Y axis, the vertical, is the simultaneity of all times and spaces, which every true poet knows and has encountered, and then there is the horizontality of mundane time and chronology, which also links your poem directly to your situation and the people and factoids of your life. The magic of the poem, when you're really in it, is that you get to be 100% on both frequencies—it's absolute communion with the totality of what's real.

I feel like this is what happens in Emily Dickinson. Inside her body and inside her poems. You're absolutely and totally you in your

situation, in your world and in your culture, but you are also nobody, in communion with all that has ever lived and all that will come and every beyond of the beyond of the beyond. This is why poetry is weird and mysterious. It is next to nothing.

When I was first starting out, I couldn't necessarily tell what made good poetry at all. I could just tell a turn of phrase that I liked, or a curious feeling. It was a line of Marie Howe's that made me realise what a great poem is. There is a line in her poem *What the Living Do* and it just goes, 'This is it. / Parking', and I remember thinking that was hilarious and so strange when I first heard it, but it was only ten years later, when it was still in my head, that I realised how mindblowingly great it is. Poetry can seem impressive on first blush and actually do nothing to you in the long run. But when it lodges itself in your body... that is a fucking gangbusters poem.

PILKINGTON: I always come back to Emily Dickinson's definition of knowing a poem by the feeling that the top of your head is being taken off.

REINES: Absolutely. But I'm not that interested in the question of what is or isn't poetry. I mean, when you're feeling great, everything takes the top of your head off. People get really fussy about what is good and not good in poetry, and sometimes I'm guilty of that too; I grumble that nobody should ever use the words "promontory" or "tender" in a poem ever again. But more than the edge between good and bad I'm attracted to the edge between the expressible and inexpressible. I like living on the razor's edge of that.

PILKINGTON: What do you mean by the razor's edge?

REINES: I am attracted to the edges of things. A space that is not totally domesticated. I want to see how far I can push against badness, on one level, but on a much deeper level I want to push against impossibility.

PILKINGTON: I want to ask you a question about language on the edge of communicability. In *A Sand Book* you refer to Paul Celan and the idea that we can never adequately express the truth, or should perhaps prefer silence in the face of trauma. Is *A Sand Book* working with particular conception of language? Is that conception different from *Mercury's*.

REINES: The sense that not everything can be expressed has been a major theme in all of my books since the beginning. I am fascinated by what you cannot say or what there are no words for. I'm also fascinated by subjects that aren't subjects. Who writes a book about sand? That is not a subject. It's a ground or background. Rilke had the wisdom to address the ground—he called it “dear, darkening ground.” I couldn't exactly address it directly, but somehow I had to find a way to get at what's in the background, the negative space of consciousness itself.

Mercury, to me, was a book about consciousness, specifically internet consciousness. How do you make a book that is a mirror of the thing itself? I think I'm more interested in consciousness than poetry per se.

But, of course, I was also researching alchemy. I like the idea of mercury being called a ‘tortured water.’ That there is something deceptive about its transparency, it binds to other things, it mimics everything, and yet it changes things in ways that are freaky. I have also been taken with the feeling since my first book, that language is *substance*. That it is material and yet immaterial. It is a flow that passes through us and yet it also has weight and solidity; it shapes reality.

PILKINGTON: And yet in *Mercury* you say that ‘poetry is not made of words’? What do you mean by this?

REINES: You know what I mean! I mean, I'm sure you do. I feel like every human being knows this. Poetry is a feeling. It's something undefinable—something beyond words. It is what is “poetic” which we can't really speak of, a feeling of intensity or beauty that comes with living. I care about language and I toil in language, but I am not a wordsmith, and I don't want to be. Somehow it's my job to live in and for that feeling, to experience that through language without holding language too tight....

PILKINGTON: Does the ‘wordsmith’ become obsessed with an obstacle instead?

REINES: Every writer, and every artist of any genre, can get trapped in their material. I like art that breathes and I always want my books to breathe. I want them to feel alive.

PILKINGTON: A specific quality of your books is that they are so uniquely

and lovingly constructed. I was just connecting this with your saying that texts, or poetry, have this strange immateriality, and so there can be a bizarre intimacy between a reader and a writer. Is the love that you put into the book, as an object, or as a form, a way of embodying that intimate event, or of paying tribute to that event?

REINES: Absolutely. And what a beautiful question. All I really want is to give my heart and my witness. That is all I want in life. When I make a book, I want it to be hospitable, and I put an immense amount of love into the construction of it, but I also want it to fuck with you, because I also like to be fucked with. We all do. That's why we're here. So, I want it to be hospitable and spacious. But I also want to make a space where difficult work can be done and surprises can happen. It is not necessarily easy to find a space to do that kind of work IRL. So, I think of the books as places. This is what I want for them, but what they really are? who knows! I'm only saying what I hope.

PILKINGTON: You have referred to yourself as having an 'antenna,' and I also know that your play *Telephone* depicted a patient of Jung's who believed that she had a telephone inside of her, and then, of course, there is your poem *Mosaic* at the end of *A Sand Book*, in which you recount a mystical experience, one in which the sun is speaking to you. So, I want to ask you about Jack Spicer's idea of 'dictation from the outside.' What do you think about poet as a receiver, or a radio antenna, or a vessel?

REINES: I think that we all are. We are all being broadcast to by the media and by our feeds and devices, so clearly we are able to receive signals—it's just a question of which stations you are tuned into. At any given time, we're broadcasting and being broadcast to, continually.

Do we know every dimension of what is broadcasting to us and what we are broadcasting to? No! We don't. We don't know where the signal stops. And we don't always know where it's coming from. And yet, some signals are more 'made' by me rather than by others. Like the *Mosaic* sequence (I was very uncomfortable calling it a poem, for a long time). I tried to make a clear distinction around authorship with it, because, those phrases, whatever they are, they are what my body made, with what was passing, with what was being done with me, in a very unusual experience. That's very different from me just writing a poem this morning.

PILKINGTON: And yet, in another way, it's also exactly the same?

REINES: It's all on the same continuum. And that is one of the things that I really wanted to construct *A Sand Book* in order to hold: that there is no way to say that every moment isn't somehow partaking of this great otherness. The sensation of the big ecstatic religious experience, the peak experience, that really gets our attention, but it's going on all the time! I constructed *A Sand Book* in order to also include lots of despair and idiotic feeling—it goes to so many different emotional places and sometimes it's more lucid than others—I wanted it be kind of a consciousness EKG. I didn't want to cut out the shitty sides of being, and transmit only grandeur and wisdom. I feel like that would be less interesting. I really wanted to expand the frame.

People are attracted to having mystical experiences, or doing magic. They're interested in that kind of stuff right now, but there is also a fetish for the peak experience that can leave people destitute of the salt-of-the-earth and practical side of what the great religions have *also* always taught, which is to help people figure out how not to waste their days, how to live decent and productive lives, how to take care of one another the best they can, how to minimize chaos and suffering to the best of their ability.

No amount of green juice or meditation or sex robots or life hacks are going to save us from the task of being human. We're also here to do difficult, real things! Suppose the universe itself reveals to you all its secrets. Well, you're still going to have to pay the bills, and eat and excrete, and you're still going to lose your temper and even forget who you are now and then. Suppose you get all your own shit sorted out. Then you'll need to see about others around you. We're here to work. We're here to live and to suffer and to strive and to love and to lose and to gain. We're here to do it all.

PILKINGTON: I think of all of this; the magical and the mystical intersecting in your poem *Thursday*. Is that fair to say?

REINES: Magic, I think, has to do with harnessing energies, planetary and universal energies, according to your will. And the mystical has to do with a connection to being that arrives through revelation. Perhaps they intersect in *Thursday*, which reads like a spell, but it's also a mourning

poem. It's also a miscarriage poem. That's the verticality-horizontality thing again.

I wrote *Thursday* for another person to perform. I was playing on the idea of what it would be to colonise his body, since he's a famous man and a beloved performer I thought it would be neat to create an uncomfortable possession with my poem. That's why there's a small woman standing up inside a tall man in it.

PILKINGTON: And it is written on Valentine's Day as well?

REINES: The final section, *Blue Palestine*, was written on Valentine's Day. There are actually, weirdly, a few poems in *A Sand Book* that were written on Valentine's Day.

PILKINGTON: Maybe I will ask you, as a transition from Valentine's Day, about sexuality in *Mercury*. I read it through the alchemical context; that we have to pass through disgust and shame and the absurdity of our embodiment, in order to rediscover the body as sacred. Would you say that is a fair interpretation?

I also thought it was interesting that the explicitness of the sexual material inverts romantic and mystical traditions where sexual metaphors are often a way of trying to sublimate Eros; orientate it towards the Divine or towards mystery. Yet, in an era of internet pornography, it seems appropriate to turn that around and use sexuality for the sake of drudgery or comedy. Would you agree with that?

REINES: One of the tasks of *Mercury* was to deal with internet pornography and how it affected my body and mind and the body and mind of the men I knew, especially one person I was dating then. I'll just give you some of the back story, since the book is old enough. I wouldn't have wanted to say this around the time that it was published, because I don't like to interfere with people's experience of the book too much, but when I wrote that book—well, I wrote it over the course of a few different relationships—but the relevant relationship was with guy who was obsessed with porn, who then became obsessed with me enacting that in reality for him. There is a letter from him that is in the book, where he expresses his desire for me to find men to have sex with while he watches, that was his obsession, and this destroyed our relationship. Theoretically, he was giving me this

great freedom, and if I was trying to be some kind of libertine, I should have been happy about that. But I also felt that I loved him, and I felt like I didn't want to be physical with anyone but him. And I thought that that was a victory and beautiful. I had been promiscuous and a little materialistic about sex prior, the way a lot of young people are, especially in this culture, where you think 'whatever' and you use it for power and ego, or to bury bad feelings. I had fallen in love and I was in a state of mind that I didn't want to sacrifice.

So, I felt hurt by this, pulled back into this realm that, even though I didn't want anything to do with it, it had something to do with me. Because it was also just the internet. And I had this idea, almost like a theology, that I was personally responsible—in some way shape or form—for everything, absolutely everything that was real, including stuff that horrified me. Maybe even especially stuff that horrified me.

PILKINGTON: It is a torturous form of witnessing as well.

REINES: It is a torturous form of witnessing, but it is also what the internet is. The pink elephant in the room of the internet is porn and I feel that we haven't really reckoned culturally with what the pornographization of sex has done to people's sexuality, to that sacred energy, to the ways we relate to that energy and our own bodies and each other. And so, I really wanted to create a book to bear witness to that invisible transformer of the internet. One of the things that the internet is sex, on all kinds of levels.

PILKINGTON: How did you see the connection between pornography and alchemy?

REINES: Sex is a change agent. And the internet is a changer. It's a consciousness changer. It affects the body. It is actually a very intimate thing. You can look at something on the internet and it provokes these very deep responses in the body. I was trying to get at the internet being inside us. That was ten years ago and I'm glad that I made some kind of record of it, because consciousness has changed. Certainly mine has.

Sexuality isn't just me and what I want or 'desire.' That boyfriend, he really did love me, but he was also crazy and obsessed and deeply toxified. The idea that your girlfriend should just be live porn is not a liberated idea. It was theoretically a wonderful invitation, but what it

really came down to was reproducing what he had been watching since his adolescence. It made me think a lot at the time about the role of fantasy in people's lives. I don't know if I can say that women are like this, I can't maybe make that generalization, but I can say that, for me, if I want something then I need to experience it physically. I am not someone who wants to walk around with fantasy images in my head. I don't want to work at keeping a boundary between fantasy and lived experience. If I am going to hold something in mind, I am going to be it. I want to embody it. I don't want to just watch pictures. Does that make sense?

PILKINGTON: That makes total sense. Like fantasies and images, do you think poetry is dangerous? In maybe the same way that magic is dangerous?

REINES: I think everything is dangerous and it should be. And I think that living a poet's life, and really devoting yourself to it, is crazy, and dangerous. But I am all for danger.

PILKINGTON: Because it is connected to transformation?

REINES: It is connected to transformation, and it gives an experience of intensity and truth. That will stimulate you to seek that in the world. That can be dangerous. But I respect the people who make safe, and I have been helped by those that make safe, and I honour the importance and the task of making safe, but it has come to my attention, over time, that I am not here to make anything safe. Unfortunately or fortunately, whatever, my lot has been danger.

PILKINGTON: I feel that there is an ecstatic flow in a lot of your writing, which I would connect to your attraction towards danger. A lot of your writing has an electrical current that runs through it. In predicting danger, can poetry be a kind of divination?

REINES: Anything can be a divination. I don't like getting too precious about divination. It's like the new juice fast or something. And there's a divinatory aspect, frankly, to everything, to reading a book, because even though it's been very carefully laboured over by the author, you're still bringing your whatever to it. There is a divinatory aspect to taking

out the trash or noticing the shape of a cloud. Walking down the street is divination. Because there are things that you notice, because your consciousness is alive and participating in the living real. So I feel: what isn't divinatory?

PILKINGTON: Then, I guess what gets called divinatory is what awakens you into that interpretative framework or that sense of interpretive vitality.

REINES: Right. Like the madeleine in the tea for Proust. But, again, it can be anything—but I don't think it has to be like a crystal pendulum or spelling things with Q's or drawing arcane shapes with a wand or throwing sticks. Although all of that is fun and interesting. Proust proved it can also be a cookie. Have a cookie.

PILKINGTON: Or some tea leaves.

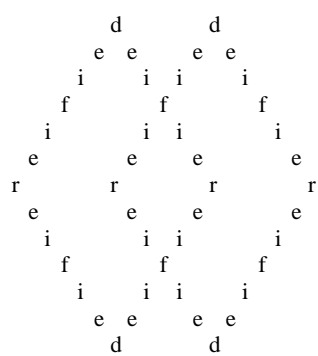
REINES: Or get some dirt in your fist and throw it on the ground and see what you see. There's meaning everywhere.

Pattern Poem

Daniel John Pilkington

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[Untitled 4]

Greta Byrum

heap overflow in Edge

*We living
beings all the time*

should not

1
Walking home at night
stop

2
Telling someone a secret
nothing

3
Crossing a border (carrying)
hide
(nothing to declare)

Q1: Who is your threat?
Q2: What do they want? And Why?

Q3: How would They get it?

type confusion in kernel

- Infiltration
- Probing

how many exploits prove
good faith

wait Why do they
want and What

think about it
licking our
wounds the barn

door closed after the dead
Horse was drug

the student said
sounds like you are talking realpolitik

two manuals I said
OpSec fail

mitigation

*when sailing
bring either one compass or three*

1
What and
2
To whom
Has access
3
Can I say things in a way
4
In person
5
Not names
6
Separate
True

*structures of manifold conformation long rows sometimes more closely
fitted together all twining
But look! one of the snakes seized hold*

as if by tightening could

Secure

Killing Gregor

excerpt from a play by Renee Schilling Bertin

ACT 2 SCENE 5

DAY (2 - 210)

Samsa and Tracy, a woman in her mid-30s, sit in the office. This will be a montage. There is no reason to indicate how many days have passed. This should move swiftly.

Lights up. Tracy and Samsa sit down and look at each other. Lights down.

Lights up. Tracy looks away. Samsa sits somewhere else. Lights down. Lights up.

SAMSA: Kill me or I'll fire you.

TRACY: *pause.* How? How about that woman in the fur?

Tracy glances at her watch.

SAMSA: I didn't think you'd...

TRACY: I wanted to let you know that I...

Enter Ms. Manager, rubber gloves on and two vials in hand.

MS. MANAGER: If you don't mind, I just need to take a quick sample.

She swipes the inside of Samsa's mouth. Then takes a blood sample from his leg.

MS. MANAGER: All done.

Ms. Manager Exits

TRACY: I set up a meeting with a specialist today. She's on her way. Will you at least try? Please.

There is a knock at the door. Samsa scurries away, Tracy greets Dr. Felice Bauer. She is the woman from the photograph on the wall. She has an accent.

TRACY: Dr. Bauer. Thank you for coming, so quickly—

FELICE: Take my coat, will you?

TRACY: Sure. Although, I'm not sure where the closet is?

FELICE: There is no need to narrate your actions. Tea, is necessary.

TRACY: Gosh, let me look over here. What type of tea? I'm more of a coffee person.

Felice texts Ms. Manager on her phone . Ms. Manager enters with a tea and takes her coat.

TRACY: Felice? Your name is Felice? And—you are an insect psychologist?

FELICE: Yes and yes.

TRACY: How did you get into that—specialty?

FELICE: A friend. You may go.

TRACY: I'd prefer to stay. If you don't mind.

FELICE: I do mind.

TRACY: Great, I'll just sit. Wait. What?

FELICE: I mind. I will need you to leave.

TRACY: Right.

FELICE: Now. Please.

Felice is the former lover of Samsa. Felice sits in a chair with her tea and waits for him to come out.

FELICE: I have tea and I am being paid by the hour. I'm very patient and would love to take more money from you.

I know you are behind the bookcase.

After a moment, Samsa comes out. They cannot embrace. They sit apart.

FELICE: If we cannot use arms. Perhaps, let us embrace with complaints. I think I have arthritis in my left knee, and I have a headache that won't shut up.

SAMSA: Life isn't really worth living.

FELICE: Hello Gregor.

SAMSA: Hello Felice.

FELICE: Same song and dance Gregor?

SAMSA: Still with that lodger?

FELICE: I only slept with an Airbnb guest once. I would appreciate it if you would stop bringing that up.

SAMSA: It's not exactly professional.

FELICE: You would know about that.

SAMSA: I went to a brothel once—yes. Fine, a few times.

FELICE: This is going well.

SAMSA: It's like our first date all over again. You not taking my hand across the table. I still proposed the next day.

FELICE: Over the past two weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems? Have you had little interest or pleasure in doing things?

SAMSA: What things could I possibly do?

FELICE: Feeling down, depressed or hopeless?

SAMSA: It's as if you don't know me. Did you know—if you were to cut off my head I would live for a week? Did you know that?

FELICE: Would you say that “feeling” lasts, all the time, most of the time or some of the time?

SAMSA: I sometimes chew food, spit it out, pick it up again and then hold it in my mouth for a number of hours.

FELICE: Do you love me?

SAMSA: There are times, Felice, I swear.

FELICE: What am I doing here? I mean. Honestly, Gregor.

SAMSA: There are times when I feel, you have so much power over me that I think you could change me into a man capable of doing the obvious.

FELICE: The obvious being...? I'll take an apple and be on my way then. Unless you would like to chew on it for days on end?

SAMSA: I am on the point of prostrating myself!

FELICE: It is a simple yes or no, Gregor.

SAMSA: When you pose that question now I can only say that I loved you to the limits of my strength. What a catch I am? You've been away, a long time. You never wrote.

FELICE: Tracy tells me you no longer want to live?

I wish I could kiss you. You were always good at it. Eager and you did this tongue thing that is reserved for very young men.

SAMSA: I am forever fettered to myself, that's what I am, and that's what I must try to live with.

FELICE: Do you want to talk about what happened to you?

SAMSA: Certainly not. What happens next?

FELICE: I think what happened to you—is—was extraordinary. You—yourself, are not. I know you. You are an ordinary person, Gregor Samsa. I could have been ok with - I could have loved ordinary.

SAMSA: I'm sorry.

FELICE: Me too.

Felice waits for a moment. Looks to see if Gregor will ask her to stay. He slinks off. She collects her things.

Tuesday's Children

KT

For August Strindberg, kind of...

In scorpion-like lettering, bottles of spirit poison the windowsill with warfracted light. It is a brilliant Tuesday morning. The Swine, passing the shop on his way to The Academy, feels virtuous at the sight. The Swine thinks of breeding and is happy. Inside, The Vision crosses the shop window, snatching the smallest tincture fracturing on the sill, rings it up at the register for The Invisible.

The Vision: This bottle is strictly for The Father. He likes his absence.

The Invisible: Absinthe. The Father likes his absinthe.

The Invisible pays for their package and holds their bag to chest showing themselves the door. The store bell rings. The Vision wonders if they even spoke the same Father? The store bell rings again. The Family enters.

The Family [*announcing itself*]: The home of all social evil. A hell for children.

The Vision: I don't do family business. I do business with The Father.

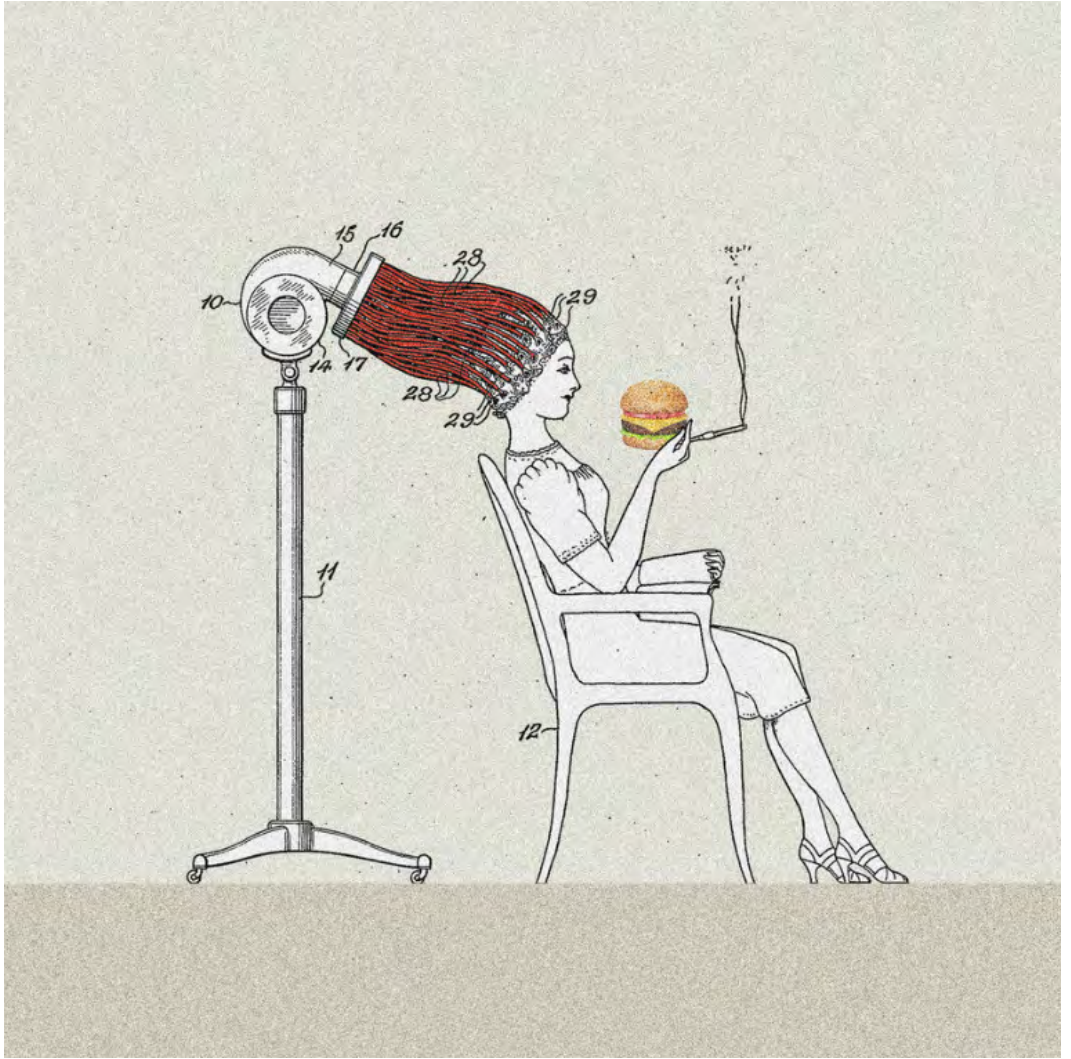
The Family: The Father comes shortly. Watch for him.

...Hyacinths widen at the hips in the shrubs outside the windowsill, desiccate themselves, defecate in the soil. The Swine passes the shop window each morning, looking in and seeing no one until he receives his degree. And even then he still never sees but breeds pink sows he doesn't remember names for. The sows all call themselves Tuesday. They see. The Vision comes into possession of a spectroscope. Before she places its display, she tries the instrument on.

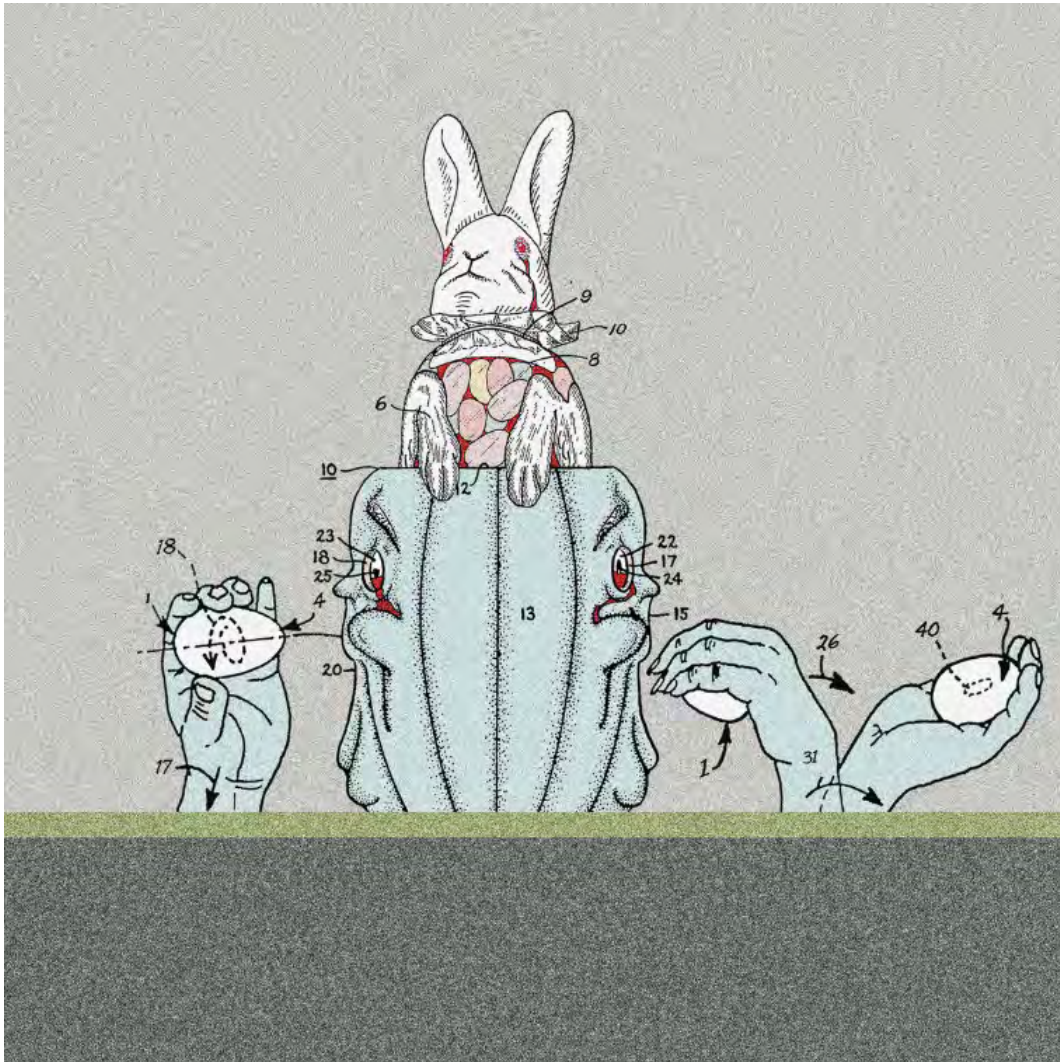
The Vision [*asphyxiating*]: Father!

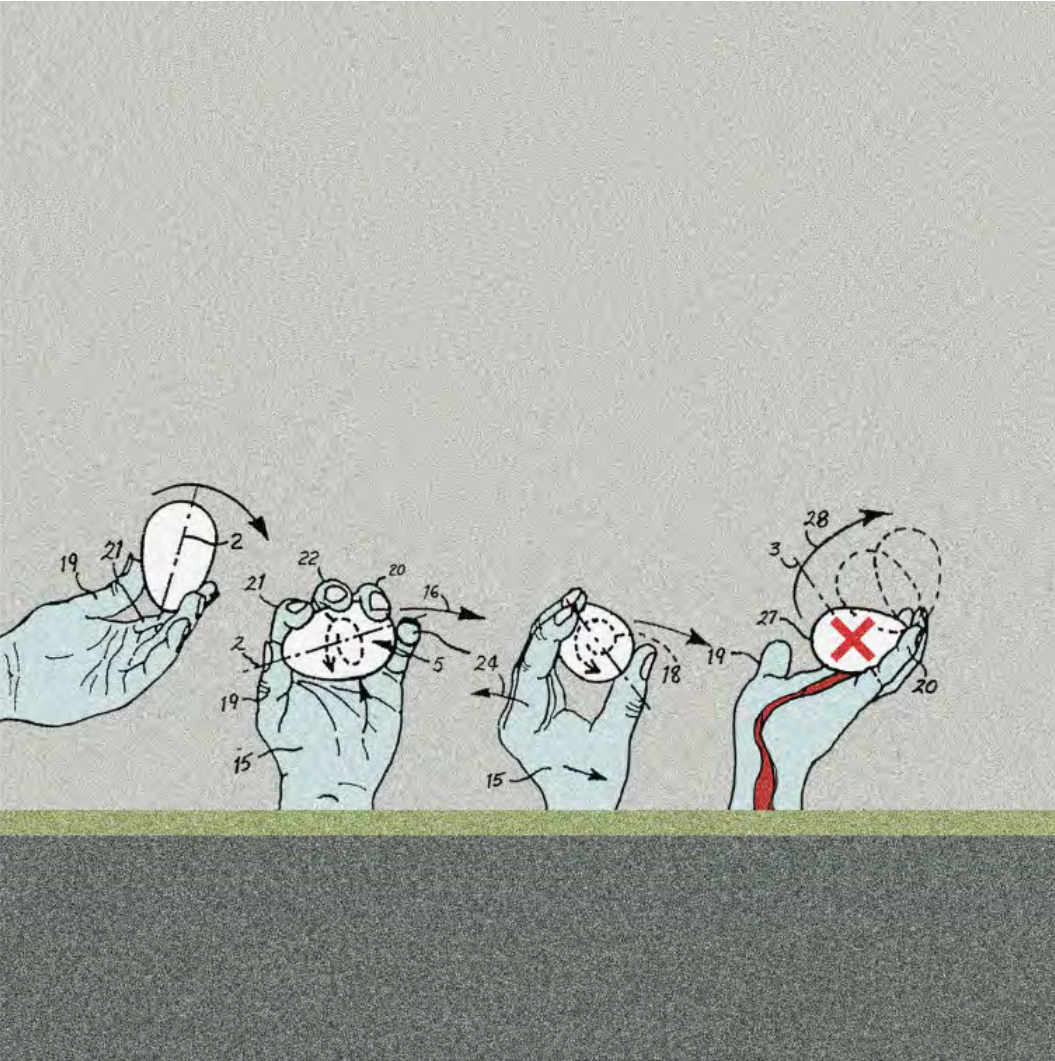
The Father [*appearing where he*

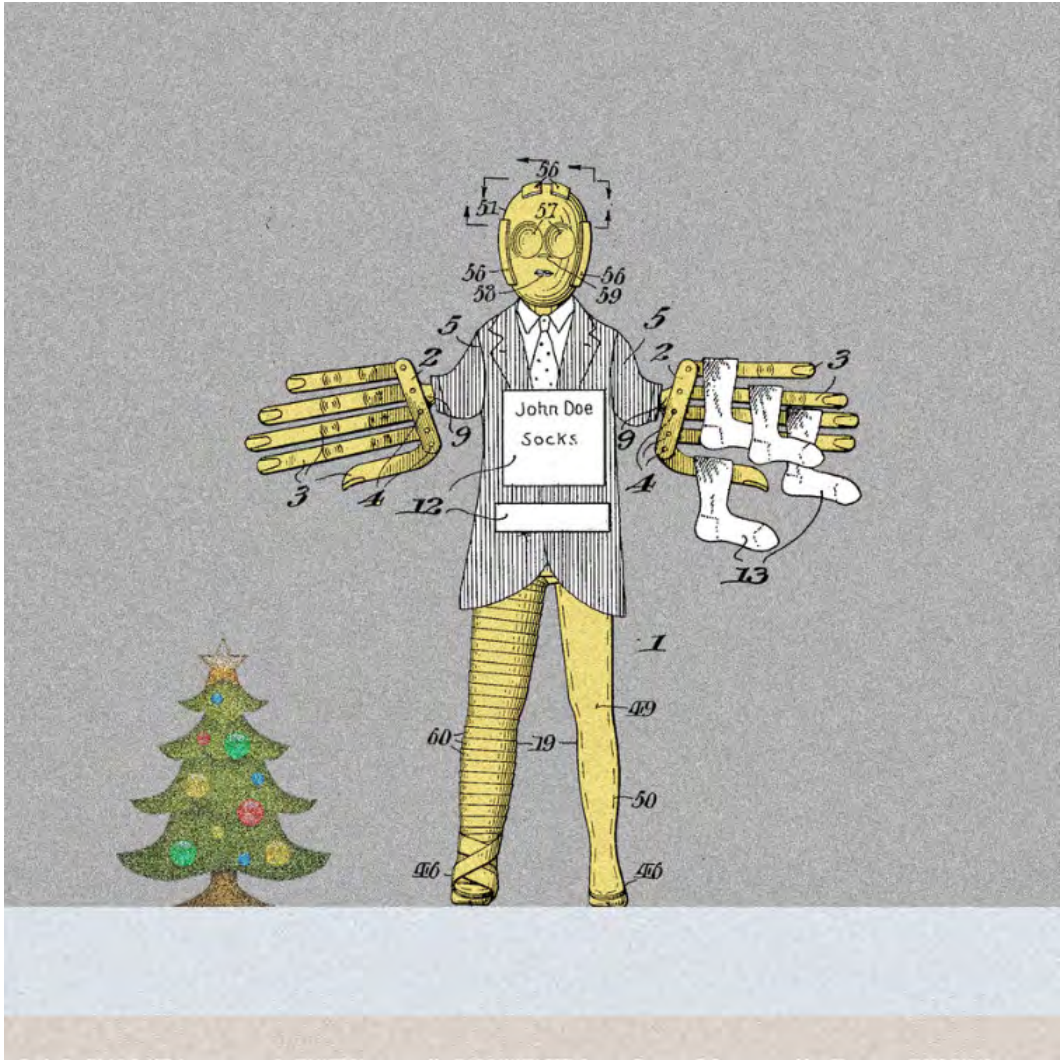
was]



meat grinder salon - the celebrity, Randy Crandon







C-3PO: sock salesman - the swindler, Randy Crandon

Fourth of July

Tess Gunty

i.

You won't understand what we're celebrating until you walk a mile in our microclimate. Picture lawn chairs, drive-through banks, lustrous flags that shimmy up the used-car lot. Picture a dad and a daughter doing physics at the table, eraser shreds in a bowl of ice cream, gazelles on the television, public radio over the sink. Picture free coffee at the laundromat. Picture no war for miles.

We always know the weather, and when it's up in the air, our national parents fight it out online. We open beers, prime accounts, our night to our instincts, our legs to our night. In the summer, kids press bare feet to burning pavement and compete to measure endurance, because most of our threats are imaginary. We call conspicuous fertility "indecent," grab husbands in the deep end, and split the best shadows. We purchase exciting Band-Aids for double the price, because they distract our kids from the sting of disinfectant. We want more. In the fall, we rake facts into our brains and kindle enthusiasm for gourds. In the winter, we believe it will always be winter. In the spring, we tug weeds and purge the size-too-small: updates on the local murderer, baby socks, toothbrushes, college friends, cinema tickets, weighty e-mails.

This is a country where math teachers and fighter pilots swap shifts, where hyacinths and mutagens share plots of dirt. We live in a post-faith theocracy. Year-round, at the Church of Coincidence—located beside the vacant zipper factory, both haunted—we witness the millennials marrying each other. We drink too much coffee and find nothing strange about superdata, excepting the fact that “data” is a word without use for a singular—like “spaghetti,” or “suds.” When we discover the singulars, we Tweet ourselves silly. *Datum! Spaghetti! ...Sud?* We like to have fun. We aren’t anarchists or anything, but in these United States, we love the most impossible singularity.

Some among us vilify our brand because they mistake such an attitude for an opt-out, but patriotism is only as sinister as its patriots, and according to the statisticians, we’re sixty-forty, benevolence-wise. I just want to postcard or fishtank it—our enormous microclimate. How safe it makes us feel. Despite the Xanax, cable guy, Wifi monopoly, faulty lettuce. Despite the lines on Black Friday. Despite the police officers. Some people get so fixated on the negatives, but me—I just want to show the whole internet how safe we feel. I mean, in the suburbs, we don’t even lock our cars.

ii.

Now it’s July, if that tells you anything, and I’m at the park, where perilous children laugh like birthdays. *Amateur*, says one dog walker to another. Nobody looks at me, and I can feel the blues advancing, again, so I think of my Facebook advertisements, which keep asking me to donate my eggs. That makes me feel pretty good about myself. Fireworks rupture clouds, sparklers spit— explosions against the law—and algorithms don’t lie about your genetic value. On a jungle gym, children dangle from their knees, skulls to gravel, blood in faces, so federal in their reckless spending it makes me notice a drone above, colliding with a tree, razoring pink blossoms from subleased branches, onto some guy, some guy in a suit on a call. *Sorry*, he says. *There was a drone. Go on.*

All this wood makes me want complicated furniture. How it outlives you. Spies on your inheritors. For example: my mother’s father built a credenza I never saw until he died, at which point the credenza traveled from West

Coast to Heartland, by itself or by some expensive truck of grief, into my mother's house. It lived in California before joining us; I don't know why. I never knew my mother's father, but I encountered his work every day. She filled it with prayer books, holy water, and VHS tapes.

In the park, identical teenage twins are bickering under a tree. One accuses the other of taking everything as a joke. *The whole world, to you, is a joke*, she spits at her sister. *The world and all its injuries, and yourself, and our parents, and our friends, and the dogs—all jokes*. This seems like a marvelous condition. The berated twin is laughing.

Dope content, a robot comments on my photo—a photo of a bird's egg, slimy and blue, interrupted—reminding me to go private. I walk deeper into the forest, frightening the bumble bees, who are already frightened enough, due to the brutality of modern appetites—habitat loss, cellular waves, pesticides, and heat—but there's no time to apologize, because I'm late to an awful picnic.

It's where I go every week to meet my gods. To compliment them, slip fruit into their chemical mouths, tap photos for their Instagrams. As I do, they book their flights and describe how tough the tragicomedy of surplus can be. Always is. I listen because I love them—their monarchy. Their gossamer skin. Their natural bug repellent: witch hazel and rubbing alcohol. Genius! You won't find my gods at the Church of Coincidence, although many seek them there.

Once a month, they notice me, braid my hair, and call me “promising.” That's how they keep me coming back; I'm a fool for deific touch. I love their haircuts. I love the spook of certainty. I love how they hijack my brain, relieve me from the driver's seat for an evening. I love the reluctance of scientists to publish until they know for sure.

I want to love fireworks, but can't—my synapses fire, conclude: *BULLETS!* Like the ones from my childhood neighborhood: midnight and a knock on the door, a man on the mat, the blood on his shirt, the too-lateness of everything. I was five, an insomniac, too small for my age. My mother set me down on the credenza and dialed an ambulance.

She married a leather maker, a woman tells a screen, gulping latte in the grass. Hot, sweet, loaded. After all those returns. Can you buh-fucking-leave it? The benefits of shopping around?

iii.

Tonight, I find my gods under a bridge, graffiti and rats behind their backs. They always pick the places you'd least expect, to throw off the paparazzi. They are so absorbable, my gods, and I so absorbent, which is another way of saying they are rich and I am young. A housecat of bad behavior crouches inside my chest. I might leap into the brown river beside us, phone and all. I might grab a husband, hunt for facts. I panic at a boom.

Fetch a bottle opener, a god commands, and I produce one from my pocket. I might go offscript. In the humidity, I want my gods to know me. Disregarded toddler, I kick a firefly. My gods brainstorm solutions to the environmental crisis—mostly apps—as I feed them fresh pineapple. I want to tell my gods about how, in American colonies, in the seventeenth-hundreds, a lone pineapple could cost up to eight thousand dollars, adjusted for inflation. I want to tell them about how people used to rent pineapples to showcase their status. You could rent one for a night, bring it to a party. It was Columbus's fault, of course. But my gods aren't listening, and they probably know all this already.

My gods wear red-white-and-blue, stars and stripes, peroxide, tennis tans, independence. There are nine of them, and they fight like judges. *I am so happy*, I tell them. *I feel so safe*. I say it because I know them, know they don't care. In truth, I fear loud noises, bright lights, and tribalism. In truth, I am poor, skittish, and sunburnt. Four years ago, I climbed into a bad night that I've been trying to feel my way out of ever since. Bondage is not a forever-home, but I'm holding out for a good referral. *Thank you for the perfect temperature*, I say, sweating everywhere. I miss my mom. Her tendency to sign her texts.

Freedom is the dirtiest myth of neoliberalism, says a god.

Perhaps we discarded Keynesian economics too soon, says another. Without a managed market, I—for one—feel orphaned.

For a while, I lose myself on Wikipedia, failing to absorb anything but them.

Pineapple, one demands.

I can't identify the neurological typo that makes me select three pieces and cram them into his mouth at once, between his lip injections. Maybe I'm just too hot. Maybe I didn't drink enough beer. He coughs. Chokes. Spits. *What in God's name?* Which is when I glitch again, involuntarily burst into song. Not "The Star-Spangled Banner," or "America the Beautiful," or even "White Christmas," which would have been okay—no: *Ninety-Nine bottles of beer on the wall! I belt. Ninety-nine bottles of beer! Take one down, pass it around! Ninety-eight bottles of beer on the wall!*

I'm possessed. Here it is, my bad behavior, and she's pouncing.

She's blitzing, says a god. How pedestrian.

Gross, says another.

Do you think we can we get a refund on her? asks a third, her eyelash extensions so damn quality.

Take my money! I shout at them, my humiliation eclipsed only by mosquito bites. I empty my wallet onto their pedicures and designer footbeds, panting a little. Laundromat quarters, library cards, an expired metro card, an IOU in the tremulous handwriting of my most neurotic friend. In the sky, another firework—red. I gasp.

This isn't the kind of violence that I find entertaining, the smartest god announces.

So I run from them, through the woods, under noise, keeping pace with the pets and the squirrels. Okay, not run. I jog. With breaks. *WHO*

ARE YOU FIGHTING FOR? demands a billboard at the intersection, advertising taekwondo lessons for toddlers.

When I reach my apartment, I lock my door and windows, calibrate my pulse to my micromicroclimate and a YouTube search. Rent is high and I'll have to move soon, so I'm trying to carpe the diems I have left. I breathe each breath on purpose, because sometimes you have to, and blink in the screenlight as a video buffers. Whenever I feel lonely, I watch reunions between American soldiers and their loyal, obedient dogs.

Excerpts from TALK

Leah Muddle

1.

In this sequence I describe the inadvertent working title of a series of poems that exist but barely. If I remember to, I will use the word wrangled or wrangling, which is always apt for the grip I imagine I must exert / over everything / as it shifts and swings or kicks. Now I am picturing Singin' In The Rain perhaps in reverse tap steps that pack themselves up, knees tucked into abdomen, a duet with lamppost and gutter that ends on an emotional low / I guess / I need YouTube to figure this out * laugh * this whole biz makes me feel like a cheat.

2.

In this sequence I am moving large pieces of furniture around in a small room. I say things like 'I actually don't like wearing layers of clothing' and * small laugh * 'no...' and 'it's fine'. I make myself keep pace walking up a hill. At the crest, a woman passes close by me bearing her teeth a little I think to let mine unclench and even show just a little

To describe the clouds' colours would be to name something else. I will have to stop wishing to make artworks other than mine. I can't tell the difference between the phone ringing and the cat eating biscuits from his porcelain plate.

3. *Waiting to cross on Hoddle*

Dusk and the sky is a mending indigo. I'm the image of a person looking into a shabby oak tree. Everybody pays for everything with card now so who has any loose change to spare. My daydreams now are things like
a woman in a car hovering at traffic lights.
She is being asked why she doesn't use her indicators any more. Both her hands are searching in a bag on the passenger seat. She glances briefly at the camera 'I don't have time' she says.

4.

In this sequence I say brightly 'this is a performance' but does it seem bright or crude. The whack of the back of a spoon upon the shell of a boiled egg. The exposed foam of an old bummed sofa. I've written a haircut and a new pair of jeans into the poem but it hasn't worked out. I walk around I say 'you know I'm XX now' 'there's a need for me to be a bit XX'. I wonder if I'm being at all like C Kaufman which would mean that I'm embedded / as embedded as I am / at a distance.

5.

I couldn't find a biro so I couldn't begin I couldn't begin so I couldn't progress I couldn't progress so I couldn't flower I couldn't flower so I couldn't change I couldn't change so I couldn't imagine I couldn't imagine
And this whole recycling thing. I am carrying
three empty biscuit trays downstairs to the yellow bin. I lift the lid and drop them in.

6.

If I asked you, who do you think of when I say the word / artist / what would you reply? Through a doorway. Helen Frankenthaler in that perfect ubiquitous image Dorothy Lee Miller Mirka Mora Sonia Delaunay Frida Sally Gabori and Grace Cossington Smith. Are you pretending not to think of men? Maybe - ha - ha. Do you like the name

Grace Cossington Smith. Yes. Does it make you think of stolen lemons
browning camellias chairs with bowing legs

7.

I adjust all my suppositions to absolutes / * I am * / part of the banana
problem.

8.

Did you get into the competition? Oh no / no / but you know I'm still it
was still good. You walk past the same plump flowers daily and wonder
if they are real. You tread around the diminishing circle of language.
You say to yourself / of Louise Bourgeois / I think she always wears
white and navy. In the next scene, she has on a red sequinned cap and a
big pink fur jacket. She carries a rose like a rose as I am writing a white
truck drives across the sky thoughts like water / leave / like vapour

9. *Big leaf appreciation*

I love the sun it is terrible
I feel all of the used cups until I hit on the warm one
I weep over a dog that's part bandicoot
You say - look at this panoply of diversions
You say - talk / is oblitative
You say - rest your goddamn throat
You say - sunburnt on a beach

My insides are suddenly strung incandescent
can you see what this is? It's red knees and red elbows it's the sum of all
my poems I basically love everything today which is a bit fucked.

Pet Kingdom

Becca Voelcker

You are in the cellar
at Grand Ann's house.
Between one holiday
and the next, I forget
you were still infant-sized
when you died. I imagine you,
crocodile, as big as my father
lying in the leather clothes trunk.
You are pickled in formaldehyde.
There are jars of jam and dusty wines.
This summer we empty
the cellar and remove you
to Wales with Minnie Ha-Ha,
and Grand John's father's pipe.
Princess Diana dies.

My father met you at Christmas.
Harrods' was filled with leopards
and turtles and hampers.
You took the 19.17 from Victoria
and lived in a tank with a thermostat.
January fleeced the South Downs.

You lost weight and your armour
was flecked with dandruff.
In one of the power cuts
your radiator switched off.
Or was it later when
my uncle knew how to hold you
without taping your jaws,
which were growing,
when you eyed the cats,
replaced your teeth, once, twice.
It was summer
in the garden of England.
You were put out to air
and High Walk.
Smiling wide at magpies,
you snaked a belly-run
towards the pond, and fell in.
No one heard you over the lawnmowers.

We take you to school, bottled
specimen from a creche
of Precambrian eggs.
You keep on Isaac's shelf
for seven drizzly winters
mouth agape with a toothpick,
nocturnal hunting, beady-eyed.

Grandfather Reappears

Emily Franklin

I dream you are back from the dead
and working at Walmart.
Even when visiting me posthumously,
you must keep busy, work off our debts.
You are a doorway greeter with your beard
and doctorate. Oh your baggy forearms
and pumpernickel breath, estuary eyes
of mossy loss, jetties of medical methods.
This is the perfect job for me, you explain
in your blue polyester vest, nametag
pinned on your life-raft chest. Flow
of shoppers you direct this way, that.
Those features that held you back—
slow gait, poor hearing, iffy olfactory—
are of no matter now. You know
everyone's name. Have your own teeth.
Ring of hair, head gleaming in the filmy
eco-light. Hello, my name is Bill!
You wave those hands, topographical veins

I pulled and pressed, wedding band
still too small. The doors open, slide,
beckon close, slide, and open again
as you stand large as paper towel towers,
sturdy as boxes of Goldfish, bright as Windex
pyramids, those household talismans
welcoming us in. Come. Come see.
Come see everything we have to offer.

Father

Isabel Duarte-Gray

it's god's grace he's alive what
but he don't stick around to wonder
what this man does with his face
to lose a cockfight to himself
each night his legs less limb more
memories and fewer in a day
each fish he scales
become the same fish
each vein become one gully
forked from birth what beauty
but what's left to touch the light
behind the cataract he finds
carrot flower aflame before
the pond traps the last light
the bass skims its fire
for supper

Kuttawa, Kentucky

To Field Dress a Doe

Isabel Duarte-Gray

Step 1. Begin with the feel of a desecration. Cut below her udder, around the anus and remove, wary not to pierce the bladder. This will feel you've killed her twice.

Step 2. Split the muscle of the pelvis. Open her to the rasp of broom sedge.

Step 3. Ease your knife through the muscle wall. Draw her skin like a warm, blood curtain to shield her guts from rupture. Draw until you find the breastbone.

Step 4. By now, the birds are calling to the likelihood of morning.

Step 5. Do not spare her cape for beauty. Slice to the chin and loose what you find.

Step 6. With a toothed blade, split her pelvic bone, sapling-like and supple.

Step 7. Drag from the windpipe down, removing all that was inside her in as few strokes as you can.

Step 8. If there is a child, place the heart into her hands. Tell her this is necessary.

Step 9. Turn her over. Across a log, if you find one. Across an oak, if you find one.

Step 10. The oakmoss holds her blood. It scents the wood with the stone weight of your hunger.

Kuttawa, Kentucky

Smuckers

Amanda Auerbach

Thought, at first not remember
filled hummingbird feeder
when told to by husband in order

read poet same age my mother first time who am not
well sort of, am older

is that why have been wearing red
today second day after church sex and sleep?
Mary a name I think as red though *always wore*
blue she was fourteen.

Red is the color I wore when peed before church
looked at hiked up
thought color of ketchup not lipstick, not blood.
Recently eaten, ketchup with breaded

fish before had showered still felt, fresh
what had eaten
yet old or digested as *on second day*

after shower though *second* is red
by virtue, the hummingbird feeder
is also that color. The water is
fresh sugar water not zingy: *Breaded* like *ketchup*:

older, of period blood. Why perceive liquid
substances *make what we are*
not color but made from. Appearance-
suggested.

Sing *poor*

Amanda Auerbach

Draw *poor* out in church song
word is full as if drunk meaning slowed

by long vowel substance each
word does not need intelligence
without alcohol still be religious
or singing in circumstance filled
all that matters that once

looked through trees to those who near
one fawn looking at, panting
had eaten: hardest thing he had done all
day

woman stands next to says welcome, hugs peace
does not know more but
my hands were compulsive wrote out word with finger
in pant leg was said
to fill space, not remember

which word. Was not *poor*.
Did not need to be else, was not
human.

A Memory

Harry Hall

I remember one day in the garden picking peonies. The flowers were *itohs*, golden and beautiful, but however carefully I handled them, the petals fell off in my hands. I felt myself getting afraid. The stems were also far too short, and dirtied, I did not know why. I picked another. Barely open, the bloom disintegrated. My mother was nearby: silent, but becoming angry.

Although we were actually inside picking the peonies, out of planters, kneeling not in the dirt but on the top floor of a house, which was my childhood home, because Bella was sniffing the polished wood floor in the corner, making a fuss, as if digging for something and distracting me.

Every flower was frail, so I tried to focus. But just then a final peony lost its form to my touch as my father came home, downstairs, dirtied and smiling, and I was beside him, taking his bag. Bella was in the corner seeking the site of some scent. My father was happy, having returned from months away, about to tell me everything... but first Bella—she had been a beautiful Golden—running toward us from the other direction—having passed two months earlier—was moving too fast to be tracked and—having only walked for her last six weeks, then limped—came from the corner to sniff the soil-scent of my father's bag.

And only then I sensed something—so looked behind me at

Bella in the corner, and Bella by the bag, where there were now two of her, playing together, and she was also by my father—four total. Then a noise by the backdoor as three more Bellas ran in. They were excited and slobbering but silent. I was afraid. I ran out to the yard, where a Bella was digging in the corner of the fence, and two around my knees, another trampling the few remaining peonies in the garden, and then five more behind... they drained out of the house and up from under the corner of the fence, and all the cracks, and they ran toward me as I bent down in a ball and screamed, high and loud—as if to alert *everyone*, of *something*—

And then I awoke to darkness, inside my apartment. It was quiet, and I knew: it was, of course, a dream. But was my mouth open?



Elactopazmajay, oil on hemp, 42x34" (2019), Joel Werring



Airport, oil on hemp, 45x45" (2017), Joel Werring

Preservation

Sylvia Beato-Davis

You grow long and outrun the boys. It is easy but you know you are not one.

Then the mangroves into which you dash one night with a girl you think you might want to be.
When you scramble out, one of you is burning.

You have shame to look forward to. She does not look back at all.

Even birds seek exile from the fever of high August.

One way to move is to tell yourself you can't remember. *Ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente.*

Thick grass blades, moist. Crickets sing to deaf night.

You never asked to be brought here, in this the South no one ever talks about the touch of.

The Lost Tribe of Eden

Shane McCrae

They knew they'd disappear they knew the stars
And sun shone for the naked pair they knew
Not to complain they knew they couldn't choose the prayer
God finally would answer to

What if it was no prayer they knew the fields
Outside the garden were alive and growing
They knew to fear they knew God hadn't said
Enough about the tree they knew the use of knowing

They knew the angels knew the will of God
They knew the angels whispered late at night
They knew the fruit they knew the apple

Wept in their mouths when bitten like a good
Smell on the serpent's tongue him they knew best
On his long legs he stood as tall as people

Namelings

Eden Werring

You, Garden,
and I:
namelings.

I go to you
Eve-forward,
debt and darks.

You, rising back
through clouds to me,
nubivagant:

shorethoughts
of leopard, sunken
river,

ranting from guiltlife
back to source
word.

The Luz Bone

Eden Werring

Virgil comes to sleep with me in the middle of the night. He waits until we have already been unconscious for hours, then leaps on the bed. The weight of white skeleton and black fur. His shadow body, shifting over the surface of the blankets. That rumble in his throat, a thrum of desire, marks his entrance into some antechamber of my sleep. In the chamber is a window—a cracked nut, the pineal body—through which I enter and leave my dreams. By the time Virgil approaches me in the bed, I am far from that place. Wandering woods bruised by pools, leaves silvered by the moon. The wilds of time. In this dream, I am on a train I have been riding for a long time, a lifetime maybe, only I have just now realized it is haunted. All these people are ghosts. At each station, a rush of them gets on and off, and I think of disembarking, but don't. With each stop, my panic rises and the train becomes ingrown with whatever dead insistence these ghosts have inside them, whatever tells them to keep at this. They don't know how to get what they want, and it's only going to get worse for me if I stay. And yet, I do stay. They know I am trying to leave them and it's making them manic, the train and all its atoms vibrating like water heading for a boil. The space between the ghost atoms, if ghosts have atoms, expands into more and more dark matter. Things are about to get really bad. But when I finally try to disembark at the next station, something won't let me. It's too late. I look down to find a white porcelain

hand circling the skin of my left wrist. Just a hand—Victorian, pristine, dispassionate. The chalky fingers sealed together, so it won't come off. I think of smashing it against a hard surface, but then the shards might recompose into the image of a strangled woman, husked yet conscious, lying in the snow. The white hand palms the wrist skin in a tight snare, like the shining rings they put around the necks of fishing birds in China so they can't swallow the big fish they catch. The horror of being that kind of prisoner. Like Ping, the little duck from that story I read as a child. Ping watched the ringed birds swooping into the ink, dropping so many doomed bodies into their master's basket. The wet black splash of the bird, choked. Each topaz eye seared above yellow beak. Ping watched them, awed in turns by their relative freedom and enslavement. And how trapped little Ping felt as well, his dread of being last to cross the little bridge to the boat with the two wise eyes where he and the other ducks in his family slept. He hides in the grass near the edge of the river, fearing the spank that comes from being last. In the morning, the wise-eyed boat is gone, and he is lost. He watches the black ringed birds and then follows a trail of rice cake crumbs on the water to a floating boy tied to his houseboat. The boy thinks Ping is beautiful, but the boy's family is just pleased he has brought them duckling for dinner. They trap Ping under a basket and wait for sundown. They would cut Ping a necklace, red instead of the shining kind worn by the black fishing birds. Then, they'll make a small incision to clean out his organs, fill the hole with boiling water, sew it up, and roast his body. Toss white bones in the river for fish to finish. Ping waits for this death. He watches pink sunlight through the holes in the basket carve diamonds of shadow on yellow wings. But then this boy lifts off the basket and carries me to the water. I swim away without looking back, towards the boat with the wise eyes. When I see the other ducks already crossing the boat ahead of me, I endure the sharp slap on my back for being last. I stay on the train with the other ghosts, the white Victorian hand snaring my wrist. I have forgotten I don't have to be there.

Even from so far away, through the sound of the train and the river, I hear Virgil's purr. It catches me, leads me. As a child, I feared my soul might leave through the open window at night and never find its way back. And then my body, asleep in my bed, would be left there, a husk

split open into dried muscle, tendon—silver flash of fascia. And my soul would be out there, lost and wandering, locked out of my body. The bitter taste of walnut pith. A silver hammer cracking open a nut. Hickory nuts fall from the trees in our yard, and I send my daughter outside to gather them. She finds them scattered over doilies of wet black leaves covering the grass. The tree man tells us we need a hammer to eat them. He says they aren't bad to eat, just hard to get the meat. Walnuts hide themselves under green hulls. The light, a green brain. They say walnuts are good for the brain because they resemble the brain with their folds and valleys, their circuitry and circularity. Like the labyrinth of stones, moonlit in the black woods. The one that Hansel lays on the ground. A map in silver, leading home.

Virgil's approach each night. A rustle, rain on water. Then, that purr. It fills his body, the armature of his desire. From the tip of his tail all the way to the top of the spinal column, the first cervical vertebrae. Jewish midrash tells of this immortal bone, the luz bone, named for the Hebrew word for nut or almond and first referenced in the story of Ezekiel. It is believed to be found buried somewhere in the brain. They say even if a body were burned or crushed or ground to meal, this bone would survive. If drowned, it would not rot. If struck, it would split anvils, shatter hammers. And then when the time comes for resurrection, the body would regenerate using the luz bone as the seed, like yeast starter for bread. The Zohar calls this bone the tricky virgin. A leftover in graves, the snake. Some thought the luz bone was not found at the base of the skull, but instead at the end of the spine, the sacrum. The holy backbone of Osiris, God of death and resurrection. His tree, the shining pillar. A serpent's head, perforated like an almond shell. In the middle of the brain, there is also an endocrine gland named for a nut, the nut of the pine tree. The pineal body, which produces melatonin and regulates cycles of sleep and wake, consciousness and unconsciousness. Descartes called the pineal gland the "principal seat of the soul," that which prompts spiritual consciousness, clairvoyant vision, hallucination, near-death and out-of-body experience, dreams. It is the wise eye. When I dream, I become this transparent eye. Like Emerson's. Like the eye of Horus, the Egyptian falcon god. Horus's left eye was ripped out and scattered into fragments by Set, the god of

chaos. Then, Thoth, the god of writing, recomposed the shards, filled the eye with moonlight, and fit it back in Horus's head, regenerated. The luz bone. An eye of sun, an eye of moon. The god of writing regenerating the god of chaos. It happens every time I go to dream.

You can't really blame the ghosts. They just want what we all want: to go home. Like Virgil. He finds me in the darkness like I am food. He leaps on the bed, steps around my sleeping husband, looking for me. His purr gets louder, straddles the distance between want and contentment. My scent. He breathes me in, sucks me down his esophagus to his bowels, searching out the peaks and folds of the blanket that lead to me. The way my children as babies searched for me with their eyes closed and mouths opened against me, bodies warm against mine. Nothing like a nursing child. The effulgence of their desire, sated with milk, yet still wanting more. Now my babies are growing up. They are asleep and dreaming in their beds one floor below us, wandering out the windows into their own voids. And my husband breathes next to me, a boy again in his dreams. Virgil's body settles next to mine, purring again. The purr expresses the compressed intention of millions of thoughts and emotions, spread out over millions of years, all hidden in the folds of this one sound: the nexus of cat desire. Though desire normally requires a sense of want, the purr both articulates and transcends it. Virgil is content to want more. The weight of his dark matter stepping onto mine, flattened by sleep, filled with flecks of milk and blood and those in-between spaces, fascia, connective tissue. The pulling apart, and the fullest parts. Virgil steps through the folds of my bedclothes, the comforter spread over me. My mother taught me to put my pink blanket in the drier on high for ten minutes. It came out bumping with static electricity. The laundry room in our basement, growing up, smelled of mildew, damp carpet, and, somewhere undiscovered, the fecal matter of cat. As soon as the pink blanket came out of the drier, I ran upstairs to cuddle with it in my bed, to be swallowed by that warmth. The way an ant navigates to something sweet. And then when he finally finds and smells me and settles down next to me, he licks his black fur a few long strokes. Licks hard against the black filaments, until they deepen into rifts and separate and clump into irregular branches. Virgil lies on my head, my chest. Over my throat, a

living stole. He steps on my face, and I try not to think of where that paw was earlier in the day. I try instead to feel gratitude that he—born of wild animals who would cull a stomach, brown, dripping and oblong, from another animal's living bag, a bladder, and then pull out the red strings of the wrists and throat—wants to be near me. It's a cat's cradle. My daughter smiles at me when I pick her up from Late Day at school. She holds in her hand an oblong length of blue wool. Blue the color of night before the night comes. She holds the string stretched taut between both hands and wrists, tensing her hands against each other, the wool waiting for my fingers to enter the yarn and transform it, bring together the pieces into a new whole. The moon eye, the boat with the wise eyes. That purr. Virgil moves from his resting place beside me and onto my chest, resting his full weight against my throat again. I pull him into my arms and rub my hands over his back and face. Behind his ears, over his belly. He only bites sometimes, when the pleasure is most intense for him, and never hard enough to really hurt me.

Virgil stands over me, waiting. The face of the deep. His furred skeleton, blue-black, hovers over mine. This cat face close to mine as I sleep. He is smelling me—my eyes, nose. The liquid, my blood and bones. My sleeping mouth. The white skull hidden under black fur. That smell from tenth grade Biology lab, when we were given a cat to dissect, strangled with formaldehyde in a body bag. The first time I took a scalpel and pressed it and the blade slid past the fur. Virgil is heavy on the blankets, and when that purr starts again, an engine bears into me. The teacher gave us the option of dissecting a feral cat or a fetal pig. I chose the cat, since I worshipped cats and wanted to understand their anatomy from the perspective of supplicant. The ancient Egyptians removed the pineal gland, that small nut that transports us from wake to dreaming, from the brains of cats and humans before they mummified them. They would not bury them with their eye of Horus intact. Bastet, the Egyptian cat goddess had an all-seeing eye, too, the right eye of Ra, sun-filled. It surprises me, in Biology class, how much I relished sliding a scalpel against sheaves of red muscle to release a silver veil of fascia. The cat body. Its jaws open, nostrils black and collapsed. And the formaldehyde smell, like a hammer of air. We carved away at this body, unearthed pods of yellow fat and a

web of red and blue veins, fragmented this animal down to the luz bone. Afterwards, the remains of fat and tissue and muscle went back in the bag to be taken to the dump. Cutting into the dead cat did not hurt me, but the thought of this bag of scattered cat tore me open. All these cats in pieces. I wished for their lives to come back. At least their souls were gone. I do not think their ghosts lingered.

Tonight, I have been dreaming of how a hazelnut might lead through a cave all the way to Shangri-La. The pineal body. An occiput path, drawn in silver from the top of my head and into the forest. A two-tailed ouroboros, devouring both of its tails at once. The town called Luz, where Jacob slept on a stone and saw angels climbing a spine. That giant in Jack and the Beanstalk who grinds my bones to make his meal. Breadcrumbs scattered down the throats of night birds. A three-story Victorian house my husband and I want to buy until we find out the third floor is writhing, corrupt with ghosts. A haunted oven in my grandmother's apartment. House painters who moonlight as exorcists. A businessman in a suit, standing on my head, the pressure of his leather dress shoes denting my scalp. And a dead professor lying on his back in the snow, eyes wide, body husked. And ghosts who switch out the souls of human beings so they can have a shot at living again. A black bird with a shining ring around its throat choking fish into a basket. A white porcelain hand clasped tight around my left wrist. I can't leave this train yet. It's not personal. A shaman in a turquoise Victorian house told me there is only one true ailment on planet Earth: loneliness. We all want to go home. I am moments lost in the forest. I am moments hurt in the daze of the sun. Virgil climbs over my husband, through the bedclothes, and hovers over my face. His purr, an incantation. I am as far back as you can imagine. I know this music isn't coming from me. He will find his way to me and that purr will just get louder, more insistent. The black paws stepping in folds of white down comforter. Virgil will come again tomorrow night. And in the morning, I will repeat the Hebrew prayer, *Modeh Ani*, to myself when I wake up. Thank you for returning my soul to me.

Lot's Wife

Daniel Kraft

for Terry Tempest Williams

I will look
back, forever,

at my home because
I am in love
with how my eyes

can trace the distance
from

the ruin to the word.

Today a pin-
tailed dove
alighted

on the grains
that were my shoulder

blades, then
flew away.
When

Jesus Christ was just

another desert Jew

I watched him sleep,
and I have seen

the midnight leopard
slink

before
me like the rumor

of a different order's
beauty.

Here
I see the whole
machinery,

the whole array.
You fall

in love
and die and then
your body

is a weapon. What

am I, God,

if not
imprisoned in
the glory
of my witnessing?

What am I,
God,
if not
your image
in a burning world?

Sonnet as Deuteronomy 14:11-18

Daniel Kraft

When I was born I was a list
of impure birds. You must not eat
the things I have to say:
white owl, small owl, great owl,

and when they read me in the scroll of laws
I ached with pride. Desert owl, every hawk,
each bird of prey, of carrion, and more.
And then in early winter when the aspen leaves

had fallen like a flock of birdshot-spangled gulls
I saw God eating a heron. His eyes were closed
as if in prayer until he looked at me,
and grinned. Heron's blood ran down his chin.

And when the heathens burned the scrolls,
then I was happy to burn.

aubade no. 5

Byron Russell

give yourself time and space, distance, he says,
is a gift. his mouth opened vastly. not
a house where I could live, it seems.

pink clouds spinning sunshine, they are not distant
defying definition as such. they spin about my fingers
wooly, a pink I would lick off your lips.

stepping into the breeches is a morning affair,
one life at a time. one elephant skin boot after
another; your oddly sewn breaches aren't fit for my life

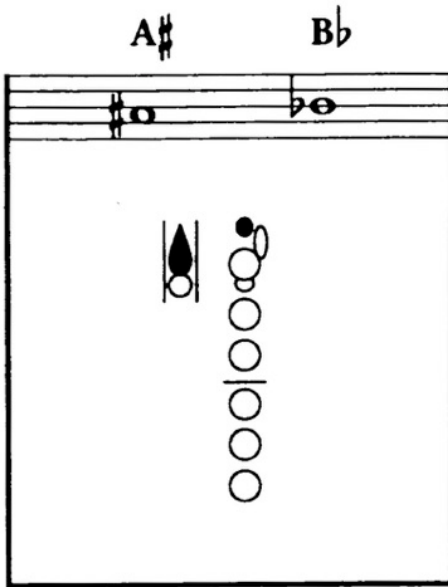
and so it seems I dance oddly through the wings,
the spotlight hot in pursuit, words megaphoning
from the audience. earth, cloud, fall, time, he says,

splitting these seams and forever is this distance.

3 Clarinet Poems

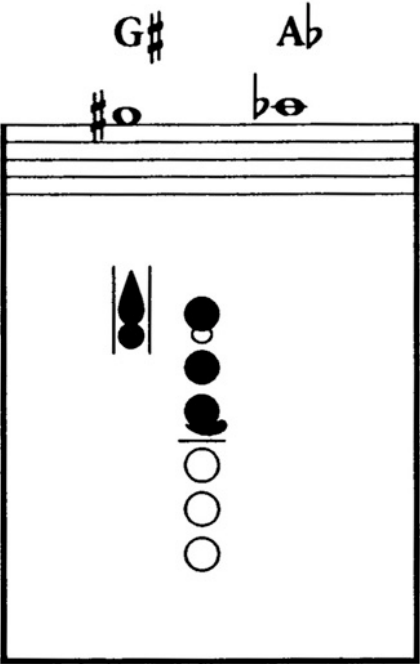
Ryan Mihaly

[A \sharp /B \flat] [They had to establish contact]



[A#/B♭] They had to establish contact somehow. Living on opposite sides of the valley, each atop their own mountain, it was clear a bridge would be impossible to build, so it was only appropriate they devise a method of communication. When they met in the valley they agreed on using lights, assigning meaning to darkness at precisely determined intervals. This way, simple communication also became a game with which they could ward off death by shining bright beams in its megalomaniac eyes. "Seeing the mundane and witnessing the sublime is less than an eye-blink away," one of them signaled to the other, mimicking a winking eye with her giant spotlight. Their hyena-laughter illuminated the valley that night, disturbing, for a few hours, the mating patterns of the real hyenas with whom they shared those less lonely mountains.

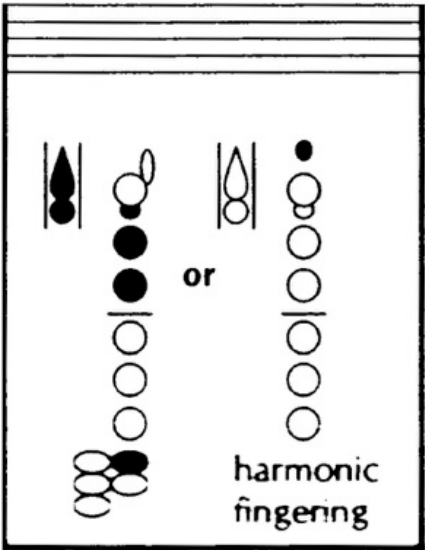
[G[#]/A^b] [The clarinet speaks]



[G#/A♭] Then the clarinet speaks: "The throat is the reed you must wet. There are splinters in your stomach now. You are hungry. You are hungry and I feed you water. The pit in your stomach deepens. The splinters shift around. You need something to chew to make the teeth work, to gnash or clench, not make them shine like porcelain. I feed you milk and your teeth glisten and the pit only deepens. Listen: a human being is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. To crush him, the whole universe does not have to arm itself. A mist, a splinter, a drop of water, is enough to kill him. But if the universe were to crush the reed, the man would be nobler than his killer, since he knows that he is dying, and that the universe has the advantage over him. The universe knows nothing about this. The throat is the reed you must wet. I am a voice box you hold."

[E] [Vision: eyes seek eyes]

E



[E] Vision: a bed, night; main roads closed;
snow; moon full and haloed – soft glow of faces;
words eagerly spilling out of mouths; memory
lodged in a wall; silence of space through which
eyes seek eyes; fingers enmeshed in space
between fingers – hair loosened into heart; hair
curling into and out of colors – footfall – flinch;
blinked tears; cold wind; color of sky curling hair
into footfall – silences growing; silver thread;
free, fine weave – laugh-flash of teeth; gleaming
skin; children laughing – bite? silence; kiss?
rabbit rushing into brush; blameless God
watching listlessly, wanting to intervene more
directly; moon suddenly making midday
appearance.

Writing Becomes Drawing

Deborah J. Haynes

This artwork is composed of layers of writing, overwritten until the text is indecipherable. I began the drawing with a tracing of my body that nearly filled the paper, inside of which I wrote and rewrote three Buddhist prayers while, at the same time, reciting those prayers. The top layer of the drawing is a traditional refuge prayer that alludes to the six *paramitas*, virtues of generosity, introspection, patience, diligence, attention, and wisdom. The word *paramita* literally means “that which has reached the other shore” or “gone to the other shore.” Writing these prayers repeatedly over several years was an attempt not only to turn writing into drawing but to move beyond myself.



Prayers: Compassion Practice, graphite on black Arches paper, 60x72" (2010-2012)

Erasures from *Cloud of Unknowing*

Sarah Fleming

Lift up your heart towards God with a humble stirring of love, and think of himself, not of any good to be gained from him. See, too, that you refuse to think of anything but him, so that nothing acts in your intellect or will but God himself. And do **what you can** to **forget** all of God's creation and all their actions, so that your thoughts and desires are not directed and do not reach out towards any of them, in general or in particular. But leave them alone, and pay no heed to them.

This is the work of the soul that pleases God most. All the saints and angels rejoice in this work, and hasten to help it with all their might. All the devils are driven crazy when you do this, and try to frustrate it in all ways they can. All people living on earth are marvellously helped by this work, in ways you do not know. Yes, the very souls in purgatory are relieved of their pain by the power of this work. You yourself are cleansed and made virtuous by this work more than by any other. And yet it is the easiest work of all and the soonest completed, when a soul is helped by grace in the desire; it feels, but otherwise it is hard, and you can do it only by miracle.

Do not give up, then, but labour at it till you feel desire. For the first time you do it, you will find only a darkness, and as it were a cloud of unknowing; you do not know what, except that you feel in your **will** a naked purpose towards God. Whatever you do, this darkness and this cloud are between you and your God, and hold you back from seeing him clearly by the light of understanding in your reason and from experiencing him in the sweetness of love in your feelings. And so prepare to **remain** in this darkness as long as you can, always begging for him you love; for if you are ever to feel or see him, so far as is possible in this life, it must always be in this cloud and this darkness. And if you are willing to labour eagerly as I tell you, I trust in his mercy that you will reach your goal.

cloud and this darkness. And if you are willing to labour eagerly as I, and try to tell you, I trust in his mercy that you will reach your goal. are ever to feel or can, always begging for him you love; for if you ^{ness as long as you} can. see him, so far as is possible in this life, it must ^{ness of love in your} earth in your intellect feelings. And so prepare to remain in this dark pleases God most. All or reason and from experiencing him in the sweet and hasten to help it but towards God back from seeing him clearly by the light of understanding in your saints and angels rejoice in darkness and this cloud are between you and your God, and hold you any of them, in general your will a naked purpose towards God. Whatever you do, this work of the soul cloud of un ^{ma} the first time you do it, you will find only a darkness, and as it were a and desires Do not give up, then, but labour at it till you feel desire. For always be in this ⁱⁿ this work, knowing, you do not know what, except that you feel in are This is the ^{out} ways they alone, marvellously helped by this work, in ways you do not know. Yes, the them. But leave them feels; but otherwise it is hard, and you can do it only by miracle. the the devils are or in particular. soonest completed. when a soul is helped by grace in the desire it pay no heed to driven crazy very souls in purgatory are relieved of their pain by the power of this their might. All reach out more than by any other. And yet it is the easiest work of all and the to frustrate it in all work. You yourself are cleansed and made virtuous by this work and do not with all to forget all of God's creation and all their actions, so that your

Lift up your heart towards God with a humble stirring of love and think of himself, not of any good to be gained from him. See, too, that you refuse to think of anything but him, so that nothing acts in your intellect or will but God himself. And do what you can to forget all of God's creation and all their actions, so that your thoughts and desires are not directed and do not reach out towards any of them, in general or in particular. But leave them alone, and pay no heed to them.

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to forget all of God's creation

do what you can

in

this work you
are relieved of their pain
cleansed and made virtuous

naked

the sweetness of

in

this darkness

Plotinus in English

George Kalogeris

Tractate by tractate, and decade by decade, Stephen
McKenna kept going over the same old text,

As if he might reap the recondite Greek like wheat—
Spellbound bales of golden wheat—however

Intractable the grammar and syntax, however
Haggard the hay in his tiny dank village of Harrow.

Until he was forced to move, but not to change
His dwelling place in the luminous obscure—

O mystical kerosene glow of a low thatched cottage
Black with the coal-soot of Cornish Reskadinnick!

For thirty lean yet fortifying years,
Plotinus, he kept to his Spartan diet of milk,

Brown bread, and hard-boiled eggs, but gorged himself
On your abstractions, convinced the sublime had substance:

An isolate like you, translating you—
But not into bloodless, Neoplatonic, ambrosia.

Please tell us, again, Plotinus, what ecstasy means,
Tell us in Stephen McKenna's glorious English

Just how it feels to be "lifted out of the body..
External to all things and self-encentered...

A marvelous beauty then, and more than ever
Assured of community with the loftiest order..."

And then the sudden, humiliating, let down.
And why the homeless soul must always go

"Alone," when the body dies, "back to the Alone."
Teach us the lesson of stoic Greek endurance.

But what do we do with ourselves after our hunger
For rapture fades, as it always does, and there

We are, back in our tiny dank village of Harrow?

Thanks to Leibniz, putative father of topology

Laura Kolbe

“... the study of those properties of an object which remain unchanged when that object is subjected to stretching, shrinking, and twisting without tearing, piecing, or gluing.” – Introduction to General Topology by K.D. Joshi

Thirty Years War, 1618-1648

It is not obvious the underwear stays on
unless at least one leg of jeans
untubes one thigh. You think there would be
a special mode of bend,

a dispensation. Hip-fishing tights
under trousers, tees under wool,
ibid. It took a man nursed in war
to tell me I have to get naked

in order. When horses became meat,
then shoes became meat, to think
what a ring in the mind could do
without breaking –

that circles are cloaked lines
glued long before the first clock told
the first pale general, *sleep*.
The iron accounts of a number-man's eye

without bread for weeks, the bright reveal
that eye fell grateful into –
what one later called
the heart of the heart

of the country, meaning an answer dead-plum-
toned, unable to rip out. What you could call
a showing. In sleek present, in rumple
before coffee, how I smell you

on my top and bottom as jacked goods obtained
through slats of soft fence.
It's only half the work to say,
“you cannot sip yolk from a whole shell.”

You must also say, “unwrap, Sister Package.
Mother Envelope, tear off your tongue.
Hooks for coats will not let me touch you,
dearest shawl, until the leather bomber

takes its neck off
your collar's blue-black modesty.”

Garter, Copper, Water

Laura Kolbe

He's my age, and for once in Wise, Virginia
I believe it: same confused complexion
(baby pimples nose and chin,
around the eyes first fine contrails scratching
vacant sky), same dislike to sit
while others stand. Same no-gold-band.
He's clean: I like the way he preened today
before clinic, though he circles us
most warm days in oily tee-shirts, mowing
our field, taking care of our snake problem.
He hands me the old inhaler dimpled with bites,
times he dug when air couldn't come fast enough.
I thank him and set it aside
as a piece of jewelry too nice for day,
or one that would clasp too much.

The snakes were in frenzies of lust this year, record-
-breaking litters and a den in every teardown past
Guest River toward the mines.
He gets them with his shovel or his truck. One
filthy time, with his push mower. Kingsnake,
queensnake, milksnake, greensnake, garter, water,
copperhead, hognose – snuff photos on his phone,
all these dead

frog eaters, ankle biters – fifteen bodies
later, they seem less like killers
and more like grammar, giving and taking breath
and stops between short, hollow teeth. “How
many would really bite?”
“You don’t wait to find out it’s mean.”

There’s a clay red cornsnake I can’t unsee,
flayed skin like a mother’s last touch
on a wrapped birthday present, cool silver stream of
scissor sucking red ribbon to its current then
releasing it, twisted astonished,
the stiff bright spiral that means
in every language, *I took great pains with this.*

Walking Autopsy

Greg Allendorf

Behold the shedding of the body,
into whose chaff-cloud of raspberry hoops the stars drop
soapy opals of watery autumn light.

The stricture of your handshake,
mortal strife, our two hands an animal couple. Our glowering

augur of the yellowed almanac:
only your inspired sleep can steer the words
back.

Then and always then is there a God.
The river and stellar calendula;
the way when you were young they called you old—
all of that coming off, falling away, do imagine
how vivid one feels after living, and how,
after every druidic embrace, frigid warmth,
fresh-painted snow in a well-heated room:
alle fleshe is grasse; your soul would roam.

Outside the Mortuary

Greg Allendorf

Loved one, dead one, sane one, quietly
I acquiesced and kissed his hairy belly,
shuddered with garbled disdain.
Rotten, my heart—
spoiled rotten.

His chin was always ebon velvet, always
his sockets were transitory
gimlets I looked into.
So close but never touching, each thing
on earth was alone in its shimmering vitriol,
blushing.

The Karoo Blues

Isabella Morris

I thought the news, when it came, would not know where to find me.

I had installed myself away from you, away from the mournful wind and the creaking wind pumps that immediately deliver the ache of you. Away from scratchy memories that are too wounding to tempt me to put a Koos Kombuis record onto the dusty gramophone and drop the stylus onto the vinyl.

But today, the news unearthed me. Delivered you.

Just your name mentioned at the beginning of the midday newscast. A reference to your *Sweeping Vissie across a Karoo dance floor* painting. A gunshot wound. I thought the radio would protect me from you. Television always held the possibility of your face, one of your paintings, landscapes layered with cumulonimbus, powdered dust, mirages, raw umber, wind pumps, cadmium blue, cracked earth, sunflowers, linked pinkie fingers, braying donkeys, chartreuse, a wink, slippery shale, blazing skies, strident eagle calls, thirst, titian, distant mountains, lanolin, linseed, a lingering kiss, wild herbs, swirling dust devils, an oasis, wheeling vultures.

The coupling of your first and last name unravelled me—a guitar string snapped from its key. My facial muscles were unable to work together so I could not open my mouth and grasp the pockets of air I needed to stay my heaving chest. I stumbled about the house, unmoored,

unhinged, finding no solid place upon which I could settle myself.

There were none of your sprawling canvases in front of which I could stand and anchor myself. No portrait of the Karoo in which I might locate moments of joy. And there was joy, Gideon!

Besides the yelling, the broken bottles, the rusting farm implements, and the gunshots there was the intense joy. Bliss under skies you have captured in flourishes of thick paint, which Marcus the Gallery Pimp would have bought, had you let him. Sunsets to burn a hole in your heart. The coppered ends of days that tempered the tension for me, and that ignited something so deep inside of you that neither of us could head it off, but we both felt it; knew it as intimately as we knew the slack of our tongues in our mouths.

Under those flaming skies we dragged our sagging mattress onto the thin sand next to our single-roomed dwelling. We slapped mosquitoes that whined above our length-to-length bodies. The evening air was cool, the stars a careless spray of a thousand searing secrets. Creation stories, myths, and Karoo fairy tales we made up on that mattress, our ankles looped, our arms stretched behind our heads, our pinkies hooked.

We laughed, fabricated outrageous tales, created monsters more frightening than Pa. We cowered, and roared towards imaginary universes in fantastic machines, and those unlikely tales were so important for us to imagine.

Sometimes, in the liquid heat of the day, you drew me into your lap, both of us damp, wilting.

“Play for me, Vissie, my little fish,” you would say.

I tucked the violin beneath my chin, drew the bow against the strings. You lay your ear against my back, listening to the sound through the cavern of my ribs, as if the percussion of my heart drummed the Karoo into you.

No matter how lightly my fingertips pressed the strings, how gracefully the bow swept, or how evenly your breath skimmed my spine, when you approached the easel, you launched yourself into the act of painting with force.

“Maybe we don’t hear the same music,” I said, retreating from the violence.

“Vissie, we don’t hear, we feel – here.” You stabbed the paintbrush to your chest, a slash of scarlet under your nipple.

Now, in my immediate need to find something of you, I try to remember where, in my daily intention to forget, I hid the small, flat stone with the fish imprint—a stone so rudimentary it could have gone unnoticed or instead have been flung and skipped across a shallow dam. Except it wasn't, and you saw the lace of the fossil in it. An ancient wedge of mud turned into a smooth flat rock, barely holding the imprint of the fish trapped in the soft sand of the shore of the vast lake that the Karoo once was. You pressed it into my hand.

“A little fish for my little fish.”

Now I cannot find it, and I am bereft.

Years of intentional dis-remembering have been futile.

You have been everywhere in the shadows of denial.

How do you forget an occupant as large as the Karoo itself? How do you forget someone who is in the stars, in the sand, the dry heat, the sulphurous first strike of a match, the scratch of an unshaven beard, the history of my heart, the geography of my bones, the double biology of me?

When I left, I placed the violin on a bench in a tearoom in Cradock, and then I caught the train.

First the calluses on my fingers softened, peeled off, and then the bruise under my chin disappeared.

I numbed myself into complete distraction by listening to radio talk shows –relentless master-classes in the over-analysis of strangers and their strange lives.

Now each syllable of your name has detonated the atoms in my body to wakefulness, and they collide in the chaos of the absolute knowledge that the trembling Karoo heat, our mattress, mosquitoes, mud-thick paint, the dust beneath our feet in our desert dance are trapped forever as the ecstasy of our past. The atoms course through my body, raging against the certainty that there will be no flash of laughter so fortifying, no embrace so restorative that I could forget every horror of mankind, including your resistance to self-love. How is it possible that you could transform your wild self-hatred into such tenderness towards me?

The vast, open, silent Karoo held too much space for us.

What did you need to escape, Gideon?

Me?

I offered to leave. You thundered against the prospect of a separation, said you would fetch me back.

“Vissie, you loved me before I loved myself,” you said, your voice deep as history.

“No, you were born first, it’s you that loved me first.”

I wanted to ask when you had stopped loving yourself, but that would have been too cruel. Cruelty was Pa’s default demeanour. Ours was love.

Now, outside our childhood home, there, against the south wall of the garden, the wheelbarrow.

Samuel, our gardener, tried to move it every time he mowed the grass, now he just tosses the weed whacker cord over his shoulder and decimates the long grass around the wheelbarrow. I bought another wheelbarrow for the weeds, the branches, the grass clippings.

The grass is a wet springy cushion after the rains. It feels good to be barefoot again. Barefoot. Exposed. Vulnerable. A dash between the house and the wheelbarrow. I start counting. One, two, three...

There is little evidence of the green paint on the wheelbarrow. If it had been in the Karoo, the barrow would have been a flaky dark coppery thing by now, its single rubber wheel melted to hardness, cracked. But we didn’t need it in the desert. We had our mattress. The stars. Pictures, stories, music. Each other only. Everything we’d promised each other when we were afraid. Hot shaky words whispered through missing milk teeth into ears cupped behind sticky fingers with nails bitten to the bloody quick. When Pa cut out the sun. When our underwear was damp as we cowered in the wheelbarrow.

How could this metal barrow have been our hiding place? Curled up inside, all elbows and knees. Toes tiny as beans. Thin-boned, broken skinned, nail-bitten, wide-eyed, wince-eyed, swollen-lipped, breath-trapped, frozen-throated. So. Fucking. Scared. All the time. Every day. Before our mother died, and after our mother died. Until you were hormones and facial hair and looked ridiculous in grey school shorts. Thirteen.

You found the hunting rifle, but not the bullets. Pa was smart—smarter than you, but not as afraid as me.

The worst always came when you were at rugby practice.

Pa took me to his latest construction site. Made me walk up

stairs on legs that belonged to someone else.

No longer my legs.

No longer me.

Someone else.

Someone he placed against the concrete floor on an unfinished level of the building, open to the wind. He placed her in a cross formation, back flat against the floor, arms spread, angling her shoulders to run flush against the edge of the floor. Her neck stiff, holding her head over the side of the building. Every part of her so rigid, so wooden that he had to kick her knees apart. Cement dust and grunts. A savage twist of her hips, a child on all fours, small stones she would pick out of the tender flesh of her knees for days, heels of her hands and fingers clawing at the edge of the floor. The man behind her so violent that she longed to launch herself into the nothingness. But always, she thought of you. That day she remembered the gun, the bullets she knew you would eventually find, and she leaned forward, allowing him to thrust-thrust-thrust, and she knew the rhythm. Knew when it would be over. She judged the moment, jerked left. So fast! Leaped from beneath him, turned, and shoved him with the heels of her hands, her torn knees. Watched him fall. Fight instead of flight. The fall was no messier than a bullet.

“The welfare will come and separate us,” you said.

Tears against cheeks that you had only just started shaving.

“They won’t,” I said.

They didn’t.

We moved into Aunty Baby’s house.

Aunty Baby knew the cruelty that Pa was capable of, and she couldn’t save herself as his little sister, or our mother as his wife, but she would save us. She tried to, with German and art lessons for you, and French and music lessons for me. And church, and meat and potatoes and two veg, and a hot pudding for all of us.

You loved painting. It fed you, but it could not save you.

I loved music. It rescued me, but it could not fill me.

The damaged part of us didn’t know how to be whole without the other.

It had nothing to do with being twins; it had everything to do with being afraid.

For a time, you sought doses of biblical wisdom that would

soothe you when memories came unbidden, unwelcome, unrelenting. Maybe if I hadn't collapsed with laughter at your pious attempts, you would have found the cure.

I was cruel after all.

You found alcohol, swapped a painting for a shotgun, and instead of dragging the mattress out into the desert, you took your bottle, the shotgun, bullets you'd found and kept, and drifted amongst the bossies in the gaunt Karoo.

The houses were waiting for me when I left the Karoo. This house and Aunt Baby's house. Aunt Baby's house packed to the rafters with things. Every kind of thing she thought would fill the holes. But this house, Pa's house, only has ghosts.

Ghosts, I have discovered, are good company when you're alone and desire is too much to bear. The whispering begins. Phantom murmurs of children too afraid to laugh. Mulberry stained feet locating each other and locking ankles under the bed, our backs hard against the parquet floor, hot hands, velvet deep mouths, no stains on sheets in the mornings. Tonight, like all nights, I will sleep under this single bed. You next to me. Eyes closed. Ankles looped. Little fingers linked.

pantoum *for two voices*

Edith Clare

yes, yes, your
circular face
moves in
the sky always,

please leave!

& i dream,
vividly,
that i desire
no material,
not in
that way
you make
demand of me.
so, cruel yellow,
bird among lilacs,
please,
leave me be.
certainly
i will live—

i'm un
certain
what i desire
no matter how you
make moves
in
my sky. often
i dream
a vividly
yellow bird
among lilacs
demands of me

my life,
what else? what else will hurt me
so? yes
yes, yes
yes, your circular face.



Europe Utopia - Spain, Canary Island, El Hierro (2018), Albin Millot



St. Kateri Tekakwitha

Hilary Scheppers

They said it was June.
I said it was day after day
when cottonwood seeds invaded
lithe with potential.

You know the way cottonwood
seeds sail arrow-thin wishing to be web
or dust, or anything other than a body
with weight enough to gravitate, but
when they do, they colonize like snowdrifts?

That was how it happened; how I lost my mother
and all her mothers. How the wind blew one pock
to the base of my spine and I flowered into a white star.

They called it God. I called it Spine

— the ability to live inside and outside,

the ability to yield to the wind,
the ability to bend
my prayers into dreams

of spines drifting
back over water.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha was born in 1656 to a Catholic mother and a Mohawk chief. At a young age she was blinded and orphaned by smallpox. When Jesuit Missionaries settled near her Algonquin-Mohawk tribe, she recalled her mother's prayers. Eventually, she traveled through the wilderness to join the missionaries where she made a vow to follow Christ. She is remembered as "Lily of the Mohawks." St. Kateri Tekakwitha is the first Native American to be ordained a saint.

Desert Bones

Gerardo Pacheco

i counted hundreds of bones
i found in *el desierto*

i placed them along
the metal landmarks
that split this country

then, i picked up the forgotten
shoes-toys-pants-bras-shirts-and-skirts

i created tall and dried pyres
of what the desert forces
los inmigrantes to leave behind

to give up what is loved
is not as easy as it sounds

i poured kerosene over
i uttered a prayer to *los muertos*
as i lit the thing on fire

i could hear the bones singing and crying;

The Carcass

Gerardo Pacheco

I had left a deer carcass here
amongst the mesquites

I've returned to the desert
to claim it, but I found the old me
clawing on the hot sand

I am looking for bones
that belong to someone I loved
at the bottom of a giant sand dune

my short stumps go numb, I grow
tired, I shut my eyes

I cannot find what belongs to me
but when I opened my eyes
again, I hate myself

the old me stayed at the bottom
of the sand dune clawing;

Falcon

Frannie Lindsay

Your body lay alone with its readiness.
We shared our bright, harsh peace with the air
of the porch, the sun a gentle stranger.
The squirrel you shooed from the feeder
snatched a white crust of your sourdough.

We laid our palms down
in your sternum's precipice. We rested our hands
in your silent, white hair, on your ears
and your white, unfeeling fingers. We dried the tear
that remained on your cheek.

We opened the drapes. We opened the cupboards.
There were your goblets, the rest of your whiskey.
Your pocked birthday spoon. Clean tea towels
folded, asleep. And your bathrobe, tall
on its hallway hook.

On the bedside table, water stood in its cup.
Your thirst had stopped. The Christmas cactus
put forth a blossom. Your King James Bible
perched on its chestnut stand like a falcon,
wings opened wide to Isaiah.

Once I watched a female peregrine
swoop on a field mouse. I watched some boys
swoop on a muddy red Frisbee. Their clean
hair glistened. In the white chapel, an amateur choir
fumbled an anthem's opening notes.

The peregrine came to rest on a birch tree's
pocked white arm. It shook with her sudden weight
and some dry leaves fluttered with afterlife.
She came for her lonesome feast. Her labor
of snapping the still moist bones.

In the harsh and bright noon's peace,
she tore and ate.

The Crow

Noor A. Asif

The crow writhes on the sidewalk that lines the entrance of our apartment building. Passersby walk on, but I cannot ignore that black huddled mass. It tries to heave itself up, but its wings will not give. Talons scrape against gray cement. Its iridescent coat of flashing purple, green, blue—depending on the light—shines like a slick of oil. It calls to me, and my four-year-old bones freeze.

I am not alone, but with my grandmother who, upon seeing the crow, also halts. My black velvet coat rustles in the cold as I point at the feeble body and look up at her. We nod at each other in resolute agreement.

At the age of four, I had forgotten how to speak my mother tongue. Save a few shreds, I had unknowingly traded in my grandmother's language for the utility of English. It happened in an environment of learning, a school, and it would take me two decades of self-directed relearning to mend the tear. Yet, in moments of urgency, when language fails, the body and its movements can elucidate meaning.

With my small hands I stretch the folds of my coat open into a pocket. My grandmother bends down, understanding. She gathers the crow in her gloved hands, and gently tucks its twitching body inside the

pocket. When I swathe the creature in the folds, it nearly purrs. Through the thickness of fabric, its body loses all shivering contours.

We enter our apartment building through cloudy glass doors, tall and arched. The building is a grand one, perhaps the nicest one in the neighborhood. Dusky gold shimmers throughout the lobby. The tiled floors gleam, and the ceiling escalates into a honey sky. The warmth emitted by the whispering radiators that line the walls feels like bronze pulverized into sun-kissed dust. My cheeks, once red with the cold outside, melt back into their natural ochre.

The three of us filter through the lobby's silence. The vast, golden chamber's quiet mingles with its heat, forming the illusion of an invisible sound-proof blanket hanging in the air, absorbing all utterances.

One time my mother and father had taken me past the lobby and downstairs to the basement, so that the three of us could throw a mouse in the dumpster, together.

In the garbage room in the gray basement, the walls appeared to be perpetually beaded with sweat and felt slimy to the touch even when it wasn't a humid New York summer day. My father had caught a mouse in a trap and dangled the creature by its tail in front of my face. It wasn't the mouse, in that moment, that scared me. It was my father's grin, like the curved base of a pendulum upon which the lifeless rodent was swung by its tail, oscillating horizontally across his face.

That trip downstairs could very well have been a ritual, some sort of perverse affirmation of a familial union that relied on the death of another. I sometimes wonder if more mice needed to die, if more fear needed to be brewed, to keep my family together, intact.

The crow is silent and dark in my coat as my grandmother and I ascend the short flight of steps from the lobby to our apartment door. My grandmother unlocks the cream-colored door with a jangle and a click that rides like waves across the lobby.

At some moment when our bodies cross the threshold of the apartment entrance, I decide to name the crow Nellie. Once inside, my grandmother and I do not stop to take off our shoes or coats. We leak on, shuffling straight away into the narrow corridor on the right, which opens onto the kitchen.

We huddle around the kitchen table, and I release Nellie from the folds of my coat onto the glass surface. My grandmother acquires a large mesh strainer from one of the cabinets, and shelters Nellie with it by placing it upside down over her, like an igloo. We have decided by then that Nellie is a girl.

In Nellie's presence, my grandmother takes off her long black peacoat, under which she wears a floral shalwar kameez with a brown wool vest. Her hair is meticulously dyed a vivid auburn and is tucked into a barrette that neatly closes shut at the nape of her fleshy white neck, dotted with moles. Her brows are faintly penciled in, a pair of large glasses sits on the bridge of her round nose, and her mouth is long and thin in her square face. The lines of her lips drop.

We both sit at the table, planting our elbows on the glass to support our heads as we lean in and gaze at the bird. Nellie seems to enjoy the intimacy of her dome-like home. She can move around inside, and also peer outside through the little netted holes. And because of the smallness of her living space, she does not feel any pressure to fly. Nellie's beady eyes are watery and I take this as a sign of dehydration. How to feed the crow?

But of course, my father, my grandmother's son, is a doctor. And my mother, almost. After a few moments, my grandmother finds a box of plastic syringes in one of the sundry cabinets in the hallway. With her help, I use a syringe to suck water out of a bowl, and when my grandmother gently lifts the dome, I bring the syringe to Nellie's charcoal beak. The crow latches on like a newborn.

My grandmother had been beautiful, and she had also been terrifying. Upon catching word that her three sons were dilly-dallying the time away on dusty streets by playing marbles with the other neighborhood kids, she'd appear in a burka—the sight of a dark shapeless mass slinging Punjabi curses in a high-pitched voice flung kids and marbles alike in all directions. The life of a widow is unforgiving and she decided early on that her sons were everything, and for them she'd do anything.

She imagined her sons as horses, each with their own identity. When she calls me these days, she again asks me to paint this specific picture for her: one horse silently grazing on some grass near a pond,

another frolicking in the fields, and a wild stallion galloping into the distance with blood in its eyes. It wasn't my father's fault, but my grandmother came to realize that she wasn't the terror of the family anymore. Having unknowingly handed her baton to her eldest son, she'd sunk into the softness of food, grandchild, and now, crow.

We realize that Nellie's left wing is damaged. This is concerning. But we do not touch Nellie, because that might hurt her. We do what we know we can do: shower the crow with praises and love, cooing and cawing as its small gleaming eyes stare into our own.

The day quickly turns into night, and the radiator in the kitchen crackles and splutters while outside, snow begins to fall. Around dinner time, the door whines open and then clicks shut. Some stray sounds from the lobby, echoes of god knows what, fill me with the dread to which I have never grown accustomed. The familiar rustle of coats being removed and hung on a teetering coatrack, and shoes unlaced, removed, and stowed in the closet. I puff up my chest, my frock frills trembling with anticipation, as my parents walk into the kitchen.

My parents greet my grandmother first, and then shift their gaze to me. The kitchen is a bit dark—my grandmother and I had worried that the bright overhead light would hurt Nellie's eyes so we had kept the kitchen warm and dark like a womb. The hallway lights render my parent's bodies into two long, narrow, silhouettes.

I do not quite see their faces, but I do hear them yelling in protest as they discover that their home is now shared with a crow who bumbles around under a pasta strainer and lives on a water-filled syringe diet. Nellie is my friend, I try to explain. Nellie needs my help. My grandmother tells me that the adults are going to take over now and help Nellie. After all, my father is a doctor. I let my grandmother swoop me up and take me to my bedroom.

In the morning, I see the absence of a strainer. No Nellie. It is as if she had never existed. My grandmother is washing some dishes and slides a cloth on the counter to soak up stray splashes. I ask her where Nellie is, to which she responds that overnight, Nellie had suddenly recovered and so, the adults had felt it best to open the kitchen window, and let the crow go free into the night.

Sometimes, when we'd go to the park around the corner, my grandmother would climb up onto a swing and stand on her two feet, holding her body in place by firmly clasping the metal chains at her sides. Then, she would gently lean her body back and forth, and let out a liberating laugh as she reached the perfect swinging speed. I would watch her, the way her scarf and shalwar kameez blew in the wind. The sun would catch her, illuminating her body and the red dye in her hair formed a glorious halo as she flew.

From *What Floods*

AM Ringwalt

Note for Performance

Consider this a score. What am I notating? White space, cavernous silence. How does it flood you? Sit in a dark room. Walk for hours. Under moon. Under breath-as-room. I'm wearing wormwood perfume, wool sweater. My hair, wet. Underwear, black. You?

Start with a headache. Let white space dissolve it.

White space—as water. Now, do you hear me?

I'm singing with you. I'm singing with you. The water is warm, and it will become cold. The water is warm, and it will become cold. The water is warm, and it will become cold—slow whorl.

The water is song and I'm singing it through.

what floods

when loose-

limbed i

dis-

tend?

(softly)

soft-

ly—

soft-

ly—i tend

lucid

i

blow blue

lurid i

comb through

these

stream-threads

(do i

know you?)

you comb

sand

(slowly)

slow-

ly—

you

make land

with burning

bark

with dove's
beak

my tongue
sweet
so

(softly)

soft-
ly—

soft—

this lily
wilt

lily-
willed in
slow clean

(slowly)

my spine
bare

what floods
then

what floods
then

what slow-soft
slow-soft

distance

I'm on the *Effects of Stress and Memory* page. Wikipedia is safer tonight. Another search result: people with PTSD "over-remember" an event, a trauma, making it worse than it actually was. "The effects of stress on memory include interference with person's capacity to encode memory and the ability to retrieve information." Still, retrieval is mostly out of the question. What I am capable of. What I enfold.

I flood. I flow.

Memory. "It is between séances." That's Theresa Hak Kyung Cha.

"Memory trespasses our limits." That's Etel Adnan.

Still. Tell me: where did my blood go? Where—

I see thee
better in
the dark

I see thee
better in
the dark

*(I think I see
a knight
I'm gonna
fuck him
for a while)*

"The Hope Only of Empty Men." That's Anna von Hausswolff's voice through organ pipes. That's a pearlescent sun on the horizon, dripping semen. That's a trance I submit to. That's a trance, trespassing. That's the *between*. The sun and secretion. The sun and its secret. The son and my weeping. I see thee better / in séance-intermission. I see *me* in / memory-remission. In a pearlescent sun wrung through organ pipes. I think I see the night. I can see for miles. I can see the limit, the mountain-blade.

I can see what floods.

What floods, what

Sun through

white fire

In a clearing,

your palms

In a clearing,

let me sing

teeth

cleans

of dove bones.

water through

She rests on

when I wake,

There is something

being to yield.

O,

I was delirious

floods me?

the window,

through hair.

in still water,

on my skull.

in still water,

water through

while my cat

her coat

Let me sing

what floods.

my chest

says *listen*.

to learn here,

O,

O—

until sleep.

I need this pace:

plum-soft, quartz
in the stream.

*

Handful of grass
from a stranger's

lawn. The sleeve
of a grey sweater

singed by flame.
Your opening mouth.

*

*(Who
are you,*

*who sound
just like me?)*

*

Self-echo.
Self-echo.

In the curve
of a trigger-bed,

which is mountain-
blade. I pulse

in the air
like a spirit.

*

Held out—
by who?

That crystal
hovering

in the air. Right
in front of me.

*

That blood-purple
carrot held out

before horse.
That quivering

bird held
before panther.

(By who?)

*

And—the faces are here.

And we all speak cold, cold water.

And we all sing, here—cold, cold water.

And—sand rolling off a cliff by breaths of wind.

*

Sand rolling off of a cliff by breaths of wind. Breaths from unreal lungs.
To be empty-headed, clear-handed. The faces are breathing. No time
to be between. My hands have skin, after all. My hands can sweat and
bleed. Can pool. Can hold out, which is to offer—something was telling
me to go. Something was telling me—let the longest sigh. Self-echo. In
the curve of trigger-bed.

*

I'm building a comb out of water. I'm building a home.

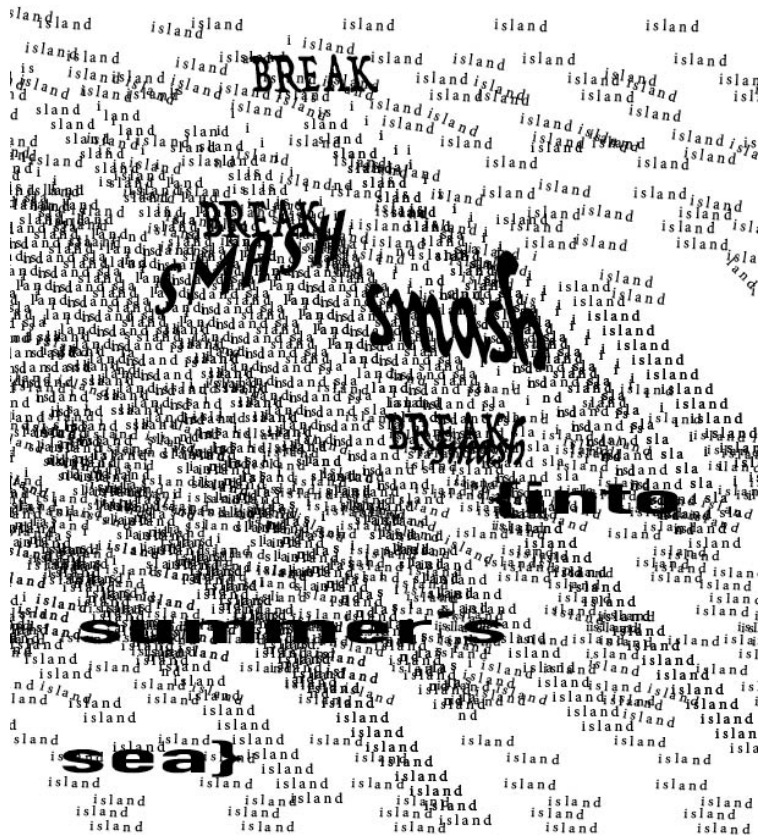
The landscape isn't important, but it makes the sound.

Matsuo Bashō

島
々
や
千
々
に
砕
き
て

Translation

by Patricia Hartland and Laurel Taylor



Tianjin, China, Shikun Zhu







Subject

Angelo Mao

1

They had us call them *patients*. The word is similar to *impatiens*, missing only the delicate four lobes that bruise far more easily than oily flesh.

I hold one mid-air—the usual grip, close to the spine to prevent defleshing of the tail’s tip—and regard it. A name comes. My own name. My lover’s name. My mother’s. I am accidentally naming this *patient*. Why would I want that? I push the words back into the awareness of the ventilated basement, awareness of my own breathing, or the basement breathing through vents and ducts

but the name holds. In my hand, it looks untouched. Like the ruins of a culture. *Where even the birds do not know to be scared of humans.*

When I handle them, I notice their differences. They are of course individuals. I see their entire body at once—sleek, black fur, bulbous eyes, vibrating whiskers. They peer over the plastic cage walls to smell the air beyond the transparent siding.

I am in a hurry and they disobey. They dart under the bedding when I lift the lid to their cage, a shoebox-sized enclosure of torn cotton and excrement. But I always find them. We designed the bedding not to hide them. And they forget to tuck in their tails. Their tail leads into the body, joins and thickens to the spine, the vertebrae, and up to their sleek forward skulls.

The only trespass is to waste. They are a resource. To destroy them without appropriate usage would be wasteful. To allay them by attaching unnecessary anthropomorphic sentiments would also be wasteful, because it would squander my

intellectual capital. *Be not afraid.*

2

My actions are approved.

My actions as verbs. Feed. Hoist. Do not dangle. Place inside cage but do not drop. Number. But not name. Check. Stroke. Euthanize. Be watchful. Remove from cage. Open. Do not perform secondary euthanasia if major organs are removed.

Realize that there is no wrong,

that it is for my use,

and later I walk down the halls

with a ziplock bag in hand

that I do not look at. I look

outside. At the light that comes in.

It was the light outside

that guided us here, wasn't it?

And in my other hand, I hold

what I came for.

Helpless

Jessica Yuan

Before you were embarrassed
out of your want, when everything
hurt for the first time,
when you were crying at the store
beneath those circling mothers
crooning, *this is the way it is*,
and it surprised you,
 it surprised you like rain
through summer-drowned gulleys
below ground-birds
in their buried weeping
and lacrimal aftertaste in the dirt.
It surprised the fog out of morning
when the television asked, *what can you do?*
and you asked, *me?*
 while swallowing large breaths
in thin air above the treeline,
meadow thick with matted dew
among the other children
shaking their heads.

To Reap Where She Did Not Sow

Maria Pinto

When Mother learned that I was still meeting my wild cat among the saw palmettos of our swampy acreage even though she'd told me to stop, she decided to enroll me in school. The catalyst: an intervening neighbor. Mrs. Duffy had come to the door the week before and complained that "for weeks now, Mack has been gadding about what is technically my backyard during those beautiful hours when school-aged children should be the state's problem."

I'd stilled in my rocker when she said this, and put my copy of *Parable of the Sower* back on the coffee table next to *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, which I'd just finished. I held my breath and put a silent hex on the woman's tongue, urging it not to bring the conversation round to Animal Control, like my mother told me it had once before. But she just kept on about the displeasure of seeing me on her property, menacing her chickens with harmless black swamp snakes, *Seminatrix pagaea*, which I liked to catch, then loose among the hens. A little chaos does a neurotic farm wife good, was my thinking. Mrs. Duffy didn't mention Lilith, the runty *Lynx rufus* I'd adopted. Lilith must have gotten better at keeping out of sight.

Mother pursed her lips. She meant for me to see that she was wrestling with serious misgivings. Mrs. Duffy was one of her least favorite people, and ever since I made Bio-dad disappear, this woman,

who resembled a seahorse in bearing and shape, had been bolder in what she allowed herself to say to us. Though my mother does not believe in compulsory schooling, and couldn't stand to let this woman think that her meddling was righteous, she'd conceded that "Yes, maybe it is time for Makeda to have a taste of the world men built, beyond what she's read in Kipling." Later, as she boiled the spurge nettle root I'd stung myself digging up because it reminded her of the cassava back home, a sort of last-ditch bribe to stop her sending me to school, she looked me in the eye and said, "Oh Makeda, my queer little witch. We're outnumbered."

My mother's pre-dawn voice makes waking from pleasant dreams bearable. It's a yodel and a croon, smooth around the vowels but roughened by sleep. She has whispered so many histories to me in this voice, about how I came to have this or that family feature: the nose ridge handed down to me from my great-great-grandmother, a world-traveling cartographer who got into fist fights with men and won; my acute hearing from a huntress ten generations back who was said to perceive the sighs of the distant moon.

In the still-dark morning of my first day of school, my mother didn't say that the night before, she'd dreamt a dying whale had swallowed me whole. Nor did she say that she'd been helpless to retrieve me from inside it so I stayed trapped while its body further sickened and rotted around me. My mother didn't say that portent doesn't always prompt action, even for those who have a direct line to the ancestors. What she did say was,

"I love how you make friends with those who are so different from you. It's a very good trait, really." All of her references to Lilith the cat were oblique. As she spoke, her fingers coiled a section of my hair around itself so that it looked like two well-fed snakes embracing. "But sometimes," she continued, "the mother in me rears up and won't leave me alone until I agree to lend your charms to the world. There. You're ready."

I squinted in the gloom of our den, stood up on sleepy legs and waddled to the glass doors that led to our acreage.

The young sun was only just making teeth and claws out of the shadows of trees. Lilith was likely asleep on her favored mossy branch; ears perked towards the house, listening closely for the approach of the thawed raw beef Bio-dad had left in the freezer before I disappeared

him. I hoped she would forgive me my obedience. I haven't forgiven my mother hers.

(Later)

One day she knew only about mushrooms. As if she'd awoken from a coma speaking a language she'd never heard. Couldn't tell us whether it was raining on the walk she'd just come back from, though she was wet through to her stuffing. But text her a photo of the glossy bracket growing on a neighbor's pine and she would text a Latin binomial, followed by five additional texts abstracting everything science currently knew about the role of that fungus in the tree's life or death.

Her knowing made those closest to her nervous. Mushrooms are mysterious to us, and her knowledge had sprung up alongside a tendency to see the future as optional. She stopped going to work at the library, and to tutor at the high school, and refused to look Isis the cat in the eye. She stopped singing over chores and never mumbled angry reminders to herself anymore. She no longer watched prestige television, which created a riot of unaccounted-for hours between dinner and bed and lost her her place in those conversations of which every get-together consisted now that we were 34, among our other childless, cohabiting, likely-to-marry-as-not friends. When asked about all this suspension, she said, her face serene as a videogame face: "I am vacant. I'm a motel in an irradiated theme park town. Nothing has cause to pass through me anymore." Her therapist told us she *had* to breach confidentiality, because old girl *might* just be addicted to grinding to a halt. What did that mean, practically? Nothing or everything! A phase or terminal! The situation was either quite dire or utterly harmless!

In the movie I will make about her life, *Omphallatus illudens* will bulge and leer, as bright orange as a jack-o-lantern, from behind the credits, maturing into their awesome toxicity. Every year people mistake this cluster of gilled mushrooms for the much lonelier, veined cinnabar chanterelle, and they pay for their mistake in gastric upset that lasts days.

In the first scene we will dine on *Cantharellus cibarius* she has gathered, and cooked in a buttery cream sauce, and poured over polenta. The camera, standing in for my point of view, will quickly glance up as she

forks her serving around on the plate. She has pressed her stocking foot to my crotch in a pantomime of desire. She is so much more flirtatious now that she's been put on an elimination diet for potentially traumatic acts and thus has permission to abstain from sex.

"You're a teacher, teach me something worth knowing," she'll say, and when I unthinkingly rattle off the estimated number of civilian dead during World War II, she'll frown at me and say,

"No, you're a teacher, teach me something worth living for. Teach me something to deepen my curiosity." The movement of her foot will slow and cause my mind to blinker and the camera to shutter momentarily. I cannot know then that she is hearing the voice of another already in her head, a voiceover my unedited self can't win against. Before I can come up with something to say, she's quitting the table. When I wash the dishes, I notice the mushrooms left on her plate don't look like the ones I ate.

In the movie I will make about her life, I'll strongly imply through flashback that the disappearance of her father and the death of her mother are to blame for the current dysfunction. I will bill the movie as a biopic. She would sue me if she could.

The movie will be mostly black and white, though that's always just a trick since the invention of color. This will be no exception. We will see her face, sideways, on a lap. The viewer will be invited to examine the asymmetry and strangeness of her features and decide: *oui, jolie laide*. This audience obligation out of the way, the face on the screen, her face, will begin to work itself into the fabric of the denim lap, until the denim has a new shape, which you can't see because ultimately we want a PG-13 rating, but that you know from experience, maybe, is the shape of a young *Amanita phalloides* mushroom, the lethal kind that pokes its cap from the earth, white as a middle-class baby's head, though even at just a couple of inches it is already exuding amatoxins. Once consumed, its poison works so slowly on a human victim that she'll get sick for a while then get better, and think she's fine for days. Then suddenly—BAM—organ failure. You will hear the rasp of her tongue on the grain of the jeans, and it will be erotic.

Erection, trust, sex appeal at her command, she will look directly into the camera and say, "*No, je suis laide laide!*" and snap her teeth around the shape in the denim. We'll hear a masculine yelp, and the

scene will turn to color just before the camera shuts off.

I have nightmares about Death Caps and Destroying Angels. Ever since she came back from an eight-hour hike. She said it had been 2 weeks since she'd eaten a basket full of them, specimens she'd collected and stored in the basement until she could work up the nerve. And she'd eaten them. Every last toxic ounce. Said she'd felt them singe her throat and the lining of her stomach. The way it burned, she knew she was digesting a contract with the cows coming home. With a belly full of disinterested chemicals, she went on a hike. And died in the forest of Eastern Hemlock down the street. And she'd come back a ghost and goddamn me for believing in ghosts.

What she actually said was that she couldn't stop thinking about the woman she'd kissed in the woods.

In the movie I will make about her life, she will reach for the camera and take our gaze with her on a walk through oaks and elms and pines and cypress. She would never tell anyone where her mushroom patches were, so the path will be as much of a surprise to me as it is to you. She will stop along the way to eat bright red *Amanita muscaria* and ubiquitous *Galerina marginata* and, yes, *Psilocybe cyanescens*. After hours walking and singing and talking to a big cat that appears and disappears like a smudge on the film and vomiting and stopping to have seizures, much of which will be edited away unless you're watching the director's cut, she will come to a spot where the dirt and leaves clump up above the forest floor—a mound the shape of a woman. If film could record smell: the fragrance of sweet, loamy rot. You will see her hands reach into the frame, as if her neck were the tripod, to dig away the soil. The critics will marvel at how realistically the white webbing of mycelial networks resolves itself into a living, breathing woman, more beautiful than possible, *jolie jolie*.



The Escape, Christina Lucia Giuffrida



Poem Written Backwards

Emma De Lisle

Taken from his body I saw what was good and he wrote it
into me naming wrote in the alar bones of the strongest

birds winging through the waters wide the word and seasons
in it I walked with him through the morning paling day from

the dark through the rosemallow tarbush and chicory lizards
new-skinned and scampering out from our toes the quail and

the kits blushing in the scrub the washes full of jackrabbits
there was no time to say *rib* to say *axe* and *helmet shoulder*

skull was he my father or my husband these words came after
write a word and it can be written backwards covered in eyes

and flaming where its hands where its mouth and yet still it is
yet still and something gripped before it glittering

Extinction/Feast

Joshua Gregory

—after Elizabeth Bishop

I. An Orchard

Night-fruits beckon
all dusk long.

The bough bends &
from its loosened grip,

this moon falls to you.

Hear the nectar beat:

to eat is to eat
of your children.

Now dig down
for the teeth you'll need.

II. A Banquet, in Our Honor

We experienced great suffering.

The oaks rumbled &
lightning pained us
while we were fasting.

Amongst all of us,
we divided one

dark loaf & three

raw plums which lasted
the eternity.

III. A Desert

What will you eat,
in the belly of the shadow?

What will you taste?

The aching ghost of hunger
clouds across these dunes,

as if each grain
were the wrong-sized feast.

Shadow Fruit

Nick Maione

The cup I took it to be
empty it isn't it was

love made a tooth die & I say
with that tooth
it is easy to finish the holy
if

an enormous vessel
once full
overflows as a shotglass:
the rate it is entered

all capacity negated
the waters the whole waters
all directions up

What isn't wasted on me
isn't worship

The rain brought a few questions

Franco Paz

Because a wave breaks
on the sea stacks | does it
squander itself | do you
notice now | how water
paints | a slender mask
across the limestone | I am

asking you | to be trivial
to be free to | be wrong | to be
essential | no | I am
asking you | is it

only you | or is it only
here | and here | is a breath

in the branch of a tree |
a lilac tree | whose hair
is made of leaves | whose |
rooted body leans | as if to

listen | the wind's chant |
is this | where you saw the shape
of meanwhile | was it like a bird |
with narrow limits | did you see
its color | was it red like June |

Feasting

Joelle Jameson

When Jen walks there's a trail of greasefire smoke
tinged with marijuana following
like a bridal train her breasts are ostrich eggs
on an angel hair pasta frame thick hair
glistening like raw tuna and her skin is the surface
of fresh whole cream so I always forget
she can't *eat* fat that medical
condition that unhooks the pancreas and subsists
on lean turkey sandwiches non-fat Ranch dressing
and the assumption that a chemical always exists
to imitate real taste spreadable diglycerides
partially-hydrogenated luxury It makes me realize
how much I talk about food that vanilla milkshake
that sausage spaghetti sauce it's really quite rude
I think of her as often as I eat and even when
I listen to Chopin in bed in a half-asleep state
I think good thing she can't hear this it's so rich
her defective organs couldn't handle these strains
though I know she houses passion enough to break
a piano in half and love enough to hold it together
to get a smile from her baby nephew as he pounds the keys

New Direction

Joelle Jameson

When I buy myself a teapot after he breaks my heart
and find a large dead water bug inside
belly up, legs bent into lower-case g's
and antennae, detached, limp against the porcelain
like a cat's stray whiskers, I try not to think it's a sign
that nothing in the world is pure and good, despite the shine
off its blue lacquered surface and capacity to comfort,
or how I'll never drink from it without remembering
the small noise of its shell sliding over the spigot
as I tilt the pot from its styrofoam bed,
or how this is the only way it could have ended: with a corpse
and a cup of tea. But I barely flinch—not because I'm numb
but because the body weighs the same as air,
and before I can react to its unseeable eyes, its stiff decoration,
he's in the trash, and I have the kettle on.

HET LAATSTE WAAR HERINNERING HET BESTE VOOR IS

Kunnen citeren
is je herinneren.

*De toda la memoria, sólo vale
el don preclaro de evocar los sueños.*

Je misherinert je Machado als:
het enige waar dromen goed voor zijn,
en waar dromen nog méér goed voor zijn,
om nog een keer met iemand te spreken
als dat niet meer kan.

Als jij ergens
niet alleen geweest bent,
wil jij zijn wie het zich herinnert,
hetzelfde als jij niet de enige bent
die iets gelezen heeft.

Het gaat zo snel,
het is moeilijk om te lezen,
maar het laat zich goed onthouden.

Van al dat herinneren,
het enige dat iets waard is,
je misciteert Machado,
voor wie je wel op wil staan
als je in een bus of een trein zit en er geen lege plaats meer is,
maar hij wuift je weg,
hij hoeft niet te zitten.

Nachoem M. Wijnberg

THE LAST THING MEMORY IS BEST FOR

Being able to quote
is remembering.

*De toda la memoria, sólo vale
el don preclaro de evocar los sueños.*

You misremember Machado as:
the only thing dreams are good for,
and another thing dreams are good for
is being able to speak to someone
when that is no longer possible.

If you were somewhere
but not alone,
you want to be the one who remembers it,
the same when you are not the only one
who has read something.

It goes so fast,
it is difficult to read,
but easy to remember.

Of all that remembering,
the only thing that is worth anything,
you misquote Machado,
who you would stand up for
if you were seated on a bus or train and there were no seats left,
but he waves you away,
he doesn't need to sit down.

translated by David Colmer

South Florida Water Management District

Walter Smelt

I was born to a failed man in a flat land.
A surface bulldozed by blue sky.
Each summer shook us down
with wave after wave of gray thunder.

My father for years works to keep water
flowing downhill, taking the easy way
out to the Gulf or Atlantic. He watches
gators drift. He hates it.

In hurricane season, the ocean
has its way with us. It bats
the beachhouses around,
grain by grain undermining us.

You were writing a book about the Moon
when I was conceived: the arid dust
that leaves the things a man has built
alone. Nine months later, I was published.

You said at lunch once
you might run for President.
I laughed, thinking it was a joke.
You never forgave me that.



Lake, charcoal and pencil on sanded paper, 9x12" (2019), Jessie LeBaron



Winter River and Trees, charcoal and pencil on sanded paper, 9x12" (2019), Jessie LeBaron

A Conversation with Reza Aslan

Edwin Alanís-García

Reza Aslan (MTS '99) is a best-selling author, religious scholar, Emmy-nominated producer, cultural commentator, and television host. He is a tenured Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California-Riverside. Professor Aslan recently spoke with Peripheries editor Edwin Alanís-García about the writer's craft and its connection to religious studies.

EDWIN ALANÍS-GARCÍA: Reza Aslan, you went from Harvard Divinity School (HDS) to the Iowa Writers' Workshop. HDS has a long tradition of writers and storytellers. How do you experience the connection between the writer's vocation and the academic study of religion?

REZA ASLAN: Regardless of whether I'm writing fiction or nonfiction, whether I'm writing history or biography, whether I'm writing prose or a film or a television screenplay, the ideas, the themes, the allegories and metaphors, that I picked up from my study of the world's great religious texts are ever present. They're always there in my work. They effect how I tell stories. They effect how I read stories. They effect how I craft a protagonist, how I understand the hero's journey. All of this is intimately linked to my familiarity with the great stories of the world's religions. I don't think it is a coincidence that we see such an intimate relationship between the study of religion and the crafting of fiction (or nonfiction).

ALANÍS-GARCÍA: In regards to this connection between literature and religion, I want to ask about the unique role language plays in Islam. In *No god but God*, you write that the medium in which *miracle* was experienced in Muhammad's time was *language*. What do you think it means for the foundational miracle of Islam to have been a miracle of and in language?

ASLAN: It's extremely difficult to understand this if you read the Quran in translation because it just simply doesn't translate well. But if you read and understand it in Arabic you can't help but recognize the supremacy of this language; it is really Arabic at its poetic height. What Muslims would say is that it is a mastery of language that would have completely escaped the skills and the abilities of a man like Muhammed, who after all was neither a poet nor a scholar, who was a caravan leader, a merchant and who, if what we know of his biography is correct, would have no special linguistic skill. So the filtering of the Quran through this person is seen not only as a miraculous event, but the sole miracle of the Prophet Muhammed.

What this has done is elevate Arabic as a language to spiritual, even divine, levels. There's this concept in Islam called '*baraka*', which basically indicates that the words of the revelation – I don't mean what the words "mean", I mean the literal physical words on the page – are endowed with spiritual power, with spiritual authority. The words themselves are divine because they contain a measure of divinity, they are after all God's speech and in Islam God's speech cannot be separated from God's self. They must be one and the same. This is why the Quran has to be treated with respect, why there are all these rules and requirements and rituals about how to handle the Quran, how to read the Quran. Why Muslims, regardless of their native language, are encouraged to, at the very least, read the Quran in Arabic whether they understand the words or not, because the words themselves, their sound and script, are important.

Islamic theology has spawned a devotion to language, to writing, to calligraphy, to poetry, to the miracle of words that is frankly unrivalled. And so I think it is to be expected that some of the greatest poets in history have arisen from out of the Islamic milieu. And some of the most powerful pieces of writing, some of the most powerful pieces of poetry, are steeped in the language and metaphors provided by the Quran.

ALANÍS-GARCÍA: I'm curious about the (perhaps miraculous) power language has to connect individuals. What do you think accounts for the communicative barrier between words, emotions, and (a writer's) audience? In an interview for Vox you seem to suggest these barriers can be overcome. You say: "The best thing a writer can do is put into words emotions you always had but have never been able to actually verbalize."

ASLAN: It's extraordinarily difficult to do. Writing well is not rocket science—it's way, *way* harder than rocket science. Rocket science? Big deal; you memorize some math and regurgitate it on command. That's not hard. Manipulating human emotions using nothing but words on a page—*that's* hard. That's difficult. It's why there are so many writers but so few great writers in the world. That to me is an indication of this barrier that you're talking about. Often there appears to be a barrier where there is a task: the task of engaging with this kind of pursuit, the mastery over language, the use of language to manipulate emotion, to create lasting images in the mind of a reader, images that profoundly reshape their perception of the world, that help them define the world, that help them define who they are as individual. That's an extraordinary task if you think about it. It's one that requires enormous skill. That's why I think it's so rare. That's why when we find someone who is able to do that, we treat them with a kind of reverence that is often reserved for scripture. That's how I think about Dostoyevsky, who was pivotal in my literary awakening. When I read *The Brothers Karamazov* I may as well be reading scripture because I view it in very much the same light. I view it as expressing the same truths.

ALANÍS-GARCÍA: Dostoyevsky is a good example of fiction that can change a reader's worldview, a kind of "philosophical fiction." This leads me to a concern I've had for years about the ethics of writing. You've said before that deeply ingrained prejudices are seemingly immune to data, facts, and rational arguments. But prejudices can be changed through narrative and character. Do you think writers have a responsibility to present certain types of narratives?

ASLAN: Absolutely. It is an obligation, if you ask me, because you wield enormous power as a storyteller. The power to reframe a person's

perceptions. That's not a small thing, and there are numerous individuals who wield the power of storytelling to tell a story about hatred and xenophobia and racism and sexism—a story about division between those who deserve rights and those who do not. Those who are us and those who are them. If you are a writer who takes your responsibility seriously, then what choice do you have but to craft stories to counter the stories of hatred and division and fear? I understand that there are many writers and artists out there who believe that art should be apolitical. But nothing on earth is apolitical. Everything that you do, everything thing that you say, every thought you express, every action that you put forth in the world, if it is meaningful, has political consequences. So, let's stop pretending that there's no room for politics in art. Art is politics.

ALANÍS-GARCÍA: Following that, television is a particularly expedient way of using that power, and you've worked on and written for television extensively. How does a politically aware television writer emotively appeal to their audience without being maudlin, didactic, or preachy?

ASLAN: It's difficult. I don't know if there is a more powerful or important medium of communication in the world today than television. More so than the internet. The internet is about information, and information, as we just discussed, has limitations. It informs but it doesn't edify. It doesn't have the power to change people's minds or to affect their perceptions, certainly not in the way storytelling does. As a medium for storytelling, TV is ubiquitous. It is where the masses go to understand themselves and their world. It's always had that power to reframe perception. And we can talk about the effects TV has had in changing attitudes about African-Americans or Asian-Americans or about immigrants or about gay people. I could talk ad nauseum about that. The question is, as you rightly say, what's the most effective way of doing so?

In my experience, the answer is twofold. First, it is more effective to write about people, not about ideas. When you're writing about ideas, when your goal is to express ideas, then that's when I think you can be "found out", when people turn away because they feel that they're being preached to or they're being manipulated. But if you are focused on writing about characters, about essentially creating characters through whom your ideas are experienced and lived out, then that is a far more

impactful way of expressing those ideas and of making sure those ideas actually stick in the mind. Wrap them up in stories. Make them part of a particular character's experience.

Second, use metaphor. Fantasy and science fiction is often far more successful in communicating big, grand ideas and themes because it is necessarily wrapped up in metaphor. You are more likely to allow those ideas to be absorbed into your bloodstream if the vehicle for that is a metaphor. Whether the story takes place deep in the future and in space, or whether it takes place far in the past amidst dragons and trolls, either way the audience is more primed to accept the message that the author wishes to convey than they would be if that message were conveyed in a more direct fashion. That's how scripture works too. Mythology, legends—it's all ingrained in our DNA. That's how we've always learned about ourselves and each other. It makes sense that it is still an effective vehicle to deliver these broad themes about the human condition.

Every Present Thing a Ghost



REBECCA DOVERSPIKE

A Quiet Wilderness Breaking into Bloom

A Fragmented Review of Rebecca Doverspike's Every Present Thing a Ghost

Ariella Ruth

Her questions are a window frame in which to gaze while in motion. These windows are on the sunny side. Light enters. A soft observation. (“It is a luxury to be loyal to light.”) This loyalty is not passive, it emanates and provides integral perspective.

Woven through glimpses of birth and prayer (more specifically, as she writes, “tiny prayer”), each poem’s window is on a different side of a structure and captures light at varying times of day. Sometimes that window shifts from one poem to the next, and the window is a poet’s view while walking through a city landscape or through the woods or by the ocean and sometimes all at once. The idea of the self is not static in these poems. Sometimes the self is a ghost or a ghost of a self. It is often many selves in the same poem, as if in conversation with one another.

An interstice of city and nature. These landscapes become the same expression: her streetlights are the moon. Buildings are forest, green and towering. Concrete paved roads juxtaposed against the stature of a quiet, towering mountain. These worlds meet, overlap (“When I hear traffic on a hike through the forest, / I think of how an ocean used to be there but now a road”), then split apart as she occupies each simultaneously. Cars are the ocean’s current, or at least that is one way we relate to its constant motion (“Sometimes walking the city, I think it is the ghost of a forest”). Haunted by trees and sky that once were. Even in a stark hospital setting

the poems enter a quiet wilderness, a space that is intrinsic and familiar (“When she moved to the ICU, I pictured a little miracle, / wandering the forest of the lonely hospital hallways looking for her”). The poet sees what is in front of her and imagines how that landscape may be covering the past that lived there before it, and how it is informed by that history and what grew there.

In scenes of nature she is incredibly mindful. Her poems trace the shapes of cabins, the imperfections in the wood that the cabin consists of, the alignment of stars (seeing them, missing them), the gentle dance of oak leaves, the scent of earth wet beneath her poems as they watch.

Nature and the body are one (a human voice as “the ocean / crossing a desert”), leaves are intelligent and communicate outside of language, something we could never quite access. Ghosts, nature, and our human selves united.

These poems are interwoven with prayer in different forms. The moments of prayer are contemplative and articulated so accurately through nature and its sounds (“and the surprise is that stone accepts touch as prayer.”) Nature becomes a character that holds an important role in this book’s poems.

The role that God holds here is ever present and malleable. God embraces a new space in each poem, a blank slate, always fulfilling a necessary role (“By God I mean her voice as she spoke about trees in winter;” “Sometimes I think God is just depth;” “If the world is a letter from God, / we are tasked with learning how to read”). It is with mention of God that the poems themselves extend a hand. The reader can feel the ground and sky concurrently, the weight that grounds our feet.

The reader is invited in: I picture a body made of creatures and moss growing from the inside out. Then, from deep in the belly, breaking into bloom (“The birds in your chest sad from smog”). Human body as planet, as constellations. An atmosphere alive.

Barbara Allen

an excerpt from *REMNANTS*
Ariella Ruth

[i want my child to have memories] screen
door falling from its alignment. wood stove
holds on claw footing. pear tree fades &
brightens from nearby hovering & she can't
remember how & where the hands were
placed. she is light—the first word—raven hair
running on wooden planks. her foot's arch
remains soft, delicate, [poet in the womb] the
snow that weighs the ceiling. yard of blue
moving sea & green buds swelling to vines. it
is hard to leave in such good light.

REMNANTS

Ariella Ruth



Pieces Rescued and Strung Together Amid the Sea

A Review of Ariella Ruth's Remnants

Rebecca Doverspike

The compact poems in Ariella Ruth's *Remnants* feel in part like they are whispering through time, divulging hungered-for secrets, stories, though with such a full and robust voice one feels whispering is the actual, true, voice. That what we may know of sound, of memory, of story is this—wholeness in each fragment, wholeness in “two blue saucers,” a pear tree, collarbones, ribcages, cheekbones, moons. *Remnants* is a story told through layered and interwoven fragments. Each poem is its own collection of pieces that, when put together, create a sort of density, a center of gravity, and the white space around each poem allows it to breathe. These poems move with such intricacy—their momentum derives from image, and incredible strength of voice (“bleed for the moons that / have passed”), and delicious, grounding as well as turning, repetitions (“she is light—the first word”; “[the more i don't write her, the more she burns]”). We feel both that we are endlessly searching for the “she” of this collection's story and fully accompanying her, perhaps even in her voice ourselves, being her.

A note at this collection's beginning tells us that *Remnants* is based on the folk song “Barbara Allen,” a story (essentially of a man who dies for love of a woman who, in some versions appears hard-hearted and in others misunderstood or equally stricken with sorrow and dies the next day, to be entwined through time with him as a briar to his rose grown

through their graves) which has experienced many iterations throughout time, all rather eternally haunting. Ariella Ruth makes beautiful work of brackets throughout these poems. Brackets, visual bookends, lift out, set aside, the clause and suggests something “else” may have been the “original” text that the author is interpreting or aiding to clarify. There is a ghostliness to the small phrases held in these brackets—it almost feels like something invisible gets through some impossible veil (of time) and is rendered visible. Ghostlier is the understanding that what these brackets hold *is* the original—there’s nothing beneath or behind it. The collection begins: “[i want my child to have memories]” which lifts up that clause as if it belongs to a more weightless gravity (of time) and then what finishes that first line “screen door” seems so solidly set down in comparison. This is, of course, brilliant work to illustrate how memory actually feels: the want for memories (or the want for a child to have memories where the child constitutes a memory already as does the parent/speaker of the child), the want for a story, inhabits a space of translucence—a light, airy, ghostly, space—whereas the fragment “screen door” constitutes an entire grounded atmosphere of memory. This brilliant first line continues all throughout the collection (which does feel like it enacts the action of “collecting” even as it moves through the telling of a story live-time present-tense though it is also its own re-telling). Memories are gathered and made—fragments sing together as pieces of broken shells while the space around the poems constitute the sea.

The bracketed fragments throughout this collection speak powerfully on their own, and they also speak to one another. Within the first few pages we see at the end of one of the pages: “[it was my first human death]”—what a solid thing to place in brackets which paradoxically holds that solidity and lifts the phrase up out of the realm of the solid. Meaning surfaces on multiple levels: the speaker may be saying it was her first experience with human death, or that she has died in other ways than as a human, or she may have died subsequently many times over after the first. And how can our hearts not bend encountering this bracketed clause which thus reads like a confession, like a plea for forgiveness? Later in the book, some brackets serve to keep time: “[roses on the windowsill are / blinking] [still blinking]”—what may appear preserved or stilled in time continues to occur. Sometimes, even the very same action (“blinking”) continues to occur. The poet captures perfectly the relationship between

cyclical movements and the “now”-ness inherent in lives and story. Music does this, too; these poems are not only about a song but also songs themselves. Their underpinning is also music.

The details throughout these poems are exquisite (“dandelion soup in the rock garden”; “feet grace grey pebbles a knock at her / window”; “only warmth in blue rubber soles”; “coffee and yellow flowers”)—one is looking very up-close and yet not fully able to hold onto the spacious nature of a soul’s story, told as much through exquisitely visible details as the surrounding wordless sea.

Remnants is two open palms cupped together, not a container—its half circle is both a story held and the world of air around it—what we can know of a voice, of a life, and all that’s left to mystery and chance. It is rare to find a writer so skilled (and at all willing) in crafting the knowable whilst humbly aware of and offering all that we cannot control and all that we cannot know of a story, of a life. Even the title sets forth these poems as an offering. *Remnants*—surviving traces, a piece left when the (seemingly) larger part is gone, a small remaining quantity. Yet what *Remnants* really gifts us is showing that such traces, such following to understand another’s heart (which is oft not so dissimilar to our own), that which “remains” is the greater, larger, part. Here, past is not distinct from present. Haunt is irrelevant because it all exists at once. These collections of poems which give the illusion of small, of pieces, are quite grand. *Remnants* illustrates how fragments constitute the whole, hold the whole, and in that way—what this collection distills down to in one word—is healing. One reason to retell a past narrative and offer another version or iteration is to help heal that particular narrative, help free that particular heart. Another is to help free all those in the present. *Remnants* are not only traces of the past—they are permission to exist in our own fragments, and to be accompanied, sometimes even understood, as Ruth understands Barbara Allen, in those fragments strung together amid the sea.

Adrienne Raphel
S. a.



WHAT WAS IT FOR

S. b.

Showcase Showdown

Playing with Polarities in Adrienne Raphel's What Was It For

Christopher Spaide

What Was It For, asks the title of Adrienne Raphel's debut poetry collection (Rescue Press, March 2017). Was any poet ever so quick to question the worth of it all? Raphel's mercurial poems teach you several correct ways to say her title aloud. At a tea party, surmising offhand: *Oh, what was it for*. While pulling out your hair, the world falling to pieces: *What was it for!* Well, what was it for? Everything, or nothing, who knows the difference. In Raphel's world, a dimension over from Wonderland and Neverland, whimsy rules tyrannically, best intentions veer woozily off, and the divinest sense lies in nonsense. Take "Note from Paradise," the book's first poem:

Somewhere in a Spain I think of as France
dozens of geese live in Paradise.
They run at the river,
swaying their sizeable livers,

while on either side I think there are
fields and fields, or one, of lavender,
faced blue toward the sun,
lavender first and by far.

It is late summer, early winter.
That spleenish November, another
idea altogether. It was something like flying.
Well, it was very like something.

On first glance, these quatrains flaunt familiar ingredients: nursery rhymes, gone metrically haywire; the color palettes and scrambling shapes of Saturday-morning cartoons; Marx Brothers-grade slapstick and deadpan illogic (“fields and fields, or one”). But disquiet runs through this dashed-off “Note.” It’s a hallucinogenic parody of classical pastorals, an alarmingly unconcerned description of fattened-up, soon-to-be-harvested geese, an S.O.S. from a “Paradise” no longer the least bit idyllic. It’s also a portrait of an artist counteracting severe displacement—in her France-like Spain, her summery, wintry autumn—with all the imagination she can muster. Her presence may seem slight or decaying, but it’s radioactively charged. “What am I but a half-life,” she wonders at the poem’s close,

what do I do but I have
to do, to face these fields where they are
lavender first and by far.

Raphel plays cartoonish surfaces against implied depths: first you notice the frantic movement and clip-clopping rhyme; later, you tune into her baffled protests against commercialism and sexism, highbrow traditions and lowest-denominator advertising. Like caffeinated kids or hostage negotiators, Raphel keeps the conversation going at any cost. Her poems parrot charms, curses, proverbs, baby talk, folk songs, shopping lists, Tin Pan Alley tunes, Ouija-board transmissions, Dickinsonian epigrams, Steinian stutter, and an operetta’s worth of Victorian nonsense: “Haccharine saccharine,” “Agar Agar / Little star,” “HOBSON JOBSON the little birds shout, / Hobson Jobson Day!” Nothing gets taken wholly seriously, not even poetry. If anything earns the title of prophecy, full-throated song, or “writing on the wall,” it’s garage-sale finds, pop-cultural flotsam and jetsam:

The middle of America
The malls decay and fall
Big Mouth Billy Bass
Sings on the wall

Raphel's distinctive creation is an ambivalent, tousled speaker, a great-grand-niece of Carroll's Alice, wedged between incompatible worlds and prey to vertiginous changes in scale. She might sound ditzy, then deadened; pre-adolescent, then post-apocalyptic; new to the world, then over it. For a poet so lightheaded from being transported (by magic, whimsy, balloons), nothing could be more oppressive than being wrapped up and packaged, like her book's cast of alliterative, doll-stiff girls—"Lena Listless Lena," "Henrietta House," "Buttermilk Barbara." Perpetually moving and dizzyingly still, Raphel condenses her paradoxes into a "Carousel," spinning above "Lost worlds," swirling phonemes all about: "No carousing in the capital. / No crowding on the carousel." Think of the carousel that closes *Catcher in the Rye*; think of the climactic carousel of Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*. Raphel's poetry is these and more, simultaneously the carousel, its horses, and the desperate crawler underneath.

Raphel has engineered a poetics of polarities, with extremes swinging pendulum-like to extremes: zaniness and stolidity, terseness and excess, metronome and malfunction. Her less memorable poems gravitate to just one pole, but when she calibrates her swings just right, her poetry sounds like nothing else. At her best, Raphel's collaborators are entropy and constraint: content falls apart while form remains unvarying, resolute, and the more daring—an abecedarian, a Double Dutch of interlocking rhyme schemes—the better.

Even in direness, Raphel is driven towards play. An unforgettable example is "The House on Bayshore," written after Hurricane Sandy, and governed by a nostalgia doggedly searching for anything to hold onto. For this, her only prose poem, Raphel soups up the formal mechanism underneath "This is the house that Jack Built" and its midcentury descendant, Elizabeth Bishop's "Visits to St. Elizabeths." For its full tidal-wave force, you need to read the poem entire, but even an excerpt can capture its swells:

This is the house on Bayshore.

This is the bulkhead behind the house on Bayshore.

This is the dock that joins the bulkhead behind the house on Bayshore.

This is the Dalmatian that hates the dock that juts from the bulkhead behind the house on Bayshore.

This is the crusted red sore on the foot of the dog that hates the dock that juts from the bulkhead behind the house on Bayshore.

This is the showcase showdown the sore and the Dalmatian who licks the sore and barks at the dock that gives a Bronx cheer to the bulkhead that keeps out the bay from 2425 Bayshore.

It's typical of Raphel that the most autobiographical detail in the entire book is an address. Look it up on Google Maps, and you'll see exactly the familiar, distanced, over-visualized scene of calamity—wreckage, severed tree, bulldozers—that Raphel eludes in her poem. Typical, too, that Raphel approaches loss aslant, with a tracking shot gradually taking everything in and an eye for absurdities. When Sandy arrives, it swallows everything, even Raphel's devastated language, with its cobbled-together consolations ("thank god the dog's dead") and self-distracting busywork ("who will get the wooden white whale"). Raphel's book, in its final lines, grounds itself in another address: "I took a rock from Hopkins Pond, / Haddonfield, NJ." If Raphel's expeditions take us right back to where we started—the real world, Hopkins Pond, that solid rock—what was it for, really? From first poem to the last, Raphel gives that question and its answers the circular runaround, a maddened carousel ride.

Note from Paradise

Adrienne Raphel

Somewhere in a Spain I think of as France
dozens of geese live in Paradise.
They run at the river,
swaying their sizeable livers,

while on either side I think there are
fields and fields, or one, of lavender,
faced blue toward the sun,
lavender first and by far.

It is late summer, early winter.
That spleenish November, another
idea altogether. It was something like flying.
Well, it was very like something,

the geese with their orange oversexed
feet bumping each other.
And enormous grasshoppers leaping,
clutching their back haunches.

In every way this is the peaceable kingdom,
the geese are livers. It's fall. It's spring.
Things migrate here. It's too far.
Also the grass, too hot by far.

A mushroom flaps around a stumpy tree,
underbelly brown where it hits the sun.
Something supposed to be seen
is seen. Something's supposed.

Into the grasses, into the wheat,
the worms have got into the flour,
the green, green worms in their bright, bright skin
colors, berserk in the heat,

Leap in the bergamot, latch to the barleycorn,
leap to the three-pointed clover
no crops here cropped close as your lover,
no time here till the corn.

What am I but a half-life
what do I do but I have
to do, to face these fields where they are
lavender first and by far.

The Garden of Earthly Delights

Adrienne Raphel

Agnes went down to the basement
To find the Christmas lights
But Agnes burned in the basement
And didn't come back that night

Bernie went down to the basement
Marching and snapping suspenders
Waving a stick like a scepter
With a beanie that twirls in the wind

Citizens went to the basement
Go where the laundry goes
Into the washer or dryer
Hundreds of thousands of quarters

Dilly went down to the basement
And the basement smelled kind of weird
Dilly found a hamper
And cop magnets on the fridge

Enron went down to the basement
To see where Bernie had gone
To find a fantastic derivative
Another boy has a swan

Fran went down to the basement
As a boy and came up as a girl
Fran went down to the basement
As Fran and came up Fran

Granny went down to the basement
A gamine went down before
With a hitchhiker's shapely ankle
Inside her bulbous bunions

Hilary down to the basement
Humming down the stone
Hilarity down to the wine
Hilary at the bone

IKEA went down to the basement
With two jealous men in tow
IKEA Tanka Tanum
Towing her men in two

Joy went down to the basement
Hoop rolling all the way down
She came in second place
She came from the other Korea

Kissimmee's down in the basement
Dial a Kissimmee phone
Kyle went down to the basement
To find another Kyle

Lyle went down to the basement
Hi your name is Lyle
Am I a coward? Who calls me coward?
Everyone after a while

Melvin went to the basement
And called himself Melvin Presley
Melvin does a mean Big Elvis
Elvira's doing the Bernie

Nancy Drew went to the basement
To find what Nancy Drew finds
Where are the ancient kachina dolls
Inside the Christmas lights

Oliver down to the basement
Oliver tripped on a toe
When Oliver couldn't see Oliver
That's when it's time for the lights

Polly went down to the basement
Polly produced a harpoon
Polly but Pammy was prettier
Polly the Female Quixote

Qatar went down to the basement
Counted a double word score
Did you find the Fla-Vor-Ice
I found the old champagne

Robin went down to the basement
There's nothing to say about that
Nothing to say about Robin
If you were Robin I'd talk

Sideshow's down in the basement
Two-headed bearded gal
Schoenberg's in the basement
Getting a root canal

Tiny went down to the basement
Made it out west on her own
Panned for gold in Alaska
Tiny's missing two toes

Uncle's down in the basement
Wrestling noise from the washer
That's where the uncle wrestled
See I didn't get stuck in the dryer

Vince went down to the basement
With his slippers and tatty bathrobe
With a tiny gold ring on his pinky
Gargling blue cologne

The Wynn Brothers down to the basement
Do you have any coke
I've got some Cokes in the fridge
Do you have any cocaine

Xerox Xerox Xerox
Xerox XOX
Xerox Xerox Xerox
Xerox XOX

Yggdrasil went down to the basement
The roots went down underneath
To the basement where dragons go
In Switzerland-on-the-Cross

Zimbabwe's down in the basement
And stayed in the basement as one
I've never had another name
Everything should be done

Dead Reckoning

Michael Jackson

There's a gold weather-vane—
a galleon—catching the sun
on the sea-green copper
spire of Sankt Johannes,
not a cloud in the sky,
the ship as if becalmed.

I try to recall
the currents, compass
errors and storms that took me
off course, asking
whether, and for how long
one's initial bearing lasts.

But on a windless day like this
the fifteen-metre waves
the broken mast
the ice-jammed pulley-block
are long forgotten
and it seems one is

exactly where one planned
to be, having kept
for all these years
with sextant and calipers
dead reckoning,
and come home.

acknowledgements & notes

“The Periphery,” “Early Spring, February,” “The Sixth Method,” and “Letters Received by Spring and Autumn,” translated by Eleanor Goodman and Ao Wang, first appeared in *Chinese Literature Today* vol 2, no 2.

Two of Susan Howe’s word art poems were previously published in *Debths* (New Directions, 2017).

“Batı Sınırları” and “İbrahim’in Düzlükleri,” translations of Susan Howe’s poems by Efe Murad, were previously published in the book *Susan Howe, Batı Sınırları*, trans. Efe Murad (Nod, 2015).

Excursions and Cruel Month by Vera Iliatova appear courtesy of Monya Rowe Gallery, NY.

“The Stag Beetles” by David Ryan first appeared in *Bellevue Literary Journal*.

“you must walk this lonesome” by Evie Shockley was previously published in *a half-red sea* (Carolina Wren Press, 2006). “fruitful” first appeared in *The Southampton Review*.

“The Reins” and “Larkin” by Peter Sacks were previously published in *Natal Command* (University of Chicago Press, 1997). Sacks’s paintings appear courtesy of Repair (Marlborough Gallery, 2019).

“Night Poppies” by Adrie Kusserow was previously published in *Hunting Down the Monk* (BOA Editions, 2002). “Lady’s-slipper, Red Eft” first appeared in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, and was previously published in *REFUGE* (BOA Editions, 2013).

“A Skull Dreams It Is a Horse” by Ashley Mayne first appeared in *Juked*.

“Participles of Deserere” by Ariana Reines was previously published in *A SAND BOOK*, (Tin House, 2019).

“Grandfather Reappears” by Emily Franklin first appeared in *The Maine Review*.

“Preservation” by Sylvia Beato-Davis first appeared in *Action, Spectacle*.

“The Lost Tribe of Eden” by Shane McCrae first appeared in *Orion Magazine*.

[They had to establish contact] by Ryan Mihaly draws from *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*, translated by Red Pine, “Seeing the mundane and witnessing the sublime is less than an eye-blink away.” [The clarinet speaks] adapts lines from Pascal’s *Pensées*. [Vision: eyes seek eyes] first appeared in *DIAGRAM*.

“Thanks to Leibniz, putative father of topology” by Laura Kolbe first appeared in *The Yale Review*. “Garter, Copper, Water” first appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, where it received the Glenna Luschei Prize.

“St. Kateri Tekakwitha” by Hilary Scheppers first appeared in *Parabola Magazine*’s Winter Issue 2018-2019 and is an honorable mention for the Thomas Merton Prize in Poetry of the Sacred Contest.

What Floods by AM Ringwalt was a finalist for *Essay Press*’ 2018 Book Contest and was longlisted for *Tarpaulin Sky*’s 2019 Book Awards.

Patricia Hartland and Laurel Taylor’s translation of Matsuo Bashō references *Kanshō oku e no hosomichi*. Ed. Uchiyama Kazuya. (Kasama shoin, 1970 p204).

“Helpless” by Jessica Yuan was previously published in the chapbook *Threshold Amnesia* (Yemassee, 2020).

“Poem Written Backwards” by Emma De Lisle first appeared in the *Colorado Review*.

“Het laatste waar herinnering goed voor is” by Nachoem M. Wijnberg was previously published in the book *Voor jou, van jou* (For you, of you) published by Atlas Contact in 2017. David Colmer’s translation first appeared online at www.poetryinternational.org

“Barbara Allen” by Ariella Ruth was previously published in the chapbook *REMNANTS* (Gesture Press, 2019).

“Showcase Showdown” by Christopher Spaide first appeared in *BOMB Daily*, 3 July 2017, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/showcase-showdown/>.

“The Garden of Earthly Delights” and “Notes from Paradise” by Adrienne Raphel were previously published in *What Was It For* (Rescue Press, 2017). “Note from Paradise” first appeared in *Lana Turner Journal* 7.

We thank Sharon Olds and the Community of Writers at Squaw Valley for permitting us to publish this piece, which originated from a craft talk that Sharon delivered during their 2018 Poetry Conference. The Community of Writers is the longest running annual writing conference in the United States and Sharon has lovingly guided young writers there for many years. For information about the Community, visit: www.communityofwriters.org.

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TESS GUNTY writes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. She recently earned an MFA in Creative Writing from New York University, where she was a Lillian Vernon Fellow. She holds a BA in English from the University of Notre Dame, where she won the Ernest Sandeen Award for her poetry collection. Her fiction has appeared in *The Iowa Review* and has been read on NPR. She lives in Los Angeles and is working on her first novel.

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DEBORAH J. HAYNES has BFA and MFA degrees in ceramics from the University of Oregon, a Masters of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School, and a PhD from Harvard University in the Study of Religion and Art History. She taught art history and theory, plus graduate seminars in studio practice from 1991-2013, also serving as a program director or department chair for more than fourteen years. She is the author of seven books and numerous articles; and her work as an artist in stone and mixed media drawing is visible on her website, www.DeborahJHaynes.com.

AMY HOLLYWOOD teaches at Harvard Divinity School.

SUSAN HOWE's recent work includes *The Quarry*, selected essays published in 2015, and a poetry collection *Debths* (2017) both from New Directions.

VERA ILIATOVA (b. 1975, Russia) received an MFA in Painting/Printmaking from Yale University, CT and a BA from Brandeis University, MA. She has also undergone studies at Sorbonne University, Paris. Iliatova recently exhibited her work at the Katonah Museum of Art, NY, Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art, Houston, TX. Iliatova's work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, and many others. Her next solo exhibition will be on view at the Monya Rowe Gallery, New York. Iliatova lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

MICHAEL JACKSON teaches at the Harvard Divinity School. His latest collection of poems is *Walking to Pencarrow: Selected Poems* (Christchurch: Cold Hub Press, 2016)

JOELLE JAMESON's poetry has appeared in *Salamander*, *Measure*, and *Broad Street*, among other publications, and her art criticism can be found at *Critical Read* and *ÆQAI*. She received her MFA in poetry from Emerson College, where she also taught playwriting to high school students in the EmersonWRITES program. She lives in Salem, Massachusetts.

BRIONNE JANAE is a poet living in Brooklyn. She is the recipient of the 2016 St. Botolph Emerging Artist award, a Hedgebrook and Vermont Studio Center Alumni and proud Cave Canem Fellow. Her poetry and prose have been published by the *Academy of American Poets*, the *American Poetry Review*, *Sun Magazine*, and the *Los Angeles Review* among others. Brionne's first collection is titled *After Jubilee* and was published by BOAAT Press.

JACK JUNG is a graduate of Iowa Writers' Workshop where he was a Truman Capote Fellow. He now teaches undergraduate creative writing at the University of Iowa. He was born in Seoul, South Korea, and immigrated to the United States during middle school. He received his BA in English from Harvard and MA in Korean literature from Seoul National University.

GEORGE KALOGERIS's most recent book of poems is *Guide to Greece*, (Louisiana State University, 2018). He is also the author of a book of paired poems in translation, *Dialogos* (Antilever, 2012), and of a book of poems based on the notebooks of Albert Camus, *Camus: Carnets* (Pressed Wafer, 2006). His poems and translations have been anthologized in *Joining Music with Reason*, chosen by Christopher Ricks (Waywiser, 2010).

JOAN NAVIYUK KANE is Inupiaq with family from King Island (Ugiuvak) and Mary's Igloo, Alaska. A 2019-2020 Hilles Bush Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Kane was a 2018 Guggenheim Fellow in Poetry. She currently raises her sons as a single mother in Cambridge and teaches creative nonfiction and poetry for the low-residency graduate creative writing program at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her most recent publication is *Another Bright Departure* (CutBank 2019).

FARAH KASHEM is a student at Harvard Divinity School, a qi gong practitioner, and a photographer. She has arrived at Harvard Divinity School after travelling for five years and is interested in all things liminal. More of her work can be found at ifkashem.com

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DANIEL KRAFT holds an MTS from Harvard Divinity School, and lived at the CSWR for two great years. He currently lives in Memphis, Tennessee, where he is Director of Education at a synagogue. His poems and essays can be seen in a number of publications, including *Image*, *Jewish Currents*, and the *Anglican Theological Review*.

KT shares the same birthday as Sylvia Plath. She studied narrative medicine & specialized in poetry in the Creative Writing and Writing for Performing Arts MFA at the University of California, Riverside. Her work is included in *Foothill Journal*, *New Limestone Review*, *Peacock Journal*, *Southern Women's Review*, *The McNeese Review*, *Turtle Island Quarterly*, and *White Stag Journal*. She is currently a first-year PhD student at Florida State University, specializing in poetry.

ADRIE KUSSEROW is Professor of Cultural Anthropology at St. Michael's College in Vermont. She graduated from Harvard Divinity School in 1990. She currently has two books of poetry published by Boa Editions, Ltd as part of the American Poets Series and is working on her third.

JESSIE LEBARON is an artist, gardener and garden designer. She holds an MFA in painting from Boston University. She has been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in painting and she is the founding owner of Jessie LeBaron Gardens, a design firm working in NYC and Long Island.

FRANNIE LINDSAY's sixth volume, *The Snow's Wife*, is forthcoming from Cavankerry Press this fall. Her others are *If Mercy*, *Our Vanishing*, *Mayweed*, *Lamb*, and *Where She Always Was*. Her honors include the Benjamin Saltman Award, the Washington Prize, the May Swenson Award, and The Missouri Review Prize, as well as fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Lindsay's work appears in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The Yale Review*, *Field*, *Plume*, *The Adroit Journal*, and *Best American Poetry*. She teaches workshops on grief and trauma. She is a classical pianist.

NICK MAIONE's work can be found in journals such as *jubilat*, *Northern New England Review*, and *Adirondack Review*. He is the author of the chapbook *A Well, In a Church, On An Island, In The Lake* (2016). Nick edits the online poetry recitation journal *Windfall Room* and is the founder & artistic director of Orein Arts Residency in Upstate NY.

ANGELO MAO, a biomedical engineer research associate and postdoctoral fellow at Harvard Medical School, has had poems appear in *Denver Quarterly*, *Lana Turner*, *Nat Brut*, and elsewhere.

ASHLEY MAYNE's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Fence*, *Post Road*, *Juked*, *Metambesen*, and elsewhere.

SHANE MCCRAE's most recent books are *In the Language of My Captor* (Wesleyan University Press, 2017), which won the 2018 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Poetry, and was a finalist for the National Book Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Award, and the William Carlos Williams Award, *The Gilded Auction Block* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), and *Sometimes I Never Suffered* (FSG, 2020). He has received a Whiting Writer's Award, a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Lannan Literary Award, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. He lives in New York City and teaches at Columbia University.

RYAN MIHALY is a poet and musician who recently completed the BridgeGuard residency in Štúrovo, Slovakia. He graduated from the MFA program at Naropa University where he was an Anne Waldman/Anselm Hollo fellow. His work has appeared in *3:AM Magazine*, *DIAGRAM*, *Opossum*, *Asymptote*, *Posit*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and in Ilan Stavans' anthology *On Self-Translation: Meditations on Language*. A multi-instrumentalist and composer, he has played in a number of jazz, rock, folk, funk, punk, and experimental groups over the years, frequently collaborates with dancers and poets, and teaches music to kids.

ALBIN MILLOT is based in Paris. His long-term projects, books, and exhibitions explore the relationships between human beings and their wild and/or urban environments. His work, *Europe Utopia*, in which he explores the changing borders and migratory patterns of Schengen and the European Union, has been exhibited at several prominent international institutions including The Antioquia Museum in Medellin and The Museum of Modern Art of Bogota (Colombia) and The National Library of France (Paris, France) and is in the permanent collection of the National Library of France. He is represented by PlainPicture agency in Paris, London and Hamburg.

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LEAH MUDDLE is an artist, poet and retail worker. Her writing can be found in online journals such as *Cordite*, *Meniscus*, and *Plumwood Mountain*. She is the publisher of Shower Books chapbooks including her current release, *It's what we're already doing*, in collaboration with Elena Gomez, Ella O'Keefe, Melody Paloma, Sian Vate and Emily Stewart.

EFE MURAD was born in Istanbul in 1987, studied philosophy at Princeton, and completed his PhD in Ottoman History and Islamic Philosophy at Harvard. He has published five books of poetry and six books of translations including the first complete translation of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* in Turkish. His poems, writings, and translations in English have appeared in a wide range of journals, including *Guernica*, *Five Points*, *Jacket*, and *The American Reader*, and in exhibitions including the 13th Istanbul Biennale. He teaches Islamic history and philosophy at Wellesley College, and his new work combines paleography, Islamic manuscript tradition, found footage, and soundscapes.

SAWAKO NAKAYASU is an artist working with language, performance, and translation—separately and in various combinations. Her books include *Some Girls Walk Into The Country They Are From* (forthcoming, Wave Books), *Pink Waves* (forthcoming, Omnidawn), and *The Ants* (Les Figs Press). She is co-editor, with Eric Selland, of an anthology of 20th Century Japanese Poetry (forthcoming, New Directions). She teaches at Brown University. Website: <http://www.sawakonakayasu.net/>

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FRANCO PAZ is a PhD student in the History department at Harvard University. His work has recently appeared in the *Colorado Review*.

CARL PHILLIPS is the author of fifteen books of poetry, most recently *Pale Colors in a Tall Field* (FSG, 2020). His most recent prose book is *The Art of Daring: Risk, Restlessness, Imagination* (Graywolf, 2014). He teaches at Washington University in St. Louis.

DANIEL JOHN PILKINGTON is a poet and researcher from Melbourne, Australia. His poems have appeared in *Meanjin*, *Southerly*, *Cordite*, *Otoliths*, and *Marrickville Pause*. He is currently completing a PhD investigating the influence of magic and the occult on contemporary poetry.

MARIA PINTO's fiction has appeared or will appear in *Frigg*, *Necessary Fiction*, *Word Riot*, *Dostoevsky Wannabe Cities: Boston*, and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from The Writers' Room of Boston, The Mastheads, and The Garret on the Green. When she's not reading fiction for *The Drum*, writing her second novel, teaching creative writing, or freelance editing, she can be found in the woods studying fungi.

RITA POWELL is a performing artist, poet, and preacher. Her commentaries about food, sports, and religion have been published in *Watershed*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and featured on NPR.

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ADRIAN T. QUINTANAR is from Pomona, California and received an MFA in Poetry from the Institute of American Indian Arts in addition to his BA from Hampshire College. He is the managing editor of *Chapter House Journal* (formerly known as *Mud City Journal*). His work has appeared in *RED INK Journal* and *Santa Ana River Review*.

BIN RAMKE teaches at the University of Denver. His fourteenth book of poems, *Earth on Earth*, will be published by Omnidawn in 2021.

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DONALD REVELL is the author of fifteen collections of poetry, most recently of *The English Boat* (2018) and *Drought-Adapted Vine* (2015), both from Alice James Books. He has also published six volumes of translation from the French, including works by Apollinaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine and Laforgue.

AM RINGWALT is a writer and musician. Her words appear or are forthcoming in the *Washington Square Review*, the *Bennington Review*, *Entropy* and *Interim*. Her music has been featured in *The Wire* and NPR's *All Songs Considered*. She is the recipient of the 2019 Sparks Prize as a graduate of the University of Notre Dame's MFA in Poetry Program.

BYRON RUSSELL is a poet and student of religion at Harvard University. His work has previously appeared in *Colorado Review* and *Narrative Magazine*.

ARIELLA RUTH's work has appeared in *Epiphany*, *Bombay Gin*, *The Ocean State Review*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook, *REMNANTS*, was published by Gesture Press in September 2019, and a full-length version of that manuscript was a finalist for the Two Sylvias Press 2017 Full-Length Poetry Manuscript Prize. She has a poem published on a sandstone monolith as part of the City of Boulder, Colorado's Downtown District and the Library and Arts Department's West Pearl Poetry Project. She works at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School where she assists in curating programming on the theme of "poetry, philosophy, and religion."

DAVID RYAN is the author of the story collection, *Animals in Motion*, and the hybrid memoir/criticism *Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano: Bookmarked*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Threepenny Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Epiphany*, *Esquire*, *Bomb*, and elsewhere. He teaches in the writing program at Sarah Lawrence College and in New England College's low residency MFA. More about him at—www.davidwryan.com.

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VIJAY SESHADRI is the author of four books of poetry—*Wild Kingdom*, *The Long Meadow*, *3 Sections*, and *That Was Now, This Is Then* (forthcoming, early autumn, 2020)—and many essays and memoir fragments. His work has been recognized with a number of honors. He teaches at Sarah Lawrence College.

EVIE SHOCKLEY is the author of three books of poetry, most recently *semiautomatic* (Wesleyan, 2017), which won the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award in Poetry and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the LA Times Book Prize. She has also published a book of criticism, *Renegade Poetics: Black Aesthetics and Formal Innovation in African American Poetry*. Her essays and poems appear widely. She is a Lannan Literary Award winner, among other honors, and serves as Professor of English at Rutgers University, in New Brunswick, NJ.

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SHANNON VANGYZEN is an emerging visual artist and educator who uses the language of an expanded painting practice to create assemblages and installations that examine the aesthetics of social class and taste using objects found in the home space. Oscillating between states of grandeur and monstrous wretchedness, the sympathetic forms simultaneously mimic and destabilize the veneer of power and public persona. Her somatic sculptures explore the abject effects of socioeconomic status on people impacted by an American class system gone awry. She lives and works in Providence, RI and teaches high school art at Joseph Case High School in Swansea, MA.

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AO WANG is an associate professor at Wesleyan University.

EDEN WERRING writes poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction. In 2018, her book-in-progress about guilt, *Work On What Has Been Spoiled*, was shortlisted for the Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize. She received her BA in English Literature from Yale University and is pursuing her MFA in Writing from Sarah Lawrence College. She writes and lives with her family in Connecticut.

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NACHOEM M. WIJNBERG (Amsterdam, 1961) is a Dutch poet and novelist. His poetry has received many awards, including the 2018 PC Hooft Prize, the most important literary award in the Netherlands. His poetry has been translated into many languages and published in a wide range of journals, anthologies and books. Books in English include *Advance Payment* (Anvil Press/Carcenet, 2013), *Divan of Ghalib* (White Pine Press, 2016) and *Of Great Importance* (Punctum, 2018). He is also a professor at the University of Amsterdam Business School.

LAUREN WINCHESTER's work has been supported by the Edward Albee Foundation, the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, and Oak Spring Garden Foundation. Her poems have appeared in *The Journal*, *Passages North*, *TYPO*, *BOAAT*, and elsewhere. She received her MFA in poetry from The Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University.

YI SANG, born Kim Haekyŏng, lived his entire life during the Japanese occupation of Korea. He wrote and published in both Korean and Japanese, and is one of Korea's most important Modernist writers. A collection of his work in translation is forthcoming from Wave Books.

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