

2-20-2019

## Santa Clara Review, vol. 106, no. 1

Santa Clara University

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/sc\\_review](https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/sc_review)



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

---



SANTA  
CLARA  
REVIEW

volume 106 issue 01

featuring Frederick Luis Aldama



SANTA  
CLARA  
REVIEW

---

volume 106 / issue 01

COVER ART BY RICHARD VYSE  
FRONT COVER / *MAN MOOD*  
CHINESE INK WITH BRUSH

**SANTA CLARA REVIEW** IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR UNSOLICITED SUBMISSIONS OF ARTWORK. TO FACILITATE ACCURATE REPRODUCTION OF YOUR PIECE, WE WELCOME SUBMISSIONS ONLINE VIA OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.SANTACLARAREVIEW.COM

SUBSCRIPTION TO PRINT COPIES ARE \$15.00 FOR ONE YEAR AND \$25.00 FOR TWO YEARS. SINGLE AND BACK ISSUES ARE AVAILABLE FOR \$7.50 (INCLUDES \$1.00 FOR POSTAGE AND HANDLING).

CONTACT US BY MAIL AT:

**SANTA CLARA REVIEW**  
500 EL CAMINO REAL, Box 3212  
SANTA CLARA, CA, 95053-3212  
(408) 554-4484

OR EMAIL AT:

SANTACLARAREVIEW@GMAIL.COM

NO MANUSCRIPTS OR ARTWORK CAN BE RETURNED UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE. MANUSCRIPTS UNDER CONSIDERATION WILL BE KEPT FOR AT LEAST FOUR WEEKS. MATERIALS PUBLISHED IN SANTA CLARA REVIEW MAY NOT BE REPRINTED, IN WHOLE OR PART, WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE EDITORS OR ORIGINATORS.

THANK YOU TO KIRK GLASER, TEDD VANADILOK, MATT CAMERON, AND ARCELIA RODRIGUEZ FOR THEIR CONTINUED ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT.

**SANTA CLARA REVIEW** ACCEPTS GIFTS AND DONATIONS TO HELP COVER PRODUCTION COSTS. PLEASE WRITE OR CALL WITH QUERIES.

# SANTA CLARA REVIEW

VOLUME 106 // ISSUE 01

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
RILEY O'CONNELL

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**    **PRODUCTION EDITOR**  
MADISON SYKES    EMILY SHIROMA

**POETRY EDITOR**    **ART EDITOR**  
ERIKA RASMUSSEN    BEVIN MCCULLOUGH

**NONFICTION EDITOR**    **FICTION EDITOR**  
DHANUSH SHETTY    ALLY O'CONNOR

**WEBMASTER**    **OWL EDITOR**  
JACK MILLER    ETHAN BEBERNESS

**MARKETING DIRECTOR**  
JULES XENAKIS

## ASSISTANT EDITORS

YANNA GARCIA    NORA FLUETSCH  
TARA TEDJARATI    ANOUSHKA GUPTA  
DANNA D'ESOPPO    WESLEY DUFELMEIER  
DOMINIC TRAN    EMMA KULI  
ANTHONY ALEGRETE    ANNIE LOEWEN

## EDITORIAL BOARD

LINDON COULTER-PETERSON    SARAH LOCKLIN  
SHENIR DENNIS    ASHIKA RAJESH  
ROSEY KENSCHOL    KATRINA SAMONTE  
JUSTIN KIM    JIA SEOW  
WILL KOLADA    SASHA TODD  
KYLA YAMASHITA

**FACULTY ADVISOR**  
KIRK GLASER

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## POETRY

BENJAMIN MUELLER / DIGGING FOR COLOSSUS  
07

PAMELA MILLER / THE GODDESS VISITS ME IN A DREAM AND ORDERS ME TO JOIN  
THE RESISTANCE  
09

CLAIRE SCOTT / ESSENTIAL ILLUSIONS  
10

CLAIRE SCOTT / GHOST LIGHT  
11

JEREMY GRIFFIN / KING KONG IN LOVE  
12

DAN GROTE / SPEEDBUMP CREATURES  
13

ANIKA JENSEN / MY MOTHER'S BODY  
21

SHAINA CLINGEMPEEL / LADY CHIPS©  
23

LARRY NARRON / PILGRIMAGE  
24

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS / LARYNX  
33

ALEX BLUM / THE STAIRCASE  
43

MARTIN OTT / NOBODY KNOWS WHY THOUSANDS OF SKITTLES WERE ON THEIR WAY  
TO FEED WISCONSIN COWS  
45

DAVID SPICER / EPISTLE TO G  
51

SARAH GIRAGOSIAN / WELCOME TO AMERICA,  
56

## FICTION

FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA / BRUNO  
02

FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA / DORA  
03

DALLAS WOODBURN / PIECES  
26

S.W. CAMPBELL / GUTTERBALL  
38

ABBEY BRANCO / THESAURUS ET AL.  
44

## NONFICTION

BRITTANY ACKERMAN / GOING SWIMMING  
46

DEDRICK C. DANIELS / CRABS IN A BUCKET  
58

## ART

ALEC GONZALES / QUEUED UP  
16

ALEC GONZALES / MMM, SALAD  
17

AUSTIN DICKIESON / CORAL BOTTLE (REIMAGINE OCEAN POLLUTION)  
18

RACHEL DILLMAN / CAT ON SHOULDER  
20

MICHAEL HOWER / KNOCK, KNOCK  
34

MICHAEL HOWER / SKYWALK  
35

RICHARD VYSE / MAN MOOD  
36

NIJOLÉ RASMUSSEN / MONOLOGUE  
37

SHELLEY VALDEZ / LIKE HELL  
52

SHELLEY VALDEZ / YOU'LL NEVER HAVE NOWHERE TO GO  
53

TESSIE BERGHOFF / THE ROOM WHERE SHE READS THE NEWSPAPER  
54

TESSIE BERGHOFF / THE ROOM WHERE WE HAVE CHRISTMAS DINNER  
55

# EDITOR'S NOTE

RILEY O'CONNELL

---

volume 106 / issue 01

DEAR READER,

It is the greatest pleasure of my collegiate career to present to you this copy of the *Santa Clara Review*, especially in this year, our magazine's sesquicentennial.

Founded in 1869, the *Santa Clara Review* has seen thousands of excellent works of literature and art, compiled and nurtured by an abundance of endlessly passionate staffs of Santa Clara University undergraduates. This year, all but I and Ally O'Connor are new to the team, giving our journal fresh perspectives from sophomore to senior, Bangalore to Boston, Political Science to Computer Science, and more, and allowing us to publish a range of deeply resonating pieces, many of which exist at the crossroads of the personal and political.

Since first stepping onto SCU's campus in September of 2015, I have loved and aspired to contribute meaningfully to this magazine and the literary world as a whole. Now, as a senior and Editor-in-Chief, I can say indubitably what a joy and blessing it has been to learn, build, and evolve, as individuals and as a collective, with this group of peers, all of whom I am not only proud but, above all, wholeheartedly eager to lead.

Undoubtedly more so, we are, of course, eager to share with you the work which graces these pages: art and literature so generously shared with us by artists of numerous backgrounds, from university students to professors to Pushcart nominees to incarcerated writers. While all telling distinct stories through their art, the culmination of these diverse works in the *Santa Clara Review*, we hope, provides a catharsis through which we as readers, writers, and human beings may find ourselves and, perhaps, reflect on the people we are and strive to be. We hope this variety offers for each of you something significant and inspiring, especially as we recognize and celebrate the influential and obligatory nature of the arts in times of suffering and unrest, like those our nation and world are currently experiencing and have undeniably always experienced.

For this and more, thank you to our contributors, both current and past, especially Frederick Luis Aldama, for allowing us to care for and give space to your exceptional and intimate work. As former editor Jake Lans '16 wrote in 103.1, "Without you we are nothing but a book of empty pages."

Thank you, too, to all those at Santa Clara University who have, for 150 years, supported our creative voice on campus and our pursuit of truth, honesty, and social responsibility within the literary arts.

And lastly, thank you to our ceaselessly driven and captivating staff, editorial board and assistants, and faculty advisor, Dr. Kirk Glaser, for your creative honesty and commitment to this book and to the arts. The work you all do and the team we have become are truly magnificent.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and that which follows. Till next time.

RILEY O'CONNELL  
editor in chief

# FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA

featured author

Frederick Luis Aldama is the Arts & Humanities Distinguished Professor, University Distinguished Scholar, and University Distinguished Teacher at The Ohio State University. He is the author, co-author, and editor of 36 books, including the Eisner Award and International Latino Book Award winning, *Latinx Superheroes in Mainstream Comics*, and *Tales From La Vida*. He is author of the forthcoming sci-fi graphic novel, *2041* and the children's book, *With Papá*. He is editor and coeditor of 9 academic press book series as well as editor of the trade-press graphic fiction and nonfiction series, *Latinographix*. He is creator of the first documentary on the history of Latinx comics as well as editor and curator of *The Planetary Republic of Comics*. He is founder and director of Latinx Space for Enrichment & Research (LASER), which won the Ohio Education Summit Award, the Columbus Council Award, and the Obama White House Hispanic Bright Spot award.



## BRUNO

I can't say why it's comforting to feel his presence. He has been by my side since he was a couple years old, moving mostly silently in the room to exercise his legs and also mostly to satisfy his curiosity. There is not a fly, not a shadow, not a noise that does not attract his attention. His ears and his eyes and his hair are beautiful. His body is slim and for most of his life it has been elegant and supple. Knowing he is in the room somewhere near and as keen as I am in exploring our respectively laser chosen microscopic parcel of the universe, is rewarding in a warm, tender way. I have sat at my table for hours, days, weeks, months, years, and my writing has been always enveloped by that warmth. I have written innumerable pages, always with passion and a considerable degree of compulsion. And almost always with him by my side or nearby. To connect with such ardor, strength and effectiveness with another being has happened to me very few times in my life. I feel him and I read him and I guess him, while knowing he has his own, deep, impenetrable mind and heart. And this I respect fully even today, after so many years of experiencing this unique togetherness. He cannot know for sure I need him because his eyesight and his other senses have waned. I know his organic systems are gradually declining and heading soon to a stop, one by one and then collectively. According to some rough calculations he is about 95 years old, so his end is obviously timely: the kind and unkind experiences his small body has accumulated along his rich and long life have by now exhausted his vital energies. Now the time has come for me to acquire new habits, to learn to work in different circumstances, to expose myself to the stimulus of a differently organized working environment where BRUNO is absent, nowhere to be seen, nowhere to be felt. After a period of grief will come the realization that it's possible to do things in new, really innovative manners. And that writing is not something one chooses or decides to do: it is a product of nature. Writers are like spiders: they spin their webs because otherwise they cannot live; they choose their words and unfold their sentences and invent their tales and drive their stories to unheard-of ends... because life can find meaning in no other way, and because the writer can not live differently. And because writing makes BRUNO present once again... again and again.

## DORA

Bang. Bang.  
Two round silver objects smash together.  
Wake up! Despierta!

They look like the platillos my school teacher uses antes de contarnos una historia. But these sound different. They bang. They clang. They scare. They remind me that I'm not waking from a pesadilla. They make me know I have been lejos de casa for quite some time.

I jolt upright. Ya es hora de levantarme. I rub my sticky eyes. I see the Big People in Green walking up and down the row of beds.

Where's my muñeca—the one I was told is named Dora. The Big People in Green said I should hold her tight until I could be with mamá and mi hermanito.

I remember. . .  
It was black with night. Mamá shook me awake. ¡Despiértate! ¡Despiértate, mija! Sucking his thumb and holding tight his scruffy *osito de peluche*, my little brother Emilio was also gently shook from sleep. Mami's eyes darted around the dark room. Her hands moved quickly, stuffing what light toys she could fit into a bag. I'd never seen her worried like this.

What about Lobito, our puppy?  
What about my first day of Primaria?

It's gonna be alright, mi pequeña. We're gonna meet with papá, en el norte.

With me and little Emilio on either side, we hurried across streets. No había nadie afuera. Todo estaba silencioso. We walked past our tía's tienda over on calle Juan Aldama and crossed to calle Ignacio Allende where I was supposed to go to school in a few days. Then unas pocas cuerdas más adelante I started to see Big People heading quickly to a street corner and begin gathering. I had never met any of them before. We stopped to join them. Mamá whispered something to a man. Suddenly a big truck pulled up. One of the Big People lifted me and little Emilio into the back. Mami

FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA

grabbed the side to pull herself in. She wrapped us in a blanket, holding us tight to give us protection and warmth. Emilio and I were the only Little People.

Doors slammed shut.

The truck never seemed to get tired. We drove and drove, not even stopping for me and little Emilio to pee. Mamá told us to be quiet. That we'd be there soon.

Little Emilio smelled a little like the fish back home.

The truck stopped. Doors opened. Sun and wind scratched my eyes. Dust caked the inside of my mouth. Mami climbed down then reached for us, one by one.

With the other Big People, we were told to stay put allí, detrás de los arbustos y los árboles. A pocos pasos había un río enorme, el más grande que jamás había visto.

We waited.

It'll be okay. We're going to see your *papá* soon.

Black of night. Again, mami grabbed us, each in one hand; bag slung over a shoulder.

We followed the Big People to the river's edge.  
Hold onto the *balsa*. Quick. Con mucha fuerza.  
Mami pushed me and little Emilio onto the raft. She held tight to its side, stretching pinkies for ours.

Get out! *Corre!*  
Hand in hand, we ran.

Flashlights.  
Barking.  
Gritos.

I couldn't feel mami's hand anymore.  
I couldn't see little Emilio anymore.

FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA

I froze.  
I cried.  
Miedo. Muchísimo miedo.

The Big People in Green with big glasses tells me to sit in a chair. I see a pistola hitched to her hip, like the one on the *federales* papi feared and hated so much. She explains that I will see another Big People who will help me find my mami and little Emilio.

*Case Number 361 you are in violation of crossing the US/Mexico Border without legal documentation. I hereby order you to the custody of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement until further notice.*

My ears are in search for mamá's name, Claudia. My papá's name, José Luis.  
I only see mouths move. I hear sounds but they mean nothing, or casi nada.  
I tremble.  
I pee.

The Big People in Green tells me to follow her. She says she's one of the *trabajadora de caso*. She's supposed to look after me. We leave the building and I see Little People like me. Lined up. Quiet. Afraid.

We enter a big building. It's huge. It's freezing inside.  
Before papá left he took me and little Emilio to a place this big. Wal-Mart. It had everything. But this one was different. Instead of all the clothes and toys I could ever wish for, this one had thousands of little beds in neat rows up. Little People like me were everywhere.

I look for my little Emilio.  
There are no boys.

The Big People in Green showed me my bed. Encima de ella, unos calzoncillos, unos pantalones cortos, un cepillo de dientes, pasta para lavarlos.  
She sternly says:  
Do not touch another child  
Do not misbehave  
Do not sit on the floor  
Do not run  
Do not share your food

FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA

Don't cry  
Do as you are told

She leaves.

Three older girls come up to me, each reaching for my hand. I pull it away.  
I do as I'm told. I remember what the Big People in Green told me.

I learn their names: Leticia, Leidy y Yoselyn. They tell me they are on  
bathroom duty. They tell me that we all have chores to do. That this can be  
mine. Así podemos estar juntas.  
They show me where to empty the trash. Where the scrubber is to clean the  
toilets. Cómo trapear los pisos.

I do as I'm told. No touching.

Bang. Bang.  
Dinner!  
We line up. Rice and beans are spooned onto my plate.  
Yoselyn me dice que hoy es día especial. Hay cake and ice cream.

The Big People in Green is back. She gently hands me a doll. It's not as soft  
as my muñeca back home. Su cabello es corto como el mío and she has a  
brown face like me.

Bang. Bang.  
All goes dark.

I pray. I scoot into bed. I pull the scratchy blanket over my toes, legs, and  
tummy.  
Abrazo con cariño a esta muñeca, named Dora.

BENJAMIN MUELLER

poetry

## DIGGING FOR COLOSSUS

Most boys of this town grow up digging.  
Rising each morning with the rusted shovels  
that fit our fathers' hands, to find our way

to that remaining grassy patch in the backyard.  
We'd say we were digging to China  
(though we meant any place else),

eventually getting far enough to feel  
that familiar clunk: metal on rock,  
a shutter straight to the shoulders.

Then jumping down to clear the dirt,  
to reveal some immutable part  
of the giant stone effigy of our pasts

that lay beneath our homes, our town.  
There was a time when it stood,  
and all gladly worked under its shadow.

Steve found the foot once, the toenail  
the length of our legs, a buried crescent moon,  
his shovel striking against, wild sparks

filling the cavity. Bryan hit what seemed  
the thigh or stomach and for hours searched  
with shovel blade for some crack or edge,

as if it had been a solitary rock  
able to be wrenched free. This whole  
town is pocked with holes. Each our own

stony end. Routes blocked by manmade  
bedrock we had no hand in laying.  
And always defeated we rise

BENJAMIN MUELLER

from our hollow ruts to turn back  
to dreaming. To fill our nights with girls  
we'd never touch. Words we'd never say.

Cities we'd never dare set foot in.  
To wake from fitful sleep to begin again.  
To uncover the great statue, to claw

at the earth, ancient grit beneath our nails,  
ache burning down our bodies.

PAMELA MILLER

poetry

## THE GODDESS VISITS ME IN A DREAM AND ORDERS ME TO JOIN THE RESISTANCE

She glides toward me on feet of smoke,  
a bearded lady with a filigreed hairdo  
but no head.

She stands beside my bed like a baobab tree,  
waving her arms against a backdrop  
of roiling sky.

She pummels my breasts to get my attention,  
her insistent fists like clattering maracas  
studded with stones.

She implants a miniature galleon in my spine,  
then keelhauls the captain and drowns  
the pleading crew.

I try to ask, "What do you want with me?"  
but she flings my voice over the precipice  
like a javelin.

She yells, "Poets are breaking evil's knees  
but you're just planting portulaca!  
*Do your job!*"

I snap awake  
clutching lightning to my chest,  
my armored legs striding, striding, striding.

CLAIRE SCOTT

poetry

## ESSENTIAL ILLUSIONS

Your shawl tossed across our bed  
the Hermès we bought in London  
for your sixtieth birthday  
your pale blue toothbrush in  
the I HEART YOU mug  
a shopping list on the bulletin board  
*cilantro, asparagus, eggs, fontina*  
for sure an omelette tonight  
your desk covered with papers and poems  
one about our grandson  
whose hazel eyes are just like yours  
notes in the margins of Merwin  
hints of what's to come

Impossible to grieve  
while you are still alive

CLAIRE SCOTT

poetry

## GHOST LIGHT

Ghosts of the unreal    invade our nights  
ambush our days

At first murmuring/rustling/subtly stalking  
then shouting/striding/staking a claim,  
setting up camp complete with tents,  
sleeping bags, energy bars, coffee makers  
& megaphones  
*melanoma for sure only a few months left*

We loop/obsess/grab Vallium/  
gulp scotch/smoke weed  
tortured by thoughts  
*a tornado ripping off the roof*  
tormented by tomorrows

That's what we do, us humans  
we haunt ourselves

JEREMY GRIFFIN

poetry

## KING KONG IN LOVE

Atop the Myrtle Beach Wax Museum,  
    fiberglass King Kong clings  
        to the spire of the plywood Empire  
State Building with one fist,  
    the other clutching a poor approximation  
        of Fay Wray as one might hold  
a champagne flute. What is the language  
    of our grasping, that melody sung  
        in brighter tongues to lull the self  
back to familiar terrain?  
    Even Kong feels the crooning  
        of phantom limbs, sugared molars.  
See him climb toward the sun, ascending  
    home because love is a thing that fits  
        in a fist, barely. Watch  
the biplanes zip like hornets around his hulking form,  
    taunting the question of his longing.  
        We know that he's bound for the earth,  
poorly designed for a world  
    where desire has no shell  
        to protect itself from itself,  
and where everything worth carrying  
    lives in someone else's arms.  
        Even now we are always just shy  
of the clouds. Kong seeking solace  
    in altitude, reaching beyond  
        the skyline, lost to the teeth of that great fall, less  
that a villain but more than a thief.

DAN GROTE

poetry

## SPEEDBUMP CREATURES

I've often wondered, in  
the course of things I wonder  
about, why are manatees so dumb?  
Fat, happy sea-cows floating;  
chewing what they chew and  
eating what they eat, getting  
hit by speedboats, backs carved up  
by whirling propellers.  
Nothing but aquatic speedbumps.  
But me, I empathize,  
for I, too, have been  
run over by life's ship,  
propeller by propeller  
  
by propeller.

10-03-18

Dear Ms. Kasmussen,

Thank you and I hope this finds you well. I received your letter accepting "Mavericks + Me" today, and on the flip side that you saw something in it that made you feel that it was worthy of publication. The fact that you were kind enough to take the time to make the edits to it that make it publishable means a lot to me. I really don't have much of a clue as to what I am doing when it comes to writing, be it poetry or prose. Your suggestions and changes were most helpful and I like how the piece reflects how I implemented them, so I'd be honored if you publish it in your Winter 2019 issue.

To be honest, I never much liked the title. Out of the ones you suggested, I guess I like "Speedy and Creatures" best. What's the creature in the equation? Me or the Maverick? Forgive me for my strange metaphor obsession - it's my spirit animal, not sure if that's good or bad, but it is what it is. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to appear in your pages and for taking the time to think it through. I hope, had more editors been as kind as you, I'd have been able to write the past few years off as time spent at the world's worst writer's retreat instead of just day after day of uncertain hell and sporadic, often pointless, violence.

Your acceptance came right on time for me. I've had almost all the rugs I was counting on and yesterday I saw my car. I was, recently told, I wasn't going to get any halfway house placement, so I go from 6-by-9 cell directly to being homeless on the streets of Chicago. Not a promising scenario, as I have nothing + nobody on "The Outside" that would qualify as much of a support system. Hell, as far as ex-cons, I'm facing a seventy percent chance of winding up dead or on my way back to prison to start with. Starting out on the streets doesn't exactly sway the odds to my favor. That being said, it means so much that you want to publish my poetry. I have this squaw who went nothing to do with me and I'm already once I get out I'm going to fall victim to the odds. Hopefully one day they'll want to find out who I really was and the poems and prose I've managed to get published will speak to them more than my past failures, poor choices and mistakes have. I want to leave behind a piece of whatever the "good" part of me was. Sorry if that makes no sense. Perhaps you'd have to be sitting where I am to understand. Long story short, just thank you!

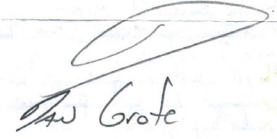
As for as my bio goes, I'm going to give you a new one but, if it's too lengthy or you do not want to print my actual address, feel free to use the one I sent originally. One last thing, and I'll shut up - I recently became

the first ever inmate at this facility to complete a 4,000 hr, U.S. Dept of Labor sanctioned teacher's aide apprenticeship, so if you know anyone in need of a teacher's aide with a rap sheet, let me know! :) Thanks again, and take care.

Author Bio:

Dan Grote is an incarcerated writer whose work has appeared in numerous print + online venues - Coal City Review, J. Journal, Hiram Parky Review, Poets + Writers Magazine, and the American Prison Writing Archive, to name a few. His one and (so far) only National Public Radio appearance can be heard by visiting [thirdcastfestival.org](http://thirdcastfestival.org), show 218, "Odd Couples." He can be reached via Dan Grote #22670-424, USP Census, PO Box 300, Waymart, PA 18472 or [dawmgrote@gmail.com](mailto:dawmgrote@gmail.com).

With Gratitude,





## QUEUED UP

CAPE COAST, GHANA, 2018

ALEC GONZALES  
digital photography



## MMM, SALAD

CAPE COAST, CALIFORNIA, 2018

ALEC GONZALES  
35mm film photography





## CORAL BOTTLE (REIMAGINE OCEAN POLLUTION)

AUSTIN DICKIESON  
clay with glaze



## CORAL BOTTLE (REIMAGINE OCEAN POLLUTION)

AUSTIN DICKIESON  
clay with glaze



## CAT ON SHOULDER

RACHEL DILLMAN  
35mm photography

ANIKA JENSEN  
poetry

## MY MOTHER'S BODY

My mother's lungs make a clean whistle;  
untouched, no cigarette smoke.  
She nourishes them with  
d

e

e

p

*ujjayi* breaths:  
inhale, halfway lift,  
exhale, forward fold.  
One day, when she slips inside the grass,  
she might leave them to a dying child,  
a desperate scientist,  
if blood is not pouring from a bullet  
hole.

My mother's spine has roots  
below her garden  
where once she carved an air pocket womb,  
a home  
for carrot fingers and corn silk hair.  
She protects her children with the rose's barbed wire.  
My mother wants to till the soil long enough  
to see her saplings bend beneath  
ripe plums instead of withering  
into another winter.

My mother's hands cannot stop a rifle,  
but my mother's body can be torn apart by it  
long enough for her students to escape  
into the hallway  
to spill out of the building  
to tell her story to the newspapers the next day.

My mother's lips will recite her favorite poem as she dies,  
the words that woke me as a child in the morning:  
*Forgive me. They were delicious.*  
*So sweet, and so cold.*

## LADY CHIPS © <sup>1</sup>

[\$2.99] + \$1.99 pink tax:  
Try Doritos' crisps

that crunch less, to mute  
that slight, splintering sound

of a woman's bite. They're made  
*for her* child-chin, chiseled to fit in his palms.

Lady Chips have a dulled-down,  
powder-pink hue,

so the dust won't ungloss  
glittered lips or stain her fingertips.

Lady Chips are carb & fat free, too.  
With their vanilla-birthday-cake-scent

(slightly strawberry-sprinkled),  
her breath will smell sweet. She's sick

of Man Chips made  
for paperweight teeth.

What she wants: a marble-sized snack  
to slip in her floral-clutch bag, to nibble.

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Pepsico's CEO, women "don't like to crunch too loudly in public. And they don't lick their fingers generously and they don't like to pour the little broken pieces and the flavor into their mouth."

## PILGRIMAGE

Instead of an overpass, you say,  
imagine trying to sleep  
under a halo of head-on collisions.

To fill the void, you leave,  
you pour a lighter theology  
until it flows over the brim,  
where your lips barely capture  
the froth of the Mahayana that  
Mom swaps her Wicca for  
after her coven degenerates  
into a vampire book club.

There's no judgment  
day on the horizon to fear,  
only a summer of coastline  
to lean on like a crutch  
during your pilgrimage north  
from La Jolla, where  
at first you fellowship  
on the beach with a fraternity  
of monks who play ultimate  
frisbee under a bonfire's  
arching flames.

You're joined by converts  
you meet at a geode shop  
later on in Solana, where  
you dribble whiskey  
syllables into the small  
ear of a child, insisting she let  
the cashier decipher her palm.

You carry a cardboard sign  
on which you've sobered up  
enough to infuse a gentle  
demand for a free Tibet.  
You channel sanity  
over the ocean to soften  
the hearts of the Chinese officials.  
Your quest is cut short  
near Camp Pendleton,  
where one of the monks  
catches you backsliding  
into your past  
life with a flask during prayers.  
You have to hand over  
your cardboard sign  
to the palm reader.

You dilute the Pacific  
with whatever's left of your whiskey  
as you stumble back  
down shore, where the water  
plays jump rope with the land,  
where the kelp binds your legs  
in the dark.

## PIECES

The afternoon I win the game, no one is around to hear my scream of victory. No one watches me jump up from the couch and throw my arms into the air. No one sees me dancing around the coffee table, adrenaline pounding through my veins, thinking that maybe Etienne is part of this somehow. Maybe he pulled some cosmic strings for me, getting the universe to align just right for this shining moment to occur. For the first time in months, it seems possible to believe that life indeed has a shape, a purpose. That there might be some underlying plan for the way things unfold — like oxygen, or gravity, impossible to see or touch, but absolutely there.

I sit back down on the couch, twisting open my glue stick to attach the winning piece to the paper game board. However, I then realize that my tired eyes had read the piece wrong, switching two of the letters around. This small paper rectangle in my fingers is not the winning piece after all. This is just an ordinary game piece, a duplicate of one I already glued onto my board months ago. Perhaps Etienne even glued it on himself, in our first few days of playing the game.

My faith and euphoria evaporate, replaced with a familiar leadenness. A memory from last summer sweeps in: Etienne in the pool, splashing me when I said I didn't want to swim, didn't want to get my hair wet. The pinprick freckles on his shoulders and the pencil-eraser mole on the small of his back. Water droplets vanishing on the scorching July sidewalk. The memory is so clear, there should be a corner of the world I can lift up and step through. Some way I can slip back into the scene. The dry heat. The yellow swimsuit, pinching my neck a little. In my mouth, the taste of lime. We made margaritas. It was a Sunday.

I rip the piece in half and move on to the next piece. My vision is blurry. The smart thing would be to sleep for an hour or two, give my strained eyes a bit of rest. But the game ends in less than twelve hours and I still have a whole box of pieces to look through. What if the winning piece is inside, waiting, and I don't reach it in time? The vacant gray space on the colorful game board mocks me. The only thing to do is press on. It strikes me suddenly, as I scan the piece for the five digits I need to become a multi-millionaire: *Perhaps it isn't really winning if you have no one to celebrate with.* But I shove the thought aside, clinging to the belief that this is what Etienne would have wanted. He was the one who began the game. I will finish it. For him.

*When the game ends tomorrow, there will be nothing left to hold*

*my life together.* I push that thought aside, too. I rip the piece in half and reach for the next in the pile.

\* \* \*

"You know we have virtually a zero-percent chance of winning," I told Etienne when we started playing the game: a month-long sweepstakes sponsored by a big national supermarket chain.

"C'mon C, dream a little." He nudged me. "Someone's gonna win, right? Might as well be us." He carefully glued a piece down on our still-mostly-empty game board.

"If only real life were as simple as this stupid game," I muttered.

Etienne glanced over at me. "What do you mean?"

"They clearly based this off the board game Life." I gestured at the winding gray road printed on the thick paper. "See? Start line, finish line.

Meander down the Road of Life and at the end you shall receive a huge mansion and five million dollars."

Etienne nodded, feigning seriousness. "Sounds about right to me. Wait—you mean that's not your life plan?"

I tore open a family-size bag of chips and set it on the floor between us. "All I'm saying is, the game of Life sets kids up with unrealistic expectations."

Etienne was quiet for a few moments, steadily opening pieces and peering at the numbers. Each game piece had five digits at the top so you knew where it went on the board and what stage of life it belonged to. All of a sudden, he whooped and threw his hands in the air.

"What?" I asked. "What is it?"

"I got my driver's license! I told you I would get it one day!" He shoved the piece at me, laughing. And there were the words, right there in bold letters: *Get Your Driver's License!*

Etienne, born and raised in New York City, had never driven a car. He told me he never needed to—he could take the subway or ride his bicycle anywhere he needed to go. His utter indifference about getting his license was something I could not comprehend. It became an ongoing joke between us.

I touched his knee. "Wait, wait—don't glue this one on the board. We should frame it or something."

"We have to glue it down! What if this is the winning piece? What if this is the only one of its kind?"

I snatched it from his fingers. "Doubtful. Hey Etienne—I think this piece is a message from the universe. It's basically ordering you to get your driver's license."

He rolled his eyes and reached for the bag of potato chips. Later,

when he wasn't looking, I slipped the game piece into my pocket. For some reason, I really wanted to keep it.

After he died, I opened up countless pieces that said *Get Your Driver's License!* I guess in the game, like in real life, it's a pretty common thing. But I kept the original piece Etienne had opened—the closest he would ever get to an actual driver's license—safe in the folds of my wallet.

\* \* \*

When I moved into Etienne's apartment eight months ago, it felt like fate had brought me there. Not in a romantic way. More in a sometimes-things-work-out way. Before that, I was living with my parents, waiting tables in Sioux Falls and waiting for the next chapter of my life to begin. Being accepted into the grad program at NYU seemed like a miracle. I was prepared to commute to class from Brooklyn or the Bronx—there was no way I could afford to live in Manhattan.

But a friend-of-a-friend from college was sharing Etienne's two-bedroom apartment, and when he saw on Facebook that I was moving to New York he sent me a message. He explained his company was transferring him to L.A. and asked if I was interested in subletting his room. The building was rent-controlled, which meant I could actually afford it. "You can see the Brooklyn Bridge from the living room," he said. I had written down a long list of questions, but I didn't ask any of them. Instead I heard my voice saying, "I'll take it." The cell-phone connection crackled with static. My heart pounded with the knowledge that this was really happening, I was really moving to New York City and I had a place to live. I signed the sublease and emailed it in that day. The funny thing was that I did not feel even a twinge of uncertainty about moving in with a complete stranger. Maybe that was faith, or fate, or both.

Etienne and I hit it off right away. My second night in New York, he invited me along to his friend's birthday party. I actually ended up dating a different friend of his for a while, this guy named Robbie. Etienne dated around, too. Most of the girls didn't last very long, except for Ashleigh, who I never much liked. She would come over and cook dinner and leave a huge mess in our kitchen, and she wasn't even that good of a cook. She put garlic in everything, way too much garlic. Etienne liked to tease me about Robbie, and I would tease him about his ladies. It was that way between us. Easy. He especially liked to wear this ballcap with the Canadian flag stitched on the front—his parents were from Canada originally—and I would sometimes steal it and wear it around all day, just to annoy him. People would ask if I was from Canada and I would look at them blankly for a few seconds, forgetting.

Anyway, it wasn't until Etienne died that I realized I was in love

with him. And by then, of course, it was too late to do anything about it.

\* \* \*

Etienne was a sucker for any type of contest. One day he came home from the supermarket with the paper game board tucked into his reusable bag alongside produce and gummy candy—he had the sweet tooth of a six-year-old—and told me not to be a buzzkill. It would be fun to play. "Maybe we'll win a \$5 gift card at least," he said, spreading the colorful game board across our coffee table.

And the game was fun, at first. It's rigged to be that way. It sucks you in. Whenever you go to the grocery store, the checker asks if you're playing the game. If you are, he smiles and hands you a stack of game pieces—you get more pieces the more money you've just spent—and says something like, "Remember us when you're famous!" Even though you know the checkers say this to everyone, it still makes you feel special and included.

It's true—at first, I felt grudgingly happy to be playing the game, grateful that it was something Etienne and I were doing together. We talked about what we would do with our millions of dollars and there was a small, secret part of me that actually believed our plans weren't made of fairy dust and clouds. That they were actually the beginning of something solid: he and I, dreaming of a future together.

\* \* \*

The way to win the game is simple: glue down all the pieces on the Road Of Life, each one corresponding to what the creators have deemed a crucial life experience: *Learn CPR! Give a Toast at a Wedding! Get a New Stamp on Your Passport!* When you begin the game you're gluing pieces on the board left and right. You're thinking, *This is so easy! I'm going to win millions for sure!* That's when the game has you hooked.

I figured out after a little while that most of the game pieces are ordinary. Before long, every piece you bring home from the store is one that you've already glued onto the board. But you only have five or eight or ten empty spaces left. *You're so close!* You've put in so much time already. It's too late to turn back now.

When Etienne's accident happened, it was early in the game. We had only been playing for a week or so. Most of our game board was empty space. I very clearly could have quit. Should have quit. But for some reason, the game was the only thing I didn't quit. I stopped going to class. I stopped showing up at my part-time job in the Admissions Office. I stopped eating real meals and I stopped going to the gym and I stopped returning my friends' texts and calls, because even typing on my phone required more energy than I could muster.

But I kept gluing on those damn pieces. I made excuses to myself to go to the grocery store, stocking up on canned beans and ramen and Oreos and rice. When I bought a box of a thousand game pieces on eBay for \$200, I knew I had entered a whole new level of investment in the game. I told myself that Etienne would be proud of me—of my passion.

\* \* \*

“Let’s buy a big boat,” Etienne said. “Top of the line. All the bells and whistles. And we’ll sail it around the world together. Where do you want to go first?”

“Five million dollars would buy us a lifetime supply of Coronas,” Etienne said as we watched a basketball game on TV. He sipped from his Corona, reached over to steal a Red Vine from the package on my lap. “And Red Vines. I’ll pay you back for this one, I promise. We’ll have a whole pantry filled with nothing but Red Vines.”

“I know!” Etienne said, sitting up. He was stretched out on the bed beside me. The pure excitement on his face gave me a glimpse of his little boy-self. “We can buy an amusement park! Or build our own!”

“What should we call it?” I asked, playing along.

“I don’t know,” he said. “You’re the creative one. You’ll be the brains of the operation. I’ll just be the pretty face on the commercials.” He fluttered his eyelashes at me. I whacked him with a pillow. We went back to watching the movie, but a few minutes later he said, “I was just kidding, C. You’d obviously be the brains and the pretty face.”

\* \* \*

My relationship with Etienne felt like looking out the window to the first glimmers of sunrise. Just a thin line of golden light peeking above the horizon—beautiful on its own, and even more beautiful because you knew it would continue to expand and expand until it enveloped the entire sky with pink and orange.

What I had with Etienne was just that first glimmer. When he died, it was as if the sun stopped rising and fell backwards below the horizon, plunging everything into darkness.

\* \* \*

The creators of the game have decided that these are the main stages of life: birth, schooling, first job, promotion. Marriage, kids, apartment, house in the suburbs. Send kids off to college, retire, and eventually die at a ripe old age with your children and grandchildren crying at your bedside.

There aren’t bad things in this game version of life, not really. No childhood friends moving away. No bullying. No break-ups, no bad dates, no divorce. No illnesses. No arguments or job losses or failures or rejection letters or dreams languishing unfulfilled.

No hit-and-run accidents.

No bicycles mangled on the side of the road.

No dying at twenty-six.

I hate this game. And it’s not the mild, simmering annoyance that you can swallow and push down. It’s a sudden flood of desperate hatred, the burning kind that makes it hard to breathe.

I want to rip all of the game pieces into tiny sprinkles of paper. I still have a pile of them to open up. At least a hundred more to get through. I glance at the clock; it’s nearly 4:00 am. Soon the game will be over. Winning boards need to be turned in at 5:00 am when the store opens.

Furiously, I rip open the pieces two, three, four at a time, quickly scanning the numbers to see if any is the piece I need. The single rare piece I have yet to find is Q7593, *Throw a Big Celebration*. The game creators obviously think they are being clever—find the most rare piece of all, win the game, and you will be throwing a big celebration. Ha, ha. Not me.

I rip the pieces open. No. No. No. No. I toss them aside to join the mess of discards littering the carpet. No. No. No. No. I have so many pieces left to open.

And then, quite suddenly, I just have one unopened piece remaining. I carefully grip it in my fingers, holding it up to the light as if the contents will be revealed through the flimsy paper. As if what is inside this piece will make everything in my life shift into focus. I squint against the bright LED bulb. The piece is a small dark square.

It might turn out to be Q7593, the winner I have been searching for and searching for. Or it might be yet another duplicate piece—*Adopt an Animal from a Shelter! Try a Kickboxing Class! Plant a Garden!*—that is already affixed to my game board. There is no way of knowing until I open the piece and see what it holds.

The clock reads 4:38 am.

I stand up from the couch on shaky, tired legs. I fill a glass of water from the sink. Drink it slowly. Stare at the piece, waiting on the coffee table.

The last time I saw Etienne, I didn’t really see him. Didn’t pay attention, I mean. He was rushing off somewhere, grabbing his helmet from the hall closet, and I was sitting on the living room floor, bent over the coffee table. Gluing pieces onto our game board.

“Bye!” I’m sure he said as he headed out the door. “See you later.”

“Bye!” I’m sure I replied. But I didn’t glance over at him. I don’t have a final memory of his smile, his eyes and chin and fringe of dark hair poking out from under his beanie, his hand waving goodbye. In my memory, there’s just the sound of the door closing. His boots fading down the hall. The letters and numbers of the game pieces swimming before my

eyes.

I still believe what I told Etienne when he brought this game board home: there is virtually a zero-percent chance of winning. Undoubtedly, this final unopened piece lingering on my coffee table is not the winner.

But I don't want to know that. Not for sure. I want to keep the mystery alive, to wrap the not-knowing around myself and pull it close. I want to keep the door open a crack, even after the clock ticks forward to 5:00 am and the game officially ends.

I cross the living room and open the sliding glass door onto the balcony. Cool night air sweeps into the room, fluttering the torn-up game pieces. The air feels fresh on my face. Morning smells and sounds are already brewing in the city below: meat roasting, bread baking, trucks rumbling down the street with deliveries. Soon the dark sky will be tinged with light.

I grab handfuls of torn-up pieces and tear them even more, into tiny scraps of paper. Then I take them with me onto the balcony. At Etienne's memorial service, we released balloons into the sky, looking up into the scrim of clouds, as if that is where he is now. When really, up there past the clouds is nothing but empty space. I knew the balloons were not actually going to reach Etienne. But somehow, it felt like they might.

Taking a deep breath, I fling up my hands and send the confetti of game pieces into the air. They swirl and flutter around me in a hundred different colors. I watch them floating in the breeze, trailing down into the city streets, looking for all the world like a celebration.

poetry

## LARYNX

All this hum must come from somewhere.

If not intent, at least origin // at least a throat  
greenly opening to spring or exhausted elms

hunkering down so the winds won't break them  
as they have so many others // at least belief:

the world is worth singing into, that echoes

collect in the corners like spiderless webs,  
their silken strings still trembling with past

prey // at least, like angels & their wretched call,  
there is an elsewhere our voices are meant

to grow toward; in this caged forest air

bodies throw themselves into the bars  
with the wild rapture of being heard

for once, as if these countless centuries  
can be healed in a single act. It would be good

// at least to call the steady static within

a bridge & listening a shore & adding to it  
current // at least to say there is a yes

rising in our throats, drowning out the wail  
of us, repronouncing our truth // carrying it.





## KNOCK, KNOCK

MICHAEL HOWER  
photography



## SKYWALK

MICHAEL HOWER  
photography



## MAN MOOD

RICHARD VYSE  
chinese ink with brush



## MONOLOGUE

NIJOLĖ RASMUSSEN  
acrylic on canvas

## GUTTERBALL

He stands six lanes down. He's not a friend, just an acquaintance, someone whose existence you acknowledge, but little else. You are in the same running group, but you've barely ever spoken. You can see him across the gleaming refracted light of spinning balls, racing their way frantically down the oiled wood. He's a big man, not tall, but wide. Big shoulders, big chest, and big arms, stretching his black t-shirt so tight that it looks to be several sizes too small. He's beginning to gain the added bulk of a man who used to pump iron at the gym every day, but has since given it up for whatever reason. There are just the starting signs. The gradual bulging of the gut. The slow collapse of the pectorals. A physical specimen slowly but surely collapsing from the peak of his perceived former glory. The steady ruination of an oversized monolith due to the lack of maintenance.

You wish she had never told you.

*"Can I talk to you about something?"*

*"Sure, what's up?"*

He's bowling. His lumbering size is strangely graceful. Each step floating his mass across the floor. His stair step calves tighten. His body lowers. His arm, the upper half covered in tattoos, whips back and extends. The ball in his meaty hand, covered in green swirls, softly kisses the hardwood without a sound. The holes slip from his fingers. The growing thunder of the roll, right down the center, building to a cataclysmic rumble as the ball strikes the pins. They fall as one and he raises his arms in triumph, turning back to his spectators at the lane who greet his feat with howls of victory.

*You sit with your friend. The tears in her eyes the only sign of emotion. A story told in a voice that is flat and monotone.*

His spectators are made up of a woman and a little girl. The girl can't be much more than five. You had heard that he had a daughter. Somebody had told you, a fact in passing, or perhaps it had just been something you had once overheard. Now living proof stands in front of you. Big brown eyes and dark brown hair. She has her father's nose and mouth. The rest must come from her mother. Who knows? You have never met the woman. A phantom from a past life. Briefly mentioned like the daughter, a fact without further explanation. An ex long gone before you ever met him.

*"What do you want me to do?"*

*"Nothing."*

The little girl is wearing a pink shirt, emblazoned with Hello Kitty,

and black tights. She's jumping with excitement. Little red lights built into the heels of her princess covered sneakers flash every time her feet touch the ground. Her hair, in a ponytail, whips up and down. There's a hole in her tights. A small one on the left knee. White skin pale against the black. The smile on her face is his smile. The same toothy grin. The same gap between the upper two front teeth.

You can hear her voice in your head. You can see the words emerge from her lips, each one part of a steady dirge, pounding with the resonating regularity of a clock tower at midnight. The words come out, but she has gone away.

*"It was a long time ago. Over a year."*

The woman with him is a stranger. She is short and a little round, just enough to make everything pop in the right places. She is a little too done up for your taste. Dyed jet black hair hangs loose to her shoulders. Skin tanned much darker than the current natural sources of light had any hope of producing. She wears tight black jeans, a fashionable white loose fitting top, and multiple gaudy bracelets on both her wrists. Too much makeup. Dark eye shadow. Thick mascara. She looks out of place amongst the aging decor, cracked vinyl seats, and stained ceiling tiles of the bowling alley. He sits down and takes a sip from a glass of beer on the table. She gets up and bends over to pick up her ball. He says something you cannot hear. She rises and turns back to look at him and replies, a coy gaze targeted his way. A little smile, narrowed eyes, and cocked hip speak more than words. He laughs and she laughs too. The little girl sits and sips her soda, oblivious to the interplay between the two adults. Unaware of a world that will only reveal itself with time, the opening of a treasure chest full of cursed gold.

*"Don't tell anybody."*

*"Okay. I promise."*

You wish she had never told you. Why did she have to tell you? She is a friend, but not a close friend. Why did she have to force you into a limbo with no way out? A world of knowledge without action. A co-conspirator in a secret that's not yours, but has somehow become yours to keep. You feel guilty for such thoughts, but they sit there in the back, furiously raising their hands, desperately trying to call attention to themselves. Of course she had to tell someone. Of course she had to share. She's your friend. It's what friends are for, but still, still you can't deny that part of you wishes she had told someone else. Part of you feels dejection at the added weight of the load placed upon your back. You were glad to be there for her. You were glad she had someone she could trust. The weight is nothing compared to what she herself must have to carry. The description nothing compared to

the actual experience. It's not even close.

*"I was asleep. We'd both been drinking. I didn't want him to drive home. I woke up to him inside me."*

You sit and stare at him as he sips his beer. You sit and stare at this acquaintance of yours, a man you have known for several years, but don't really know beyond the few passing facts. You sit and you stare at him, trying to hate, trying to feel disdain. He is nothing to you, just above being another anonymous face in the crowd. The few facts you know only due to the coincidence of group dynamics. Two people. Same place, same time. He is not your friend. You've never done anything but exchange pleasantries, follow the social norms, and now it is required that you hate him. Hate him for what he has done. Hate him for committing such a cardinal sin.

*"You should do something."*

*"I don't want to."*

He looks up and notices you across the way. Your eyes lock across the distance. He gives you a little nod and raises his hand in greeting. The reaction is automatic. Your hand raises back, a mirrored gesture. You lower your hand and look away. Your hand feels dirty. You stifle the rising need to go into the bathroom and wash it. He looks confused for a moment then looks away, his shoulders shrugging. The connection is too small for your strange reaction to spark much thought or worry. The bastard. The fucking bastard. He sits there in the gleaming fluorescent light. Relaxed. Happy. Enjoying the undeserved bounty of his time. You want to stand up. You want to point your finger. You want to denounce him. Declare to the world what he is. What he has done.

*"Don't tell anybody. Do nothing. It was such a long time ago. Nearly a year."*

It's the little girls turn to bowl. He stands up and pulls over a metal stand, a sloping ramp of stiff wires which goes from waist height down to the floor. The little girl watches with eyes wide open, taking everything in. He lifts up a ball with purple swirls and places it on the top. He lets the little girl instruct him how to aim it, pushing the bottom end with a few well placed taps of his foot. The little girl makes loud demands, contradicting the last command. He dutifully follows each order, eyes twinkling, mirth playing across his lips. The woman watches from her seat, sitting back, sipping on a beer. Her face gives away the emotions of her mind. Warmth. Adoration. The planting of the seeds of love.

*"This is hard for me to say, but I need to say it to somebody. I need to tell somebody."*

Nothing. There is nothing you can do. You have made a promise. Given your word. It is not your place. Not your sin. You are not the victim.

You do not get to decide. Rapist. He is a rapist. You yearn to say the words. To fall upon him with righteous indignation. To shatter the facade and reveal to all the ugliness underneath. To unmask the monster that lies within. To watch the adoring eyes of the woman with him turn to disgust and horror. Sucked in. You've been sucked into a vortex. She is not a close friend, but she is a friend. A promise is a promise. The bastard. The fucking bastard.

*"You're an easy person to talk to. I feel like you're somebody I can trust. Is it okay if I tell you something?"*

The anger subsides and falls back. You dig deeper, trying to restart the flow, but the well has run dry. There is no way to sustain it. You are not the victim. You are none of these people. Truth be told both he and the one you call your friend could drift out of your life and leave no mark. It is a terrible thought to have. One tinged by further pangs of guilt, but there it is. You don't want to see her hurt, but there is nothing you can do after the fact. Just sit with the knowledge you've been told not to share by the very person on whose behalf you feel the need to try and fill yourself with rage. Without sufficient emotion such passion is unsustainable.

*"I see him around sometimes. It doesn't bother me much anymore. What's done is done."*

What are you supposed to do? You are neither judge nor jury. You are just someone who was there to listen when someone needed to talk. A proxy by happenstance. Now obligated to feel the anger required by society. Forced to take up the mantle of the right against the wrong. What was described to you wasn't right, what was described to you wasn't fair, but you weren't there. You don't know. Does he even know? Does he even know the harm that he has caused? The hurt that he has wrought? If you were to march over and tell him that you know, would you be met with denials, or would you be met with horror and tears? Would he be a monster, or a man scared of himself, desperately wishing he could be washed clean of his sins? Your promise has left you trapped. You will never know. You can never ask. All you can do is stare and wonder. All you can do is keep your mouth shut and hope. Hope that he is a man and not a monster. Hope that the terror he fashioned was a mistake and not a trend. You don't know. There is no way for you to know.

*"Have you ever said anything to him?"*

*"No."*

He helps the little girl push the ball down the ramp. It picks up speed and she squeals in delight. He crouches beside her, watching the progress of their efforts. The woman in the seat leans forward. Watching. Waiting. The ball slowly glides to the left. Inch by steady inch. It grazes

S.W. CAMPBELL

the furthest pin as it rolls past. The pin shakes. The pin shudders. The pin falls. The little girl screams with joy. The woman hoots and claps her hands. He stands and tosses the little girl into the air. He lifts her onto his broad shoulder. The little girl is smiling, one fist pumping the air, the other holding tight to her daddy who parades her about, celebrating her victory.

*“What do you want me to do?”*

*“Nothing.”*

You feel a nudge on your side. It's your turn again to bowl. You return to the broader world. You rise and pick up your ball. It's green with swirls. It feels heavy in your hands. You insert your fingers into the holes. Your steps move you forward. Your arm extends back. Your arm arcs forward. You can see them from the corner of your eye. All three are smiling. All three are happy.

*“Can I talk to you about something?”*

The ball clatters into the lane, a resounding thud that draws in eyes from all around. It slides down the lane, straight into the gutter. Everyone but you looks away.

*“Don't tell anybody.”*

ALEX BLUM

poetry

## THE STAIRCASE

You somersault over the carpet  
warm as milk  
and fall down the stairs  
in slow motion  
crash onto the landing where  
the cat once slept  
skittish and dark  
she died before  
she warmed to you  
and  
peer through the banister bars  
your father built  
the lathe sprinkling birch  
upon your fine spaghetti head  
and  
collapse on the steps  
your mother fed you  
breakup takeout there  
a salty warning  
keep your shoes on  
and  
commemorate in your private heart  
the good grass twang of sneakers  
the proper knock of oxfords  
the g-force of the holidays  
a carousel you'll be flung off of  
no matter how tight  
you grip  
the horse's pretty neck  
come meet your black-cloaked  
elders sleeping wide-eyed  
through eternity  
no photos of the current guard  
but echoes  
get your ass down here right now  
I mean it.

## THESAURUS ET AL.

It starts when I see the stranger. I am five and she is much older than I will ever be. Leather-clad. A single chain connects her nose to her ear. Her blue lips touch another girl's like a man and his wife, which creates a clutch in my chest and a heat on my cheeks. My eyes water when I see them. My mother grimaces. She looks at the stranger's boots and catches the red snake dancing around the skin of her forearm. Then, she covers my eyes. My side stings as I am opened to a world with letters strung together spelling out all of the synonyms for hate. "I'm just saying, Lily, it's okay if they are... just keep it at home."

It hides itself in the closed lips of the boys in my high school. Materializes and glues itself on the rooves of their mouths like bites of peanut butter sandwiches. They whisper it to my friends on mold-crusting buses after I've cut my hair short, "Is she a...you know?" Their mouths run dry and palms grow clammy at the thought of two girls behind a closed door.

I can see it ruminating in phantom syllables slipping on my mother's tongue as I turn down her wedding gown. I have just graduated, and her offer is a chance to reclaim her youth. I tell her, "It's okay, give it to Janie, I won't need it." Little sister always doing right, no need to hide. I don't ask for dad's ties, don't wish for his loafers, I just blame the lace and balmy wedding mornings.

It's spat out by my first (and last) boyfriend as a punchline to an old joke. Five letters puffing off his chest with ignorant sharpness. He passes me off and says, "You shouldn't get mad, you're only bi," and "My best friend is a lesbian. I can say it." I shrug and laugh, but my heart breaks each time he speaks. I sit in the bathroom stall of his dorm and try to stifle my tears. Hot gasps and a burning chest keeps me from drowning, and *God* how badly I want to drown.

When I shave my head a year later, the whispers grow louder. It brands me on subways from elderly bodies, with their wrinkled lips and puckered cheeks. It's hurdled from ravenous men in their demand to be heard, to be seen, to be bigger than the space I dare to make up.

I don't hear it when she brushes out her hair, or when her eyes catch mine, and they're green and warm and I'm floating. I don't hear it when she fries eggs in the morning or wears striped pants with star patterned socks.

I just know that her fingerprints become my fingerprints. That we are one and true and as much a part of the world as we are a part of each other. With starlight in her eyes.

## NOBODY KNOWS WHY THOUSANDS OF SKITTLES WERE ON THEIR WAY TO FEED WISCONSIN COWS

Where were you when the Skittles flowed like a sacred  
river on the highway, the red states hemorrhaging  
across the plains, the corporation that manufactured

the candy unaware of how defective merchandise  
without the letter "S" was shipped to feed Wisconsin  
cattle, only candy the color of blood, sweet as kisses

blown from politicians? The secret to our hamburgers  
finally revealed: feeding cows corn syrup is cheaper  
than corn itself. The blacktop roils in beads that hang on

the neck of lake country, internecine symbols cutting  
through valleys and springs, an entire nation quivering  
like cows shaking for a sugar fix, starving for rainbow.

## GOING SWIMMING

I.

He wanted to go camping with me. He took me to Key West, but we stayed in a tent. I thought of all the people in hotels on Duval, making their way through town, drinking alcohol slush from Fat Tuesday, eating Philly Cheesesteaks. Instead I was knee deep in the ocean on Big Pine Key, about 30 minutes north of Key West. I saw a baby nurse shark in the water, screamed, ran to dry land, swore I wouldn't go in again. He felt bad and took me for tuna burgers in town. I joked, asked if we could get a motel and live like normies. He drank beer and said it tasted better than the warm beer back at camp. We stayed in that tent. And in the morning, we had coffee that the lodge made for visitors and sat by the burned out fire pit and he asked me why I stayed so long in that thing I called a "relationship". I wish I could see myself the way I was then. I was so open, like a sheep, like one who worships, so ready to give.

II.

"She's going to Bali to get away from me," you tell me. I imagine some blonde girl climbing rocks and her friend taking pictures of her back with captions like "finally free" or "alone but not lonely." You're not supposed to write about someone else's someone, but I felt like I knew her, the way she always had to wear bright red lipstick even though she looked better plain. She was the type of girl who didn't call much, but made a lot of noise when you tried to leave her. She was always figuring things out. I imagine her on the plane after her trip, her bag a little heavier from all the rocks and crystals she collected walking by the water, thinking of you. Did you and her also drink Fireball in your apartment, get stuck on the roof, yell down twenty stories for someone to help, help you? Did she too find tags on your luggage that said "Dallas" when they were supposed to say "Fort Lauderdale?" Did she let you in when you showed up at 6:00AM, drunk on whiskey, begging for another chance? Did she write you long letters detailing why you were wrong for each other? Did you tell her purple was your favorite color?

III.

When I worked at the sushi place in Westwood, I prayed to God I'd get out early every night. I was the only hostess for a while, so God never answered my prayers. I ate noodles with the sous chef in the back and he told me to eat more ginger, to get a massage with hot stones, to go to Japan as soon as

possible and climb a mountain. People that barely knew me saw the milk of my insides spoiling. I used to pretend I had to use the bathroom so I could put cold compresses on "worry rashes" that climbed up my legs like flames. The minute clinic didn't know what to tell me other than to get some sleep. But every night when I left work I went for pizza at Enzo's and ate it on my balcony that overlooked a parking lot and called the guy who worked at my camp when I was still a camper and he was a counselor and I'd go over there and watch movies and eat Ben and Jerry's and he said we could use the hot tub but I said no and I remember being so worried someone might see me, might find me, but telling myself I was so far deep in the Valley no one would think to look there. I knew I could never love him or like him, even just a little bit, when on our first date he poured his milkshake on my pancakes. He laughed and I didn't. He said they were still good to eat, that the milkshake probably makes it better, but I lied, said I wasn't hungry. I remember thinking it was all a big waste: the night, the sky, the goddamn universe.

IV.

Out of all the girls in our sixth grade class, Parker chose me to give a ring to at the Spring Fling Carnival. He won it by shooting a water gun at a target for forty-five seconds. He stood there, proud and eyeing the crowd of girls around him. I said a prayer to God, *please, please let it be me and I will never ask for anything again* and then Parker stepped forward and placed the ring on my finger, linked arms with me, and took me away. It initiated me into the popular group that before had been reserved for girls with full chests, girls who gave oral sex, girls who could "hang." Parker called me over to his house the next day. I asked what we were going to do. "Go for a swim," he said. I wore a padded bikini under shorts and a tank top. I was the only girl. His two friends, Chuck and Andy, sat around and played pool, listened to music, talked about how great Eminem was. No one went swimming. Parker talked about Anna Sue from History class and how they'd been making out by the lockers every day for two weeks now. It became clear he wanted me to hook up with Chuck, or Andy, didn't really matter, anyone but him. When I got home after not kissing any boys, I dug a hole in the dirt and buried the ring. The ring had simply been a gesture, a recruitment.

V.

Troy was my neighbor when I lived in Westwood. Our balconies connected. He could see when I was home if my lights were on. He'd hop over his railing and climb to mine with the swift ease of his 6'4" body. He was of German descent and had a girlfriend named Natasha who I never saw

or met. I never decorated my apartment, except for a small print of Jack Nicholson that I kept on the mantle. I didn't want to commit to the space. I knew it was temporary. Troy brought over a bag of scarves once without explaining their origin. When he left, I took them to the trash. Troy worked at Whole Foods and sometimes left chocolate covered strawberries or a plate of cheese on my balcony. I only needed him once when I broke a glass in the kitchen. I climbed to his balcony and knocked on his door because I knew he had a vacuum. I came into his apartment and it was so different from mine, so cluttered and artsy and lived in. On his couch he had a decorative pillow with little pieces of sushi on it. A few minutes later he knocked on my front door and brought in the vacuum, cleaned all the glass, told me to wear shoes in my kitchen for a while. "I have to go to work, but I can come over later," he said. "Can you get me those cookies with jelly in the middle?" I asked. "Anything for baby," he replied. We only hooked up once after he gave me a massage and told me I had tension in my shoulder blades that meant I was having trouble connecting with my ancestors. I was high and didn't argue. As a gift, Troy gave me the sushi pillow. It was on my couch when I got home from work. He came around asking for the scarves one day and I told him I didn't remember where I put them and he started yelling and crying saying they were his girlfriend's and he didn't mean to give them to me and that I was like a family member and not really lover material and I told him to take back the sushi pillow because it was probably hers too and he said no it wasn't and then he left and I never saw him again. Someone new moved in next door. When my mom came to visit, she told me the pillow was hideous and took it to the trash.

## VI.

I never apologized for what I did. I lied about it, made sure those lies were covered up so neatly. You and I had been together since summer. He said he'd take me to the movies, as a friend. He paid for my ticket. I did my makeup. He'd had my number for a while and we talked sometimes. I was living on campus. When I wasn't with you, I'd text him. I sent him a picture of my hair once after I got it blown out for your cousin's quinceañera. You didn't even talk to me that night, all night on that damn boat. But it doesn't matter, I was wrong. Still, you took a picture of me on the boat, my hair in my face blowing wild. I asked you to take another picture and you refused. It wasn't a good picture. I didn't like it. I met him at a car wash. He gave me the "manager's special" at a "classic" wash price. He laughed at something I said. He still likes all my pictures online. Please forgive me.

## VII.

I still talk to myself when I drive. It's the only place I can really be myself.

I host a talk show where I'm also the star. It's all about me. I tell my students this and they laugh. David used to talk to himself in front of me and it scared me. It was as if he was reliving an old life. If I asked what he said, he pretended he didn't know what I was talking about. We once got into a terrible fight and he threw a tripod at me. It was big and heavy and broke in half when it hit the ground. We had split it, the price. We were talking about starting a business together. We wanted to get into film somehow, make our way to the West Coast. We talked about renting a van, like Marina Abramović and her former husband, going across the country. We never even made it across state lines. We didn't travel, or go out, or do anything. We met during grad school. David liked to smoke and think about his life. I've never hated anyone so much. I didn't want to fail again though. This comes up a lot on my talk show: fear of rejection. When he left me, I drove to the beach and took off my shoes, started to walk into the ocean. I stopped at my ankles, not ready to commit.

## VIII.

Do not date someone who lives in a tree house and who is addicted to heroin. This is something my mother should have taught me. Or maybe it's something you're supposed to just know. I guess I never really tried to help him get off dope. I let him stay at my house when I flew home for the weekend. The place was clean when I came back. I let him borrow my car. In group, they'd call that "enabling." My biggest problem is that I constantly check up on the alcoholic. But if I don't, who will? Anyways, his name was Paul and one night he took me on a walk and we ended up in a neighborhood where all the houses were beautiful. There was one house with a black truck outside and he snuck us around the side, he knew the key was under the mat and he let us inside and showed me to a room in the back with a Mickey Mouse comforter and he got in the bed and I watched him and stayed quiet and he said this was his childhood room, his bed, his blanket. I think I could have done a little better that day.

## IX

I got to church early and used the bathroom before mass. I liked the little steps by the sinks for children. I got a seat in the middle of the room so I could see anyone who went to receive Christ when they called for it at the end of services. Matt had taken me there, and I kept going in hopes he'd see how devoted I was to God. The more I loved God, the more Matt might love me back. Matt came with Lisa every week after her fiancé died. Matt also brought Terry and Joey and Clark and Michelle and Tony. I was always alone. It was a big church with pop-worship music and cameras and live broadcast online. You could watch from your bedroom if you wanted to. I



BRITTANY ACKERMAN

wanted the real deal though. The pastor in front of the crowd, his hands up, his colorful shirts. He told us faith was like believing your car would start when you turned the key. He told us about a woman whose son was so bad she prayed every day no matter how bad he got and now he was a pastor too. Things can really turn around. I prayed every day for Matt to love me and one day in the parking lot he walked up to me, opening and closing the cap of his blue Gatorade, and he asked me why I was still coming to church and I didn't know what to say so I just lifted up my hands like I was praising God and Matt hugged me and said, "please, stop" and walked back to his car and got in with all of his friends to drive back to Delray Beach just down the street from where I was going. We could have driven together, I thought, maybe next time.

DAVID SPICER

poetry

## EPISTLE TO G

G, the couple warned you in the Roosevelt Hotel elevator that Awards Night thirty years ago: *Girl, your editor's a P.O.W.* *P.O.W.?* you asked. *Piece of work. He'll burn you hotter than a Tucson lover in August and barbecue your heart.* You told me that story, but we wandered New York all weekend during a three-day poetry-love affair. In your room we discussed Yeats versus Keats and earthquakes of wisdom some seek in words. You told me of collecting the recordings of men you stopped loving, like Mexican cokes. After the wine spilled on the beige carpet, we laughed at cupids on the wallpaper. The lamp flickered like the strip club sign across the street. I inhaled your rose perfume and you fell into my brown eyes— *They're deeper than Carlsbad*, you said. Then we said goodbye, held each other until the plane almost closed its door, and I wished you had chosen me over Chicago. We wrote for months, my address changed, delayed your doodled letters. I didn't answer them and you stopped writing. Decades later I regretted verifying the couple's prophecy. I sent you a postcard, spoke deeper and slower than Nick Cave to the machine of voices in your foyer. I don't blame you for ignoring my *mea culpa*, G, but the reason I stopped writing? I threw away a state of mind I loved no longer, that no longer loved me, stopped catering to my ego. My passion ran away from me like a skittish cat. Sometimes, that's all we have anymore, G: the passion that appears, deserts us, and returns, a boomerang on fire.



## LIKE HELL

SHELLEY VALDEZ  
mixed media



## YOU'LL NEVER HAVE NOWHERE TO GO

SHELLEY VALDEZ  
mixed media



## THE ROOM WHERE SHE READS THE NEWSPAPER

TESSIE BERGHOFF  
acrylic and embroidery on canvas



## THE ROOM WHERE WE HAVE CHRISTMAS DINNER

TESSIE BERGHOFF  
acrylic and embroidery on canvas

## WELCOME TO AMERICA,

where the children play  
cage to cage.

*We've taken back our country,*  
my countrymen say from the sunny side  
of empire, while mothers in airtight cages do time,  
their babies playing mercy in nurseries lined  
with steel bars, each day their captors  
ho-humming away their nine-to-fives.

And when the president,  
in another televised scolding,  
into the sequined air said,  
*Over the border, they're sending explosives!*  
he meant *missives*, but it's all the same  
to him, and they are all  
the same to him.

Some configurations of my mother tongue,  
cage that it is, bring such shame.  
The myths become muscle memory,  
but any Land of the Free,  
any opportunity with a deadbolt  
is a head game.

Immigrant, you know the game's  
rigged, and the bullets on your bones  
were never meant to be even,  
and the state will have its way  
with your body.

Immigrant: hide away your hope  
with its bubble sheen in your lunch tray,  
store your soul behind the pellet-  
hard peas, for safekeeping.

I'm afraid to map my heart  
in these badlands, this sad land  
where they say I *belong*, meaning  
at its root

*to go along with.* Let me not

belong, if this is belonging.

## CRABS IN A BUCKET<sup>1</sup>

---

This piece of writing is dedicated strictly to my fellow hustlers in the hood. We do our absolute best to “get it out the mud” and “hustle hard”. Myself, I have always been very arrogant, and I had a thing for letting it be known that I had money. By any and all means, I’d work to stay at the top. When I’d fall, I’d become a “crab in the bucket”, and pull someone else down too in order to climb to the top.

I use the phrase “crabs in a bucket” because that’s exactly how the people in my environment, myself included, acted. If you place a bunch of crabs in a bucket, they will continuously try to climb out. They will grab at one another and pull each other down in their desperate attempts to escape. Each crab has the same goal, getting out of the bucket, but won’t/can’t help each other.

This is the same thing that I see in my community. We all want to make enough money to get out and do a bunch of fancy shit in life. The problem is complacency, jealousy, and a loss of focus. I for sure lost focus of my goal and just stuck with what was happening in the hood. My main thing was looking the part for as long as I could. My ass wasn’t going anywhere though. Life became a competition and I was going nowhere fast as hell.

When I was at the bottom, I would do all types of “hater” shit in order to get past the crabs that were also at the bottom with me. The more I climbed, the more crabs I put under me, the more crabs I pulled down, the more I began getting pulled down by the ones under me.

This foolishness continued for a good length of time, and we all got nowhere. Honestly speaking, some crabs die in the process, or get seriously injured.

It took me some deep reflection to acknowledge the role I played in this nonsensical lifestyle/deathstyle. Unfortunately, it took coming to jail for my eyes to open. I noticed the violent charges my peers were facing, and how these crimes against our brothers and sisters were openly glorified. I noticed how others were being oppressed, and the lack of brotherhood amongst us. My role in these crimes and glorification of them was detrimental to myself and my community. Being a new father and wanting to live a beautiful life led to a search for a deeper understanding of my behaviors, and a desire to change how I’ve been living. Now, I look for ways to support people in their journeys, and I surround myself with people that will do the same for me.

The difference between us and these crabs is that we have the ability to make a conscious decision to stop hindering and start helping one another. We no longer have to be the “crabs in a bucket.” We can be beautiful men and women, and empower one another. With the understanding that we have similar goals, we can help keep each other focused, share resources (whatever little ones we have), and we can reach down into that bucket and pull out our brothers and sisters that have yet to find their way. Today I can honestly say “I’m not longer a crab in a bucket. I have found my way out, and I will gladly help you find yours.”

---

<sup>1</sup>Daniels is a participant in the Resolve to Stop the Violence Project (RSVP), a program of the nonprofit Community Works West. Rooted in values of restorative justice, Community Works West empowers individuals and families impacted by incarceration and advocates for a more humane criminal justice system.

The RSVP program works with men incarcerated in San Francisco County Jail who have violence documented in their criminal histories. Through a rigorous curriculum, participants critically analyze and deconstruct the Male Role Belief System of superiority and dominance, reflect on personal trauma, and hear the experiences of survivors of violence. Facilitators and peers help lead each other to personal accountability and healing, and develop tools to stop their violence and transform their lives.

This last summer, a group of nine participants, including Daniels, gathered to sit on the editorial board for a RSVP publication called *The Issue*. The book contains stories, experiences, and realizations from contributors.

*-Kristin Godfrey, Santa Clara University Jean Donovan Fellow at Community Works West and summer editor of The Issue*

## CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

**Brittany Ackerman** is a writer from Riverdale, New York. She teaches Critical Studies at AMDA College and Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Hollywood, CA. She currently lives in Los Angeles with her forthcoming collection of essays entitled *The Perpetual Motion Machine* to be released by Red Hen Press in November of 2018.

**Frederick Luis Aldama** is an Arts & Humanities Distinguished Professor of English at the Ohio State University. He is the author, co-author, and editor of 33 books, including *Long Stories Cut Short: Fictions from the Borderlands*. He is currently completing a science fiction YA novel.

**Tessie Berghoff** is a recent graduate of Santa Clara University with a major in Studio Art. She explores different mediums through her art to represent how places and things can look different to people throughout their lives. She is inspired by memories and how they can be blurred, but the warmth with them can remain. Check out her website at [www.tessieberghoffart.com](http://www.tessieberghoffart.com)

**Alex Blum** is a fundraiser living in Berkeley, CA. *Hobart* and *Necessary Fiction* have published his writing. He studied English at Yale University, where his short story “You Two Stay with the Bear” was awarded second place in the Wallace Prize for Fiction. You can find him on Twitter at @a\_blum.

**Abbey Branco** is currently a junior at Bridgewater State University located in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Along with reading and writing, she loves to spend time with her dog, Iris. This is Abbey’s first official publication as an adult.

**S.W. Campbell** was born in Eastern Oregon. He currently resides in Portland where he works as an economist and lives with a house plant named Morton. He has had numerous short stories published in various literary reviews. His first novel, *The Uncanny Valley*, and first short story collection, *An Unsated Thirst*, are available for purchase at his website, [www.shawnwcampbell.com](http://www.shawnwcampbell.com).

**Shaina Clingempeel** will obtain her Poetry MFA from Sarah Lawrence College this May. Additionally, she is an ESL Teacher. Writings of hers appear in *Lumina*, *Crab Fat Magazine*, *Free State Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Black Fox Magazine*, among other places. She enjoys reading and writing poetry at coffee shops in New York, watching mindbender shows and films, and discussing feminism.

While being raised in Daly City’s Bayshore District by a single mother, **Dedrick C. Daniels** experienced many traumatic struggles that developed his own violent behavior, ultimately leading to his incarceration. Inspired by his son Taidrick, Dedrick aims to make amends and stop the violence in his community so no child has to go through similar trauma. For more work by Dedrick and peers, visit the Community Works West RSVP “The Issue” online. Peace.

**Austin Dickieson** is a sophomore Studio Art minor with a background in ceramics and pottery. He hopes to study abroad in Florence and expand his talents and knowledge of art. More of his projects can be found on Instagram @hunchodickie.

**Rachel Dillman** grew up in Pasadena, California and is now a junior at SCU. In her photography, she works to capture the moment and create connection. She highlights the hidden beauty in old and forgotten industrial objects and the power and simplicity of the ocean. Rachel enjoys eating sushi a lot.

**Sarah Giragosian** is a poet and critic living in Schenectady, NY. She is the author of the poetry collection *Queer Fish*, a winner of the American Poetry Journal Book Prize (Dream Horse Press, 2017) and *The Death Spiral* (Black Lawrence Press, forthcoming). Her poems have recently appeared in such journals as *Ecotone*, *The Missouri Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Denver Quarterly*, among others.

**Alec Gonzales** is a Senior Studio Art & Public Health double major from Phoenix, Arizona. Ever since receiving his first camera for Christmas in 2013, he has been fascinated with the idea of freezing time. You can always count on him to bring his camera on any outing in a never-ending pursuit for the perfect photo.

**Jeremy Griffin** is the author of the story collections *A Last Resort for Desperate People: Stories and a Novella*, from SFASU Press, and *Oceanography*, forthcoming from Orison Books. He teaches at Coastal Carolina University, where he serves as faculty fiction editor of *Waccamaw: a Journal of Contemporary Literature*. He can be reached at [griffinjeremy.com](http://griffinjeremy.com).

**Dan Grote** is an incarcerated writer whose work has appeared in numerous print and online venues — *Coal City Review*, *J Journal*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Poets & Writers Magazine*, and *the American Prison Writing Archives*, to name a few. His one and (so far) only National Public

Radio appearance can be found by visiting [thirdcoastfestival.org](http://thirdcoastfestival.org), show 218, “Odd Couples.” He can be reached via Dan Grote #22670-424, USP Canaan, PO Box 300, Waymart, PA 18472 or [danmgrote@gmail.com](mailto:danmgrote@gmail.com).

**Michael Hower** is a photographer from Central Pennsylvania where he resides with his wife and two boys. His experience with digital photography began six years ago. Over that time, he has amassed a resume of over a hundred exhibitions and publications. His work has been featured in shows at the Pennsylvania State Museum, PA; Biggs Museum of Art, DE; Masur Museum of Art, LA; and Marshall University, WV. Current projects include documenting graffiti landscapes for a show at the Art Association of Harrisburg and a project called “Steelworks” for the Newark Art Alliance in 2019.

**Anika Jensen** earned a BA in English from Gettysburg College. She has upcoming publications in *Metafore and Angles*.

**Pamela Miller** is a Chicago writer who has published four books of poetry, most recently *Miss Unthinkable* (Mayapple Press). Her work has recently appeared in *RHINO*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *After Hours*, *MAYDAY*, *Peacock Journal*, and the anthology *New Poetry From the Midwest* (New American Press).

**Benjamin Mueller** lives and teaches in Ithaca, New York. His poems have appeared in *Washington Square Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Negative Capability*, *Two Hawks Quarterly*, *42 Opus*, *Split Rock Review*, and *Euphony*.

**Larry Narron** is a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania. His poems have appeared in *Phoebe*, *The Brooklyn Review*, *Berkeley Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. They've been nominated for the Best of the Net and Best New Poets. Originally from Escondido, California, Larry currently lives in Philadelphia, where he works as a research assistant and reading specialist intern.

**Martin Ott** is the author of nine books of poetry and fiction, including *Underdays* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), Sandeen Prize Winner and Forward Indies Finalist and his newest book *Fake News Poem* (BlazeVOX Books, 2019). His work has appeared in twenty anthologies and more than two hundred magazines.

**Nijolė Rasmussen** was born in Lithuania. Since 1992 she has lived in Denver, CO. The journey through life has taken her to photography, and

eventually to painting, which has been her passion for the last 7 years. With some guidance from professional artists, she is mainly self-taught and derives her inspiration from nature, travels, and love of art. She loves to read and does so in several languages, and also writes poetry. Nijolė has had many solo exhibitions in Denver, one solo exhibition in Chicago. Her art is also represented by an art gallery in Lisbon, Portugal.

**Claire Scott** is an award winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has been accepted by the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Enizagam*, *New Ohio Review* and *Healing Muse*, among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

**David Spicer** has published poems in *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Synaeresis*, *Chiron Review*, *Remington Review*, *unbroken*, *Raw*, *Third Wednesday*, and elsewhere. Nominated for a Best of the Net three times and a Pushcart, he is author of one full-length poetry collection, *Everybody Has a Story* (St. Luke's Press). His latest chapbook is *From the Wings of a Pear Tree*, (Flutter Press).

**John Sibley Williams** is the author of *As One Fire Consumes Another* (Orison Poetry Prize) and *Skin Memory* (Backwaters Prize). An eleven-time Pushcart nominee and winner of various awards, John serves as editor of *The Inflectionist Review*. Publications include: *Yale Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Massachusetts Review*, and *Third Coast*.

**Dallas Woodburn**, a former Steinbeck Fellow in Creative Writing at San Jose State University, has published work in *ZYZZYVA*, *The Nashville Review*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Monkeybicycle*, among many others. Her debut short story collection *WOMAN, RUNNING LATE, IN A DRESS* (Yellow Flag Press) won the 2018 Cypress & Pine Short Fiction Award. Connect with her at [www.dallaswoodburnauthor.com](http://www.dallaswoodburnauthor.com)

**Shelley Valdez** is a Filipino-American writer, artist, editor, and performer from California's Bay Area. She is a recent graduate of Santa Clara University and worked as the poetry editor of the *Santa Clara Review* for several years. Her work has won multiple prizes, and has been published by *poets.org*, *The Best Emerging Poets of California*, *Quiet Lightning*, and elsewhere. Mostly, she wants to tell good stories, give good love, and make good art.

Internationally collected artist **Richard Vyse** has shown in galleries in



Manhattan and Honolulu. He has studied at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan and taught at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. His art has been featured in many international art and literary magazines. His art is in the Leslie Lohman museum in Manhattan. For bio and published art, visit <http://manartbyvyse.blogspot.com>.

“Celebrating man in line and spontaneous brush strokes to capture a moment and a mood.”

# SANTA CLARA REVIEW

## SUBSCRIBE TODAY

---

ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTION  
\$15

TWO YEAR SUBSCRIPTION  
\$25

INDIVIDUAL ISSUES AND BACKORDERS  
\$7.50

---

SUBSCRIBE AT:

[SANTACLARAREVIEW.COM](http://SANTACLARAREVIEW.COM)

SINCE | 1869

# SANTA CLARA REVIEW

---

volume 106 / issue 01

---

## CONTRIBUTORS

BRITTANY ACKERMAN / FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA / TESSIE BERGHOFF / ALEX BLUM /  
ABBEY BRANCO / S.W. CAMPBELL / SHAINA CLINGEMPEEL / DEDRICK C. DANIELS / AUSTIN  
DICKIESON / RACHEL DILLMAN / SARAH GIRAGOSIAN / ALEC GONZALES / JEREMY GRIFFIN /  
DAN GROTE / MICHAEL HOWER / ANIKA JENSEN / PAMELA MILLER / BENJAMIN MUELLER  
/ LARRY NARRON / MARTIN OTT / NIJOLÉ RASMUSSEN / CLAIRE SCOTT / DAVID SPICER /  
JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS / DALLAS WOODBURN / SHELLEY VALDEZ / RICHARD VYSE