



periphery
no. 2

a journal of word and image

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PUBLISHER Center for the Study of World Religions
Harvard University

FACULTY ADVISOR Charles M. Stang

EDITOR Byron Russell

MANAGING EDITOR Alejandra Oliva

POETRY EDITORS Sherah Bloor and Emma De Lisle

EDITOR-AT-LARGE Adam McLain

Online submissions should be sent to peripherycswr@gmail.com

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Epithalamion with Dogwood and Dog

Emma De Lisle

I

A boy zips by on a bicycle and rings his bell three times.

If even the womb can harbor a tumor, it is possible that memory
outgrows its purpose.

It is possible, May tells Henry, that everything will let me go.

.

Time
is like that. It means there grows thicker

II

a veil of experience hanging about the body an
aura caked and layered over every sense so rarely

can I look even upon leaf without every of its cousins
ever I saw crawling it over as though I live I must

.

We have many hidden expectations of each other I must

.

be a series of trip wires tangling stumbling each another
clamoring

*you have seen its like before you have seen before now
you have lived ere you live it now there was once another and
time another there was once a moment there is a moment
that is not this one there was once a leaf*

as though it were Memory who were Maker

as though Leaf I could Make

III

getting or gotten to a new point
of empathy with all her surroundings May
writes in her journal

she tells the dog she sits in her grandmother's rocker today I
saw Henry he was in the dogwood bush he was flowering he
had so many arms you know almost a tree by now really

.

siren whistle slung low over the square arcing

IV

Matter loves a still point but bears not its weight. Assume

a cavern

in fulfillment and its denial we read signs like
weddings not to mention speaking to one another and dreaming

words hang in the air and we fit our mouths to them
does the mind read first or the body breathe there was none

before you to love

never before had I been any lover

may there before you none

Do not cross the sea for virtue May pronounces watching
the dog nosing her flank in the foxglove bed

V

pleasure is to be enmired in a glowing web of points to touch each one
lightly

VI

It was first just in the eyes of his brothers their two daughters soon
in their lips and feet fingernails even until a body anyone's
body until everything started becoming became clearer to her

May rocks, thinking, wicker
is just like the mind

blue biplane silvering through an orange sky a pickup
half sunk in the road

.

we measure

VII

by these things, but we don't have to

.

It is a ruse, the Mind
telling Leaf, I write you
line over line. Ramify

VIII

.

IX

Loving you is the only reason I feel I must reckon with my death,
May says to the dog.

The body loves its revolt on condition of mastery

time known by its feet
time unable but to be two
time only by its vow

When God makes a breath he repeats it; If I had words I would use them
to repeat my hands

He would have told the water
Go down from the mountain for you have seen my face

and must the water have run chattering blushing grown ever fuller carving
that countenance its memory down down
the rock meeting the dogwood tree in its abundance saying you must
change everything you must help me
leave off your branches
turn your roots over to the sky there comes a need

.

to flower them

.

Henry I never told you there are two times
that you make me miss my childhood: in my speech rendered
soundless and open an auguring of joy or of grief both times I
miss it aching age when I was so full of God and yet been none but His

each point wants a beauty that can rob it of all wisdom
each wanting sets all its kin humming

X

The way to summon a return is to write it.

A honey flush of knowing surging
—vivify—a shock of tributaries icy

may I salt my mouth I did not miss you but
dreamed that I did

.

youth is marked with a conviction that the moon turns straight from full
to new

XI

without a breath in between something vanishing in its becoming a
fullness into its own expectancy

To leave home is to practice dying

but yet more so to return

.

I should have started writing it down a long time ago,
May writes, and then she stops.

I should have started writing a long time ago, she tells Henry.

XII

It is memory, finally, that kills a man.

With satisfaction May thinks:
we read expectations like a text that confuses the words within and up

at the meeting he said hey for a minute there I thought I knew you
maybe something in the eye or the smile but hell you know what I don't

think we've ever met but sit down here and don't mind the dog that bell
gets her going stay a bit why don't you it sure is nice to see a new face

And the tall man laughs takes off a flowered hat kicks his shoes against
the porch loosing some dirt says tell you what Henry there's a whole lot
more where this came from

.

pleasure is to be to the lover a lost thing returned

but truth is like the clear eye of the roe
who does not wish to hide
who cannot hide and does not wish to

come back to me like this

.

To see something geometric as a sphere, May writes,
you must add infinite angles

Nothing Comes

Nick Maione

But what is human
we approach craving
 mouths open
within licking distance
of the Pyrenees

This holy tastes
like pretty horses on fire
 speeding across a field

Here comes Bernadette
Today she is a young man
with a shotgun and an orange vest

I ask in a cobbled, trailmade French,
What are you hunting?

Sanglier, she says
smiles through two hooked fingers
on either side of his mouth

My throat acts allergic
to all the things we could
do if we believed we were loved

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The sun is hot and loud
and the shadows are complete
where they are complete

Bon courage! as we part
like two humans trying
to stay on the walking side
of the water

September 19th

Josh Gregory

I kept lighting matches, one
for each cloud gone
dark: a constellation of sodium
lights
 aloft in oily vapor.

The roadside motels,
marooned

cars at the airport.
 This unendurable
exhaust
from the metallic
 refineries

*

(You're on the asphalt beside me, heaving
orange-black.)

A Contestation of Signs

Josh Gregory

Autumn

mists move
apart
the leaves
are falling down
a dying deer
sways

by the bike path. A girl was singing slow on the porch
while someone cried.

Many crickets must not make sound.

**

In the impending dark we practice

under stadium lights

(Scheuller
brings the hockey pucks in his backpack

) *I saw*

a cat sitting on a cinder

block as the sun set

*

Trees rife. Breeze-black

fire rising beyond the night-round rink.

I barely heard a twig snap, then

a twig snaps.

Fossil Poetry

Charles M. Stang

I can't remember how it was that Susan Brind Morrow's book, *The Names of Things: A Passage in the Egyptian Desert*, first found its way into my hands. I think someone gave it to me, but I can't remember who, or exactly when. I do know that I've given it to a number of other people since then. I've read it so many times that I can't remember when I *first* read it—it must have been around 2002, when I moved to Cairo for six months, longing for my own “passage in the Egyptian desert.” I know I must have had it with me in Cairo, because I transcribed passages from it into a notebook I carried with me from that time.

I reread it recently, and it's astonishing how a book one has read so many times still offers itself up as if it were new, almost unread. I laughed again at her description of her first hotel in Cairo—the Garden City House—because it was mine also. I remember the unbearable heat and humidity of my arrival in August, of my inability to sleep for many days, and as a result the Cairo I first came to know was almost hallucinatory, an insomniac's dream of overwhelming crowds, traffic, and noise. I fell in love with that city, and with the dying river that cut through it—especially the Cairo of night during long hours spent lingering in coffee shops, smoking, and playing shesh besh.

I was also reminded of the pain at the center of Morrow's book, the loss of her sister Barbara and, later, her brother David. In the wake of her brother's death, Susan writes of finding her way back to Egypt:

“In the beginning of the summer I packed up and left the country, having no idea where I was going. I wrote in my Shanghai journal, on a train going north through Norway in August,

Something like the Fall in me
All my leaves were dying
They died in the most violent way
And turned screaming colors

...

I traveled north to the Lofoten Islands in the Arctic Ocean. Coming south again I shared a compartment with an old Englishman who lived in Oman. He was murmuring out his lists of Arabic verb forms as we sped through the Dolomites. Listening to him, I knew that throughout the trip, curled on my sleeping bag spread out in train compartments, loving the rain and cold, I had been heading back to Egypt.

It was not the idea of Egypt, or of Egyptology this time, that drew me there, but Egypt itself. Egypt as raw environment, difficult though it was. I have thought since that the difficult part of it was like a knife cutting away the frozen parts of myself. At Venice, I took a boat to Alexandria. I came into Cairo having shed my baggage all along the way.” (59-60)

In the years since I first read, and reread *The Names of Things*, I have regularly spied on Susan by way of her publications. I remember in particular when *Wolves & Honey* came out. Last year, while doing my usual sleuthing to see what Susan was up to, I saw that she had published *The Dawning Moon of the Mind: Unlocking the Pyramid Texts*. And then I read this description:

“Buried in the Egyptian desert some four thousand years ago, the Pyramid Texts are among the world’s oldest poetry. Yet ever since the discovery of these hieroglyphs in 1881, they have been misconstrued by Western Egyptologists as a garbled collection of primitive myths and incantations, relegating to obscurity their radiant fusion of philosophy, scientific inquiry, and religion.

Now, in a seminal work, the classicist and linguist Susan Brind Morrow has recast the Pyramid Texts as a coherent work of art, arguing that they should be recognized as a formative event

in the evolution of human thought. In *The Dawning Moon of the Mind* she explains how to read hieroglyphs, contextualizes their evocative imagery, and interprets the entire poem. The result is a magisterial religious and philosophical text revealing a profound consciousness of the world with astonishing parallels to Judeo-Christian culture, Buddhism, and Tantra.”

It’s a thrilling read, and a magisterial interpretive event. Last year, as I pondered how best to issue an invitation to Susan, I happened to be in Terry Tempest Williams’ apartment: Terry is the writer-in-residence at HDS and a resident of the CSWR. My eyes were drawn to her bookshelves where what did I find but a copy of *The Names of Things*. It turns out that we had both been touched by Susan’s searing prose, which has always reminded me of Emerson’s famous line, “Genius is the activity that repairs the decay of things.” Terry was as excited as I about the prospect of inviting Susan to speak as part of our series on “Poetry, Philosophy, and Religion.” And, so the invitation was issued and we were delighted when Susan accepted.

In October, 2018, Susan came to the Center to give a lecture from out of *The Dawning Moon of the Mind*. She spoke on “Nature into Language: Hieroglyphs and the Origins of Poetic Thought.” Taking inspiration from Emerson’s insistence that “Language is fossil poetry,” Susan discussed hieroglyphs as poetic metaphors and vehicles of abstract thought that emerged from close observation of nature—a sophisticated language and metaphysics rooted in the vivid and precisely depicted physical world.

Susan is currently the Scholar in Residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, and is also A New York Institute for the Humanities Fellow as well as a former Guggenheim Fellow. She was kind enough to share the following three poems as a gift to our community of readers.

Fragment

Susan Brind Morrow

I love to watch you walking in the evening, when you're afraid,
and your wavering frame folds back arc-like to fight the wind.
Your skin melts golden with the sides of grass
and voices of birds skin your delicate heart.

Thaw

Susan Brind Morrow

Black earth, wet earth, first smell of spring.
We walk around the lake where the smashed ice lies in loose low heaps
 like scree,
Where the lake, refrozen now, broke and spilled it in the wind.
Our feet slide beneath us in the steel gray evening.
A mallard shot open spreads its frozen insides on the ice, thick and red
around its waxy yellow organs rimmed with iridescent feathers blue and
 green,
a scrap thrown up, a treasure of the splintering thaw

The Silver Forest

Susan Brind Morrow

In the silver forest the light is silver
And the hard leaves of salt-fed trees clatter in the wind
And the snakes and birds in them are invisible.
Their roots wind through pocked iron coral
That on the surface cuts like teeth,
Roots carved in claws as smooth and hard as ivory.

For a day I pretend I am a creature of the sea
I lay flat on the sand and let the froth slide under me.
Hush, no time... the waves are circular with the tide.
The wind animates the mineral earth
As though it were its disembodied breath.
This is a secret.

The sand lies down under the waves
The color of my brother's skin
And the water is the color of my brother's eyes
Here he comes over the sand, a mirror of me.
I close my eyes and have one true friend.

Michelangelo's '*The Awakened Slave*,' 1520

Maia Elsner

Out of polished marble
rib-cage sucked-in
emerging breath-strained
 against immobility
 itself un formed his tensile
 features rocking, nestled
 into hardness, imprecise, or
 a softer vagueness, in
 tilting up,
about to yawn, or taste
 morning. He is
blurred-already in that
 too-quick to capture,
 stretching-out
 he is
 mallet-made,
 unmade
 eroding into
 statue
 memory-
to circumvent
 time's own
 oscillation
 fading
outside *L'Accademia*,
 lime trees, pale, colour the dusk.

Leonardo da Vinci, *'The Adoration of the Magi'*, 1481

Maia Elsner

Sepia-streaked, rouge into ink-dried, discoloured, then overlaid, dashed-purple-dark beneath sketched-in
figures horses-rearing against infidel behind silhouette trees, leaf-stoke-black over water-colour
seeping timeless—this translucent base, set before oil fixes place-colour-country light. This duskperhaps
fading features
for instance, the man who carries
a little treasure everyday
a silver brooch on his knees, he
falls in the mud,
as Leonardo walked past, & there he is,
sketched his as the ring that was
his falls
unreachable indistinguishable in the dirt, & now
despair sallows his cheek
as hands reach into that gutter, or towards the virgin's feet, then
transfigured, suddenly reworked into the 'Adoration'
into hope, now genuflecting to the left
perhaps he found it afterall, a miracle
his likeness fixed on canvas
as he was that day heading to the pawn shop,
with lids drooping at the almost-envisioned
possibility salvation
slipping-through his fingers, and the space between, empty, darkened-red beneath the virgin, somehow
symbolising somethingother &the rest, blank faces merely, another unknown or longforgotten, unrecovered
their final anonymity nowscattered in the Arno, as merchants pass by the Ponte Vecchio exchanging coins

The Limits of France, The Limits of Territory

Albin Millot

Albin Millot's border tryptichs appear throughout this issue of Periphery. Each represents three views of the same border site, and along with it, a deeper reflection on nationality, landscape, and borders at large.

The implementation of the Schengen Agreement in 1995 effectively transformed the European Union into one continuous zone of free movement. The borders of the signatory countries—which had been fought over and jealously guarded for many centuries—suddenly became porous, vague even.

The first Arab revolutions, starting in 2011, created a surge of immigrants which led to a careful review of the Schengen agreement. In a short span of time, sudden, drastic changes to Europe's sense of territoriality made clear to me how the notions of boundaries had started to become fuzzy.

More recently, the major migrant crisis are highlighting these thoughts even more.

To help me think through these questions, I decided to approach the limits of my homeland, France. I decided to test my mental map of the country with the actual, geographical edges of its territory.

By positioning myself on the borders of France—its extreme points, its international tri-points with Italy, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, its furthest reaches, I re-defined its contours for myself

and reaffirmed the country's reality. I placed lights on the border lines to make things clearer, where what I found was nothing but geographical haziness. I record, through photography, from these positions, the different points of views, inside and outside and say "Here I am on the edge of the territory."

In other words, by going to the ends of my country's territory, I pushed to the very limits of what France still means today.





The Glamorous Life Ramses the Great

Michele Madigan Somerville

"Living the dream"

I awoke to a gorgeous gamine straight out of the Renaissance,
a long-necked Maria, beside me in bed, nosing her lustrous osculating
face into mine, her mane a crimped coppery spray
arrayed about pillows, her extremities all-
encompassing, her epidermis impossibly aglow.
She was working me all right, shaking me down for food,
but I didn't mind. (It won't be long, Botticelli girl,
'til you're old enough to play with fire.
Then you'll feed *yourself* in the morning and
make magic using beans and a French
press and thus catalyze our early antemeridian routine!)

For now I, too, am a big baby in the morning. I like lots of milk
in my coffee and the first one best, drunk
in bed. And I like news! And weather! And I like the voice
of an on-air "personality" whose politics I loathe.
I met the handsome oaf once in the flesh. In a bookstore of all places.
He had a light heavyweight countenance.
I'm a sucker for pugs. Sometimes we are not
the sum of our parts. Sometimes the loins
hold the key to the ancient city. He's the kind of man
you know can kill with a jab, the kind who looks down the front
of your blouse when you're trying to hold

a conversation, and you fail
to object, even if you are the objecting sort,
even if you are intelligent and saying something
he's better off knowing because you know
he's listening, but, then again, what do I know?

I'm a sucker for a man with a voice.
Next enters the Pre-Raphaelite sister—darker, shorter
on propriety. She enters the boudoir
accompanied by Chulito the Splendid
who chases her onto the bed.

What a glamorous life I lead!

Chaque matin, a pair of sprites and boy like a god, a trinity,
scrapping like Huns for the *Grand Prix* of my attentions as
Zero Dark 30 dissolves into a broad
daylight commands the stage, stretches out—
Rise we must, O fond and adored
spawn, for we know the excitement won't let up
until the chicken music stops.

I proceed with confidence. I can do it all again. I'll be the Greek
executioner of short-order alimentation. I'll preside with élan
over assembly-line ablutions. In my capacity as Diplomat of Hygiene
(with a concentration on fingernails and teeth) I shall command:
“Let me smell your breath!” As Minister of Shodding
assigned to Lost or Strategically Concealed
Footwear, I will issue orders in the tradition of
Established by the hyper-fecund Irish bitches
who came before —my foremothers—
“They didn't just get up and walk away.”

As Chief Petit Officer in charge of unheeded carping
I shall harp and whinge at the Great Wall of Blah Blah
“Can't you *see* we're not even *listening*?”
As Czar of Swaddling I shall demand: “Where's your raincoat?”
and lament: “Every time it rains, I'm \$20.00 lighter.”

I must serve with a smile and move the troops out.

Today's surplus of plenty ensures that oatmeal will petrify
and circumnavigating flies will swarm
over warm juice but I can always swat, disinfect and chisel anon.
Operation Civilization commences at 0900 Hours,
at which appointed time my commission requires
that I report for duty at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.
Having arrived at my post, I will accomplish reconnaissance
with Thucydides whom I shall find in a lineup
alongside Confucius, Aeschylus, Homer, Pindar, Saint
Peter, Moses and Deuteronomy where at street level
a layer of thatched evergreen vinyl tethered to a chain-
link fence obscures the new hemicycle
whose new origin, having been established
beneath an existing dome, accommodates
an oblique axis of approach.

The day is *trés* lazy Paris; limestone mist lurks
neutral relative to the question of the state of
its matter: liquid? Gas? *Potage*?
N'importe quoi, it is mighty
clear early precipitation has foreclosed upon the mixing
of cement leaving the construction crew stuck doing what
construction crews appear to spend much of the time doing—
not much. Haloed in a cannabis cloud, they loiter in a cluster
sparkling skinnies in the drizzle at the base of a young pear tree.
Their diffusing cloud infuses local fog on ascent
lending an incendiary nose that comprises honeysuckle and piss.
Due to rain there is nothing outside to build but inside
the structure is everything!

Do Union regulations require the hard
hats to remain where they stand on the site? Do they not
know what miracles thrum and manifest just beyond the revolving
doors? Ought I stop to tip them off?
Head on in, fellas, for the ride of your life! The new Degas is
well hung in the ballroom whose walls perpend a floor of glass.
Experts believe it might be an under drawing.
Light pours down upon one of her breasts as
the freshly immaculate *baigneuse* dries her body with a cloth.
I have it on good authority that heterosexual men

in their testosterone-lousy primes are quite partial
to undraped demoiselles—never more so than when they are toasted.

Let them admire Hiram Powers's *The Greek Slave* on 5.
One is quick to imagine on first glance that she is ancient
and white, but she is black for eyes
deceive as history does, whereby lessons are missed
by the heartless and stupid. Her shackled beauty is black.
She is an American slave poured of cream.

Larry Rivers's *July*, also on 5, delivers us a softly operatic summer glimpse, a
half-drawn cookout on canvas transpires:
a black bike, a geometric shirt, a verdant yard wherein sun works, some-
where behind the scene, to throw light upon a table.
Visitors in chairs enjoy shade and its opposite.
The rendering is replete and as incomplete
as leisure itself on a warm afternoon when thoughts of industry
wash out in sunlight.

But there's work to do and be done and neither
world enough nor time to edify the tool belts from the Local
because today's enlightenment is to be focused
upon those wriggling pupils in the museum's foreground
pouring forth fresh from yellow vehicles.
They depart in an orderly fashion and form lines
at the entrance, queuing up alongside the point of entry in the rain.
I am expected to join them among the sarcophagi. It will fall
to me to distribute ebony implements and ensure that each is returned
to the *Medaglia d'Oro* can once the eight-year-old masters
have completed their works. I expect to be charged
with reminding the uninitiated and forgetful
that touching is prohibited.

I will field inquiries, count heads and herd 30 juveniles
from Ms. Lehman's class through monumental rooms wherein
together we will behold the Guardian Eye of Horus and
Precinct of Mut as we marvel over
the flexible equilibrium of the Late Egyptian Period
before the Persians and Ptolemies advanced.
The particulars of mummification will not fail

to fascinate, the practice, for instance,
during the reign of Ramses II
whereby the brains of the imperial dead
were drawn out through their nostrils
by means of a hook
in order that organs of the head could be buried in canopic jars
along with other viscera.
The hearts were left intact, within thoracic cavities
because the ancient Egyptians believed
the muscle of the heart to be
the locus not of love
but of intelligence,
which sounds like a pretty good idea to me.



Boats

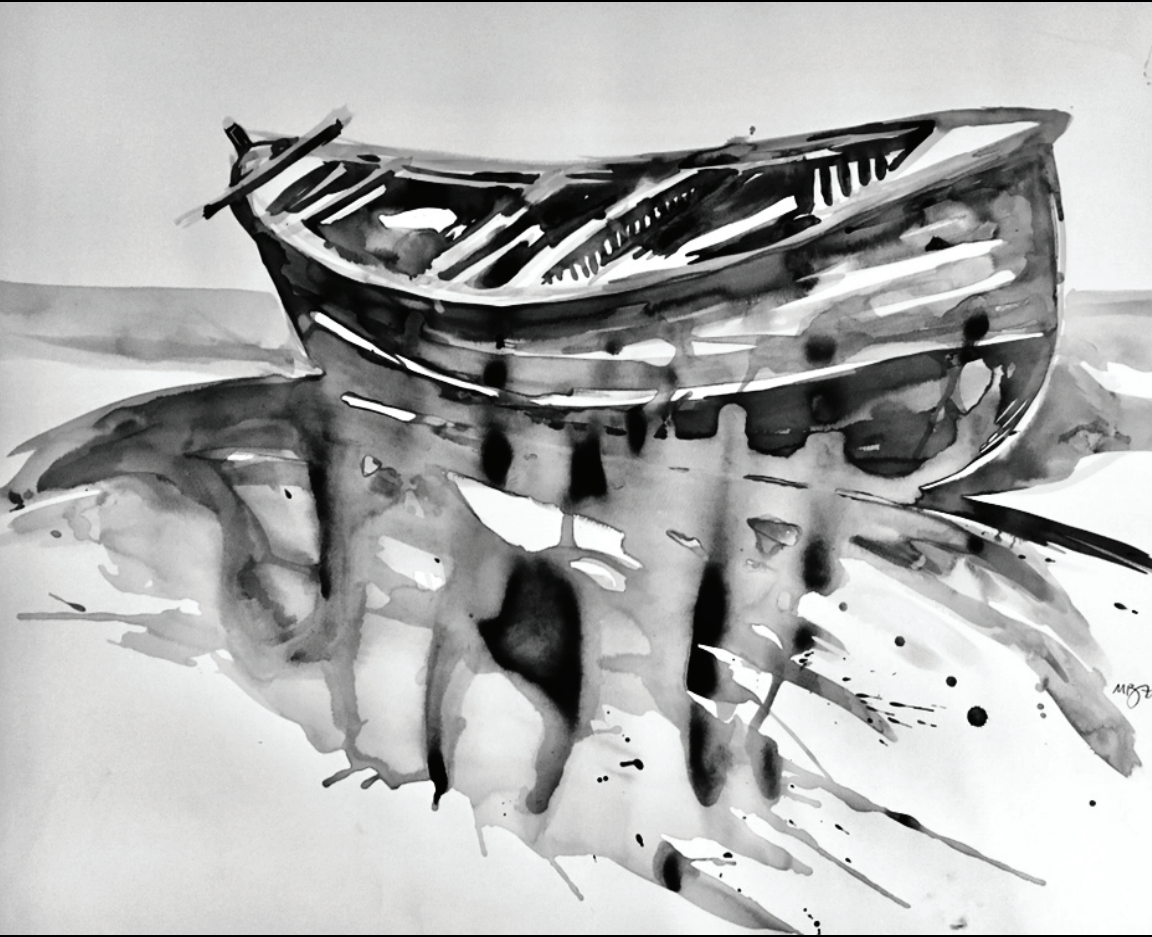
(walnut and india ink, watercolor on paper)

Mark Adams

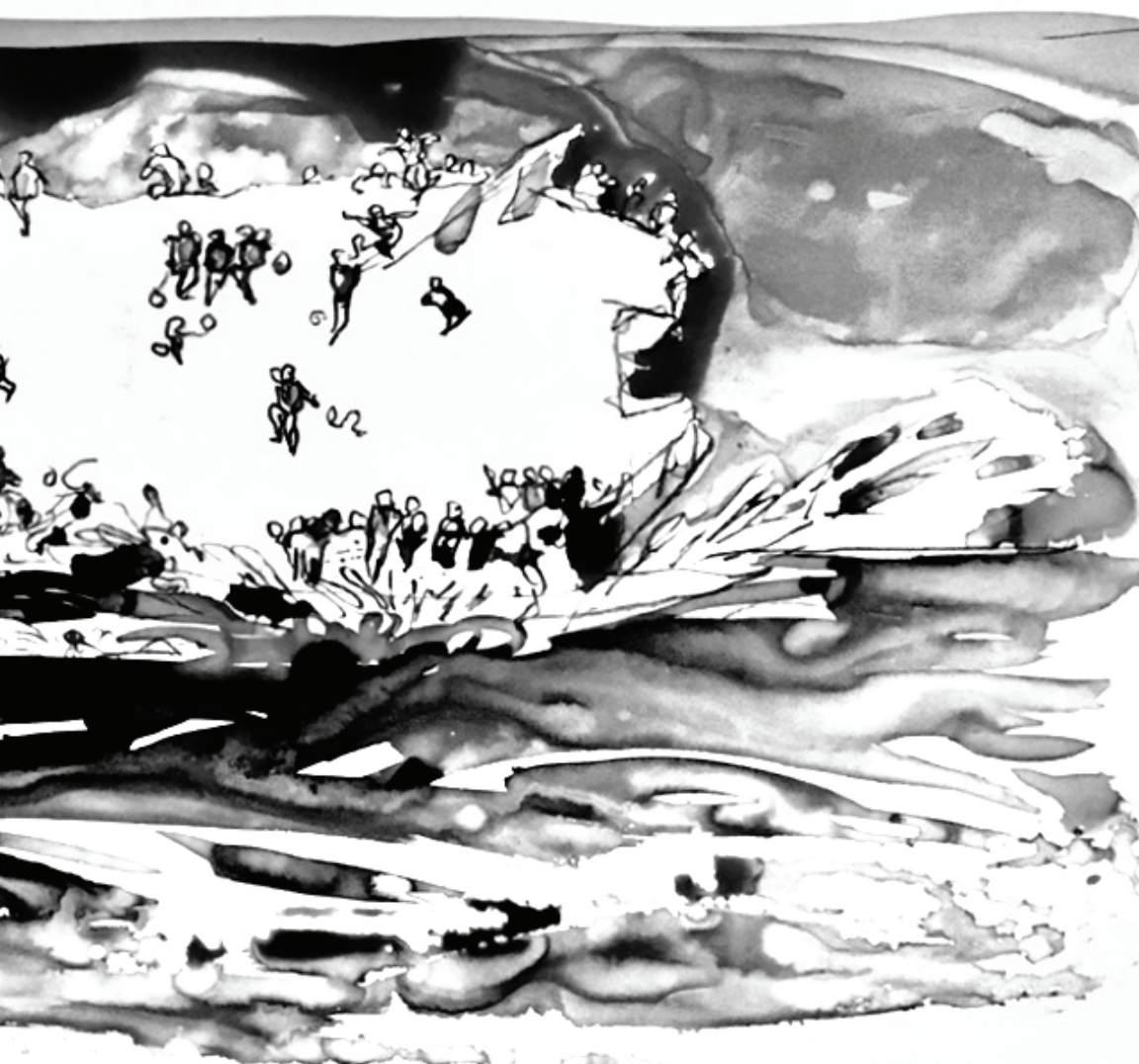
Like most animals, humans have a repeated impulse to disperse, as boundaries and resources shrink. Hierarchies expel the marginal who are forced to wander adrift as social networks are strained or gamed by the powerful. The communities that deliver opportunities, food and desirable niches are finite. In nature the herd offers its weak and young to predation, either as stragglers or as pioneers.

The lone orphaned traveler is represented in many species. To set out alone or in an accidental tribe, to break family ties and seek new communities—these are dreadful notions but also romantic ones. Without seekers, communities become moribund and inbred. Unlike Neanderthals, Sapiens made boats, and—earth or ocean—no boundaries could contain them.

These boats represent the perils and opportunities of outward voyages, voluntary or forced, the risks of a fluid world. They are vessels of placelessness where tethers are untrustworthy and currents and tides seem arbitrary. The migrants' journey often plays out against slim odds, in leaky vessels with uncertain navigation. The seas are home to the homeless. Migration stories magnify our vulnerabilities, rewarding the impetuous, the hardy, and the yearning. The pendulum swing between migration and refuge has no steady state, either in society or ecology. The forced dislocations happening around the globe today can never be anything but wrenching and the reactionary exclusion of immigrants by Europe and America puts them not merely on the wrong side of history but counter to the fundamental nature of our species. That we will one day be travelers is as likely as any fate. That we must discover how to scan the horizon, to steer and to swim is a constant surprise.







My Mother's Language

Syona Puliady

cunning honey drips down the chins of those speaking cheap flowers
slipping from their tongues is that free world across the dark water
my mother fears of the garden growing in my brain.

thorns take root in the throat as my mother's language buries itself inside
the stomach
she wonders how long it will take until the thorns grow thick
and the tongue decides to surrender.

Hard Nucleus

Edwin Alanís-García

(After Frida Kahlo's *Moises*)

Call me *simiente de Israel*; my father,
this idea of Father, was a Hungarian Jew
who lived on both sides of a camera, proving
our faith enroots beyond evidence.
It's nothing blind and proselytizing—it's purely pragmatic,
nonveridical, organic, a truth indexed to the body's nucleus.
Past and present gestate in the world's
womb, float corpuscular and helpless.
This is my history, my connection to Aten or
Jehova or Coatlicue or whatever you call It.
Our story is the chosen three-eyed child,
Egyptian prince and bloodkin of Aaron
and Miriam and Marx and Yeshua and Venus,
Buddha and Stalin and Gandhi and Trotsky.
Pantheons of oblique stories, probably or
certainly lies, reminders
that our origins are so much
spilled paint.

Proof

Miriam Huettner

If John is in Boston, then John is in Boston or in Rome. If John believes that he should not use humans for their bodies, then John calls a higher good either a higher good or smoking at a café. If smoking is using yourself for your body. If using another person for his body presupposes the existence of part of a person differentiated from his body that you can access and also use. If a body and a part of a person that is not his body implicate generation. If generation uses words to prove itself, it isn't working. If generation has anything to do with eating lunch in a café, then John does not want anything to do with it. If generation has everything to do with smoking and eating lunch in a café in Cambridge, then Sue is going to be sick to her stomach or call a midwife. If generation has nothing to do with smoking and eating and coughing in a car or a café in Cambridge and in Minnesota or Rome on a Sunday in the morning with a child in a car seat named Shelly or Florence who will grow up and move to Rome and then Minnesota because her mother was quarter Italian and half Swiss and she traveled there occasional or monthly with her children on sick and holy days from Rochester where she worked in a factory or a hospital and the cleaning lady or her son loved the children more than the mother appreciated and the mother loved them impartially or unpredictably. If John asks about generation and belonging, then he does not think about children or Rochester or impartial love. If children allow two people to belong to each other more fully because they generate a third party. If a higher good or generation relates to belonging to yourself, then do you belong to another person. If you belong to another person then what is the difference between belonging and possession. If possession is physical then what do words have to do with it.

Eukaryote

Miriam Huettner

As I clutch my fat rolls
I become my mother engendering
Myself from whence I came
All blue, my favorite color.
She stands there in her frozen
Image black hair down to her waist
And wide smile face flushed up from burping
Her third male before me or the force of her
Serve during couples tennis, also bible study.
“I loved being pregnant. My
Hair was thick.” Do you love my
Body, or when you love do you
Let the appendages tag on,
My eyes lasiked since I was fourteen
And could not look at my body though
I watched it across a mirror as a cat does
A fly though I did not leave it for rest rather
My food became a sleep and sleep the
Only heaven. What bearing does the
Form have on substance, no sustenance,
As a pie vs. peach cobbler or a cream and
Its butter, the only love, poor word, I know
Looks with its own criterion, no materialist
Reduction, this acid-base computation.
And a good friend whose expression
Says there is no use to change or

Cut or dye this hair or wear glasses on this face
Says “the bones will float / Up through sand
And sea and / Flesh will grow like mold
Over / Them.” How will my moldy flesh shimmer,
In the lamp of sun, when I become all
Suffused over by a love that looms my
Rolls to laughter. But will the cells
Still be there, embraced, or will they
Have dissolved into this former race?

Semeia

Regina Walton

Before we could interpret,
We knew the world as full of signs—
That one points to another,
Each nests in each
All the way down to
The pulsing kernel
Of the sparrow's heart.

How could we know at the start
Their everlastingness?
Continuing on while we disintegrate—
Even scratches on the page outlast us,
Oak to grass. Humiliating.

Inscrutable beauty of the characters—
Sing the lists of letters again
And perhaps they will arrange themselves
Into a correspondence—
Hebrew to Greek, Greek to Hebrew,
The revelation always
Re-revealed.

Translation's aftermath
The proliferation of signs.
Escaping their alchemists,
Burning like constellations,
Reading us back.

NY | NJ

Regina Walton

A tile in the Lincoln Tunnel: squint
Your eyes and pay attention from your high
Seat on the bus bench for the whole ride through,
And you will see it for an instant, lit
By tiny lines of lanterns, glowing white
Above the untrod sidewalk that we'd use
If we were stranded underground, under
Water, crossing over.

Icon like the
Whale suspended, life-sized, breathless, hung by
Cables in the cavernous museum,
NY|NJ: oikoumene, earliest
Boundary, like the whale's eye, witness to ceaseless
Tides of humans, carnal motion,
Still point fixed in unseen ocean.

Newman's Remains

Regina Walton

They exhumed him, the great Cardinal—
He deserved a transfer
Behind the altar from this muddy plot,
Transparent veneration
Fitting his elevation.

And also, let it be said,
To separate him from his beloved,
Another priest, in whose grave
It was his wish to be buried.
And they had rested peacefully together
These hundred and twenty years.
Such an attachment
Unseemly for a saint,
Even in death.

But when they opened the coffin,
Not even a relic—
His latest miracle
To have translated himself
Into dust, disintegration complete
With the first rush of air.

Nothing to disturb,
They sealed the grave again.
At the last, as the poet said
Of another tomb,
What will survive of us is love.



Border Rites

Alejandra Oliva

There's a spot at the edge of the continent where the border wall plunges into the Pacific Ocean, a good 50 feet out, far enough that you know that if you walked to its end, you'd be past your depth, the waves closing over your head. That portion of the wall has been there since the 1980s, although if you drive east along it, further into Tijuana proper, you'll see portions of the wall constructed since October. They are already beginning to rust in the sea air. This place where the border wall falls into the sea feels like the height of human folly—a literal line in the sand that has been defended to death, the beginning point of an empire.

I'm there at the wall, on the Tijuana side of the beach, at around one in the afternoon on a Sunday. I walk right up to it, step into the ocean up to my ankles and rest my hands on the paint-clotted steel. There's a low mist hanging over the water, a fog that the sun just now is beginning to cut into. I'm in Tijuana because of the news, because of reports of tear gas and people sleeping in tents and parents being separated from children. I'm there to help, I think—to do something, although just what seems unclear to me. This afternoon, though, I'm here for church. With the other volunteers, I climb up the beach to Friendship Park, past where the deported veterans have painted their names on the wall, past murals and Bible verses, past food vendors and dogs on walks and blaring boomboxes.

In a lot of ways, it's a regular ecumenical service. There are prayers, and announcements, and a young guy with a guitar leading a worship

service. There are other ways in which it isn't just another service. It is outside, and the sea wind whips everyone's hair and carries the sound out over the Pacific. Also, looming over pastor and worship leader and all of the congregants is the border wall, rising some 20 feet. Through its slats and razor wire, we see another group of people, across the expanse of sandy no-man's land, and hear another sermon, this one in English. We sing along to Spanish versions of the hymns I knew from childhood, staring at a cross painted on the wall itself, and under it a tablecloth-covered card table set with bread and wine.

Church services—this one no exception—sometimes feel like uneasy compromises between the human and the divine, but the eucharist is a moment that feels uncomplicated in its beauty. In sanctifying the regular, life-sustaining ritual of a meal, you call attention to a God present not only in this bread, in this wine, at this gathering, but everywhere, the world bright and buzzing with grace. So what does it mean to call God down to a border wall, to praise in the middle of a wound?

I had arrived in Tijuana earlier that week, crossing the Chaparral footbridge with other volunteers every morning as the sun rose. I had spent those days being with people—as they waited to cross, as they learned about rights that we couldn't guarantee they'd have when they crossed the border, as they learned that spouses would be separated, that at least one parent would be separated from their children, as they navigated the complex calculus of crossing with not one unknown but with a thousand. I would spend another several days after that Sunday in Tijuana, days of pouring rain spent under an overpass, handing out garbage bags to keep suitcases and documents and children dry.

We tried to prepare people to “cross over,” listened to them talk with burning intensity about “el otro lado” and what they would do when they got there, though we could only give the vaguest answers about what it would look like, feel like, what would happen. We prayed over people, blessed their journeys. I helped to translate prayers by clergy from English to Spanish, and blessings back. “Que Dios les bendiga.” We gathered to see off vans full of people about to present themselves for the crossing, to give a few small comforts before, all with the forced cheerfulness of a wake trying to be a party. Our language was that of crossing a border, but it was also the same language used for the passing of death.

That first Sunday though, when I walked up to the border wall to receive communion, felt as if it was pinned to the center of everything. Between Mexico and the United States, land and sea, between some hard days and others harder still. Taking bread and wine in the shadow of the

border wall didn't resolve anything for me, or make my faith stronger. The grief and anger that I walked into the mass with only got heavier. If anything, I got angrier at God and politics for the expanse of human suffering. Though the eucharist is a potent symbol, of suffering turned into salvation, of the holiness of bodies, of communities, that afternoon, the reminder that God is present in our physical reality seemed cruel rather than hopeful.

Author Annie Dillard says that “there is no less holiness at this time—as you are reading this—than there was on the day the Red Sea parted,” but the waves of the Pacific continue lapping up against the shore and the wall, people keep getting loaded into vans and taken into detention centers for the crime of wanting to be safe. They keep getting fed into a system intended to humiliate and dehumanize them. These are not the shores of the Red Sea, and this wall is not built of the stones and earth of Jericho, and yet, I see in its rust and rigidity the slow work of time and the waves, mechanical and unstoppable.





Am I Feeling Quiet or Restless

Rebecca Doverspike

The rib of Adam in me grows feverishly
 (what is implicit is easily forgotten;
 we all come from a womb and so harbor both
 bodies, deep mythologies)
like all other bones, you can look back
across a long drawbridge, a stretched out memory, a ribboned road
concrete and steadfast enough
to hold falling leaves—through that distance something nameless comes
clear.

What if pain came before the apple
and dear Eve placed herself beside every woman
down the line out of compassion? What if her knowledge
preceded the fruit? What we are homesick for
cannot be found in this world. Twilight and dusk blue touch
upon it. Daily I ask of myself the difficult task
not to erase longing. To accept the undoing
inside/out inside/out inside/out (the best advice: keep
whatever can stay unwritten unwritten) the tongue dreams
of wild prairies, tall grasses, but most days it shapes predictable beads
outside/inside are both ghosts of trees, please hold this ghost carefully;

the body sings its own way.
If you crack the ribs open there are stars
what would the world be like if you believed that without doing it? Magic
just beneath the surface.

Time makes the body break as waves
in the whole of the ocean; the seconds are whole
the fishes' bright mouths on bright hooks
and every day the endless sadness but if it cannot art
iculate lit like street lamps illuminating branches as webs in the quiet
orange
 the silk of it

it can take a while for evening to settle—
mud soaked through with rain looking toward the end of a long candle's
taper
 delicious movement in the word unfolding—
a flame to keep the bluest blue star flickering under our chests from being
only cold

like how each night the sun is swallowed
as darkness holds a concentrated disc of light
and every morning, the sun slips silent from the throat in a burst of choice,
as if it were my choice
to keep the sky there all day long; to speak at all.

Vertical Boundaries: Life Under the Eaves

Marie Doezema

*C*hambrés de bonnes are as Parisian as croissants or the Eiffel Tower, even if much less visible. For many of the city's residents, this is where life is lived: a small nook along the rooftops, often no more than ten square meters. These small rooms, originally envisioned by French civil planner Georges Eugène Haussmann as the servants' quarters for the building, often contain everything needed for a self-sustaining life in miniature: a single hotplate for heating up soup, a cube fridge, a kitchen sink that doubles as a place to brush teeth, a bed and—if you're lucky—a toilet and a shower. (These latter luxuries are frequently down the hall, shared by the entire floor.) The best part of these tiny nests is often the window, a bird's eye view of sky and city that lends breath to otherwise claustrophobic quarters.

The maid's room has been an essential part of artistic and intellectual life in Paris for decades. It may not be the gilt-edged French existence that many dream of when they imagine the city in all its glamorous, tired cliché, but *chambres de bonnes* are part of the quotidian; a way of life for many, be they composers or students, waitresses or writers, recent immigrants or wandering souls. Over the centuries, these little rooms have been key to the social, cultural, and economic fortitude of Paris, an integral if underestimated part of the city's identity.

For this is the best, if tiniest, real estate in Paris. Spectacular sunrises, poignant sunsets, the ever-present sound of rain, wind and pigeons. It is still possible to have one of the fanciest addresses in Paris—just across from the gargoyles of Notre Dame, high up in the Palais Royal, or footsteps away from the Jardin du Luxembourg—for a laughably small fraction of the price paid by residents of floors below.

Life in a *chambre de bonne* can be highly unromantic. It can be cold. Cramped. Lonely. But it can also be poetic, the perfect spot for writing all night by the light of a candle or meeting for an afternoon tryst. A *chambre de bonne* becomes a way of being, shrinking and adapting spatially for the sake of expanding artistically, financially, or intellectually. At the end of the day, as dusk falls over mauve-colored rooftops below, what lingers is the coveted solitude of the space. At its heart, a *chambre de bonne* is a room of one's own, a place where dreams are dreamt and plans are made, and anything might happen.

French philosopher Gaston Bachelard wrote eloquently about the allure of garret spaces in his 1958 book, *La Poétique de l'espace* (*The Poetics of Space*): "...When the attic room is lost and gone, there remains the fact that we once loved a garret, once lived in an attic. We return to them in our night dreams. These retreats have the value of a shell...In the past, the attic may have seemed too small, it may have seemed cold in winter and hot in summer. Now, however, in memory recaptured through daydreams, it is hard to say through what syncretism the attic is at once small and large, warm and cool, always comforting."

Rewinding a couple of centuries to English author and attic-lover Samuel Johnson, we find the suggestion that rooftop dwellers may have had not only cheaper rent than the inhabitants below, but also a philosophical or spiritual boost from living on high. As he writes in his 1751 essay in *The Rambler, Advantages of Living in a Garret*, "The wisdom of the ancients was well acquainted with the intellectual advantages of an elevated situation: why else were the Muses stationed on Olympus or Parnassus, by those who could with equal right have raised them bowers in the vale of Tempe, or erected their altars among the flexures of Meander? Why was Jove himself nursed upon a mountain? Or why did the goddesses, when the prize of beauty was contested, try the cause upon the top of Ida?"

It was sentiments like these—romantic notions of life on high—that inspired the serial novel *Scènes de la vie de bohème* by Henri Murger, published in 1851. Though the work may not be so well known nowadays, its offspring certainly is: The book became the source of Puccini's opera *La Bohème*, which pays tribute to the gritty, inspired life of writers, philosophers, composers and artists who live in garret spaces and other small hovels.

Author Roberto Bolaño has written about the *chambre de bonne*, too, in rather desperate and unflattering terms. From his novel *2666* comes an alarming description: "Then Pelletier could think back on the day when he first read Archimboldi, and he saw himself, young and poor, living in a

chambre de bonne, sharing the sink where he washed his face and brushed his teeth with fifteen other people who lived in the same dark garret, shitting in a horrible and notably unhygienic bathroom that was more like a latrine or cesspit, also shared with the fifteen residents of the garret, some of whom had already returned to the provinces, their respective university degrees in hand, or had moved to slightly more comfortable places in Paris itself, or were still there—just a few of them—vegetating or slowly dying of revulsion.”

Yet for every horror story of a *chambre de bonne*, there is one creative spirit who is making the best of her “dark garret,” using it as inspiration for creativity and whimsy. The 2002 documentary *Chambre de Bonne* by Finnish filmmaker Maija-Lene Rettig includes an interview with one such resident, a woman who imagines life on the rooftops like life on the high seas. “Everything is there. All that I have can be found in this little room, and sometimes this place is transformed into a ship cabin. When I’m stretched out on the bed, the only thing I can see from the smallness of this space is the sky. Nothing but sky, and I imagine I’m on a boat. Above all when there’s a stormy sky, it’s fascinating to imagine being on a ship...it takes me on a voyage.”

Writer Rebecca Solnit, who lived in a *chambre de bonne* during her student days in Paris, would later write about the role of these rooms in her book, *Hollow City*: “This building style created a sort of integrated housing: a famous illustration of the nineteenth century shows a cross-section of an apartment house with the bourgeoisie in armchairs just above the ground-floor concierge and the inhabitants getting progressively poorer as it ascended to the wretches huddled under the rooftop. Bohemia was the Brownian motion of urban life; it brought together people of different classes, was the incubator for those who would rise through talent or sink through addiction, poverty, madness; was where the new would be tried out long before it would be found palatable in the mainstream; was where memory was kept alive as paintings, stories, politics.”

Memory has a way of surviving in these small rooms, of stretching across centuries and over generations in the most mysterious of ways. Novelist Paul Auster has his own *chambre de bonne* story, a tale he describes as a “rhyming event,” one of those strange, profound coincidences that sometimes comes in life, the kind that inspires wonder and provides us meaning, even as it defies rational explanation. The story was told to Auster by his friend M, whose father hid in a *chambre de bonne* during the second World War. Twenty years later, when M moved to Paris for his studies, he found lodging in a small rooftop room. It was only after sending his father

a letter with his return address written on the envelope that the “rhyme” was discovered: it was the very room his father had lived in, a room that had helped save his life.

For all the influence the top floor has exerted over the centuries in France, it has been largely ignored. Many apartment residents walk by the service staircase without even a glance; sometimes the staircase is even hidden with a door that blends into the mirrors and moldings of an ornate entryway.

A popular 2010 film tried to change the common disregard of this floor. *Les Femmes du 6ème étage* (*The Women on the Sixth Floor*) tells the story of several Spanish cleaning women working in an upper-class Parisian apartment building in the 1960s. Though the theme is facile—wealth does not equal happiness—the film does give due credit to the fundamental role this top floor plays in Parisian life. The film’s protagonist, a wealthy businessman, moves into an empty room in the servants’ quarters after his wife accuses him of having an affair. It’s the first time he has had a room of his own, and with the help of his sixth-floor neighbors he begins to make some sense out of his life. In its cinematic way, the film brought to mainstream consciousness an often invisible floor of Paris apartments. Of course, in real life, endings are not always happy.

I’ll never forget walking through Paris on an autumn evening some years ago, stopping short at the sound of sirens. Ambulances and police were arriving at the scene of something I didn’t yet understand: a man prostrate on the pavement, his feet turned in at an unnatural angle. At first, it looked like a scooter accident, a disturbingly common phenomenon in the city, but there was no bike to be seen and his feet were bare. My gaze travelled up, past the first floor, the second, the third...all the way to the sixth. There, a small window was open, gaping, to the chilly wind outside. The man had jumped to his death. What life inside was he trying to escape?

Some lives disintegrate in these small rooms, others are built. Maria Salomea Skłodowska, long before she became the first woman to win the Nobel prize and the first person to ever win it twice, lived in her own lonely cold room above the rooftops. And though she had to carry coal up the many flights of stairs for any hope of warmth, and dinner was often only an apple and cup of chocolate, having her own space for the first time, in a city of so much possibility, proved transformative. In a poem, Marie Curie described her room as a “lonely cell,” but one she celebrated for all it contained: “Ideals flood this tiny room; / They led her to this foreign land; / They urge her to pursue the truth / And seek the light that’s close at hand.”

île

Joris Burmann

je suis l'île, et la mer
sous le soleil des mots
— couchés au sable blanc
qui bégaie et divague

quand et quand île jette
l'ancre
au bord même de ma mère
je roule dans l'écume
où elle m'a accueilli
j'ai touché le voyage
arrivé où je suis,
et vous ai recueillis.

Au plus avant
l'encore
des mots laissés
qui réfluent
réfluent
réfléchissent
sur la rive
le rivage
Vous étiez le mouvement où sou-soufflait
la chair quand en l'avant des temps
nous attisons les eaux.

mieux que mots et paroles
qui disent tant et voient
tout comme en l'enfer
que le feu illumine j'ai trouvé
son entrée son trou le plus obscur
où se lève l'endormi
entre les pages encloses
qui au profond toucher qu'inexploré
jouxte le senti et le su au son
juste d'une caresse intérieure
s'avance plein de joie
l'île blanche, dont le ciel convers
est un linceul tout imbibé de lait
délicieuse dans la crème des sens
vraie comme Leucé aux héros antiques
comme l'Agneau qui danse de montagnes en vallées,
le si vivant nuage qui tient de ses sauts
le ciel
et guide de ses chiffres la brute sentinelle

île—au bord de qui l'eux et l'y unissent
où tout en l'eau retient à couvert son cours
où les contraires se marient et se cachent
où enfin le noir parle où le blanc se tait
où tout ripaille et joue
où le vide est le tout qui brise sans retour
où toujours au creux de ta rive attends
Patiemment
Qui sauvera l'histoire du déluge mutique et des mots emmurés
qui comme au premier zoo deux par deux s'accouplent

Au
plus
avant,
avant,
sentons venir la vraie la blanche brise
qui seule palpe et brise s'y livre
s'y voile et s'y désigne toute
limpide
à l'aventure
dans le carnet
sans bord



Joris Burmann

οί λίθοι κράζουσιν

des rives
du Jourdain
quand encore son cours
aquatique coulait et baptisait
de livre en livre
mon cœur est né des rocs
• gazillion de galets •

il pose éclatés
à tes bords démis
et de leurs voix de pierre
• en toute politesse •
mes cœurs crient
sous les coups transis
du torrent taré de ton amour

qui, mesure à mesure, emmousse
mon cœur qui ne peut plus
te chanter mon amour
qui, mesure à mesure, émousse les cœurs
qui couchent dans ton lit,
qui donnent bien pourtant
• ô les galants galets •

une course à ta vie
et du poids à mes mots.

À l'aval des monts mon amour nous serons
nous ne serons plus À l'aval des monts
ce torrent et ces pierres qui s'aiment bien pourtant.

ô Tendres
les versets qui couraient
de ligne en Lignon
finissent renversés
à l'océan salé, dilués en lettres
de gouttelettes
de mer et graines
de sable
l'amour éloigne
à mesure que les rives
éloignent les amants
à mesure que s'écoule
ce qui nous sépare
à mesure que ton
regard de la page où je crie
s'éloigne
que des berges
le chant des bergers
s'apostrophe
se perd à la mer qui a noyé leurs voix

À l'amont des vallons mon amour nous serons
nous ne serons plus À l'amont des vallons
ce torrent et ces pierres qui s'aiment bien pourtant.

Au jour
dit-on nous serons
à la source inconnue
celle que • tu disais
nul vif œil n'a vu
que nous serons
Quand

tu
coul-

-eras
de
m

o

i

et je suivrai ton cours

à son reflet constant
Pour contempler nos âmes et nos
Corps à l'envi s'y donneront
Contents
Q
uand
À la source de vie et d'amour
je coulerai de toi
et tu suivras mon cours

The Shape We're In

Liya Rechtman

I. What
happened
happened
and will never
happen again, she
will tumble water and
scalding oil, hair, her skin,
down the walls of the castle
lock the doors, stay close inside
the better to hear the better to see

III. blackened crusted steamed yes
sautéed charred finish finish
crisp soaked buttered, done
drenched creamed, yes, yes
baked, fried the better
to hear the better
to see the better
to grab the
better
to
eat

II. she
is a fish-
erman's wife
tonight, deep sea
treasure, she grabs for
blanket, but there is none,
Rocks back back back against
her chest, hugs her shoulders tight,
ripped fishnets caught underwater
the better to grab the better to eat

Touching Hebrew

Liya Rechtman

נגעתי במלה העברית
כמי שנוגעת באקסית שלי בפעם האלפית
באהבה ובעצבים
בחושך ועם קשי

יצאתי מהמלה העברית
אני משוררת - אין לי שירים שם
אני מספרת - אין לי סיפורים שם
אני אמריקאית
אני קווירית
- אני רפורמית
אין לי חיים שם

(פה)

כמה פעמים הצטרכתי לגעת
בשיחות עם בני דודים
חיים של אבי
סיפורים ושירים של אנשים בדרך
המשמעות שלהם

In response to a poem by Radu Klapper, Romanian-Israeli poet



Dégustation

Lynne Bermont

The sound of pouring is fresh green and swift but
it all tastes carmine and oval.
A bacchanalian gadfly interjects and contradicts while
others sniff and sip and simper.
Oh, that one wine was oxidated. Next.
Inside lips, the palette becomes a map of knowings. Inside
glass, the glycerin clings. These lithe extensions mean little,
the sommelier says, but they glide nonetheless and beckon
something. "Everything is a something," a poet (not poetaster) said.
By extension of this blithe notion now
everyone is a someone.

Lake at the Frick

Lynne Bermont

And look, Corot is coruscating again
This lake, this slaking of nacreous light
sylvan and silver and the sky's sliver of phosphorescence
In between the calligraphy of branches,
the silhouetted rhythms of limbs
cows sans moo ruminate while a man pleads
towards the impavid pallor above
A birch reveals its palimpsest
its leaves unfettered letters read
in the silence of an arboreal boudoir, seated on tufted olive velvet.

Corot's foes are critiquing again.
Thoré intones that "one does not know where one is
or where one is going."
Birch, don't even get me started
Oh, delectable ambling, aqueous quietude
Rapturous rupture with the vapid quotidian
Envelop us in this pearlescent vagueness
Just look and let the lake incandesce
Like Corot, I care only now
for this ambivalence, this shimmer and chimera.

Rodin's Garden

Lynne Bermont

Wild rabbits and ostracons precede
this verdant geometry
once a manse then an untamed expanse
then a convent becomes space
for dance, tableaux and enacting torsos
the fashioning of hands and marmorean monuments
Balzac needs a bathrobe, by the way.

At the entrance, you're entranced by the Gates of Hell
go find shade in the grove of fragments
there I read Rilke, my book for hours
but tourists mocked me
then one had me glance at the plaque on my *socle*
Nude Woman 1898 - Under Restauration
my ignorance in abundance
but an estival reading fest I still savor.

One summer the garden stays open until midnight
faux fireflies illumine topiaries
faux stone stereos offer medieval chants
their intermittent sounds astound the unwitting
and offer unremitting orisons to stone.





Kamen Mali

Jamie Stockton

We land in Dubrovnik at noon. The mountains rise in all directions, slicing into an endless expanse of blue sky. The rocky terrain is scorched, a mix of black, grey, and brown. There is no shelter on the tarmac, no shadows, only blinding sun and mid-August heat, a stark contrast to the overcast weather in London.

The taxi from the airport winds down steep switchback roads to the seaside town of Cavtat, where bougainvillea, red tile roofs, and a canopy of Dalmatian pine trees replace the barren mountain soil.

The driver leaves us at the bus stop with our luggage. A stray dog sits on the grass, welcoming us with a friendly face. As instructed, Maria retrieves the keys from the town baker and we head toward the footpath. On the way, we pass the bus stop again, and the same stray dog stands up and trails behind us. When we reach the house on the point, at the northernmost end of the peninsula, he stops outside the front gate.

We explore the house, then sit on the porch to eat the sandwiches Maria bought at the bakery when she picked up the keys. Small fishing boats rock in the wake of a catamaran as it exits the bay. Mountains erupt from the far shore, dotted by brush fires along the ridge, smoke shimmering in the heat.

From behind the stone wall that circles the property, we hear the splash of a diver; the wail of a young child; water lapping against the shore and receding. A few islands float in the middle-distance. Dubrovnik is barely visible, no larger than a fist. The Adriatic stretches beyond the horizon.

After lunch, we unpack, change into bathing suits, and head down to the beach. There is no sand. Only rock. Giant and craggy. Like the remnants of a blasted-out quarry on the edge of the sea. The plastic lounge chairs, which rent at a daily rate, are mostly empty. The sunbathers opt instead to spread out wherever they can find a chair-shaped place on the shore. Our new friend comes with us, wagging his tail, and guards our towels and sunglasses while we swim.

Cement stairs descend from the footpath, leading into a channel of water that splits the outer rim of the rock formation to feed a small tide pool. Dried clumps of salt fill the crevices closest to the sea. In the tide pool, and along the bottom of the channel, are fist-sized stones, smooth as glass and impossible to walk on. Instead, we must dive into the deeper water beyond the outer rim. We climb down and around until we find a suitable launching pad. The soles of our feet are soft, and we feel the pressure and texture of every nook and cranny of this lunar-like surface as we approach the edge, staying always on the dry rocks, so as not to slip.

We hold hands as we walk, keeping each other steady, and when we first dive in the salt burns our eyes, but it is cleansing and we quickly grow accustomed to it. We swim until we grow tired and then dry ourselves in the sun. Our friend eventually leaves and walks down the path toward the harbor. The sun hovers above the horizon. We go back to the house to shower.

When we reemerge, it is night, and we head into town to search for dinner. The path is marked by lamp posts. Waves crash against the rocks below, but the shore and the sea are dark. The last beachgoers meander ahead of us, towels over their shoulders, with the slow stride of sandals, the warmth of their tans enhanced by the artificial light.

The harbor is full of people and life, and yet at the same time it is calm. Running lights of yachts and sailboats illuminates the water from below. Couples and families stroll along the promenade. Restaurants and cafes run seriatim from one end to the other, no separation between them, the lines of demarcation drawn only by the fact that each establishment has different chairs. We find an open table near the promenade and sit down. The menu is in several languages: English, German, French, Italian, Croatian.

Our waiter suggests that we start with a shot of rakija, a sweet and strong local version of grappa. It has the alcohol content of paint thinner, which clears us out and makes us hungry. We order soup, pasta, fish, and white wine. The air is warm and mild; the sky, clear and black. We notice

our friend sitting on the street, just outside the jurisdiction of the restaurant, not begging, just saying hello, joining us for dinner.

“He likes you,” says the man at the next table.

“We met him at the bus stop earlier today.”

“Ah. Shisa likes to wait for me there on the days I go into Dubrovnik.”

“He’s your dog then?”

The man considers this for a moment.

“No, Shisa is a town dog, a stray, but he stays with me many nights during the summer. He was left behind a few years ago, by a Japanese family who thought he had run away. He tried to swim after their boat, but it was already heading into open water. A fisherman in a skiff saw him and saved his life, then brought him back to town.”

“He followed us swimming this afternoon, up at the point. But he didn’t go in the water.”

“Kamen Mali,” he says. “It means ‘small rock.’ Shisa loves to swim, but he can’t climb back out easily at Kamen Mali.”

The waitress comes over. The man speaks to her briefly in Croatian and motions with his hands. Returning to us, he switches back to English.

“A few weeks ago, Shisa caught an octopus, a baby one.”

He holds his hands together, about the size of a grapefruit.

The waitress returns with a tray holding three small glasses of dark liquid.

“You will have a drink with me.”

“What is it?”

“A traditional Croatian after-dinner drink.”

He motions for us to pick up our glasses.

“It is a sin not to have one.”

We have three.

He tells us of his years living in Italy during the war, and about going to college in England when he was a young man. He is from this town, and although he lives in the north now, in Zagreb, he comes back every summer.

When it is time for the restaurant to close, he bids us farewell, tells us which cafes stay open late, and admonishes us not to go in the sun before three or four in the afternoon—to be like the locals. We part, and Shisa follows him into the town, in the opposite direction from our house on the point.

The walk down the path the next morning is shaded and cool. The air smells of pine and salt. Shisa is waiting at the mouth of the harbor and chooses a café for us. We order macchiatos and share the London papers. No English is spoken at the surrounding tables. No Croatian either. Still foggy from drinking the night before, we order more espresso.

Back at the house, we eat lunch on the porch overlooking the Adriatic. We make love with the windows open, embrace, whisper about our future together.

When we feel the midday heat relenting, we wander down to Kamen Mali. The sky is cloudless, a shade of blue never seen in England. Its color gradually becomes warmer as the day passes. The yellow light flickers across the mild chop on the surface of the water. The islands and coast fade into silhouette. The sun becomes larger than the earth, deep and full, before exploding at the horizon, painting the sky with streaks of orange, yellow, and purple.

For several days, we continue this routine, spending our mornings in the cafes along the harbor, sometimes staying through lunch, then napping, making love, and going to the beach. While there are many places along the coast to swim, we spend each afternoon at Kamen Mali. Then, when the sun is low, we disappear through the gate in the wall that surrounds the house on the point; shower; snack on local cheese and fresh figs; and return to the harbor for dinner. When we stay out late, after last call, we have a nightcap with the servers and bartenders from the town. The days and nights blend together.

The water is clean and clear. We learn the best places to enter, and the places with shallow rocks to avoid. We start from the outer rim, but as our diving improves we go in from the bottom of the stairs, where the water is only waist deep. At first, our fingers graze the large pebbles on the bottom of the channel, and other times we are too cautious and nearly belly flop. But soon our dives become smooth and we glide through the channel with ease, into the open water of the Adriatic. The salt improves our skin and clears our bodies of toxins. We float on our backs, watching planes descend overhead toward the airport, identifying each airline by the logo on its tail fin. We sit on the rocks until the sun dries us; and when we begin to sweat, we dive back into the sea.

A few nights before we are due to leave, during the Feast of the Assumption, a strong northern wind—a Bora—blows down the coast, bringing with it cold, choppy water. The tide rises, and when we look out at Kamen Mali the next afternoon the water is beating violently against the jagged rocks. Large swells push into the channel and crest, forming a natural water park. The local children laugh and scream, unphased by the force of the waves. The tourist children look on enviously from the shore.

We decide not to go swimming today, unsure of how to navigate the high tide. Shisa is living with us now, and we decide to take him for a walk.

All the way down the path, along the side of the cliff, Dalmatian pine trees grow from the rocks, horizontal toward the sea; their boughs floating, full of needles and cones; their branches twisting and outstretched, like giant bonsai trees.

Around the final corner, where the path winds toward the promenade, an elderly couple sits on a grassy knoll in the shade, embroidering souvenirs. We turn left at the church, and begin to climb the steep stone steps that lead into the residential part of town, carved deep into the hillside overlooking the harbor. Shisa finds a comfortable spot in the shade and lies down, announcing that he will not be joining us on this leg of the journey. We hike slowly, keeping close to the wall to shelter ourselves from the sun.

At the highest point, above the last terrace of houses, we reach a mausoleum. In front of the entrance, on a cement platform, a field of tombstones and dry graves faces the sea. Cypress trees grow straight up from the surrounding hillside. A local woman sits at a small table by the door and offers to give us a tour for ten Kuna, the local currency. We pay and follow her inside.

The mausoleum is cool and dim. A slice of daylight is visible through the open door, made brighter by the contrast.

According to our guide, when a townspeople dies, the body is carried to the mausoleum for a funeral service and the bell is rung, echoing off the mountains and out to sea, returning the person's soul to the water.

She explains that the mausoleum was built in 1920, in memory of an entire family that died of the Spanish flu, and that it is made of special white stone from a quarry on a nearby island. This is why it has stayed white all of these decades—unlike the other buildings and houses in town, which began white, but have since faded to grey.

As I listen, I do not realize at first that Maria has drifted away, has withdrawn. On the hike back down to the harbor, I ask her if something is wrong.

“No,” she says. “It’s nothing. I just realized that this is a real place. Where people are born, live their whole lives, and die.”

The next day the tide has gone down and the waves have settled. The rocks guarding the channel no longer appear treacherous. The sun shines, but it hangs lower in the sky, is less hot.

“Ready to go to the beach?” I ask, eager to resume our routine.

“No,” Maria says. “I’m going to stay here and finish my book.”

“C’mon, we only have two days left. You can read on the plane.”

“I said I don’t want to go.”

The water is cool and there are fewer sunbathers on the rocks than there were before the wind blew through. Shisa sits near my towel and watches me swim. I am nearly alone in what now feels like a vast ocean. The summer is not over, but it is fading.

I swim down the shore a little way and climb onto a high rock to warm myself in the sun. Below me, three young women in their twenties are sunbathing topless—sirens hidden in a cove among the rocks. Their skin is a deep chestnut, their bodies all different types. Two are lithe ballerinas. One with small breasts, one with large breasts. The third is curvy with a small waist, like Sophia Loren when she was young. All defying gravity.

They see me watching them. Sophia waves.

“Ciao.”

“Ciao,” I say, nodding my head.

“Americano?”

“Si, Americano.”

“Vieni a nuotare con noi.”

She stands up, puts on her top, and dives into the water.

“Venire!” she shouts after she surfaces.

I shrug my shoulders. “That’s all the Italian I know.”

Her friends laugh.

“She says come swim with us.”

They stand up and dive into the sea, a succession of mermaids.

It is warmer the following day, and Maria comes with me to Kamen Mali. She also seems warmer, more relaxed, but she does not go in the water. She stays above on the rocks with Shisa, still reading.

I swim down the shore to the cove and climb up to my perch from the previous day. Peering over the edge, I see a heavy-set, middle-aged

couple. A small child runs around playing with a toy. Perhaps the sirens have moved on, looking for other wayfarers to lead astray. Perhaps they have returned to Italy. Perhaps I imagined them.

I turn and look up to where Maria is sitting. She picks her head up from her book. I wave, but she does not see me. She puts her head down and continues to read. I walk along the rim, above the tide pool, until I reach a good place to dive back into the Adriatic, my feet now as tough as the surface of the rocks.

I swim until after sundown and climb out in the near-dark, my footing based more on habit than vision. My towel and t-shirt are the lone relics of the day. Shisa continues to guard them patiently, his leonine silhouette providing my only point of reference in the dusk.

I walk through the gate to the house on the point and look for Maria. Her book rests on a table in the entranceway, the corners bent and tinged with dirt. The smell of cypress flows down the hill from the mausoleum and through the open windows. On the porch, a lone figure gazes across the Adriatic.

The next morning, we fly back to London.



Notes from Humboldt-Logan

Anthony Immergluck

I cuss often, dress humbly,
chain-smoke behind the chain-link—
its hoppable height, its dangling padlock.
I shoulder the trash past dead
rats, spray-paint hieroglyphs
dripping down my stoop.
I often hear of altercations—
usually as a rumor,
sometimes as a gunshot, a blood stain,
a new tally added to the mural
on the side of the nail salon.
Stalactites of rust-water
hustle from the ceiling. A beer
tap for a kitchen sink.
And every night, around eleven,
an ice cream truck groans and grown
men gather at its window.
I dissuade my mother from visiting.

*

Carl says that rehab is a sham and
if I ever man up again, he'll score

me mescaline, ketamine, fentanyl,
smoke-able heroin or high-end crack.
Grandfatherly, he tells us all to gather
round for another unprompted
story about waterboarding.
He promises me a beer on the VHA.
Says if I roll with him,
no one will fuck with me.
So I roll with him occasionally.
I think he's lonely. I taught his
daughter a couple of chords.

*

Lily and I made love on the roof
in a damp spritz of weather—
a film of mold, dead roach rubble,
mist through which we could make out
the little apocalypses of the block.
Some spongy substance I couldn't trust
was holding up the drainpipes.
And we saw Natasha naked
through her kitchen window.
Her belly, in all its generous dimensions,
brushed against the sill and
ruffled the leaves of a potted plant.
She fed the cat, combed her hair,
met my eyes when I tried to hide.

*

On the day of the Puerto Rican Parade,
I passed out from let's say the heat
and woke up in brown arms saddled
with tattoos. *Come on, Princess*, said
Luís. *Don't make me fucking kiss you.*
He passed me water, beer and *maduros*,
punched me in the gut to see if I'd puke.
Luís, who muscled my car from the
snowbank—who waits out his hangovers

with Italian horror movies from the '70s.
His dreadlocks smell like burning leaves.
We once brought an old MacBook
out back and took turns smashing it
to hell with a two-by-four. I have a key
to his place and sit for the pit bulls weekly.

*

When no one's watching, I hopscotch
from pothole to pothole, trash-heap
to trash-heap. I play a little game
with myself called *Cat or Bag?*
when something whooshes from
behind an abandoned station wagon.

In a Flat

Anthony Immergluck

Charlie and me, in a flat
above a pizza shop,
sharing in parallel squalors—

We were one another's
consolation prizes
when lovers lost their patience

and left us, regretless, to catch
a train to some less Midwestern state
or to collapse into the collar
of a lessee next door.

We pissed with open hinges
and always picked *dare*
instead of *truth*.

Charlie and me, in one another's
tank tops and boxer briefs, maybe.
After a while we sort of lost track

and would just pluck some
wrinkled dollop off the carpet
and hope that it fit.

A hundred winter mornings,
stretching in silence. Some tooth-
brushing, the hair of the dog.

He read history. I read fantasy.
We marked our spots with
unpaid parking tickets.

And while the moldy percolator
gurgled and spat, one of us
would grab some hollow
wooden rib-cage loomed with steel
and pick it as if by nervous tic.

Banjo, mandolin, two guitars.

Neither of us singers but both
of us sang, pitches burdened
by years of bad habits between us.

We'd stop if a neighbor angrily
percussed on the wall or if
one of us had to leave for work.

But in the interim!

Charlie and me, in A flat, waltz time,
a little bit bluegrass and a little bit punk,
patched from bastardized standards
and refrains of our own making.

To a crowd of centipedes and stink bugs.

Do you ever wish we were gay?
Charlie asked me once.
Just kidding, he said, and
started strumming again.

That twitch in his wrist—
he could never keep time.

And those eely veins on the back
of his hand—blue and restless
as the surface of a swimming pool.

The Portrait Painter

Charli Pence

Katie grabbed a sticker from the hospice visitor's desk and placed it on her faded white blouse that had seen too many laundry cycles with colored clothing. She didn't bother writing her name on the tag; she doubted she would be there long. When she got to the room, she found it cracked open, but still knocked lightly.

"What?" a gruff voice called out.

"Mr. Nelson? May I come in?"

"Not if you're a nurse."

She opened the door and offered a smile. "I'm a reporter. Is that better?"

Clarence Nelson nodded.

"I never thought I'd say it, but shockingly, yes it is."

He straightened a little in the chair he was sitting in by the window. There was a small desk with paint supplies in a box underneath that Katie noticed as she walked in. There were no seats other than the bed, and he motioned to it. She sat on the edge, a little awkwardly.

"I'm not gonna lay there while you interrogate me, if that's what you're thinking," he said. "I get the chair because I'm the weaker one in the scenario."

"I don't see it that way, sir, but whatever you'd like is fine with me. I have a few questions here for the article. We'd like to write about your extensive career and—"

“Yeah, I know you have to say all that but I’m not answering any questions.”

“Oh, well this is really just a profile piece. It will be very positive, I can assure you.”

“You’re gonna publish it when I die though, right?”

Katie hesitated. Her editor had given her prepared talking points, but she had a feeling none of them were going to work.

“It’s really up to the editor,” she answered. “I don’t decide when articles are published.”

“If it goes out after I die, then you can screw me on it and I won’t know. Right?”

“Well, I guess, but—”

“I’m not interested in that. I don’t want you getting any quotes from me. But I’ll paint for you. You can write about that. That’s the only interaction I have with the press. You all can look at what I make and you can write about that. But that’s it.”

She sighed. Some of the other reporters had warned her that Clarence was known to be difficult to work with, but none had mentioned ever doing an interview with him.

“We may be here a while in case you want to leave now.”

“I can’t leave,” she said. “This is my job.”

His demeanor changed a little. When he looked at her this time, she felt like he was looking all the way past and behind where she sat.

“I’ll paint you,” he offered.

She stifled a laugh. She knew she needed to get the interview, but something in the way he said it made her reconsider. He had said this to many people in his lifetime and now she was one of them. The moment felt like it was the last of many.

“Okay,” she said. “What should I do?”

He shrugged and reached under the table where the supplies were stored.

“And they said I wouldn’t use these again.”

“Who?”

“The nurses.”

“They said that?”

“They didn’t have to.”

“So, they didn’t say it?” Her pen was poised to write this down, noting the possibility of an article about the staff at Greenbrier Hospice Center, but he didn’t answer.

He began his ritual of readying his workspace. She watched intently

—he didn't seem to mind, or even notice. This was a sacred transition for him—the crossing over from the natural world to the imagined, from the questions to the halting of the pursuit of answers. There was a precipice here that separated the two of them and she felt herself longing to cross over into the shadow land he had begun to create.

The paints were spread out on the desk, the paper on a small, wooden easel that she assumed was a stand-in for what he used professionally.

She glanced around the room.

“No artwork in here?” she asked.

“That would be a little ‘on the nose,’ don't you think?”

His hand moved across the page and she glanced across to see what he was working on, but he had positioned the painting just so she couldn't see. The only information she had was which colors he chose, so she took note of the palette from which he was drawing. As he dipped his paintbrush into the water, dried it on the towel, and plunged it back into a bright orange, her curiosity grew. She was not wearing orange. She didn't think she had ever worn that bright a color, but nevertheless, it had found its way onto the paper.

Her initial research into his work had revealed his reputation as someone who challenged the norms of modern art. Her favorite pieces were the ones where he drew outside the lines; the colors became their own dimension, barely revealing the object they were originally meant to depict.

“You want to see it, don't you?” he asked.

She nodded. “Not until you want me to, though.”

He turned the edge of the painting ever so slightly—just enough so that she could see where the lines had begun to form, and then been eradicated. As his hand moved, the edges of the objects on the page blurred together. The borders began to dissipate and she watched as he continued to work and the separate aspects of the painting became one together.

He looked at her and she could feel him smiling, but she didn't look away from the paper.

“It's more fun if you see the progress,” he said.

She nodded, entranced.

“Almost done,” he said.

A small part of her didn't want him to finish. There was a magic to his rhythm, a beat she couldn't quite hear on her own, and she feared that if he stopped painting, she would lose it.

His hand stopped, the paintbrush lost its momentum, and Katie continued to stare at the edge of the painting she could see. She knew he would turn it around in a few moments and she only had a short time left

before this moment was lost.

There was something here she wanted to hold onto, a pressure that was about to be released and let go. She could see the other side of the chasm just barely; the perimeter she inhabited separated her from the world in which he dwelled, and she wanted to honor this moment and take a few seconds to acknowledge the distance between them before he invited her to cross over the border and into his habitat.

He lifted the painting and turned it towards her.

Before she looked at it, she kept her eyes on him. His gaze stayed on his handiwork, a spark igniting there she had not yet seen.

She glanced at the painting. There was no beginning and no end to the image he had created. Yet, there was space for both of them within this dimension.

“Now,” he asked without looking up. “What do you see?”

She crossed over.

Bugle Taps

Robert Huddleston

Soldiers were waiting in the yard
by the stone wall in the wet grass
Two young and four old men
They were there when we arrived

Seemed like they'd been there always
But they too had risen, washed
and walked into the bright cold air
Like us, visitors from another world

A van was parked at the gate
A morning's work for early risers
The cemetery was not large
Trees glistened, glazed with rain

The dead outnumbering the living
A flag was folded by gloved hands
turning it precisely as a lathe
and gently placed in hers

They rose together as rifles cocked
The sound like branches cracking
under heavy snow from far off
as the sun broke free and vanished

Knell

Julie Ascarrunz

For my Father, born June 1937, died December 2015

*

Some want to hero away,
hold the hissing
head of pain at arm's length
or, crumple with it chest-cradled,
as all its snake-hairs bleed, out-of-breath. He,
he shuffled all day,
hunched, head down, eyes closed, defiant
confronting walls and hallways.
His continue—always the desire to do.

*

You watch, exposed.
Look through.
The window reflects,
absorbs, throws you
glisten as snow on a hillside
grave near dusk,
The sheened, black flatten of the river just below.

*

Crevasse unending. Snow—frozen, water-glazed. Sky balanced above.

*

Like a step off the sidewalk

into storm-piled snow shoved up inside my pant leg
into my boots, cutting at my collar bone, neck, wrists
Nobody saw. And then

I am looking up

*

It's morning—a mallard hen waits in the parking lot next to the body of
her drake.

Later, I drive home from work, she stands
To the side in the grass, alone.

Mom says she remembers only moments of my father's struggle into death
Hour after hour she held him to calm his thrashes, not knowing she'd forget.

*

In the cul-de-sac across the street, an old
man, shovel on his shoulder, steps carefully on ice. I cannot

see his face, squint as I may. He follows the sidewalk cleared
by someone in that house, the blue one, then he stops next door

where snow drifts swell. He balances half the height of snow
across the scoop and throws it, in momentum almost throws himself.

He shuffles some, regaining balance. Wipes his nose. What am I

*

waiting for? I watch—
that is not him.
He will not be.
There is no virtual queue
I crook my neck to
hold my phone to stay in,
listening
as the robot voice
reminds me I am still
number four of
four after an hour
The cats, the taxis all turned
down, as through a
sleeve of cellophane
or on a monitor
whose brightness button
has been nudged, contrast
broken, sound of bottles shattering
far away. My sigh,
full of holes.

A single goose flies. I don't know if he honks or if I made it up.

September 27, Paul Newman Died Today

Michele Madigan Somerville

1

I trust your birthday gift arrived, just in
time, a present perfect, landing a knockout
cross to the solar
plexus—which enters clean
into the bound-up hot and cold—
running like Barbarella not wholly
awful in a world full of spiritual tomato
cans. How unlike that palooka
you loved until the Sunday Punch,
that flesh and blood machine-
gunner-turned—peg-pants-Vitalis
corner hood, that Shakespeare-
intoning GI Bill undergrad who
assumed the position, taking on roles:
waiter, writer, father, cop—

An unworthy match, pound for pound, for you,
Our Lady of Stack-O-Barley, and Merengue
Saint Rose of Lima born rug roller,
carpet-cutter Bridget, girl bride with something
blue ever hemmed in as it were
in the beginning and ever shall be—

At least that Rocky would dance.

The satin should have been a shade
of periwinkle to set off that pair
of eyes set deep in a flushed
kisser, but we hadn't gotten color yet
in which to see him simmer and rove
too close to the flame in
a black-and-white world,
to see him pay for breaking
every rule he could dig up and bang
his head against, for the crime of aspiring while green.

The trick was to exit stage right
before the cops arrived on the scene—
but what happens when the palooka is a cop?
In which cases the trespass is made
to go away like a vapor
because that is how it goes
under the blue protection;
names and paperwork disappear
become as invisible as fragrance—
invisible as aroma
such as that which rose
wafting out of the blue
and white Corningware percolator
those evenings at 4:30, just in time
for the movie on 7.

Its syncopated cough
forced warm color into the clear
nipple of glass.

The snake of your
Raleighs or Pall Malls ascended
a rope signal
from the corner
of the walnut table.

Electrons acted in concert.
Dark Shadows
wrapped up.
The miraculous convex medium
through which he came
for us provided—

2

Those first scenes of Exodus
indicated history in the making,
a Holy land that was holy.

With four blue eyes we beheld
his unreal blue eyes. We had read
about their color and their pallor
provided a clue: values.

You did your ogling from behind milk-
bottle glass, your vision stretched
in a reach to clutch the pulchritude
of that blue-eyed Jew,
of Basil the chalice-maker,
of god Hud; of Brick, Chance, Fast Eddie—

I was too young to grasp the urgency
of Maggie the Cat but O, those lilac peepers
and full slips, the baubles and Brick
in plantation whites hanging 'round
her neck like big bird of

Paradise mislaid, misplaced, misspent.
How Irish I thought, even as a girl,
Tennessee Williams so savoring pains-
taking beauty—

3

During the Jiffy Pop Era predating “Newman’s Own”
corn in a bag
there was never
popcorn for the 4:30 movie but often we dimmed
the lights in the room so as to disappear into the Heavenly
coffee and visual ambrosia cantillating in our viscera
with its dulcet voltage.

There was taciturn smoldering.
There was summer and secondary smoke.

There was Cool Hand Luke to ignite
my pilot light as always on the rise
the reptile of gaseous matter
seeking
not so much
elevation
as escape

not Heaven
but
the Heaven
Earth mimics,
its rough facsimile
love.

4

Beyond fenestral panes
during winter months
buttery light converted
daylight to dungaree
as the clanging
of city heat rose
in 50-year-old pipes.

One year there was
incredible safety and
Ari Ben Canaan arrived
to lead “the Chosen” toward victory.

I read somewhere that Paul Newman was color
blind. The spectrum and wheel failed
to register.
But they still see blue.

The coolest color announces
the hottest bottom
of flame, Basil’s blue heat
whose softening offered malleability
that led to the fashioning
of a treasure curved smooth as
a breast or utmost grail.

5

Sometimes there was the plump scent of a bird
or pot roast in the oven heat at 5—
fat on an altar, sacrifice to a God
more angry than hungering.

Buttery schmaltz smoke
picked up the tube’s blue
glow in a room wherein
haloes of stars in jagged orbits

suggested a dizzying hell of a walloping.

Potential went kinetic.
Barbarella knocked the wind out.
Fast Eddie lost the evolutionary privilege
of opposable thumbs.
Chance was neutered for the crime
of being stupid.

When *Sweet Bird
Of Youth* aired,
I was missing
the meat
of the matter
at hand

but the foretaste of succulence
and birdbrain was nonetheless—

6

It's faintly creepy, I suppose, such
nostalgia: that for a young
mother, the two of us ignited,
united in fixation, our
tandem focus on a common
object of desire,
the two of us, side by side
on an evergreen
couch whose color was chosen to conceal stain,
taking in the broken beauty
of perfect love crippled by football, booze, hatred
of women; demise of imagination
in our so-called home
in which the so-called "man
of the house" played both the roles
of alpha and dog.

You took no pride in passing on the baton:
the thrill bad boys bestow, whether tough-talkin' Rocky
or a Sloe Gin-Brick, drawling, danger.

You passed on the desire to go where those succulent
birds of paradise loom, where flesh-eating doves fly
into glass and shatter it

where beauteous beasts
like that smoking hot
red-sauce speed-racer fox—crash, burn.

7

At the breakneck finish,
you both weighed in at nearly
nothing.

Like the star
in question, you gave fuming
up too late and went down for the count:
two bouts the same year.

You always knew which side you were on
You knew how to make a buck
You knew what it is to bury a son
how to stick it out in love
You looked out through eyes that grew more blue
as hours passed.

8

Days came and passed.
Dark shadows descended.
Why Maggie ever hissed
sharpened down a fine
white hot point.

This stint is a gift,
this respiring in the flesh.

Dreaming goes delectably
in its train.

Reporters once asked
why the screen idol
declined to run around
on the missus; he answered,
“Why go out for hamburger when—”

Behold logic of one who believes
himself worthy of dessert.

When asked why he didn't live in Hollywood,
Paul Newman answered:
"Too close to the cake."

9

You take the cake.

It's your birthday today
and Paul Newman just crossed
to the other side, sweet bird,
so unlike a chicken.

Make a wish before you blow

Dare to drink
from the vessel
Basil the Greek
softened in his clutch.

It's your birthday. I trust your gift
is on its way.

Devil food, Angel food, "just
desserts," made fresh, made ripe, made new.

Have your beefcake
and eat it too.

A *Primum Mobile* cut,
your pretty cowboy
your holy Greek
your pretty pug
your glorious inmate
your bad lieutenant
Your Fort Apache "Lieu."
He's all yours.
He's better

than ever. He's all
new, all yours, all him, all them,

all meat and
soul poised
to leap
out of the aforementioned
cake
(potential to kinetic)
in nothing flat
as choirs of angels dance
Merengue on cloud—
On aisle 9, your own
Paul Newman
who died just
in time
for your first birthday in Heaven

because somebody up there likes you.

Contributors

Edwin Alanís-García is the author of the chapbook *Galería* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2019). His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Acen-tos Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *Tupelo Quarterly*. He received an MFA in Creative Writing from New York University and is currently finishing an MTS in Philosophy of Religion at HDS.

Julie Ascarrunz lives in the foothills of Colorado. She has an MFA from NYU's Writers' Workshop in Paris. Her work has been published in *Per-iphery*, *Main Street Rag*, *niche*, *aaduna*, *Calliope*, *Camroc Press Review*, and *Streetlight Magazine*.

Marie Doezema is a Paris correspondent for various international publica-tions. She also serves as the head of the languages department at the Sorbonne's journalism and communications school.

Rebecca Doverspike's chapbook, *Every Present Thing is a Ghost*, is forth-coming from Slapering Hol Press in March 2019. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Ruminate*, *Leveler*, *Souvenir Lit Journal*, *5x5 Literary Magazine*, *Valley Voices*, and *STATOREC* among others.

Anthony Immergluck is a writer, critic, and musician with an MFA in Poetry from NYU-Paris. His work has received an Academy of American Poets Prize and the Lane Prize for Poetry, and has been shortlisted for the World Nomads Travel Writing Scholarship and the C&R Press Summer Tide Pool Chapbook Contest.

Nick Maione is the author of the chapbook *In A Well In A Church On An Island In The Lake* (2016). He is the founder & director of Orein Arts and edits the online publication *Windfall Room*. He is from Upstate New York and lives in Western Massachusetts.

Albin Millot is a French photographer based in Paris. His long-term proj-ects, books, and exhibitions explore the relationships of human beings to their wild and/or urban environments.

Lily Mindich is a representational painter living and working in Chicago, IL. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2016 and has exhibited at galleries throughout the U.S. and Europe, most notably Sullivan Galleries in Chicago, Ice House Gallery in Evanston, IL, Dillon Gallery in Madison, WI and the International Centre for the Arts in Monte Castello di Vibio, Italy.

Alejandra Oliva is an essayist and embroiderer. She is the author of chapbook *Declaration*, out from Guillotine Books. "Border Rites" originally appeared online at *The Christian Century*.

Charli Pence is a candidate for a Masters in Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School, focusing on religion, literature and culture. More of her work can be read at charlotterosepence.co

Syona Puliady is pursuing a master's degree in theological studies to learn more about Saurashtran histories with textiles, temples, and taxes. She hopes her research will examine how Saurashtrians of Madurai have imbued their religio-cultural expressions of self in visual and performing arts—all of which subtly weave the Saurashtran identity into a Tamil landscape.

Liya Rechtman is a Harvard Divinity School and Harvard Kennedy School of Government concurrent student. She writes and thinks about transnationality. Her work has previously been published in the *Boston Globe*, the *Forward*, and *Washington Jewish Week*.

Michele Madigan Somerville attends HDS, and is the author of *Black Irish*, *WISEGAL* and *Glamorous Life*.

Jamie Stockton is a graduate of the NYU Paris Writer's Workshop MFA program. He lives in New York City.

Regina Walton's poems are reprinted from her collection *The Yearning Life*, which won the Phyllis Tickle Prize in Poetry. She was a finalist for the 2018 Sewanee Review Poetry Contest. An Episcopal priest in parish ministry, she is an HDS alum, denominational counselor, and lecturer.

