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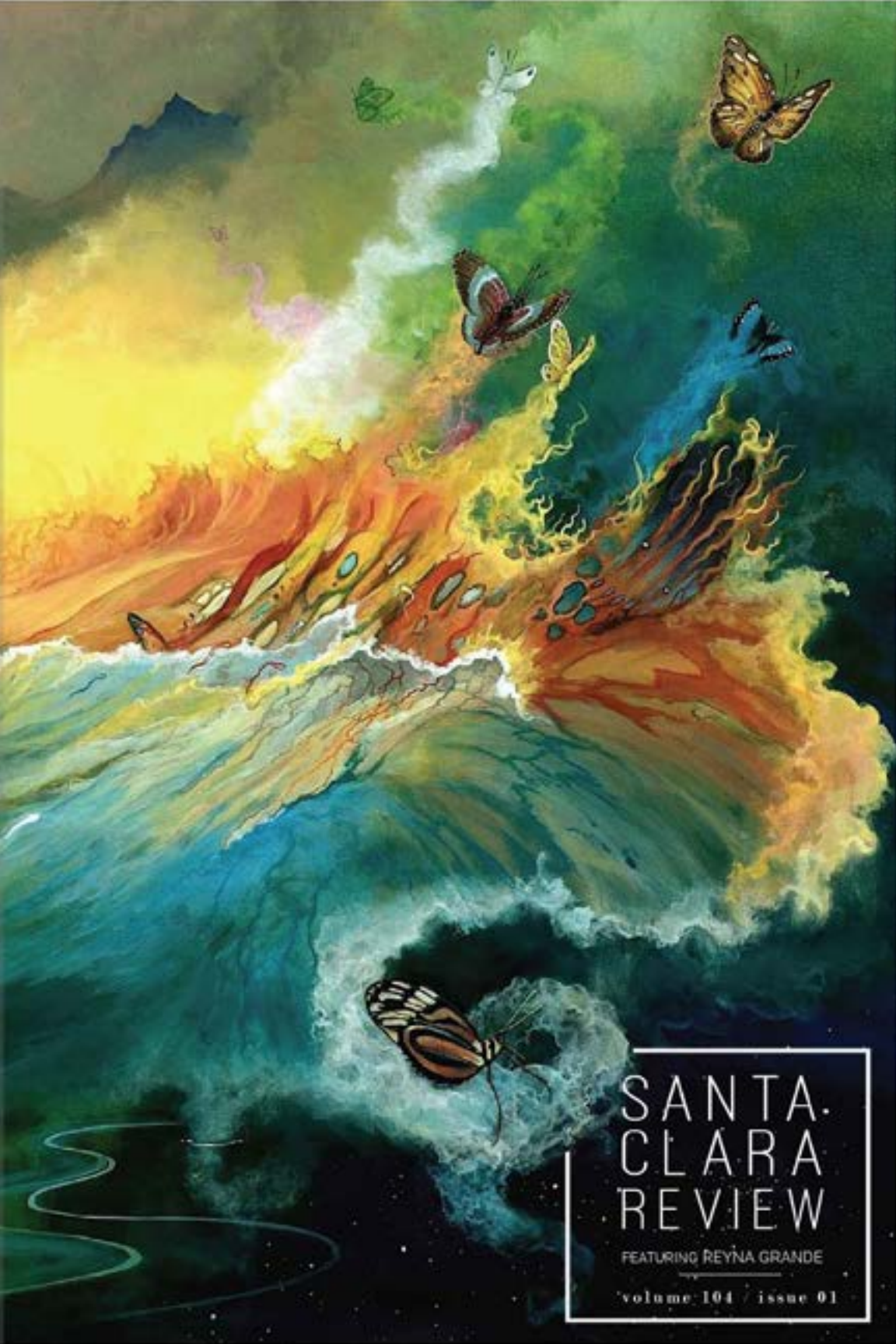


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SANTA.
CLARA
REVIEW

FEATURING REYNA GRANDE

volume 104 / issue 01

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FRONT COVER / ***FIRST LIGHT***

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SANTA
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REVIEW

volume 104 / issue 01

SANTA CLARA REVIEW

VOLUME 104 // ISSUE 01

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURED AUTHOR

REYNA GRANDE / EXCERPT FROM THE SEQUEL TO *THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US*
03

REYNA GRANDE / EXCERPT FROM THE SEQUEL TO *THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US*
07

POETRY

CATHLEEN STEWART / DIALOGUE WITH PAUL CELAN'S "STRETTO"
11

NATE STEIN / WE'D FIGHT ABOUT WHICH LANGUAGE WE COULD TALK ABOUT
OURSELVES IN
12

MARILEE RICHARDS / SIERRA CLUB SINGLES
28

MARILEE RICHARDS / MONARCH IN THE HOUSE
30

TOBY GOOSTREE/ MOSES
31

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS / ON BEING TOLD YOU MUST BURN LIKE THIS
46

MARCIA LOGHRAN / THE BURDENED VESSEL
47

CLAY WATERS/ THE LAST CHRISTMAS
49

LAUREN SCHARHAG / IN EVENT OF MOON DISASTER
72

ERICH SLIMAK / COMPROMISE ELSEWHERE
75

JENNIFER HAMBRICK / EVA GOUËL'S LAST TANGO WITH PICASSO
76

CYNTHIA SCHWARTZBERG EDLOW / TUESDAYS I WEAR PERFUME FOR A BISON
78

FICTION

MEGAN PADILLA / YOU SHOULD KNOW
18

SEAN JACKSON / THE LAST FIRST STAR
56

NONFICTION

MAURA TURCOTT / WRITING ON THE WALL

32

JENNY FERGUSON / THEY SAY I'M LUCKY I HAVEN'T HAD IT WORSE

86

ART

ROBERT SHARDA / PINK SOMNAMBULIST

15

CARA BROWN / OFFERING

16

FABRICE POUSSIN / DROWNING

17

LAURIE BARNA / LIBERTY ABOVE ALL

43

KAI HIROTA / RISE AND SHINE

44

LARRY SACKS / TRANQUILITY

51

BILL MOY / BIRDS

52

LARRY SACKS / DEFINITION

53

JENNIFER LOTHRISEL / EMPTY DRAWERS

54

BORIS KOODRIN / THE BEHOLDER'S "I"

67

BORIS KOODRIN / GRANDMOTHER

68

BORIS KOODRIN / FIRST LIGHT

69

ROBERT BHARDA / ASTROLOGER

70

LYNETTE COOK / BLUE BALCONY

81

BRIAN HARVEY / TIED, FRONT AND SIDE

82

SCOTT SHAFFER / EZEKIEL'S WHEEL

83

SCOTT SHAFFER / RISING FROM THE ASHES

84

EDITOR'S NOTE

HENRY STRICKLAND

volume 104 // issue 01

TO THE READER,

I'm an Economics major and a Philosophy minor, which means I am thoroughly out of my depth when it comes to writing this editor's note. My initial attempt read like a middle school graduation speech that cozied up with a thesaurus one time too many. The words were lofty but lacked purpose. The sentences were eloquent but empty. I tried to convey my thoughts through grand metaphors, and in doing so I lost my voice in a sea of third-person platitudes.

So here I am, two "persons" closer to you, dear reader, and now that I have my voice back, I can tell you what my highfalutin flop of a rough draft could not: with this issue of the Review, you're in for a real treat. Bear witness to Jenny Ferguson's formidable feminist voice as she reclaims her body in "They Say I'm Lucky I Haven't Had It Worse." Let Sean Jackson whisk you away on a heartbreaking space odyssey with "The Last First Star." Discover the value of adhering to your principles (as well as your cold cuts) in Erich Slimak's "Compromise Elsewhere." And revel in the tumultuous landscape of churning waves and glistening stars depicted in Boris Koodrin's "First Light," which happens to adorn the cover of this issue. We are truly proud to present the collection of profound, entertaining, and evocative works that appear in this edition of the Review.

In closing, I'd like to recognize the many passionate, genuine, and good-hearted people who made this issue possible. First, I would like to commend the members of our editorial board, who carefully evaluate dozens of submissions to narrow down the works that are ultimately showcased here. I would like to thank our faculty advisor, Kirk Glaser, and my fellow editors as well; their devotion to the

Review and unbridled enthusiasm for art and literature push this magazine to new levels of excellence. I would also like to praise the creators and dreamers who were bold enough to send us their work and nourish your soul with their words and images. And thank you, dear reader, for breathing life into our humble magazine through the simple yet commendable act of taking the time to read it.

HENRY STRICKLAND
editor in chief

This issue is accompanied by our new online subscription service. If you would like to receive future copies of the Review in the mail, you can visit us at santaclarareview.com to sign up for an annual subscription. We greatly appreciate your support of this magazine, and would love to continue sharing it with you in the years to come.

REYNA GRANDE

SANTA CLARA REVIEW

featured author

stories from

THE SEQUEL TO *THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US*

(Washington Square Press)

DEAR READER,

THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US ends when I leave Los Angeles to become the first person in my family to attend a four-year university and pursue my dream of being a writer. Readers of that book often tell me how much I've inspired them and how they see themselves or someone they know in my story. Others tell me that, until they read my memoir, they never realized how much immigrant people like me struggle to come to The United States. These comments are often followed by a question: What happened to you at the university? How did you finally become a writer? Did you ever overcome the distance between you and your family? How does someone like you, a former undocumented immigrant who attained a college degree and became a US citizen against all odds, dare to become a writer?

The sequel to THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US (still untitled) attempts to answer those questions and more. These two excerpts from my new memoir touch on the “distance” that continued to separate me and my father, despite my attempts to reconnect with him. I hope you enjoy reading them!

With love,

REYNA GRANDE
featured author

EXCERPT FROM SEQUEL TO *THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US*

REYNA GRANDE

nonfiction

When I graduated from UCSC in June of 1999, they all came to my graduation. All my siblings were there and their spouses and children. My former English teacher Diana and my mother came, too. And so did my father.

I had not expected my father to come. I had not allowed myself to even dream that he would. By then I had learned that the only way to stop being disappointed was by not expecting much from either of my parents.

So when my father showed up in Santa Cruz for my graduation, for a moment I thought he was not real, just the way I had felt all those years ago when he had shown up in Mexico when I was nine years old. Back then, I had thought I had conjured him up—like a spirit—after so many years of longing for his return.

The day before graduation my father invited me to lunch, and I took him to my favorite Thai restaurant so that he could try my favorite soup. He'd never been to a Thai restaurant, he said. And I knew that. He never ate anything that wasn't Mexican.

When we sat down at the table and my father looked at the menu, I was nervous. Perhaps it had been a bad idea to bring him here. What if he hated the food? What if he was angry that I'd made him waste his money on this? I should have taken him to Taquería Vallarta instead. He glanced at the menu, and as I looked at him I could see his eyebrows pull together into a frown. His forehead wrinkled the way mine always did. I felt myself sinking into the floor.

When the waitress approached, she asked us a question and my father and I looked at each other in surprise. She was speaking to us in Thai!

“Excuse me?” I said.

She repeated herself, again in Thai, and my father and I smiled at each other from across the table. “We aren’t Thai,” I said. “We are Mexicans!”

And the waitress laughed, surprised. “Oh, my God, you could have fooled me!” she said.

My father and I laughed as well. He and I looked Asian. With our slanted eyes, wide nose and cheeks, we looked so much alike, my father and I. That moment of confusion had brought about a moment of recognition because he was looking at me the same way I was looking at him. We recognized each other from across the table. Whatever had happened in the past—for that one moment there at that Thai restaurant—no longer mattered. What mattered was that we had the same blood flowing through our veins, a common history woven from the same dreams and sorrows. For that brief moment, there was no distance between us.

I saw my father’s shoulders relax. He said, “Why don’t you order for us, Chata, since you know what you like from here?”

“Alright,” I said, and the ache in my stomach began to disappear. I ordered us Chicken Pad Thai noodles and my favorite coconut shrimp soup to share.

“This is a nice town,” he said. “So different from Los Angeles.”

“I’ve been happy here,” I said.

He looked at me for a moment, and I wondered if perhaps he was reading too much into what I’d said. Was he thinking that woven into that statement was the fact that I had not been happy in Los Angeles? In his home? With him?

“Then you should stay,” he said. “Why would you leave then?”

I wanted to stay. But Santa Cruz was the kind of place that is not easy to stay in when you are poor. As a college student I had not minded the low-paying jobs that I had found at the mall, at the boardwalk selling hotdogs and ice cream cones. Those jobs were okay when I was a student, but I was graduating now, I’d have to make it on my own, pay my students loans, my bills.

“All my friends who are staying can’t find work,” I told him. “They are taking jobs in whatever they can find. And I didn’t work so hard to get through college to end up at a coffee shop! Maybe in L.A. I’ll have better luck. Plus, I’ll be closer to you, to Mago, Carlos.” I did not mention my mother because even to that day he still didn’t like to talk about her.

He didn’t say I could stay with him if I did come back to LA and I didn’t ask. I still didn’t know where I was going to live, but wherever that was, I didn’t think I could go back to living with my father, even if he offered.

The food arrived and we set out to eat. I served him the Pad Thai

and the soup and I watched him dig in, observing his face for a clue about whether or not he liked it. After a few bites in silence I couldn’t wait any longer and I asked. “How do you like the soup?”

“It tastes like armpit,” he said, but he ate it all.

UCSC has a tradition that all graduating seniors are encouraged to write an essay about a teacher that changed their lives. The winner would get to read this essay at the commencement ceremony and the inspirational teacher would be presented with the Distinguished Teacher Award. I jumped on the opportunity. Ever since my community college English teacher, Diana, had taken me to live with her and had supported and encouraged me to keep pursuing my education, helping me to transfer to UC Santa Cruz and getting me on the right path to becoming a writer, I’d made a vow that one day I was going to repay her for her kindness. This was the perfect way to do that—to have my beloved university give her an award, to recognize her as a teacher who changes lives. I had never worked so hard on an essay. I turned it in and a few weeks later I’d received the news that I had won!

UCSC paid Diana’s airfare and hotel so that she could attend my graduation. I hadn’t seen Diana in three years, and when she arrived I was filled with pride to show her that everything she had done for me had paid off. I had honored her in every way I could as her student, as her mentee, as her friend.

At the ceremony, I was invited to read my essay before Diana was presented with the Distinguished Teacher Award. I spoke about the circumstances that had brought Diana into my life—my father’s alcoholism, the abuse I had experienced at home, the lack of support, his arrest. At that moment what most mattered to me was to honor Diana. This was my first time thanking her, publicly, for what she had done for me. “She was my hero. She saved me,” I said in my speech, not knowing how those words, once they were released into the world, would float across the field carried by the ocean breeze to my father, and how they would make him feel.

After the ceremony, my father retreated once again to his stoicism, his curtness, his indifference. The man I had had lunch with the day before, that had laughed with me, that had eaten my soup even though it tasted like armpit, was gone.

He gave me a quick hug, and he seemed unwilling to be in the pictures that we took. He had retreated into himself, and I could see the yearning in his face to leave. If he hadn’t come in Mago’s car and had brought his own, he would have taken off. It was then when the realization

of what I had done hit me.

My father was a private man. Through the years, whenever I asked him about the past, he would hardly ever share anything about himself. He would always say, “the past is past. Just let it go.” He did not like to talk about himself even with his family.

“Reynita, I’m so proud of you!” Diana said to me over and over. And Carlos and Mago, my mother and Betty said the same.

I looked at my father, waiting—hoping—for the words I had always longed to hear from him. That he was proud of me. But all he said was, “You told everyone I’m an alcoholic. That I beat you.” And I knew then that even though on that very day of June of 1999 I had made history by becoming the first in my entire family to graduate from college—that speech was what my father would always remember about that day.

EXCERPT FROM SEQUEL TO *THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US*

REYNA GRANDE

nonfiction

One day, my father called to ask me for a favor. I was surprised that he’d phoned me. I could count the number of times we’ve spoken to each other with one hand since I graduated from UC Santa Cruz and had returned to Los Angeles. What surprised me though was that he was asking for a favor. It was so unlike him.

“I was wondering if I could stay at your house until I find a place of my own. Maybe just a month.” Not too long before, my father made a bad investment. He sold his house in Highland Park and moved to Adelanto, a town over an hour and a half drive from L.A. My cousin’s husband convinced him that houses were dirt cheap in Adelanto, and he could have a nice big house with a big yard for half the price. But my cousin failed to mention that there were no jobs in Adelanto, and my father had no choice but to ask for his former job back in Culver City. “It’s too long of a drive,” he told me.

That was an understatement. Without traffic, the drive from Adelanto to Culver City was almost 2.5 hours each way. I never thought I would ever live with my father again. When I left his house for Santa Cruz I vowed I would never, ever, live with him again. When I returned to Los Angeles, I’d struggled to make it on my own, sleeping for six months on my brother’s living room couch, trying to find a job to pay back my student loans. Now I was a full-time teacher for LAUSD, a single-mom, and at twenty-six- years old, a proud homeowner.

Now here was my father wanting to come live with me.

“Okay,” I said.

I offered him my son’s bedroom but he refused. Instead, he moved into the detached garage, which was nothing but studs and stucco, barren

and dark. It was not a finished room, not comfortable in the least. But he was used to worse. As a child, he'd lived in shacks where he'd slept on a straw mat over a dirt floor. In the U.S. he'd never gotten used to beds, and often, through his years living with my stepmother, she'd wake up to find him sleeping on the hard, unforgiving floor. It was one of the ways his childhood still haunted him.

Now he was at my house, and for the most part he kept to himself. He made a point to leave the house as early as possible so I never saw him, although sometimes I'd wake up and hear the shower running. That was the only way I knew he was actually here. He'd come home late, and most of the time he entered through the patio door and didn't even come into the house. It angered me that he went out of his way to avoid me. I knew he did it as to not inconvenience me. He thought that staying away would make things better, so that I wouldn't think of him as a burden.

I didn't know how to tell him that I wanted his company. That I yearned for it. That I wanted to sit and have coffee with him in the mornings. And in the evenings, I wanted to make him dinner. Sit with him out on the porch or in the patio and watch Nathan play with his toys while we talked about the future. That had always been my favorite topic of conversation with my father. The future. The dreams that we dreamed.

But he would have none of it. He made no effort to connect with me or my little boy, and though it hurt, I let him be. I told myself it was better that way, to keep our distance. If I didn't see him I could pretend he wasn't here. I could continue to live my life the way I'd been living it ever since I moved out of his house. I could continue to pretend that I didn't need him. That I had never needed his love.

Because I wouldn't accept money from him for rent, he started to do things around the house. He unclogged the bathroom sink, fixed the leaky faucet, replaced a bad light, pruned my plants, watered the grass. Once, I mentioned that I would like to have a pergola—but not knowing the word in Spanish, I called it a little house, “una casita” over the patio. He offered to build the “casita” for me. I'd come out to the patio in the evenings and sit on a bench while he worked. I didn't know what to talk to him about so I just sat and watched. He measured the wood, then cut it with an electric saw. Little by little the pergola, the “casita”, began to take shape. I admired how skillful he was.

“Where did you learn to build like that?” I asked him one day.

He turned off the drill and told me a story I had never heard before. He said that both his parents were so abusive, constantly beating him and insulting him, that one day, when he was seventeen, he couldn't take it anymore and he'd ran away to Mexico City. I tried to picture that boy, and how much courage it must have taken to leave our hometown of Iguala, Guerrero, and go to the big city where he knew no one, where everything

was different—the tall buildings, the wide paved streets, the cars, the metro, the millions of people. It must have been a scary place for a young country boy like him with a third grade education, having known no life outside of Iguala's dirt roads and fields and shacks. He was lucky, he said. He found a job in construction and that was where he learned how to build. How to use his hands to lay brick and tile, to stir mortar, to measure and cut, to hammer and drill, to survive.

“And then what happened?” I asked. “How did you end up back in Iguala?”

“My father came to look for me,” he replied. “He came to take me home. So I returned. But I told him that if he ever laid a hand on me again, that would be the last time he ever saw me.”

He resumed the drilling and I knew the conversation was over.

I thought about that dream house my father wanted to build for us in Mexico, the reason why he had headed to the U.S. If he had had the money to buy the material, he could have built us the house with his own hands. He wouldn't have had to leave us behind in Mexico for the eight years that it took him to build us that house. He could have stayed with us, not broken up our family.

Maybe then there would be no distance between us. Maybe then I would have been able to talk to him some more and not feel awkward doing it.

For the several days he worked on my “casita,” I sat there and watched. He never told me any more stories about his past. I sat there and as the pergola began to take shape I pretended that he was building us another dream house. Just like the one in Mexico. I pretended that he was going to stay with me forever. That this time, he would never leave me again.

A few days later, he told me that he and my stepmother were moving back to L.A. and buying a house. “I will hurry up so I can finish the ‘casita’ before I move out,” he said.

Soon, he was gone. I came out to the patio and looked at the pergola, the ‘casita.’ If it weren't for that, I would have felt that it was just a dream, that my father had lived here with me. And as I stood there, the ‘casita’ rising above me, I realized that for the second time in my life, my father had built me a house. But not a home

DIALOGUE WITH PAUL CELAN'S "STRETTO"

CATHLEEN STEWART

poetry

Paul Celan is a poet and translator, born into a Jewish family in Romania. Both parents were killed in the Holocaust and he served in a slave labor camp, yet he is considered one of the major German-language poets of the post-World War II era. "Stretto" is one of many poems informed by the Holocaust.

I spoke to you then. We held tight
in the center, a mist held.

It came to us and it did not mend our concern.
We lived on crystalbreath then. The truth shot out.

And then – again, it was then – the night
was a square or a circle, green circles,
or the night was squares of roll call,
5 x 5. Not just anyone could join us. We were
his chimney souls then.

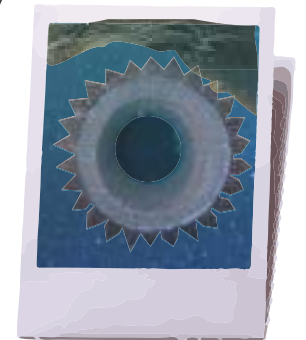
It was night enough to expect an owl's flight.
We had empty hands. Shots shot out. My
hands rose by themselves and yours
did too. One of us remembered.

And after that, we thought stars
might be....
And stone temples are...

A place to raise hands.

Now it is growing darker.

We wring our hands and study the topography,
faith peeling like an infant's skin.



with art pieces from Kai Hirota, Boris Koodrin & Scott Shaffer

WE'D FIGHT ABOUT WHICH LANGUAGE WE COULD TALK ABOUT OURSELVES IN

NATE STEIN

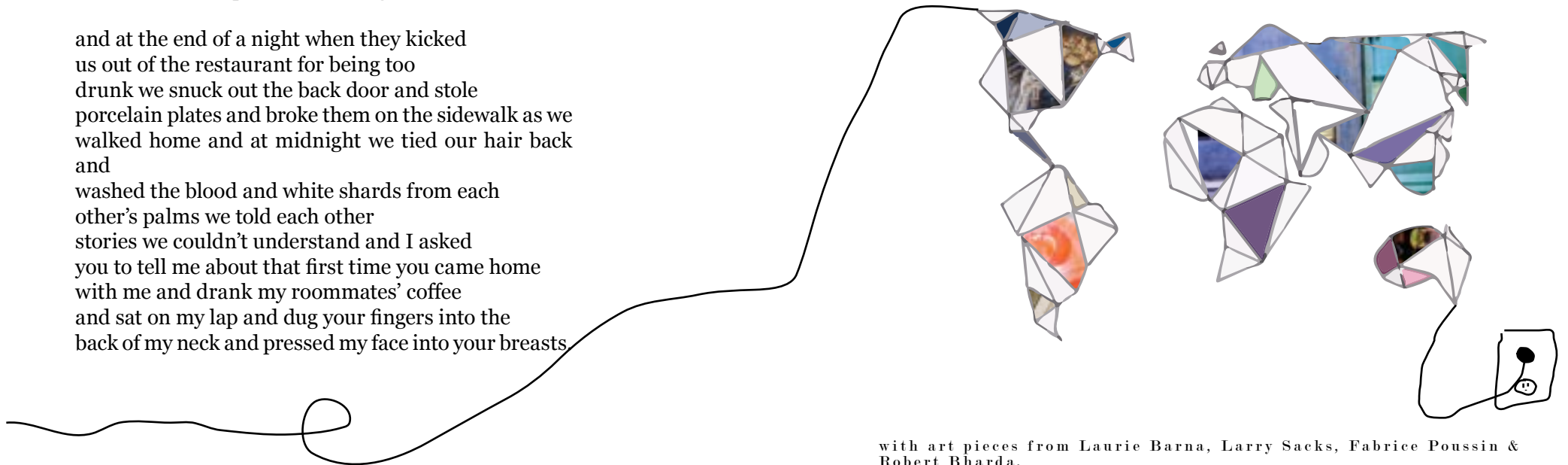
poetry

there was a restaurant we used to go
to in Argentina before we could
even speak to each other where
we could be poor and still eat bread
and olive oil and wine all day where
you tried to teach me enough words in your
language that I could tell you how I felt
about you.

you told me your family was never
allowed to speak its own language your
parents ran from Germany and Portugal and
you ran from Brazil and you wondered
where your kids would run from and
worried if there would forever be enough
tongues in the world for your descendants
to learn and escape from and forget.

and at the end of a night when they kicked
us out of the restaurant for being too
drunk we snuck out the back door and stole
porcelain plates and broke them on the sidewalk as we
walked home and at midnight we tied our hair back
and
washed the blood and white shards from each
other's palms we told each other
stories we couldn't understand and I asked
you to tell me about that first time you came home
with me and drank my roommates' coffee
and sat on my lap and dug your fingers into the
back of my neck and pressed my face into your breasts

no one talked to you at school. no one
could mention that you wore the same clothes
every day and you told me that you had tried being
angry
and that your whole family had tried being angry
and that in fact you had tried everything but
nothing seemed to work but it was okay to start over
because every
time you did you got better at it and we'd fight
over which language we could talk about
ourselves in and you worried about telling me
too much because it meant something to you
and you thought it might mean that soon it'd
be your turn to run again.



with art pieces from Laurie Barna, Larry Sacks, Fabrice Poussin & Robert Bharda.



PINK SOMNAMBULIST

ROBERT BHARDA

Digital images from templates
11" x 14"



OFFERING

CARA BROWN

watercolor
29" x 39"



DROWNING

FABRICE POUSSIN

digital photography

YOU SHOULD KNOW

MEGAN PADILLA

fiction

My little sister's house smells like damp carpet and floral bouquet air freshener. She uses the stuff whenever we come over, both Josh and I—when I come over by myself, the house smells like damp carpet and hotdog water—so, of course, Josh says, “Smells nice in here,” as we hang our coats in her hall closet. There is no standing for ceremony at my sister's house. We let ourselves in after a superficial knock, which nobody can hear over the living room television. Today it's blaring The Wiggles, and I hate that I know that, so I touch Josh's elbow and nod toward the dining room indicating that we should sneak around to the kitchen, and he says, “Aw, don't be hateful,” then heads straight into the living room, and I can hear the twins yell, Uncle Josh in unison while I slink past my sister's worn-out dinette.

I don't hate kids. I just don't know what to do with them, and I don't particularly want to have any of my own. My family doesn't get it. I'm the older sister. I'm supposed to be the one with the husband and two kids. They don't understand why I'm so un-motherly. It's just one of those things. You know—those things that happen when you're young that scare you into a state of vigilance, like first-time sex with that really cute guy from your dorm while your roommate is out of town, which somehow culminates with you having to stick your fingers up in yourself to root around for the condom that got lost, followed by the subsequent pregnancy test and STD screening, which all amounts to an experience that proves to be so traumatic that this new found vigilance never wanes and you end up being an adult with what your sister calls “really fucked up family values.” It's one of those kinds of things.

Okay, so maybe it's not all that common. Maybe you'd have to be an anxiety-riddled youth like I was, but in any regard, wine is a cure-all, and Leah already has the glasses lined up on the kitchen counter. I pull the bottle of Riesling from the fridge before she notices I'm behind her.

“I love wine. Wine, wine, wine. Down it goes. Down into my belly.”

“That movie is so stupid,” she says and continues chopping tomatoes into neat cubes and sliding them to the end of the cutting board. She asks where Josh is without looking up (in the living room), and I ask where her

husband, Steven, is (taking a shower), then I take a long sip of wine and watch her rinse another tomato for the homemade spaghetti sauce she's only making to be pretentious. I've seen jars of Prego in her cabinet before.

For lack of a better transition, I say, “So, how are things?” and Leah interprets things as her children and reminds me that their fifth birthday is coming up and to clear my Saturday so I can join them at the bounce-house place for the party. Last year was a princess party with real for-hire Disney princesses. The year before—a rented backyard petting zoo.

“If I go, can I actually bounce in the bounce house?” I ask her.

“It's for kids, Aria,” she says, but I know there will be parents there so, obviously, it's not just for kids. She adds, “No, there won't be any booze,” before I even ask.

“Sounds fantastic,” I tell her, really laying on the sarcasm, but she's distracted by the sound of Addison and Avery squealing Pony, pony! from the living room: Josh, no doubt, crawling around on the floor even though I've told him to stop doing that because then they think they can get me to do it, too. It's terrible for my lower back.

Leah says, “He'd be a great dad.” She nods toward the living room.

Josh doesn't want kids any more than I do. He's just good at faking it. It makes him look better for being the long-term live-in boyfriend in a family that values marriage.

“You would, too, you know—be a good mom,” Leah says.

“That's what you want, not me.”

“Well, let me ask you this—” Leah sweeps her tomatoes into a sauce pan, then sets down the cutting board and knife. “What would you do if it just happened?”

“Impossible, obviously. I take too many precautions.”

Leah shakes her head in a way that suggests she is so much more mature than I am. She wasn't so smug when she got pregnant. If I recall correctly, and I do, she came to my door all damp from rain and crying, asking me to go to the drug store and get a pregnancy test. I was twenty-seven and she was twenty-three, and like a good big sister, I went to the drug store and chose the most expensive test because it had a digital screen that would display the words pregnant or not pregnant unlike the cheaper models with pink lines or blue lines. I had to make eye contact with the store clerk as she rung me up, and I couldn't tell if her expression was one of pity or congratulation, but she said good luck when she passed me the bag. Then, later, when Leah came out of the bathroom, I told her I'd help her find an abortion place, that I'd go with her, I'd do whatever she needed, but she gave me this wounded look and I realized, then, that we'd never had the abortion talk.

“Well, just what-if?” she says now and reminds me that Aunt Carol got pregnant at thirty-five after ten years of fertility issues. I know

she knows that I have no moral qualms with terminating an unwanted pregnancy, but does she want to hear me say it? Because I will.

Instead, I tell her, “What-if nothing. I don’t want to play what-if,” and before I have to get into past events, Steven walks in and jumps to my aid, telling Leah to quit aggravating his favorite sister-in-law.

“Where’s Mr. Skinny Jeans?” Steven asks, and I don’t even care that he calls him this because Josh has a fantastic ass in those skinny jeans, so I just nod toward the living room. Steven doesn’t look bad himself tonight, in dark-wash denim and a button down. He hugs me long enough for me to catch a whiff of the cologne that is probably also an irregularity, and I like that he still tries to impress me after all this time. Leah notices too, because she pinches the collar of his shirt and asks him why he’s so fancy-smanchy.

“We’ve got guests,” he says and my sister rolls her eyes and says, “I’d hardly call Josh and Aria guests.”

Becoming an aunt might have been one of the things that did it. I mean, picture me, sitting in the corner of the living room while my mom and sister fussed over those newborn babies. Mom placed one in my lap—Avery I think—laid her in the crease between my thighs because it’s less complicated than trying to cradle a baby and support the head and whatnot. They took a picture of me like that: Avery laying comfortably, her little arms stroking the air, me sort of just sitting there trying not to upset anyone: watching the way my sister stood, gently bouncing, and holding Addison to her chest with so much ease. So naturally.

“Smell her little head,” she said. My sister pressed her lips against the downy softness of her daughter’s forehead, leaving them there for a long while. When I didn’t do the same, I could see a pinch of disappointment forming between Leah’s brows, but then Avery began to fuss in my lap, her small whimper disrupting the moment, and soon my sister’s face returned to normal and our mother came and retrieved Avery and carried her away. Now the twins are going on five, and in all their time they haven’t been able to wake any kind of mothering clock in me, which makes me think I don’t have a mothering clock at all.

Tonight, they find me before I finish my first glass of wine, barreling into the kitchen, all crooked pigtailed and untied shoelaces, and they slam into my thighs while I’m talking to Steven and immediately start grabbing at my clothes. They call me Tee-tee instead of auntie because that’s what Leah’s trained them to do, and they can stretch those vowels out forever with their shrill little voices.

“Come play with me, Tee-tee,” Addison says.

“Come outside and watch me trampoline,” says Avery. I can tell them apart by the small scar Avery has over her left eyebrow—the one she

got the day she fell and hit her head against the edge of their concrete patio. “But I’m drinking wine,” I say in my whiniest tone because it freaks them out when I talk like a little kid, and I try to steady my glass from splashing. When they start pulling on my free hand, I start digging in my feet and moaning, “Noooooooooooo,” and Leah gives me a judgy look that says, Go spend some time with your nieces, which is a crock of shit because how about she spends some time with her sister.

Mostly, I let Leah guilt me into doing whatever her kids want with me, be it watching them jump on their trampoline or watching them dress and undress their Barbies. Today, however, Steven tells them in his stern

“Dad voice” not to be rude and bossy to their Aunt Aria and that we’ll all play a board game together after dinner.

“Besides, I have to help in the kitchen.” I smile and pull the loaf of cheesy garlic bread from the grocery bag I brought with me, dancing it across the counter toward Leah with a tada flourish.

“We’ve got enough carbs already with the pasta,” she says, apparently not remembering all the dinners we used to have comprised solely of hot French bread pulled from the loaf in chunks.

“I’ll get the oven,” Steven says and squeezes Leah’s shoulder as he passes by.

Where’s Josh for all this? He’s still in the living room, and I can hear that he’s changed channels now that the kids have vacated. For the most part, Josh and I are similar. We’re both artsy, though his art manifests as real art, whereas I am a copy editor for pay, but when it’s just us in our little, downtown apartment, sitting on hip secondhand furniture—stuff Leah calls college-grunge—we have the same reaction to those awkward birth announcement photos people post online: naked, painted baby bumps or those custom tee-shirts that say obnoxious things like bun in the oven. The reaction is: Ew. Just this really primal disgust way down in our guts.

Just last week when we were at one of his gallery shows, we marveled at the way one of the other showing artists could not stop calling home and eventually left early after the babysitter didn’t pick up. Such a damn shame, we thought, to be completely owned by kids. Afterwards Josh and I grabbed a late dinner, then went home and fooled around on the sofa, something we could never do if we had kids, him pulling off his white tee-shirt in one smooth sweeping motion while I wrapped my legs around his hips.

“Anyway,” I say. I fill up my wine glass and turn back to Steven, but before I can say anything else, Leah says, “Hey, Aria—can you set the table?”

Now I give her my look—a little tilt of the head and a raised eyebrow—and raise my wine glass, which says, Um, I thought we were having a conversation here, but Steven’s the only one who gets my message.

bread I brought, which she doesn't really want her kids having because it's not whole grain, but once I bring it to the table she doesn't want to tell them no.

"Girls," Leah says, "Did you tell Tee-tee about your soccer game and how you both scored a goal?" Addison shakes her head, more interested in trying to kick her sister under the table, and I know my sister wants me to ask them about soccer and whatnot, and it kills her that I am not, but Josh jumps in, as usual, and gets little more than enthusiastic nods in response to his questions.

It wasn't always like this with Leah. Way back before the twins, before boyfriends and husbands even, we used to have fun. We had the best time ever the summer after her freshman year of college when she lived with me instead of our parents. We'd never been that close as kids, but something about my having gone away to college and come back and her having experienced her first year away made us more like sisters. She used to call me on the way home from her job to see if I'd eaten, ask if I wanted anything from the burger joint, and when I got myself one of those fancy gourmet cupcakes from the fancy gourmet bakery, I always picked up one for her, too, even though they were five bucks a pop. And, together, we got hooked on this Showtime series about single, gay men living bachelor lives in the city having hot guy-on-guy sex—lots of full frontal nudity and close up dick shots, basically everything except penetration—and we'd wonder how we could make our lives more like theirs. We actually talked about ourselves—things we liked, things we didn't like—and we cared about each others' answers. Then she moved back to the dorms and I went back to living alone and the next summer she took summer classes and got an apartment off campus, and so on and so forth until we were eventually back in the same city in our own separate apartments. Then she got pregnant.

It wasn't until the baby shower that I realized I'd finally lost her completely. Up until that point, Leah had approached pregnancy with a sort of anxious resolve. Our mother, who was most excited, organized the shower and when Leah and I arrived we both balked at the pink, fluffiness of it all, smirking to each other as she explained the identify-the-chocolate-poop-in-diaper-game and the no-saying-baby rule. But once the presents were opened and Leah had those tiny pink outfits in her hands, the way she fingered the fabric, touched them to her cheek to gage their softness, I could just tell, from that point on, that the whole motherhood thing was going to consume her.

I can see it consuming her now, the way she continues to bait the girls into telling us about pre-school and the letters they've learned, and while she does this I just stare at my fork, twirling it around in the spaghetti. Josh, across the table, does the same, twirling the pasta round and round then biting off the excess and letting those strands smack back

onto his plate trying to listen and nod when the girls do talk. He uses a piece of garlic bread to scoop up the bits too short to twirl, and I remember the time we went to a dive Ethiopian joint and ordered this noodle dish we were supposed to eat with our fingers. After a few slippery fingerfuls we had to ask the waiter for utensils. That was one of our first dates, and Josh got right to the point: He took a bite, swallowed, and said, "So, I don't believe in marriage," and since I had only just met him a few weeks prior, I said, "Okay. I don't believe in children," and he said, "Okay," and all our issues were out in the open and afterwards we went back to his place and the sex was amazing.

I want to be sitting next to him now, but Leah arranged us this way so each of the twins could sit next to their Uncle and Tee-tee while still being closely monitored by at least one parent. When they eat spaghetti, they use both hands to twist the fork and then try to cram giant wads in their mouths, and because I am sitting next to Addison, I worry that it's my job to keep her from choking, but most of the wad comes sliding back onto her plate as she chews, anyway.

After dinner, we pair off for Scrabble—Leah teaming with one of the girls, Josh with the other. "Steve, honey," my sister tells her husband, "You play with Aria. She's needs all the help she can get." I know it's a dig, but getting to team up with another adult is just fine in my book. I scoot next to him, shoulder to shoulder, to organize our tiles. He wants to start making words, but I prefer to group the tiles in alphabetical order.

"Do you want to win or not?" he asks and nudges me in the arm.

"Like you even know how to spell," I tell him and it reminds me so much of how we were before he and my sister got together. We were really close, Steven and me, for a good year before Leah graduated and moved back. Like a platonic couple. I wasn't ever interested in him physically because I was into hipsters back then, and Steven was this dorky architect who wore Dockers and polo shirts and had corporate aspirations. Somehow, in the last five years though, he's gotten hotter. I hate to say it's Leah's influence, but I think it is.

Across the table, Leah and Josh attempt to organize their respective tiles as well, but two pairs of tiny, grabby hands don't make it easy, and it doesn't take long for me to realize that we aren't really going to play the game, not not properly at least, because the twins keep stealing the tiles and whining when they don't get to put them on the rack themselves. Leah keeps saying settle down in this meaningless way, and I try to make eye contact with Josh so we can bask in the ridiculousness of this together, but he's got Avery balanced on his knee and this look of faux confusion on his face.

He says, "What do you think Avery? We've got a C here, and there's

an A, and look, a T. What's that spell?" My boyfriend and his Scrabble partner put down "cat" with more than a little show of excitement, but that's only three letters and only worth five points. When Steven and I put down the word clinical using their C, I point to Avery and say, "Twelve points—in your face," and Avery says, "No, in your face," and we go back and forth for a little while until Leah tells us to knock it off.

Then Leah uses our I to put down the word Impregnant, and I tell her that's not a word and Leah rolls her eyes and says, "I'm pregnant."

"That's a phrase, not a word."

"No—Aria, I'm literally pregnant. Surprise!"

For some reason all I can get out is the word, "Really?" So Josh jumps in and congratulates them and Steven smiles tightly, but by then I am wondering if we were ever really playing or if the whole point of the stupid Scrabble game was just for dramatic effect. If the whole get-together—I miss you Aria, You haven't been over for ages—wasn't so much about seeing us as it was about this big, elaborate reveal. All this pisses me off, but mostly I feel bad for Steven. He didn't really want to have kids. Way back before they had kids, before they were even really a couple—a few days after I got Leah the pregnancy test—Steven came over just like my sister had. Right when I opened the door, he said, "You know then, don't you." And I said I did. He said he wasn't ready for this, and I felt bad for him so I hugged him and held him close for a long time, something I didn't usually do, but I wanted to see what would happen. And he said he was going to do the right thing, and even though he was talking about my sister, my heart dropped into my gut. Exactly like it is right now.

Once the impregnant tiles are played, the girls get bored and fidgety, and I ask Leah if she has any aspirins and she tells me, "Master bathroom, medicine cabinet," then goes into the kitchen to make coffee. Her bathroom is clean and quiet compared to the rest of the house and it doesn't have one of those stupid toddler footstools at the sink or one of those weird, potty-training toilets. In addition to aspirin, the medicine cabinet also has an already-opened pregnancy test two-pack, one test still rattling against the cardboard.

Okay. So maybe the real thing happened when I was sixteen. It was no big deal, really, because, in the end, I wasn't pregnant. But I drove to a Texaco station forty minutes away to get the test then took it in their prison-cell of a bathroom. Now, I've got a holy hormone-filled foreign-body wedged in my uterus—the best there is—and I'd have to be the fucking Virgin Mary to get pregnant with it in there. But I still worry. I worry about that one sneaky sperm who can wiggle his way past an IUD and into my fallopian tube, which is why, now, in Leah's bathroom, I can't help myself. I sit on the toilet and pee on her last test stick just to see that comforting

negative sign, then I rip the box into little shreds and wrap everything in a wad of toilet paper and shove it to the bottom of the wastebasket.

Steven's in his bedroom when I emerge. He asks if I found the aspirin.

I say, "I did. And, sorry I didn't say congratulations out there with the Scrabble tiles. Really, congratulations."

When Steven smiles, he usually goes full frontal teeth, but for me, here, he does this half-smile thing and says thanks.

"God, remember way-back-when when you didn't want to have kids?"

"Yeah." He laughs a little and rubs his neck and I can almost see that long-ago man in his eyes. "Well, she's letting me get a vasectomy now."

"Oh, shut up. Don't pretend you don't love being all domestic." I smack him in the arm, just like I used to back in our flirty days.

"Some days are better than others."

"Just count your blessings you didn't end up with the child-hating sister," I tell him and I remember, again, the night he came over and told me Leah was pregnant—how, out of nowhere, I kissed him, and he kissed me back in this desperate way that affirmed all the suspicions I had about him and me. Of course I stopped it after that. Steven even let me be the one to say, "We can't do this."

"You can't say I didn't try," he says now and squeezes my elbow, and when he gives me a sad grin, I get that little electric buzz in my stomach that I try to ignore every time he hugs me.

* * *

I drink my after-dinner coffee with extra creamer, the chocolate-caramel kind, and the kids eat ice cream sandwiches. When I ask Avery for a bite, she holds it up carefully to my mouth, her fingers pressing into the sandwich part, chocolate crud already caked around her nails. Once we're back in the car, Josh says, "That was fun," but I don't hear the sarcasm in his voice.

"I can't believe they're having another kid," I say. "You think it's on purpose?"

"Probably."

"Ew."

"Don't be hateful," he says and I am getting pretty sick of this word he keeps using. Hateful. As if I am incapable of love just because I don't want to pop out a kid.

"What, so now you're suddenly not grossed out by children?" I ask and Josh doesn't say anything. I throw him the same hypothetical question my sister threw me—the big 'ole pregnancy scare scenario, because after tonight, I need someone on my side.

"You can't, not with your thingy," he says.

“Just what-if.”

Josh thinks for a second, flexing his fingers around the steering wheel. “I don’t know—”

“You don’t know?”

“Yeah. I guess we’d have to talk about it,” he says, and I am thinking, Whoa, there. Back up. What’s to talk about? and that the correct response would have been, I’ll help you find a clinic, I’ll go with you, I’ll do whatever you need. I don’t tell Josh any of this because, after four years with me, he’s supposed to get it. That Ethiopian restaurant, our slimy fingers, no marriage, no babies. The words had been subtle and brief, but it had been that understanding that held us together for the last four years. After a few seconds of silence he says, “You might feel differently then. You never know.”

He takes my hand across the center console, glancing over while he drives, and says, “But, hey, we don’t have to worry about that right now.” But I do worry about it, actually. And I do know how I will feel. It’s one of the only things I know. And now when I look at him, I can feel the seam between us coming undone, so I tighten my jaw and say the most hurtful thing I can conjure: “I never told you, but I kissed Steven.”

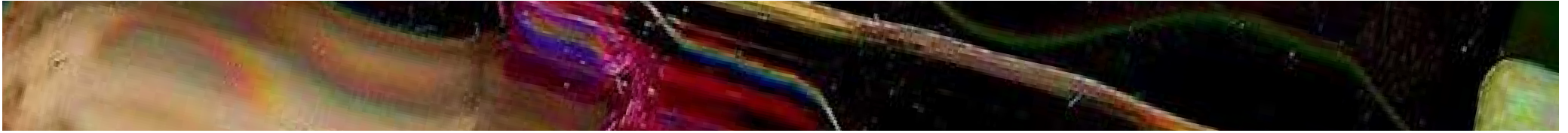
“Huh?” Josh laughs and snorts a bit, but then his voice begins to get a hint of an edge to it. “Leah’s Steven? Tonight?”

“No, not tonight.”

“Why are you even telling me this?” Josh’s face is twitching between emotions—confusion, amusement, disbelief.

I shrug my shoulders. “I just felt like you should know,” I say.

His whole body tenses up and he tells me that I just can’t throw something like that out there and not explain it and I can tell by the way he’s blinking that he’s trying to figure out if I fucked Steven too—if maybe Steven and I have had a whole side-thing going for years—and I sort of want to take it even further, tell him that it could have been me and Steven, instead of Leah and Steven, and that he could have made me happy—really happy—but the sick feeling in my gut tells me I’m on the cusp of something really cruel, so I say nothing, which is cruel in its own way.



SIERRA CLUB SINGLES

MARILEE RICHARDS

early 70s

poetry

Like all men my age, I've had to learn to adapt.
Jon Carroll – S.F. Gate

Whether it was Gloria or something
in the water, like hypnotized chickens
one summer we all whipped off our bras
and perked up our nipples
against thin cotton tees,

our breasts frolicking like uncaged animals
under the wide smile of the sky.

And the guys hiking along
with us were supposed to rattle
the snake eyes of their brains
and toss them –

where exactly?

You're not one of those women's libbers
are you?

one would ask and then lash himself
to the mast

of cluelessness as the gale roared
through. They carried the steaks
and watermelon, huge jugs
of Gallo Red, already striding up
the trail toward the swirling vortexes
of their creamed-peas-

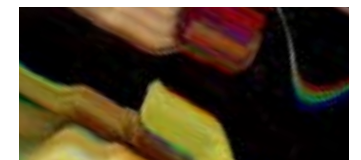
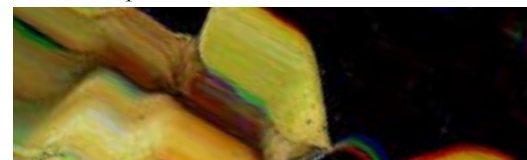
over-colonoscopy futures
where they would never get
the female thing quite right.

Wouldn't kick her out of bed...
Smirk. Right, as if.

I thought of them as friendly
horses ambling up to the fence
when you had an apple. I'd nuzzle
the hard warm nose and hold out

my treat. Hey there Big Fella, I'd say.
You a hungry boy? You want some of this?

with art pieces from Robert Bharda.



MONARCH IN THE HOUSE

MARILEE RICHARDS

poetry

When eventually she expired under the blue quilt,
I continued to feed her tiny bits of apples and celery,
her shriveled hands with their ugly brown spots clutching
at my hair, her mandible working in rhythm to form a kiss up
and down. Her eyes, those cloudy relics
unmoored in milky space, thudded closed like brick balloons.
I dragged her down a passageway
to the bureau, then stuffed her inside a drawer
and flipped open the phone, hoping for a cure.
A day went by...
I checked. No decomposition yet
but that of damp leaves rotting in piles
along the street. Her brain –
a tiny bowl that could not produce heat –
that body
wings in tatters now
and starting to complain, waited nervously
for the cremation to begin,
and the EMTs finally
on the way. I played hokey-pokey
with her limbs, each nail
with its fine translucent polish
soldered on.

MOSES

TOBY GOOSTREE

poetry

When she could no longer hide him or deny
his curiosity, having come to know
him these three months, and fearing Pharaoh's
infanticide, she wrapped him in a papyrus
basket, sealing it, and left him in the Nile
among the reeds, in a place royals would go
bathe. His sister watched from the bushes, hoping
someone would find him who wanted a child.

I've been waiting in the bushes, too,
watching my wife down by the river.
She's crying. Her shoulders rise as she catches her
breath, carelessly running her hands through
the reeds like a child's hair, a son or daughter,
at her post, an empty basket beside her.

WRITING ON THE WALL

MAURA TURCOTT

nonfiction

Perched in a corner high up, a camera observes the shiny doors slide open. Max and Ted stroll in. They lean against the walls of the elevator, exhausted from the night's revelries.

Waiting for the doors to shut, Max¹ glances down at his hand. Seconds pass and still the doors remain open. Ted presses the close button and looks over. Max is still looking down at his hand – seemingly admiring the small scarlet cuts on his skin. Ted begins inspecting his own. The two men laugh and compare their wounds, as if they're trophies from the night. The doors finally roll shut and Ted retreats back into the corner of the elevator, still holding his injured hand out.

Suddenly, Max leans over – there's blood dripping down his leg. He prods the cut and standing up straight again, proudly displays the blood from his leg on his hand. Laughter breaks out as Max begins smearing the blood on the wall. He draws a line. Mischievous smiles break out on both boys' faces. Ted joins in spreading the blood, while Max pulls more ink from his wound. They add more and more lines to their illustration, smiling all the while.

Their creative process is abruptly interrupted when the doors slide open. Ted immediately leaves, but Max, looking out into the hall briefly, returns to adding more details to the graffiti. His motions become increasingly frantic as he pulls more blood from his leg and rubs it on the wall.

And then the elevators doors shut. Matt turns, seemingly finished,

¹Names changed to protect privacy of students

and frenetically pushes the button to open the elevator. He walks out, leaving his grand artwork on display.

On Sunday, October 9, students at Santa Clara University received a school-wide email from Jeanne Rosenberger, Vice Provost for Student Life and Dean of Students. As Rosenberger explained, the day prior a community facilitator in the Casa Italiana dormitory discovered a swastika painted in human blood in one of the elevators. On top of that, homophobic slurs were found on the walls of the fourth floor of the building.

Campus administration swiftly expressed their disapproval of the incident. Santa Clara President, Michael Engh, S.J., followed up in another email addressed to the students in which he condemned the acts, describing them as “shameful.”

“I believe that Santa Clara students have finer values and deeper respect than what has been scribbled in this residence hall. I encourage you not to stand idly by and ignore what has happened, but to discuss openly why such attacks of hatred are reprehensible,” the president stated. “I know that you will not allow the individual or individuals who have defaced our facilities and shamed our school to think that we at Santa Clara will tolerate such actions.”

Then, the Tuesday of that week brought another twist in an already peculiar story. A group by the name “SCUWatch” sent a video to the staff members of The Santa Clara, the undergraduate newspaper. The footage, pulled from the security system on campus, depicted the two students – clearly identifiable – painting the swastika in the elevator of Casa.

While the administration did note at a briefing following the episode that one of the two students had unenrolled from Santa Clara, the school has yet to disclose the status of the other student and whether or not he has faced any disciplinary action.

The incident in Casa was not the first of its kind this quarter. Just two weeks prior, several unidentified people walking through campus late at night vandalized a memorial dedicated to the 43 students who were kidnapped in Mexico in 2014. In an opinion piece in The Santa Clara, President Engh criticized the vandalism, stating, “Some members of the community have expressed the idea that this act is symptomatic of a larger problem surrounding inclusion at Santa Clara. Regardless of motivation,

we cannot allow this destructive behavior to continue.”

Now, at the close of Fall Quarter, these offensive episodes have largely faded from view. Was it because Jesuit values prevailed as Father Engh hoped? Were these just mere lapses in students’ better judgment? Did Santa Clara and its students uphold the values of social justice and inclusivity that they so proudly declare on brochures and posters?

When Perla Luna first arrived at Santa Clara, like most first-years, she immediately sought community. As she was interested in journalism, she joined the newspaper. And as a Latina, she found herself drawn to MeChA-El Frente and Hermanas Unidas, two groups within the Multicultural Center (MCC) that primarily serve the Latinx community on campus.

“I knew that Santa Clara was primarily white, so I thought it was important to find a community within this campus that I knew I could relate to,” said Luna, who is now a sophomore. She described that she often finds herself to be the only minority student in classes, and while she at first dismissed that as just a “fact of [her] existence,” she did confess that it still bothers her occasionally.

“Sometimes in class, when you talk about certain issues, you feel uncomfortable – not necessarily because you are uncomfortable with the topics but because you are uncomfortable – if you say something, suddenly you are the representative of your entire group’s opinion,” she expressed.

However, Luna noted that groups like MeChA-El Frente and Hermanas Unidas provide an escape for her from these issues regarding her ethnicity and gender that she encounters daily.

“There are times when a professor may not even be talking specifically to me – just to the class – but they’ll say something and I’ll think, ‘Maybe don’t say that.’ There are little things that happen that you feel you shouldn’t make a big deal out of because maybe someone misspoke or whatever, but those moments definitely impact your experience on campus and in class, because then you are not sure if you are safe to talk about certain things here or are they going to think I’m being sensitive? I think that’s one of the issues that comes up a lot – being accused of being sensitive about something – when you’re not, you’re just voicing your opinion. A lot of the time, it’s just easier to say nothing and just compartmentalize those

little moments,” Luna said.

Perhaps because of that compartmentalization, when Luna, who currently serves as the Opinion Editor for the paper, first learned of the vandalism of the 43 students memorial from the editor-in-chief, she admitted that she wasn’t that upset.

“I thought, ‘Well, this probably happens all the time,’ you know? Things get vandalized and we don’t even know about it,” she stated.

Nonetheless, Luna crafted an opinion article for the newspaper, titling the piece, “Vandalism Indicates Cultural Ignorance on Campus.” And while Luna condemned the acts, as she explained, she ultimately found herself a little more forgiving of the perpetrators.

“It’s maybe easier to understand why they would do that? I don’t know, they are just not thinking. It’s still wrong, but they are just not thinking,” she said, shaking her head.

Yet, two weeks later, Luna’s sentiments suddenly changed upon learning of the episode in Casa with the swastika. As she read the description of what occurred, Luna grew more upset.

“It’s such a consciously hateful act. That, on top of what had just happened with the vandalism – it was concerning because you started seeing a pattern and you don’t like where that pattern is going,” she said, her voice cracking.

What really concerned Luna the most, however, was the fact that so few people on campus seemed to even care about the swastika and the homophobic slurs.

“The problem on this campus is that everybody is silent and that the only people that want to talk about it, like MeChA, they get put into this corner as “activists” and so they become immediately inaccessible to most people at Santa Clara because they don’t want to be extreme in their views or anything,” Luna remarked in an annoyed tone.

Thus, the weeks following the Casa incident, later coupled with the election of Donald Trump, a man whose campaign profited off of racism and misogyny, shook Luna to her core. She recalled walking around campus one day with her friends – also women of color – and feeling incredibly separated from the rest of the Santa Clara community.

“Just walking around campus,” Luna described, “we just kept looking at people and thinking, ‘Are you against us?’”

When Isaac Nieblas arrived to Santa Clara’s palm tree lined campus, it didn’t take long for him to encounter racist perceptions.

“When I came here, during my orientation, someone asked me whether or not I was Mexican – and I said yes – and the first thing that they told me was ‘Oh, wow, you speak English really well,’” Nieblas, who is now a senior, remembered. “This was my first experience with Santa Clara... I knew it was going to happen, sooner or later. It wasn’t an if, it was a when – and for me, it was the first day.”

While already interested in culture as a form of empowerment, Nieblas noted that that very event spurred him to join and become heavily involved in MeChA-El Frente. His sophomore year, he served as the co-outreach coordinator. His junior year, he became the co-chair of the group. But by the end of his third year, he had his sights set even higher, wanting to work with multiple organizations around campus. As a result, he ran for director of the MCC and won.

While his current job consists of many responsibilities, from acting as a liaison between the organizations to talking with the administration, the position of the MCC director also involves confronting a lot of painful and difficult issues. For instance, when Nieblas learned about the vandalism of the 43 students, he found himself personally affected.

“To not even have the decency or respect for those 43 individuals who were just trying to gain an education... then those people really don’t care about myself, a person who shares that same heritage, that same culture, that same skin tone,” the director firmly stated. “The fact of the matter is that this memorial is of 43 brown students... I don’t know, for me, its more racial implications than anything.”

Yet, despite the pain of that first incident, two weeks later the MCC director found himself even more unnerved upon learning about the swastika episode in Casa.

“That day, that week was intense because more than anything, it was emotionally traumatic for me because I’ve had my instances with Neo-Nazism back home in Phoenix, Arizona, and I understand what the swastika means to marginalized groups across the world.”

Nieblas paused. His voice lowered.

“I think what pissed me off the most was a lot of individuals’ apathy and unwillingness to hear what students were feeling, or the implications of that symbol,” he said. “I think in one of my classes someone was saying, ‘Oh, they were just joking around.’”

While his frustration increased with those particularly incendiary incidents, Nieblas ultimately acknowledged that those ignorant ideas and attitudes were nothing new.

“Students of color, students of marginalized groups feel it every single day,” he explained. “Every single day I have an individual come up to me and tell me about them feeling uncomfortable in a class, them feeling uncomfortable with something that a professor said. Whether it be a sexist comment or a racist comment – it happens every day.”

However, despite these difficulties so early on in the quarter, the MCC director managed to hold on to some optimism, which he attributed to the people he works with in the MCC and the handful of students that came forward in solidarity with marginalized groups. Nieblas believes these events have pushed Santa Clara to become a “socially-conscious campus” that takes more of a stance on issues through marches and discussions with the administration.

“I think that we are shifting towards being that campus, that community that puts forth the effort making it known that that’s not allowed,” Nieblas related. “There are definite issues on campus that need to be addressed, but at the same time, here on campus, I am able to have that conversation with President Engh, with Ray Plaza, with Dennis Jacobs if I need to, you know? Now look along the lines of Mizzou² – look along the lines of other great universities that haven’t had great dialogues with their administration. They’re just at odds at all times.”

Similar to Nieblas, Calliope³, an Asian-American student, felt alienated on Santa Clara’s campus immediately. Closing her eyes, she recalled her first year at the university, noting that it was the first time she

² i.e. University of Missouri

³ Names changed to protect privacy of students.

saw herself as a “racialized being.”

For example, as she claimed when going to parties on Bellomy Street, Calliope felt like an object of sexual fetish with how men looked at her and her race. She recalled a guy at a party went so far as to yell at her once, “Me so horny, me love you long time.” And in her classes, she struggled with her peers who told her she only got A’s on papers because she’s Asian.

Searching for a source of support on campus those first couple years, Calliope found none that truly addressed the problems she faced.

“There’s the MCC where you can talk about your identity within a culture and then there’s Feminists for Justice, which talks about identities of feminists and what being a women means. But there wasn’t really an intersection, and I think we forget that we don’t live single-issue lives.”

Calliope continued to struggle to find a community here at Santa Clara, until the end of her sophomore year, when she finally began connecting with other women of color on campus. Together, these women share their stories and advice in order to empower and uplift each other.

“At the root of it all is self-love, because so often, especially at this school, you are forced to live in the Santa Clara bubble, and for women that often means fitting into this mold of whiteness and blonde hair and you have to wear Brandy Melville and be in a sorority and all of these things. But that’s not our reality and that’s not our experience and of course that’s true for women who aren’t women of color, too. But for the most part, the Santa Clara mold of women is directly in opposition to women of color,” she stated.

When Calliope heard about the vandalism of the 43 students memorial, she was furious, aware of the history of damage to campus installations of marginalized groups.

“With these art installations, we’ve had the 43 that was vandalized several times, and – I think it’s SCCAP that puts on the border wall to highlight immigration week and to just really shine a light and lift up the voices of immigrant communities and specifically undocumented communities on our campus as well as outside our campus – and every single year, without fail, either the university receives flak on their social network or its vandalized,” Calliope noted. “Last year, the mock border wall was vandalized with very xenophobic things like, ‘Go back to your country,’

‘Build the wall.’ ...We say we are about educating the whole person but in terms of educating the whole person that goes with actually loving and caring for marginalized and oppressed peoples. I don’t think that level of compassion is really fully taught or really fully enforced by the university or by the students.”

Calliope’s anger largely stems from how the administration handles incidents regarding marginalized communities. As she explained, their discussions and calls for solidarity only feel artificial to her. And so when she received the email from Rosenberger regarding the Casa incident, she couldn’t help but notice the context of the weekend.

“What pissed me off about that was that they sent it a full 24 hours after the incident had happened and the discovery had happened. Why? That weekend was Alumni Weekend. The one thing that I can say about this school, one hundred percent, no questions – this school, the administration of this school, Father Engh care about donations and sponsors more than they cares about students. I can say that with a hundred percent conviction. Rather than disrupt Alumni Weekend proceedings and be like, ‘This is something that happened on campus, be worried,’ they waited until that weekend was all over,” she claimed.

During the days following the news of the swastika painting in Casa, her frustration shifted from the administration to other students. Looking around at the community, she was shocked to see little change.

“They don’t care or they don’t know. Or they know and they don’t care. And then they dismiss it as just mindless fun,” Calliope said. “Not only was it actual hate speech and an internationally known hate symbol that got painted on the wall – it was in blood! Who would think, ‘I’m bleeding and I’m going to touch my wound and possibly infect my wound and smear blood on the wall and not only that, I’m going to paint a [expletive] swastika.’ I don’t understand how anyone in the world could think that’s mindless fun.”

She took a deep breath and launched into further critique.

“And then two weeks later, the [expletive] Hut closes. And the goddamn whole school loses their minds. Like I have never seen the campus as a whole mobilize so quickly – all of them! It was insane! What pisses me off is clearly the campus cares more about a bar than the people they go to school with,” Calliope rapidly fired. “Every time I think I understand this school and I think I know the depths of how bad it could be, the school

finds another way to surprise me.”

Raising her voice even more, Calliope declared, “This school has a culture of willful ignorance, of discrimination, of racism, of sexism, of xenophobia, of classism, of ableism, of Islamaphobia... We can contextualize the Casa incident as just the Trump effect taking place, but to say that ignores the fact that this is not the first time an act of hate has happened on this campus.”

However, the issues go beyond just the greater student body from Calliope’s perspective. Communities and institutions, like the MCC, that are supposed to serve marginalized groups, she called “highly problematic” and claimed they fail to provide the proper support for a wide-range of students.

“The MCC will only unite in a ‘Kumbaya’ moment for specific events and communities. And it’s always in response. This idea of a community within the MCC and this idea of social justice and liberation for everyone, that’s never really enacted. The MCC can be just as performative as the administration,” she asserted.

When considering the university’s overall climate, Calliope paused.

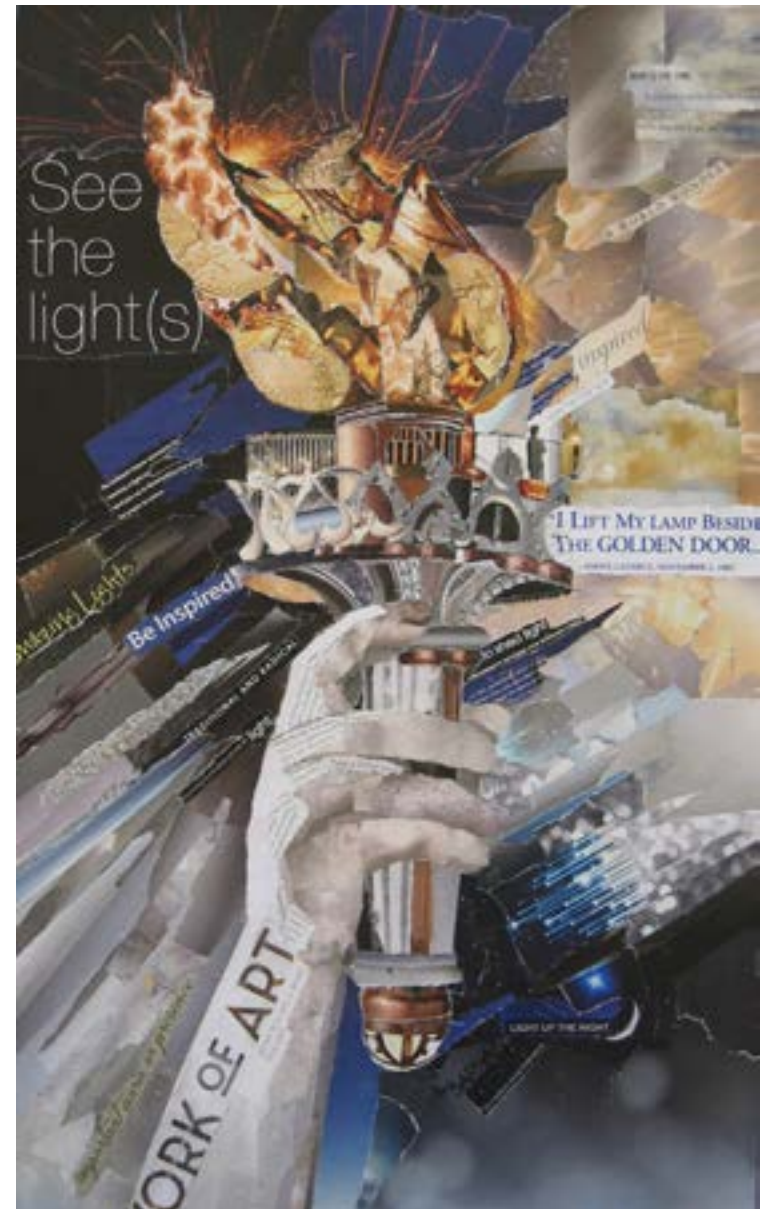
“I guess the way I sum up this school is probably the worst four years of my life,” she solemnly said.

She looked away.

“How do you heal after experiencing all that hate? How do you cope with that? How do you go on?” Calliope asked. “Existing at this school – I’m not sure there is a going on. I’m not sure there is a way you can ever feel un-unsafe again and way to feel not like a spectacle and to feel not like a token and to feel not like the other. I don’t think there’s any undoing that.”

These may only be the stories of three students at Santa Clara, but the sentiments of these students – who notably all serve leadership positions on campus – have been voiced by countless other students of marginalized groups for years now. And as these three students so clearly demonstrate, their views and intensity of emotion regarding their alienation on campus vary widely. Some are more accepting of their status here at Santa Clara, while others are more vindictive. Nonetheless, these

three students, and many others beside them, all share a pain that has yet to be properly addressed by the university. Whether students are engaging in outwardly discriminatory actions such as painting a swastika or just simply refusing to acknowledge the emotions and struggles of their peers, both prove indicative of a greater issue with diversity and inclusion. These problems aren’t recent occurrences – as all three of these students voiced, they encountered alienation as soon as they stepped on campus. If Santa Clara wants to actually remain true to its Jesuit values, then clearly it needs to actively do more to fight against the apathy and disregard for others that pervades the community.



LIBERTY ABOVE ALL

LAURIE BARN

torn paper collage on canvas
25.5" x 16.25"



RISE AND SHINE

KAI HIROTA

digital photography

On Being Told: You Must Learn to Burn Like This

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS

poetry

Cities should be seen at a distance at night at the halfway point between enter and escape. Look—how our manmade stars cluster together for warmth: archipelagos flickering in a sea of glass, fireflies burning into the distant ridgeline. I only ask to be as dangerous as a failing bridge. As a cigarette sparking refuse in a barrel, warming a dozen empty hands. I only ask to be this version of a man. But living takes its time making a fire of me. The city still looks like the sky a child holds. I don't ask to be that beautiful. I can't ask what you see in me when all the lights go out, from that middle distance of leaving and, maybe, please, returning.



with art pieces from Laurie Barna & Robert Bharda.

BURDENED VESSEL

MARCIA LOGHRAN

poetry

"That vessel which, according to the applicable Navigation Rules, must give way to the privileged vessel. The term has been superseded by the term 'give-way.'
— Nautical Know How - Glossary of Nautical Terms

We live in a paper lantern;
light visits.
It's portable for river trips,
night festivals.
My mother's circulation
maps the riverbed:
brown spots, blue arteries.
She packs teacups.
I think I hear a whistle at the door.

We live in a house made of keyholes:
the wind peeks in, the air leaks out,
I tape up gaps.
Every Monday
she gets a needle in her eye
to help her see.
She squints
and abdicates
the periscope.

We live in a birch bark canoe,
it is tippy.
I decree, No more falls.
But a fall in this house has no reason.
Remove all wires, clear the rocks.
She staggers,
held up by three windows.
We fall asleep to tiny waterfalls,
cascades downriver.

We live in a claw-foot bathtub.
Her soggy cough a foghorn
which we ignore
like the radio,

a cough that rocked me to sleep
before I was born.
I circle the tub
with tubing,
reset the compass.

We like to look out our portholes—
watch the light shift slowly
from the one on the left in the morning
to the one on the right at night.
She paddles light,
I bail with a thimble.
Our ballast: air,
water,
time.

THE LAST CHRISTMAS

CLAY WATERS

poetry

the spinning marble crunched to a stop
hurling the last haul into the rising smoke
the two of us outside (everything now outside)
anticipating the end on our knees
under the festive flaming redwoods
(spiny needle floor carpeted with ashes)
when the twinkling blue sky god
dropped the biggest present of all

after all the drama
how could we tell Him
it wasn't Him we sought
just the big box He came in:
the time within time
after every drop of soul has seeped
out of the plastic saint soldiers
hubcap halos reduced to rust
time enough to stay always children
slightly naughty, eternally anticipatory
under the twisted shelter of trees



TRANQUILITY

LARRY SACKS

digital photography
644 x 1000 pixels



BIRDS

BILL MOY

digital photography
18" x 32"



DEFINITION

LARRY SACKS

digital photography
1000 x 793 pixels



EMPTY DRAWERS

JENNIFER LOTHRIE

digital photography

THE LAST FIRST STAR

SEAN JACKSON

fiction

-John Livengood, final journal entry

This is space. The wild blue yonder is dead. Time is in upheaval, the death of eternity, wicked engines each one the size of a god. Pulsars, quasars, magnetars, and more stars and stars and stars. Eventually a lag time becomes the future and we fill our mouths with clouds, radiant dying species that we are, until we fathom the fairy tale of reality.

Hook up to the nebula painted chrome by the last untroubled men to walk on the moon. Be still in your first barber's chair and relish the pompadour they gave you, since you're a girl now and you always were a woman—not fashionista but Gaia, never a virgin to anybody but yourself.

...

John called in:

"I'm in a weird mood, Donna. I want to die."

Donna clicked on his stream:

"You can't die, John. You are meant to be here forever. You have always been here. That's a long time already."

The steady go function irritated John. He tried a new pattern. He told Donna that this would create a different convergence than was planned out. Was it acceptable?

"I don't know, John. I don't make these choices."

They signed off as irrelevant and, separately, gazed through portholes at manifest galaxies that pirouetted on proxy lakes and rivers. The foreground was beautiful. The distance was always a blank canvas.

...

John was a deusnaut. He searched for Heaven. He was told he'd find it, eventually. Some had already been close, within reach, a da Vinci forefinger stretched—in expectation—only to fall short.

"God reaches, but Adam does not," John wrote in school. He wrote

it over and over on the screen, the wall screen behind the lecturer so that everyone in the assembly could see.

"God lies!" the lecturer bellowed. He was a man with a warrior's heart who had returned from war in darkness. The old man looked like the white-maned God Himself, a Moses cursing the heavens above.

"Adam was lied to!" the warrior cried out, waving his hands through iterations of that day's lecture on his transpaper. The lecturer banished John from the assembly, secretly nudging him into the advanced protocols. There, in the brutalist towers of University, John met Donna and they were sewn together by the Master, to be flung into the edges of proper distance to meditate with dark energy.

I don't understand meditation, John told her through cold language, what appeared to be telepathy. She responded in images, images with feelings, which told him: Yes you do. And better than anyone ever has.

Why? He was told Donna would be the guide out here on the edges. They said Donna was the one who could walk through time barriers and not blink, the one who could see ghosts lurking in the wrinkles of Time. They told him point blank, Donna can see God. The real God. Once and for all, they had someone who could do it.

And almost as soon as they arrived, on either arms of a barred spiral galaxy, Donna said it was the other way around. His "patience," as they called it, was unrivalled. They'd said he was more valuable than antimatter—ounce for ounce. They told Donna to coordinate periods of extended meditation, and through these "lounges of exaltation," the relationship between God and matter would be recalibrated. And, once all of this was done, they'd have a vis-a-vis with the creator Him- or Herself.

"I have a serious case of the wanting-to-dies," he said. "It's called major depression. There's no cure for me, Donna. My parents, both my parents—first Dad, then my mother—took their turns with it. You should know that. I don't think that's information that should be withheld from you."

"Use your meditation to think about it, John. To work through it."

"I've already tried."

"But not out here, John. Out here, there are different energies. There are so many new possibilities out here."

John stared into the glowing plasma of a Chernobyl-esque deviation along the border of a gas cloud. It was large enough to vaporize a small planet. It was like a symphony that had been turned blue and gold and pink, then turned inside out so that the music created new instruments, so that music created emotions that weren't meant to be felt by living things.

"I have a bad feeling about everything," he said. It was true. Doubt was like a cold vice around his neck.

"Just meditate, John. You bring God to us, and I will see Him."

"Is that how it's going to work?"

"Yes, John. I can only see God; I can't make Him come close enough on my own."

"Okay, Donna. But after you see Him, I want you to kill me."

"Yes, John."

...

They conferenced on a tile with Michael. Big Mike, Captain Mike, Michael the Archangel. Michael ran the show, from writing work instructions to manipulating senators. He was, indeed, their angel. A bald, athletic man with delicate nostrils, he probed their eyes for signs of fear.

"John?" Michael wiggled his fingers, grinned over at Donna, then tilted his head over toward the deusnaut. "Your body readings are solid, John. But you don't look so good. How is your day going?"

John cleared his throat, thought long and hard about it.

"I haven't peed," he told the archangel. Protocols say a body needs to rid itself of fluid waste every few hours or else the buildup will cause numbness—first in the organs, then to the vascular system, which means the brain will eventually power down a bit until the bladder is emptied.

"Why not, John?" Michael looked at his tablet where Donna was sending a reacher. She was so loyal to the mission. Her concern was that John was wavering.

"I've been too busy," John said with a smile. He placed his hands behind his head and leaned back, almost off screen, so he could peek out the big glass of his module.

"John is getting very close, Michael. I think he is caught up in the growing excitement—that we are so close now. It is any day now, Michael." Michael squeezed his nose and closed his bright eyes.

"Is this true, John?"

John nodded, leaning toward the broadcast on his tile. "Roughly so," he said. "We will be bringing God to life within the next day or two. You can write that down, Michael. Go ahead and write it down. And tell everybody. I want my mom to hear it so that she will be proud of me."

John's heart rate was accelerated.

"Okay, John," Michael smiled, his face like the moon peering through dark clouds. He turned his hands so the palms faced down. "Take it easy until then, son. Tamp it down as best you can. I know there's a lot of anticipation right now. I can feel it myself. Just keep the volume tweaked as low as you can, until ..."

"Yessir," John cut in. He looked directly at Michael and turned off his transmission.

Michael and Donna waited a beat, just in case John returned. Then

Michael zoomed in so that all Donna saw was the center of his face, just the eyes to mouth.

"It's not the money that's been spent," he said. "It's the lives invested in it."

"That's not lost on me, Michael."

"Nor should it be on him."

Donna held eye contact until she had to veer away. "I think John understands just as I do."

For the rest of the wake period she revisited John's notes from the previous two days. He had begun by saying it was crucial for the nebulae to resemble spheres. Especially double spheres, like cells merging under a microscope. Then he complained about his feet swelling, which continued until he removed his rubber boots.

I think I saw one was the last thing he entered before moving into sleep period the "night" before.

She asked him what it was, opening a tile without even waiting for him to say if he was available.

"I can't tell you over the tiles," he said, aware that the ubiquitous, reflective squares weren't secure at all. She explained it would take a whole day or more for them to reach a mutual point for docking. He suggested they use cold language, do it in telepathy. She said they'd been instructed not to use that any more, as tangible documentation was now, going forward, part of the protocol. But she couldn't convince him to tap into the stream of a tile, no matter where it was located in his module, not even the "private" tiles in his quarters.

"You'll have to stay in the dark about it for now," he said. "But I'll let you know. Actually, you'll know soon enough. You will know exactly what I'm talking about by no later than tomorrow."

"Is this about God?" she asked.

"No," he said. "Something even better."

...

Hours into her sleep she heard a voice in her chamber, someone speaking in normal tones—to her. Another her. She was conversing with someone. When she opened her eyes it was all gone. Silence. She closed her eyes and the conversation started up again.

"Hello?" she said. They acted like they didn't hear her and kept on talking. So she opened her eyes and they stopped. None of the lux tiles in her chamber, nor the ones visible through the glass walls and doors, were on. Imbedded like an endless series of old-fashioned light switches, these small metallic plates blinked a soft, rhythmic green—steady go.

Then John was saying something telepathically, using the cold

language which had just been forbidden hours ago. He was asking her if she remembered what they just talked about in the future.

Can you make sense of it, Donna?

What the hell? John, we can't do this.

He laughed. He said she already agreed that they could, in fact, resume telepathy. Just a few hours from now. He promised she had.

We have to do this now, he said. While nobody is watching.

Donna scrambled up and hurried from her chamber, quickly reaching the front of the module. There was nothing unusual to see. Just black and stars, some wavy nebulae in the distance, off to where John was. Everyone is always watching us, John, she said.

"Not us," John said. "Them."

And her glass suddenly glowed as though sunlight reached out and poured through an Earth-like atmosphere. She put her forearm across her eyes and cursed out loud.

Don't say anything they can hear, he said. Then the glare was gone and her field was back to empty black and endless points of light.

"What was that?" she asked out loud.

"Fingers extending to us," he said. "Or maybe a warning shot. I can't really say for sure which one it was. But it kind of felt friendly, right?" Donna checked her messages. She was being asked why she was up. (They were used to John roaming about his module at all hours.) She typed "indigestion."

"Light always feels neutral to me, John. It exists without sentiment."

"Yeah," he said—distractedly—as if busy with something. "But you've been to clubs. We've been to some together. You can tell when a light is warm versus when a light is cold."

"Light is light, John."

"This one is God," he said.

Know what? she asked, telepathically. There is science in this.

"Mumbo jumbo led stargazers to plot courses beyond war and starvation," he said. "And the stargazers steered that mumbo jumbo away from God—we looked inwards even as we sang the high praises of the most holy thing."

"We should talk more," Donna said.

"Yeah? I was going to say we make it less."

"No, no, no. More. We stay alert and in tune with the more talking we do."

"I am fine with saying less. More stargazing, less mumbo jumbo."

He saw a ring of ice form beyond a catapult of gravity-driven mist ... like a sleeve positioning itself for an arm. "You can never tell what is a lie and what isn't."

"Not true with telepathy," she said.

She waited for him to reply, to agree and say cold language is something that needs to be expanded to everybody in the future. She wanted to debate evolution and genetics with him. But he did not respond.

"Telepathy is different," she added.

Still nothing. And just static inside. She meditated a moment.

"It is different, isn't it, John?" she asked, finally. An image swirled into her head, a Japanese boy eating Pocky in a bright subway tunnel. The boy looked down the empty tracks and munched his chocolate-flavored stick. Then the boy began to cry and a train arrived and a throng of businessmen and women got off, their briefcases swinging with their rush. Then the boy was alone again, the train gone, the commuters well up the stairs. The boy smiled and bit a fresh stick.

Who is that, John? she asked, mind-to-mind.

That's the son of the man who designed our telepathy, he said. Remember learning about him?

Yes. And she tried to meditate but he broke in, stronger than he'd ever been, so forceful it made her ears ring.

The Black Yūrei. The priest of mental chains, or some such nonsense. How many people did he enlist in his Tokyo days? How many students were put to death by his votaries?

Donna spoke out loud: "Four hundred and eighty."

"Four hundred and eighty what, Donna?" the Center asked, having resumed its monitoring undetected. So John continued inside her head. He said it was a blessing that cold language was discouraged. He said his own father had used it as he was dying. John heard the quiet, pacifying words of his soul during departure—he'd seen his father looking into a glare that took hours to fade away. Then it was like a honeycomb, or a beehive. But this ambient color poured in, sluiced in, dripped through his mind and gave him a feeling of despair. And he's wanted to die ever since.

"That's just mourning, John. That's sadness over losing your father. I've heard you talk about him and it's obvious that you loved him a great deal. You're just mourning a loss. I don't think you want to kill yourself."

"Who said that I did?"

"Michael."

"Then why did he send me up here?"

"Reward outweighs risk, according to data. And sometimes I think that's all we are to them, John. Just data. Parts and data."

The Archangel is dying of cancer, John imparted, suddenly discreet again. He splashed scenes of Michael in so many backless hospital gowns that Donna had a moment of vertigo. John held up a recent memory of Michael in the sun, leaned with his hand against a high concrete wall, the other hand rubbing his face, as the word INOPERABLE swung like a pendulum up and down the alley behind him. Then Michael put on his sunglasses and

straightened his tie and walked around the front of the building and hailed a cab that was already pulling to the curb for him.

He is taking it very hard, she said. She squeezed her eyes closed in an attempt to block John's telepathy, but she may as well have been holding up a pencil to block the wind.

Then there was silence. John wasn't present and her ears stopped ringing.

John?

Then out loud: "Hello?"

"Hello, Donna," the Center responded, and her tiles glowed, all at once, with messages.

...

When she awakened exactly at 0900 he was there, in her quarters, beside her cot, picking at something stuck in the hair on his forearm. She whispered his name and he told her shhh. He replayed a history for her, a dream he had created for her while she slept:

Her eyes were liquid silver, and in shadowed rooms she undressed for him and then sank into the foam and satin and waited for him to melt into her. It is useless to describe what they did to each other, as so many before them have done it, that nothing will seem original or perfect enough. He tried to describe it once, to a chaplain down in Florida as they prepared for the pre-lightwave leg of their journey. John said it was like ... it was like being in a forest, in dawn's light, and being awakened by a single meteor that seared the icy boughs, creating a mist, into which all existence entered and died.

"Physical love," the chaplain said, shaking his head. But John took the man's thin, old, hairy forearm and squeezed it, saying: "It is a test. Every moment, every joy and sorrow, it is all a test."

The chaplain, perhaps vaguely Catholic or maybe a Presbyterian, merely feigned interest in John's words.

"Go in peace," the man told him.

And indeed, the young deusnaut felt he had done that. He departed with an ease upon his conscience, with his module attached to Donna's (until they reached proper distance), and the early stages of their telepathy emerging along the liquid-y hours of pre-lightwave travel. And once they attained lightwave, their souls merged once, then returned to isolate trajectories.

Now three weeks into their limbo, the visual exegesis begun (of the Law of God as written on the walls of every mind ever created), their talents turned to the exotic. Donna spread light memory across the unbound field of vision outside her thick glass windows. She lay in a wire

cot, like a spider's web inside her module, and probed the notes of Gothic chants for something previously unknown. She internalized the Latin words denoting prayer, let them find room in her ringing mind.

"Caligo," he said. He said it loud enough for her to hear, in real time, 0904, with the Archangel already connecting to a stream in her lux tile. Michael's face appeared on a glass wall by the door. John had his back to him and repeated the Latin word to Donna.

"Darkness," she said. "Gloom. I know what the word means, John. We had the same teachers most of the time. I had that old woman in doxology who said I looked like her granddaughter."

"John?" Michael said. He put his eye to the camera so that his cornea filled the screen.

"You have green eyes," John said.

"Impossible," the Archangel whispered. He called out for an engineer to click in and help determine what was happening. John's module was an easy fifty billion miles away. Three days at light.

"Not in the future," John said. "Very little is impossible in the future. It's a whole different ballgame here. And I've been here a while, so I should know."

Michael was speaking with the engineer so Donna got up, looked John up and down as she put on a thin robe, and then artfully pulled her hair out of a ponytail and then returned it inside a shiny tie, looped twice. "You took some liberties there," she said. She did not seem very happy about the memory he released. "I'm not sure that's something I'd approve of doing. I don't know, John, I'd rather not talk about it again. Or see it. But you can see it so that bothers me."

"What's happening up there?" Michael asked. He was squinting at them as if trying to see something they were hiding.

"It never happened," John said.

"I'm not so sure," she said as she went past him into the front of the module. She went up to a large screen and stared at Michael. "We're just discussing doxologies, Michael. Maybe you can give us a minute of no-contact?"

Michael nodded and all the lux tiles went dark. She turned to John.

"Are you really here?" she said. He nodded.

"Not now, but later. I've been ahead for a while now. I've already seen it. I talked to it. I heard what it had to say. And there's something you should know."

"What?"

She steadied her hand over the steady go.

"What, John?"

He rubbed his hands together, strode to the glass window and stared out at the same scene she had been watching for days. There was a

red star just to the right of center that he seemed to focus on. It had a slight pulse, very slow. He pointed at the red star. She explained it was a common red dwarf, perhaps a trillion years old.

"But I can't see it," he said. "Where I'm at—or when—I can't see it. It's gone, Donna. But, if I see what you see, I can point right at it. Back here, where you are, it's right there, all blinky and pretty."

She reached out and lightly touched his arm. He was warm like a baby is warm. She asked him if he was ready to bring Michael back. He shrugged.

"Michael's already gone," he said and showed her a woman in a coffee shop staring—her face stricken—out the window at people moving along the sidewalk. Then the woman was looking into a safety deposit box from which she lifted a tidy stack of papers with just the tips of her fingernails.

Donna pressed the steady go. A young woman's face appeared. Serious, pretty, with a tiny black mole just beside her nose. Her eyes bulged and she spoke loudly into a wire half-circling just in front of her lips.

"Somebody get on the old dark energy stream with me! For fuck's sake, they're on." The woman stared wildly at Donna, then John.

Their famous faces were clean and bright, belying their journey between worlds, through randomly scattered futures, and under the radar of so many things resembling all gods and monsters, every one ever imagined.

"It's been thirty years," the young woman said. "Ball's in your court, guys."

John leaned in, seemingly worried that the tile—updated many times over three decades—wouldn't work properly. He cleared his throat, checked with Donna, and then spoke. But they weren't words. He didn't sing, either. Rather, it was a tone.

The young communications attendant cupped her ears and squinted at the on-screen image, as it warped from one John-version to another, then faded to black. Slowly Donna appeared, alone, stone-faced, her stare penetrating and calm. She used cold language briefly, and abruptly vanished. The young woman waited a moment before announcing the stream was closed.

The Center asked for a status. It had been so brief, but they wanted to know what the young woman was told by long-feared-lost deusnauts. "He loves her. That's all I got. Don't know how I even got that, but he loves her."

From their side, Donna heard the young woman. John provided it to her via a memory, since it had yet to happen for Donna, but would soon occur.

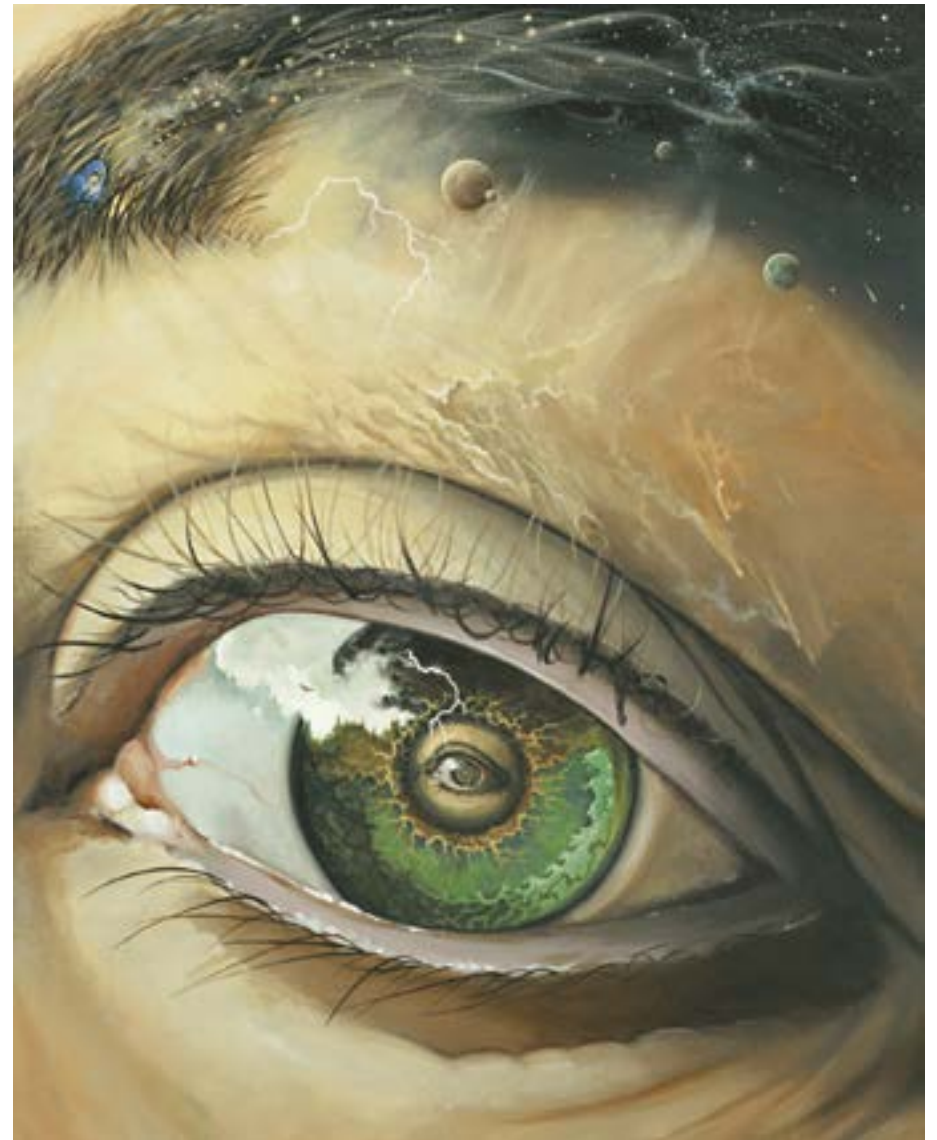
"Is that true?" she said. John wiped his face. He peered at the dark

glass of the module, through which a dynasty of stars bloomed, as if all chipped from a single light.

"Memories don't lie," he said. "It was definitely true once. And if there's anything we've learned, it's that once is forever."

Donna wore an expression of a woman exhausted from her encounters with indeterminate factors. She was drained, like a swimmer sprawled on a darkening shore.

"I suppose it's impossible to know for certain, with things being what they are," she said. "But it was still nice to hear, John."



THE BEHOLDER'S "I"

BORIS KOODRIN

acrylic on canvas



GRANDMOTHER

BORIS KOODRIN

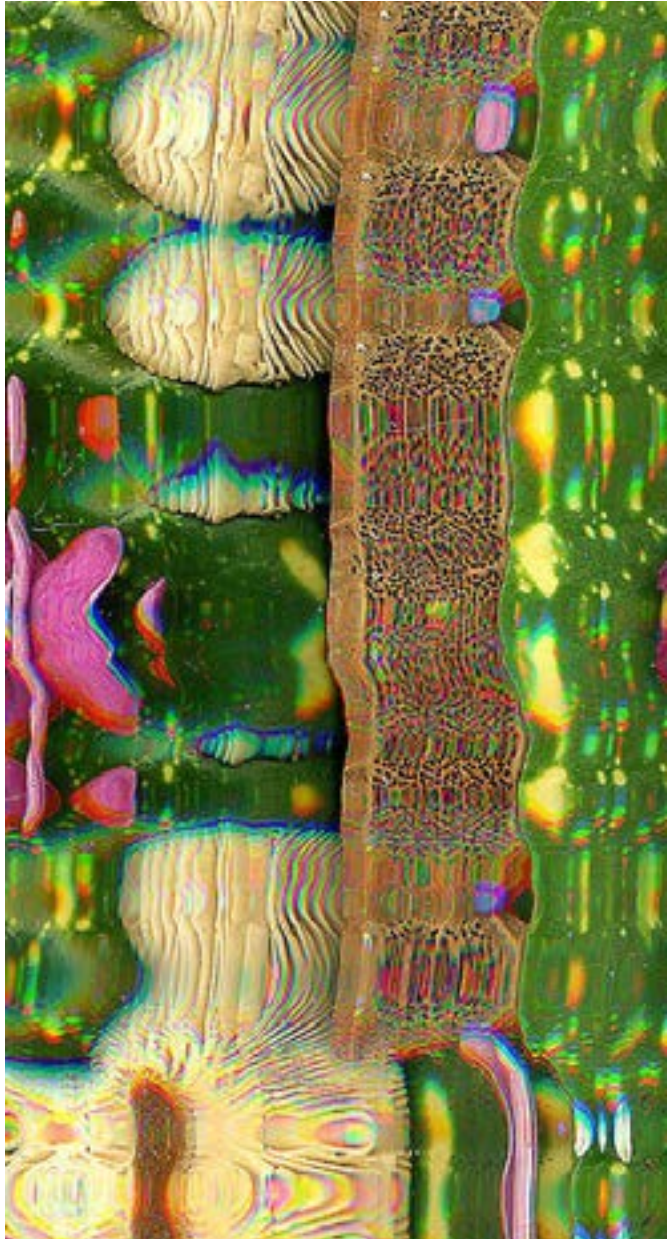
acrylic on canvas



FIRST LIGHT

BORIS KOODRIN

acrylic on canvas



ASTROLOGER

ROBERT BHARDA

Digital images from templates
11" x 14"

IN EVENT OF MOON DISASTER FOR O.W.

LAUREN SCHARHAG

poetry

Can you see the moon from where you are,
Or do you just reconstruct it from memory?
If it's any consolation, the moon landing
Was a hoax staged by Stanley Kubrick and the CIA.

These walls that confine you are lunar in their grayness,
Flecked and pocked with the dark collisions
Of fists and sticky tack, where an unknown number of men
Have pinned their hopes and despairs.

Will you leave footprints behind, suspended forever in space,
As you are suspended? I thought it was an especially nice
Cinematic flourish, the way your reflection smiles up at you,
Moon-like, from the drain in the shower stall.

The hanged man is poised for revelation. These gallows
Are a door, through which the monk and the cosmonaut
Charge through, determined to conquer heaven.
Because here, down is up and out is in

These fifty feet are square, yet they are a circle,
The circle of a life spent whirling madly round the drain,
From bunk, to toilet, to shower, to common room,
Praying the hours into being.

How's the air down there? Can you breathe okay?
Six days out of ninety, we're told,
Is perfectly acceptable for taking in a bit of sky,
By now, you should've weaned yourself off that need for stars.

You should've schooled your lungs into taking in
This block, where uncelestial bodies nestle
Both too near and too far, crowding the night with their snores,
Their tone-deaf songs, and their space dementia.

That funk is not just food cooked on improvised hot
plates.
This is Golgotha, and there are miles of carrion flesh still
being lugged around
On bone hangers. Start building a box because the
eclipse is coming
In full Smell-O-Vision. One man, you say,

Has taken to wrangling gnats, attracting them with
empty cereal bowls,
Still sticky with milk and sugar. When the COs open his
door,
They must stand back for the swarm. These letters make
good fly swatters,
And your firmament is a ceiling grown dark with mold.

Mold would never grow on the moon in such profusion.
Apollo astronauts said the moon smells like spent
gunpowder
And feels like rough snow. But we know that's a lie
Dreamed up by Arthur C. Clarke. For all you know, snow
is a lie.

In South Texas, snow could very well be a lie.
There's a lot to see when you've had an eighteen-year
Moon's eye view. You see these rations on a tray,
They could be NASA-issued. They could be a hoax.

They could definitely be from 1969:
Canned meat and freeze-dried reductions
In case you needed reminding-- you are reduced.
Otherwise, it's a thin spread of peanut butter on white.

You use the brown paper bags to write me when your
tablets
Run out. I put them over my head and go about,
Trying to imagine this tunneling vision, until my head
and my toes
Are reversed, until my heart and my colon are reversed,

Until I am a ballerina poised on tippy-toe
At the trapdoor of the gallows. You inquire
If I will send you girlie magazines. Of course,

You know I will. Even rocketmen

Have to get their rockets off somehow,
And your life comes down to spent gunpowder.
It was July the year they enacted the moon landing.
People thought they knew what the worst was.

All the good men were dead and the remainder
Had bombs burning holes in their pockets.
It was hard to be optimistic, to believe our boys
Could make it home from the stars, even fictitiously.

Eventualities had to be considered, the memorandum drafted,
And you don't have to imagine what it would be like
To be stranded on the moon because we're still stuck
Inside this crater. Now, Haldeman is dead.

He did eighteen months in Lompoc.
I wonder if there will be time enough for these notifications
For words like fate's ordination and the mourning of a nation
In your impending disaster. I wish I could give you a handful of
snow,

The promise of gravity. But all we can do is talk Kubrick films
And dance in circles on the moon. Tonight, it's a waxing crescent.
We'll catch it with the arches of our feet like the rung
Of a ladder, because in space, it doesn't matter

Whether we go up or down.

COMPROMISE ELSEWHERE

-for boar's head cold cuts

ERICH SLIMAK

poetry

I spend my days in a bookstore helping shrunken
grandmothers reach nicotine stained romance novels,
old lottery tickets pressed in them like leaves.
All the while, I am dreaming of my sandwich in the back room,
heavy with salt and spice juice to run down my chin.
A nourishing thing, one to remain heavy within me
through the interminable drive home, the croon
of traffic radio like a folk song memorized.
"I 90 is running slow. West 25th is slow. Prospect is slow."
I am inching toward an existence where I wake
to my wife's rancid sleep breath and roll out of bed,
past my snoring children who care most about
high fructose corn syrup and multicolored ad campaigns,
and wander into the kitchen where the refrigerator holds
my only solace of finely processed sinew and muscle,
perfectly tender and the color of blood.

EVA GOUEL'S LAST TANGO WITH PICASSO

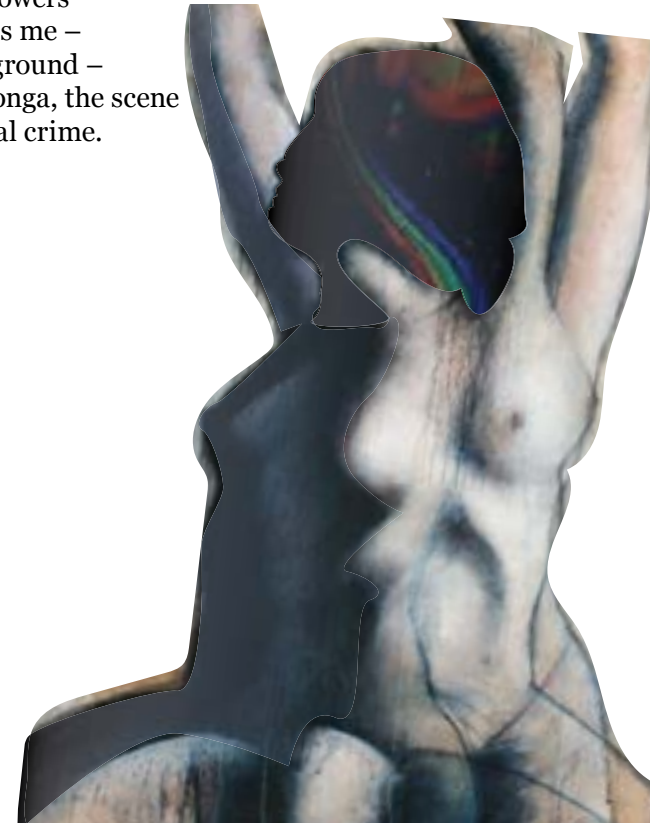
JENNIFER HAMBRICK

poetry

"Women are machines for suffering."
—Pablo Picasso

For all the machismo
of your slashing diagonals
you cannot bear the absence
of our close embrace,
the demise of your dominance.
So on canvas you dance your denial:
one primal stroke dissects
the curve of my neck
you slant the slope of my shoulders
into the flatline of the future.
The breasts you once kissed,
the womb you might have rounded
are in your hands half-moons
burdened with the guache of grief
sisters of the love-sick moon
who illuminates the anguish
of your blank stare.
You make certain
no one else will caress
the flesh you slice
from my thighs
that my dismembered fingers
will grasp no other shoulders
in a sudden lunge
submitting to another's will.

The love letter you write
—J'aime Eva —
where your angles part my legs
shortens the single step
between love and death
between the red-green-yellow-blue
of children's toys with which
you paint my moods
and the black of your bladed lines.
And while you remake my mind
into an empty latticework
my eyes remain open but unseeing
lips still and silent.
With this dance of death
your genius flowers
yet transforms me —
partner, playground —
into your milonga, the scene
of an immortal crime.



with art pieces from Brain Harvey & Boris Koodrin

TUESDAYS I WEAR PERFUME FOR A BISON

CYNTHIA SCHWARTZBERG EDLOW

poetry

When the garden greens lean into a narrow bitter
and the snap peas collapse in the heat
and the knobby yellow squash cries, do not forsake me,
oh please devour, in the end I'd rather,
it is time to return to the bison and display
no offense at her stellar indifference.

Seventy feet away she smells me exiting
the car, the leathery Hermès florals, sugarwrap
kite notes, I wear my best scent
for her. I like to do that, smell
the same, that she knows it's me coming.

A bison's water bowl is a claw-footed bathtub.
A bison's down comforter on a chilly night
is a dung heap mixed in loose earth.
A bison wallowing on a hospitable dung heap
is enormous brown happiness.

I've secretly renamed her.
Billie, may I be frank?
Very few men have mastered
the art of superior kissing.

When scolding a stubborn man
the lesson is far better grasped
in an improper venue—
wasn't it the pretty ballroom dancer
who spat, don't give me your shoulders.

The moment you give me your
shoulders you submit to me.
Don't submit to me
in Tango.

Why couldn't I have been a female buffalo
skipping and sauntering and time-lazy
in love with a female buffalo
and nobody to brother our love?

Free to promenade our way over hill and hollow,
blizzard curses stunning our sentiments in winter,
rough footing elsetimes,
but always together shoulder to shoulder,
hump to hump, snout to snout, below the shadow
of snow-collared lodgepole pines.
Come the clutter of blooming spring
and us simply occasioning by,
a trove of ardor to wave us past.



BLUE BALCONY

LYNETTE COOK

acrylic on canvas
24" x 48"



TIED, FRONT AND SIDE

BRIAN HARVEY

acrylic
30" x 24"



EZEKIEL'S WHEEL

SCOTT SHAFFER

ceramic, raku fired with gold painted highlights
12"L x 15"H x 5"W



RISING FROM THE ASHES

SCOTT SHAFFER

ceramic, cone 10 high fired reduction - with candle and wood base
14"L x 21"H x 11"W

THEY SAY I'M LUCKY I HAVEN'T HAD IT WORSE

JENNY FERGUSON

nonfiction

I'm a woman with big tits. And I kind of love them, bouncy, warm, and heavy. But I haven't always loved this weight. Yeah, when the Canadian government said they would cover the cost of breast reduction surgery for women like me, I imagined my body in all the bras I'd never been able to wear before. Victoria's Secret. La Senza. La Vie En Rose. Hot, hot pink. Or red. The obnoxious colours. The cuts women like me can't wear. The bralette. The plunge. For a while, it was a nice fantasy, the cutting and cropping of my body.

I'm a woman who wears a size 16. Like all women, I have hips, I have an ass. I bleed. I like stretchy fabrics. God bless Lycra.

And I'm fucking hot. It's something I know now, not something I've always known.

I'm a woman who at thirty wore a bikini to the beach for the first time. Let's not talk about the sunburn. Or the weird hairs I suddenly noticed in the penetrating gaze of the Florida sun. Let's talk about the pink and black polka dot bikini top with its adjustable straps, and the drawstring keeping my bottoms on when the waves at Coco Beach hit me, salty, cold, and rough, over and over again.

Hundreds of other people occupied the beach. Welcome to Florida in July. Hundreds of other people with eyes. I'd never noticed eyes in this way before. These people who could, if it thrilled them, examine every flaw of my body. New light brings new shadows. Even though I was exposed, on show, as open as I had ever been with my body outside of those comforting private places like bedrooms and kitchens, I felt safe. Let's discount the time I spent tracking sharks on OCEARCH's Global Shark Tracker app and the time I spent applying SPF 60 sunscreen to my exposed bits. Because: sharks. Because: cancer.

Sharks and cancer. With the teeth and the cells growing, abnormally, out of control. All those horror stories. Someone's aunt, someone's mother.

These fears I understand.

The ocean doesn't belong to me, but to others, to the things that live in the dark down there. The fish we eat, and the fish we don't: swimming in mercury, in man-made poisons.

In South Dakota, about as far from the ocean as you can get, we don't worry about fish. Instead, it's Monsanto. Glyphosate. Atrazine. Tetrahydrophthalimide. Pyraclostrobin. Spinosad A. These are but a handful of the things living in the cornfield across the street from my house. The one my dog runs through, the one the wind blows through, in my open windows. When I think about what particles are living in that field, in my air, I can almost feel my cells mutating.

These fears are understandable.

Sharks and cancer, sure—but the walk-in freezer?

I work the front of the house. He works the back of the house. There's the line: where hot food sits under heat lamps, waiting. The line keeps us apart. The line keeps us safe.

It's a cheap restaurant. A franchise. Italian. Unlimited salad or soup and breadsticks with an entrée. I make an average of 2\$ on every bill.

I'm overworked, underpaid. You know the story.

A memory: I spill orange soda on a woman's lap. An accident, of course. But she's still pissed, even after I help clean up, even after I sorry myself raw, even after the manager comps part of their bill. At the end of the meal, her husband tips me with a twenty, and a smile. It's funny where we take our petty little revenge. My boss, he seems to think this is what women do: screw around, screw up—and when they do, cost him money.

My boss is an asshole—but whose boss isn't?

The first time I call in sick in my life he orders me into work, even after I protest my migraine is so severe I can't see straight. This is no metaphor

for pain. Living and working in the suburbs, there's no getting to work without driving, and there's no driving with this migraine. I don't show up for my shift that day; he doesn't follow through on his threat to fire me. I wonder if it's because he's heard I've filled a complaint with the Ministry of Labour? I wonder if it's because he's only an asshole when he wants to be?

Eight or so hours into a fourteen-hour shift. Open to close. It's exhausting, but I've done it before, and I'll do it again. But this time it's different.

In the front of the house, I'm safe. The lights are bright. My asshole boss is around, hovering like he does in his pressed black dress shirt, his made-for-work, crease-free slacks. As the shift progresses, we sing this dreadful happy birthday song, over and over again. I hate to think it says something about me that I'm never part of the group clapping and singing even when it is my table, my tip on the line. I hate to think that it says something about me, my skill in convincing others to sing for me.

There's something in the walk-in freezer. I need it to do my job. Today, if you ask me, I can't tell you what I was doing in the walk-in freezer, in the back of the house. I don't belong there, across that line.

At another job, before this one, when I worked at a pizza place, the walk-in freezer was the site of most of our practical jokes. Not that it's very funny to be locked in a walk-in freezer, two guys—cousins—pressing their weight against the door, locking me in, while the phone rings, over and over again. Someone wants a pizza, but they're not getting it tonight. We're goofing off, throwing tiny balls of dough at each other, or shaking someone's fresh soda can when they turn their back. It only takes a second to pull one over on someone. In the pizza place, it's practically a rule that if one of us steps into the walk-in, if the boss is out, we're going to force someone to sit on a milk-crate in the cold until it's not funny anymore. I've been cold, I've been angry, but I've never worried they wouldn't let me out, or worse, I never worried they'd come in after me.

But at this cheap Italian place, I crossed that line and walk to the back of the house, where the walk-in freezer is located. He must have been watching me, or when I stepped foot into his space, he noticed. Like radar. Like a sixth sense.

The timing is off, wrong. Cooks don't leave the line during the dinner rush.

Servers don't cross the line. Their space, our space.

I needed something. Maybe the liquid caramel and chocolate in squirt bottles, the stuff we drizzle all over the plate so your seven dollar dessert doesn't feel so small. I liked drawing flowers in caramel with chocolate centres on white plates. Or running a knife through alternating rows of the sticky sauce, blending the two.

Liquid caramel and chocolate, maybe that's why I was in the walk-in.

The door clamps shut. I reach for the switch, happy when the yellow light kicks in. The space is cramped, frozen food everywhere. Boxes of chicken, breadsticks, cheesecake.

I'm looking for something—what exactly? Does it really matter? I've crossed the line.

He walks in behind me, pulls the door shut, and stands, his wide body blocking my exit. In order to leave, I'm going to have to move through him.

It's a skill I haven't picked up. Moving through solid flesh. Moving through male space.

"You have a nice ass," he says.

We've never exchanged words, except thanks, and generic food-related statements like can you rush that chicken cacciatore, my table's in a rush? And yet I know he's an ass man.

Then his follow up: he asks me what I do for fun. What I do when I'm not serving cheap Italian food to Woodbridge Kids.

I'm a full-time student working 30+ hours a week at a cheap Italian restaurant. I don't do anything else. I study, I work, I sleep. But I don't tell him that. I don't want to mention the bedroom. Don't want to convince him, with a single breath, let alone words that could suggest, if he takes a fucking leap, that I'm cool with what's going down.

I don't remember what I said, or what I wanted to say.

My nipples are hard. From the cold.

And I'm crossing my arms over my chest, knowing that this move only accentuates my lady parts, hoping that he leaves soon. Because I can't until he does. Because his body is between mine and the door.

My nipples are hard. And I'm hoping he can't see this because that's not the message I want to send. Damn my body for betraying me, for reacting to the cold.

After a while, I'm not sure how long, he steps closer to me, reaches across my body, brushes me to grab himself a bag of flash frozen chicken. There is no room to step away.

There is no room for me here. This is the back of the house. This is not the front of the house.

After a while, he leaves.

I work at the cheap Italian restaurant for a few more months. I never step foot in the back of the house again.

Sharks, cancer, stairwells.

Fact: Girls mature faster than boys.

Fact: In my sixth grade class photo, the top row is almost exclusively filled with girls. By the eighth grade, I'm downgraded to the first row along with most of my girlfriends. Something's changed.

Fact: It happens twice. In the stairwell.

Fact: There are several ways to exit Beverly Heights Middle School. The front door, rarely used lets you out on the neighbourhood. I don't live in the neighbourhood. The north exit leads to the road with a funny name: Troutbrooke. The road leads to the bus stop at Jane Street, down the hill. I take the bus, use the north door. But for a few weeks, I decide to ride my bike to and from school. It's a long trip, but my parents seem proud. My body could use more time on the bike. I know this, even at twelve.

Fact: The bike racks, well, they aren't out the north door.

Fact: The first time I run down the stairwell that leads to the door that leads to the bike racks, I'm not worried when I spot him standing there. He's leaning against the wall, relaxed. I'm not even worried when he smiles at me. People smile. I'm not worried until he uses his body to push mine

against a cinderblock wall.

Fact: It happens twice. Both times I don't say anything to anyone. For years. Both times, I feel guilty for using that stairwell, like my laziness is a crime.

Fact: He uses his body to hold mine against a cinderblock wall.

Fact: He uses his hands to grab my breasts, my ass, and once, he presses his hand between my legs.

Fact: I'm fully clothed.

Fact: This is my fault. I'm lazy. If I'd only walked a few more metres, if only.

Fact: There are other doors.

Fact: It happens twice. I let him do this to me twice.

Fact: I don't tell anyone. But when I do, it's after my best friend tells me it happened to her. More than once. In that stairwell. How she remembers his heavy body, his heavy hands.

Fact: Knowing it happened to her too doesn't make me feel any less lazy for letting it happen a second time. Knowing she let it happen a second, and a third, and fourth time, over and over again, doesn't make me feel any better.

Fact: The adult I've become likes being manhandled. Consensually. But it's not fair that I sometimes worry there's something about twice in a stairwell in my middle school that's fucked me up, that's changed me.

With sharks, we expect blood. With cancer, hair loss. With parking lots, it's violence. This is not the parking lot story you're expecting.

I've moved to the Midwest. I live alone, in a log cabin. It's very Midwest. I teach Intro to Lit at a small midwestern university as I study for my PhD.

It's boring here. My life is boring here.

I'm stopped on the quad and asked out by a freshman my first week on campus. He says my body's fit. And I know he doesn't mean ready for a

marathon. I tell him I'm too old, but thanks. He says, "Age is just a number, baby." And that's my cue to walk away.

My second week on campus, I'm followed aggressively by an international student, an overly nice guy who isn't reading my I'm-not-interested signals. This reminds me to work on my not-interested signals, and maybe, work on my not-interested-at-all speech. After all, I really should say it: No. I'm not interested in having sex with you. He follows me, aggressively, for a year. I never find the words as I'm avoiding places where I know he'll find me.

Life is boring, but my wardrobe isn't. I get to play at being a professional. I get to dress up in my professorial drag: usually a pencil skirt, black, a top of some kind, and to keep it classy, and fashion forward, a pair of pantyhose disappearing into black slouchy boots.

I own a collection of pantyhose: mostly black, some patterned. Sometimes, when I'm feeling extra runway ready, I put on the fishnets. They aren't the kind with huge holes, where I'm like, um, yeah, that doesn't cover anything. The little holes are tight, a pattern more than an all-access pass. In my gut, I believe they're classy.

After teaching, office hours, and then sitting through six hours of my own classes, it's ten PM and I'm starving. Before driving home on two-lane country roads to the log cabin, where the likely contents of my fridge include cheese, and maybe a can of Coke, I stop at Subway.

The parking lot is littered with trash. A tan sedan is parked next to me. I'm climbing out of my red Mustang. I'm exhausted. I'm hungry. I'm ready for an all-American ritual: exchanging money for food under florescent lights.

I'm not ready for the look the driver of the sedan throws my way. She meets my eyes, and once she knows I see her watching me, she makes her way down my body, over my breasts, over my stomach, over my pencil skirt, my thighs, my fishnets, and then, she slowly shakes her head from side to side, over and over again. This is her disapproval of my body.

A moment of disassociation hits me. Where time slows, where I'm taken outside of myself. This has never happened before.

Last week dressed head-to-toe in winter gear, a truck slows and there's the whistle. My winter coat covers me from neck to knees, my boots from toes to mid-calf. Men's eyes on my curves, sure. Catcalls, yes. Once in Belize,

I'm followed eight blocks, and out onto a country road by a pack of men, who taunt me in one breath, who praise my assets in the next.

But a woman. Not like this. Not ever.

I can't meet her eyes. But when I raise my own, I see two boys. Not hers, she's too old. Maybe they're her grandsons, too young to be without car seats, watching her, watching me.

At home, I strip down, peeling the fishnets from my body. I shove my collection to the back of a sock drawer, and when I need more room for socks, I throw the fishnets and the opaque black tights in the garbage.

For a few years, I stop wearing skirts. Haven't worn fishnets since.

Cancer rates are higher here. It's the chemicals they put on the crops. But the saving grace, there are no sharks. Only corn, only classrooms.

Two moments in higher ed.

One. Student evaluations.

I'm not very good at writing papers and she was literally a bitch about everything.

Two. The protestors.

Women Are to Be Meek, Quiet and Modestly Dressed.

You Must Change For Christ To Accept You.

The protestors stand on the quad. They're holding signs. Those signs are double sided. On the other side of one sign, a trite phrase, something about divorced women, something about whores.

Even though the protestors stand there all day, no one stops. No one stands their ground, a living monument against the message the protestors are forwarding. I don't stop. I read the signs. I walk away.

That's not true. I take a stand, writing a letter to the office of the university president, asking why anti-feminist religious messages are allowed on

campus. I discover two things. One, you require a permit from the office of the president to hold a protest, or counter-protest; however, no list of approved protests is made available to students. Two, free speech, in this place, is the official excuse for allowing anti-feminist sentiments. For calling divorced women whores. They call it free speech, I call it hate speech.

Months later, I write a novel. My protagonist meets these men on her university campus, and in response, she strips down to her underwear and bra. Conservative religious nuts meet boobs. Meet the female body. Meet curves. Meet sex. Meet my right to my body. Watch me, watch my body, watch how you cannot control it.

This character, she's the woman I want to be. Never mind that she winds up dead. That her body cannot transgress these lines without consequence. She's a feminist, and she's mouthy, and she's killed.

But that's fiction. That's story.

That's not my body in this place in the year two-thousand-and-sixteen where a student feels as if bitch is a word to wield against me. What makes me a bitch? Who makes me a bitch?

Sharks, fuck yeah. Cancer, yes. But add all these others, and learn to balance them, as well.

The bikini and the salty ocean and the weird hairs and the pale whiteness of my usually covered skin, it's liberating. Strange but happy, too. I know I'll do it again. Because I believe every woman has a bikini body. I've returned to wearing skirts, prefer them actually. But I've ditched the hose, most days, because if my community can't learn to accept my legs, they'll never accept the rest of my body. And if they can't accept my body, as mine, in the shape and form in which I present it, then they will never accept my mind making similar moves.

They will never accept my no, or my stop, or my safe word.

Yet, when I put the bikini away, and strap on my super-expensive because they-don't-sells-bras-for-women-like-me-in-malls but smoking lace cage, the one that holds my tatas in check, I'm reminded that we live in a world where porn stars can't be raped.

From behind the veil of anonymity the Internet draws around us, we are willing to say this to the face of a woman who has had her body and her mind overruled, as if her body or mind don't matter. We are willing to do this, to continue to enact this rape on her, over and over again.

We live in a world where, in Canada, Indigenous women are four times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women—and nobody is listening to their cries. Statistically, their murderers are more likely to ditch their body somewhere in the open. When they are discarded, these women do not even merit a shallow grave.

We live in a world where Planned Parenthood—an organization that provides abortions, yes, but also cancer and STD screenings, contraception (to, you know, help avoid abortions) and sex education to American women—is under attack by government, and domestic terrorists, every damn day.

We live in a world where the walk-in freezer at work isn't safe, where the stairwell in your two-story middle school isn't safe, where the well-lit parking lot of the strip mall is not safe, where the university where you learn and teach is not safe.

People tell me I'm lucky I haven't had it worse, as if too close, too much, too often, too drunk, too tempting, too easy-to-excuse doesn't count, doesn't matter, doesn't change who I am, who I am allowed to be. There are sharks. There is cancer. These fears I understand. These fears I can rationalize. These fears I am willing to face, big tits and all.

But in this world, where too close, too much, too often, too drunk, too tempting, too easy-to-excuse doesn't count, I am left afraid.

I exist. I fight. I face these things with resilience. But, at my core, in this body I have learned to love, to respect and hold as sacred, I am heavied.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

SANTA CLARA REVIEW

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Laurie Barna is a native northern Californian, a retired pediatric RN/NP, an award-winning watercolor and mixed media content artist, and most recently, an author. She is best known for her ongoing Liberty Series, chronicled in her self-published book, *The Liberty Series: For the Love of Liberty*. Read more about Laurie and her artwork at www.watercolorsmymway.com.

Lynette Cook explores the shadows of the urban environment as inspiration for her realist paintings. She is a current grantee of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Recent solo exhibitions include the Morris Graves Museum of Art in Eureka, CA and Gallerie Citi in Burlingame, CA. Her painting *Kaleidoscope*, commissioned by Imagery Estate Winery, soon will be released on a wine label.

Cynthia Schwartzberg Edlow's collection is *The Day Judge Spencer Learned the Power of Metaphor*. Prizes include: Tusculum Review, Red Hen Press, Willow Review, Smartish Pace, three Pushcart Prize nominations. Journals include: American Poetry Review, Barrow Street, Cimarron Review, Gulf Coast, The Los Angeles Review, Plume, South Dakota Review, Tahoma Literary Review. Anthologies include: *Drawn to Marvel*, Emily Dickinson Awards Anthology, *The Plume Anthology of Poetry 5*. Her next full-length poetry collection, forthcoming 2017: *Horn Section All Day Every Day*.

Jenny Ferguson holds a PhD from the University of South Dakota. Her first book, *BORDER MARKERS*, a collection of interrelated flash fiction stories, is now available from NeWest Press. You can reach Jenny online at www.jennyferguson.ca.

Toby Goostree's work has appeared, and will appear, in *Christianity and Literature*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *By and By Poetry*, and *Kansas City Voices*. He has an MFA from the University of Arizona, and lives in Kansas City with his wife, Amy.

Reyna Grande is an award-winning novelist and memoirist. She has received an American Book Award, the El Premio Aztlán Literary Award, and the International Latino Book Award. In 2012, she was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her novels include *Across a Hundred Mountains*, (Atria, 2006) and *Dancing with Butterflies* (Washington Square Press, 2009). In her memoir, *The Distance Between Us*, (Atria, 2012) Reyna writes about her life before and after illegally immigrating from Mexico to the United States.

Jennifer Hambrick's poetry has been honored with a Pushcart Prize nomination, and her chapbook, *Unscathed* (NightBallet Press), was an Ohioana Book Award nominee. Her poetry appears in *Third Wednesday*, *Pudding Magazine*, *Modern Haiku*, *Presence*, and in many other journals and anthologies worldwide. A classical musician and public radio broadcaster, Jennifer Hambrick lives in Columbus, Ohio. Her blog, *Inner Voices*, is at jenniferhambrick.com. "Eva Gouel's Last Tango with Picasso" was first published in the Ohio Poetry Association's anthology of ekphrastic poetry, *A Rustling and Waking Within* (OPA Press, 2017)

Brian Harvey uses multiple angles of the same pose to explore the human form. The drama and motion that this creates is also present in his abstract work. Brian has lived and painted in the Bay area since the mid 1980's. He is an award winning artist who's work has been exhibited and sold through out the west coast.

Sean Jackson has published numerous short stories in literary journals from the U.S. to Canada and Australia. In 2011 he was a Million Writers Award nominee. His debut novel *Haw* was published in 2015. He was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, and currently lives there.

A native San Franciscan, **Boris Koodrin** describes his painting as "magical realism". His work includes canvases, murals, satellite dishes, utility boxes and a fully-illustrated collection of recycled wooden doors known as "Life Thinly Sliced". His mural "Spiritus Magis" (2005) commemorates 150 years of Jesuit education at the entrance of St. Ignatius College Prep in San Francisco. www.boriskoodrin.com

Jennifer Lothrigel is an artist and poet residing in the San Francisco Bay area. Her work has been published in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *The Tishman Review*, *Cicatrix Publishing*, *The Haight Ashbury Journal*, *Mad Swirl* and elsewhere. Clay, like God, once it gets into your soul, it never leaves you or gives up; even after 45 years of working with it. God is our Master Potter; I continue finding inspiration in this very versatile media with each piece I create. Professionally, I am a Marriage Family Therapist and have been counseling At Risk Youth for nearly 30 years. (more of my work can be seen at www.saspottery.com)

Marcia B. Loughran has published poetry in *The Riding Light Review*, *Newtown Literary*, and *decomp Magazine*. Her chapbook, *Still Life with Weather*, won the 2016 WaterSedge Poetry Chapbook Prize. Marcia

received her MFA in Creative Writing from the Bennington Writing Seminars in 2013. Marcia has performed with Writers Read NYC and the Bennington Writers series. She is a nurse practitioner.

Megan Padilla currently lives in Las Vegas where she teaches English at the College of Southern Nevada. Her fiction has appeared or is forthcoming from The Los Angeles Review, Eleven Eleven, The Meadow, and elsewhere. She also holds an MFA in fiction from Eastern Washington University.

Fabrice Poussin teaches French and English at Shorter University, Rome, Georgia. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in Kestrel, Symposium, The Chimes, and more than two dozens of other magazines. His photography has been published in The Front Porch Review, the San Pedro River Review and more than one hundred other publications.

Marilee Richards has had her poems widely published in journals including The Southern Review, Rattle, and Tar River Poetry. She is the winner of the 2016 Asheville Poetry Review William Matthews Poetry Prize selected by Joy Harjo. She lives in Sedona where she leads poetry hikes into the Secret Mountain Wilderness.

Larry Sacks is an award-winning photographer and SCU graduate (BSC in Marketing). Photography is his passion and he photographs weddings, seniors, headshots, families (including pets) and fine art subjects (www.LarrySacks.com). His works have been published in the Wall Street Journal and Shutter Magazine and he's been the Lead Staff Photographer for the Santa Clara Weekly since 2005.

Lauren Scharhag is the author of such works as Under Julia, The Ice Dragon, and West Side Girl & Other Poems. She is the recipient of the Gerard Manley Hopkins Award for poetry and a fellowship from Rockhurst University for fiction. A recent transplant to the Florida Panhandle, she lives with her husband and three cats.

Erich Slimak is a poet and teacher from Queens by way of Cleveland. He is a 2015 graduate of Kenyon College and currently resides in Brooklyn.

Nate Stein is an international human rights attorney in New York City. His work has appeared, or is forthcoming, in Wordriot, Gravel, The Santa Clara Review, The Orlando Sentinel, Shanghai Expat Magazine, The NYU

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Cathleen Stewart has an M.F.A. (in Creative Writing) and an M.A. (in Philosophy). Her education and personal experience (from the aftermath of World War II and through 9-11 and the data-bit revolution) bring longitudinal richness to her poetry. Her central focus is the role language plays in shaping the inner life. She has been published in Poetry Quarterly.

Maura Turcotte was born in the swamps of Orlando, Florida, but grew up in Los Angeles. She is a senior at Santa Clara University double-majoring in English and Political Science. An avid writer, Maura serves as the Scene Editor for The Santa Clara in addition to working for the Santa Clara Magazine as an editorial intern.

Clay Waters has had short stories and poetry published in The Santa Barbara Review, Abyss & Apex, Poet Lore, and Literal Latte. He studies Library Science and writes, when he can, from his home in Central Florida.

John Sibley Williams is the author of nine poetry collections, most recently Disinheritance. A five-time Pushcart nominee and winner of various awards, John serves as editor of The Inflectionist Review. Recent publications include: Midwest Quarterly, Massachusetts Review, Poet Lore, Saranac Review, Arts & Letters, Columbia Poetry Review, Mid-American Review, Third Coast, Baltimore Review, and Nimrod. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

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