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SANTA CLARA

REVIEW



vol 107 / issue 02

Featuring Marialisa Caruso,
Anthony Caruso, Aaron
Shurin & Warren Chang



volume 107 / issue 02

COVER ART BY **MARIANA PALOVA**
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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

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

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VOLUME 107 / ISSUE 02

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DEAR READER,

Although this magazine was drafted before the outbreak of COVID-19, the *Santa Clara Review* wants to take a moment to acknowledge the current collective experience that the world is facing.

While each of us is impacted by this pandemic in a unique way, we all share the experience of living through this time. Our staff is keeping everyone in our hearts and is sending love to all who are grieving, hurting, and struggling during this global crisis. We believe that your story matters and that writing and art can serve as an essential source of community and inspiration in challenging times.

We encourage you to continue reading, writing, and creating art no matter the circumstances. Our publication is dedicated to holding your experiences of this crisis gently within our hearts and eventually within the pages of our book. We are living in an unforgettable time with stories that deserve to be documented by our community of artists and writers, and we hope our magazine might serve as a source of love and healing.

We would be honored to read and share your experiences in future editions of the *Santa Clara Review*. Thank you for your continued support. We hope that through the works published in this edition, we can support you as well.

Take care,

SANTA CLARA REVIEW STAFF

Ally O'Connor, Danna D'Esopo, Maddie Sykes,
Madeline Golliver, Jules Xenakis, Rhiannon Janeschild,
Erika Rasmussen, Kish Rai, Annie Loewen, and Kirk Glaser

DEAR READER,

It is my honor to share this copy of Volume 107, Issue 2 of the *Santa Clara Review* with you. As the last issue on which my name and many of my colleagues and amazing friends' names will appear, this work truly captured our hearts.

For more than 150 years, the *Santa Clara Review* has published poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and art thanks to the tireless work of enthusiastic undergraduates. These beautiful books are created as a result of the efforts of each and every team member. I could not be more grateful for the commitment of our Leadership Staff, Assistants and Associates, Editorial Board, and Faculty Advisor.

More than just a student organization, the *Santa Clara Review* is a supportive home for our group of creative undergraduates. After joining the Editorial Board in my first year, working as the Fiction Editor for my second and third years, and now serving my fourth and final year as Editor-in-Chief, the *Santa Clara Review* has been my space of growth, friendship, and dedication. As I accept my diploma this June, I walk away from Santa Clara University a better person, so much due to my time with the *Santa Clara Review*. This has been a life changing four years, and I am thankful for every minute.

In this Spring issue, we are honored to share with you literary and artistic contributions from a wide variety of gifted authors, artists, and poets. In light of a large part of this issue being created through the challenges of COVID - 19, we are especially fortunate for the efforts of our contributors. Thank you for working with us through these uncertain times. We hope and believe that the literary and visual arts can bring light in darkness and bridge physical distance. Our hearts are with all of those who have been impacted by COVID - 19. While this book was edited and designed through times of social distancing, we are lucky for the intangible things that this world has to offer — most importantly, the love that we all share for one another and for our craft.

As stated in my last Editor's Note, none of this could be possible without the skills and hard work of our more than 35 student staff members, most specifically our 2019 - 2020 Leadership Staff — Maddie S., Jules, Kish, Maddie G., Danna, Dhanush, Erika, Rhiannon, and Annie — and our fantastic faculty advisor — Dr. Kirk Glaser. I am incredibly fortunate to have had the privilege of working with you all, and to be able to call each and every one of you a true friend.

I have more gratitude in my heart than I could ever fit on paper, but I have to take a moment to thank my parents for making this past four years possible, and my 94-year-old Grandpa Ed for being my greatest inspiration. I am endlessly appreciative for my family's encouragement and kindness as I chased all of my college dreams.

Finally, to the *Santa Clara Review*, thank you for being my home and safe space through college — for changing me in ways I never would have expected, but for which I will always be grateful. The memories will be with me forever.

Yours,

ALLY O'CONNOR
editor in chief

ANTHONY CARUSO
and
MARIALISA CARUSO

featured authors

A native Californian, Anthony Caruso moved from northern city to central country life before following his family back to Trabia, Sicily at the age of 19. It was there that he first tried his hand in the entertainment industry with radio and film. Anthony eventually returned to the States a newlywed to start a business and family, five kids strong.

Marialisa Caruso '20 is a graduating senior at SCU with a major in Finance and double minor in Creative Writing and International Business. She intends to use this seemingly incoherent background to one day found her own self-sustainable business with profits yielded from producing various forms of visual and written media that each evoke the essence of life.

EMERALD RUN SELECT SCENES

Emerald Run is an enticing film for all members of the family. From emotional turmoil rooted in medical conflict to the intrigue of the Sicilian mafia's collaboration with Mexican cartels, the film depicts the struggles of defining what is moral. As a result, the varied relationships constructed by these engaging storylines make for a lively depiction of an exaggerated reality.

The story follows John Thomas as he ventures on a desert excursion orchestrated by his questionably righteous father-in-law. Though reluctant at first, the exacerbating toll of his daughter's medical condition forces John to seek recompense across the border. Throughout his journey, John encounters various characters that raise new conflicts, both internally and externally, allowing him to reflect on the relationships he left back home and find inspiration in the relationships long gone.

Thus far, *Emerald Run* has been nominated for 21 awards across 5 international festivals in 4 different countries. Of the 3 festivals that have passed, we have won 6 titles, including Best Film, Best Feature Film in the Faith Based category, Best Director, Best Lead Actor in a Feature Film, and two awards for Marialisa's role as Best Supporting Actress. Of all the contributions she made to the production, Marialisa never expected her acting to be the most impactful, especially to the point of a title upgrade with her latest nomination for Best Lead Actress. However, getting there was a process. It was nearly two years into the project that Anthony and Marialisa, the then Executive and Associate Producers, respectively, began to rewrite the script left behind by the previous writer, having to keep in mind all the middle action scenes that had already been shot. They went through at least a dozen drafts of the renewed beginning and end of the story, as new circumstances arose. Whether it be from the demands of a desired actor, the inability for another actor to return, or the creative preferences of the director, such as the inclusion of a dramatic haircutting scene, Anthony and Marialisa quickly adapted to the art of compromise. These first twelve pages come from one of the later drafts, still comprised of many scenes that were omitted or otherwise changed as a result of further restrictions incurred over the minimal course of the three-day shoot, giving you a better taste of Anthony and Marialisa's *Emerald Run*. Enjoy!

- Marialisa Caruso

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH - AFTERNOON

INSERTS of suited men and their loud, consecutive footsteps, handshakes and money exchanges, zoomed in for a nefarious appeal, before coming to the full image of a church congregation.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Shot opens at the chime of church bells, ringing two times for the start of the hour. Parishioners exit at this conclusion of the service. Children run out at their parents' calls, as groups collect, couples turn to each other, and all descend the steps. The camera moves in on ANNA THOMAS completing the sign of the cross as she walks out the door.

She is slowly followed out by her daughter of seventeen, LISA THOMAS, and her husband JOHN THOMAS. The two lag behind as Lisa seems fairly uncomfortable, grasping her arms, and John remains fixated on his phone. Lisa gets the attention of John, who goes on to pass her a pair of car keys. Lisa moves straight for the parking lot, while Anna drags John along with her. She cuts through the crowd to get to the priest, PADRE VINCENZO. ANTONINO LAUDATO, a finely dressed Sicilian man in his fifties, better known as DON NINU, wishes Padre Vincenzo well in Trabiese and walks off as Padre notices Anna.

PADRE VINCENZO
Anna, come stai?

They shake hands as John peers out from behind.

PADRE VINCENZO (CONT'D)
And John, how are you?

John seems distracted, but manages to breathe out a

response.

JOHN

I'm fine, Father, thank you.
That was a beautiful
dedication you gave for
Martin.

PADRE VINCENZO

Ah, grazie! I can't believe
it's been ten years that he's
gone.

ANNA

I know, and, now, Lisa...

John puts his arm around her.

PADRE VINCENZO

(in Italian)
No? Che c'è?

ANNA

First it was chest pains,
then migraines, now she
complains of vertigo. I
can't even get her to eat,
sometimes, she's so sick
to her stomach.

PADRE VINCENZO

Oh, mi dispiace. I had no
idea.

ANNA

(suddenly collected)
Ma, senti, Padre. I think,
Maybe, an anointing could
really do her some good. And
confession. She needs it.

John moves his arm off of her and stares her down.

JOHN

Anna!

PADRE VINCENZO

Not to worry, John.
(to Anna)
Of course, if she wants to
confess we can go back in the
church. Let me talk to her.

ANNA

(immediately)
No!
(composes herself)
Not now. We are going out to
My father's restaurant, in
remembrance of Martin. Why
don't we do it there?

PADRE VINCENZO

There is no need to
publicize it.

ANNA

Si, certo. I just thought
she would be more comfortable
if we were all there, to
support her. She is very
stubborn, you know.

PADRE VINCENZO

Anna, you cannot force these
things.

(MORE)

PADRE VINCENZO (CONT'D)
I'll be happy to help her in
any way I can, but only when
she is ready to come to me,
herself. Non ti preoccupare.
Va bene?

ANNA
(disappointed)
Si, Padre, grazie. But you
are coming to lunch, aren't
you?

PADRE VINCENZO
Si, si. You know I come
every year. I just need to
finish up here, but I can
meet you all in about half
an hour.

ANNA
(in Italian)
Okay. Allora, ci vediamo.

John and Anna shake the priest's hand one last time.
They walk back towards the parking lot, for which they
pass a light post. CLOSE IN ON: the poster, stating
"MISSING - MARTIN DWYER - MARCH 24, 2008."

CUT TO:

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - SAME

We walk through, into the restaurant. ALFIO SARDA, a
suited Sicilian, and self-assured mafioso, in his six-
ties, cracks a joke, now filling the room with laugh-
ter. John sits beside him, appearing disappointed.
Anna, sitting to John's left, steps out to the re-

stroom as drinks are being served. Alfio begins to
contain his enthusiasm as he takes a sip of wine, and
looks to find John unamused. He leans over, questioning
John.

ALFIO
What's the matter, you don't
Like the party?

JOHN
No... It's just... A whole
decade! Where could he have
been all this time?

ALFIO
Let's not concern ourselves
with this now.

He looks over at his granddaughter, Lisa, as she
glares down at her phone while sitting at the kids'
table.

ALFIO (CONT'D)
How's Lisa?

Just then, Lisa gets up with her phone in hand. She
turns and walks out toward the door.

JOHN
Lisa!
(sigh)
I better go check on her.

ALFIO
(pulling John down by the
arm)
You know, if you're having
money troubles with all this
medical business, I can help.
Anna tells me you've been out
of work for a while, why

didn't you come to me? Like
you did with Martin.

JOHN
(annoyed and impatient)
I'm not out of work, I've
been between jobs, and I
haven't come to you because I
don't need your help. I can
take care of myself, of my
family. Speaking of which,
my daughter needs me.

Anna walks in just in time to see the tempers rising
and stays behind at the shoulder of her father. John
exits.

EXT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

John catches up to Lisa speaking to a twentysomething
-year-old boy at the corner. He makes eye contact with-
John and runs off.

Upon his departure, Lisa turns around, appearing con-
fused, with that same look of discomfort last seen at
the church.

LISA
Dad?

JOHN
Who was that? Are you okay?

LISA
What? Oh, yeah. That was
just some guy... from church.

JOHN
Really? Well, why didn't he

say hello? I don't recognize
him.

As Lisa struggles to respond, John notices her nerves
get the best of her. Her arm begins to quake, bringing
John's attention to the gift bag she is grasping.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What is that?

He grabs the bag from her and opens it up to find what
appears to be a chocolate bar wrapped in foil.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Ah, you got a boy to buy you
chocolates, huh?

LISA
It's not what you think.

John turns the bar around to reveal that it has been
sealed with a label stating, "THE CHURCH OF MARY
JANE."

JOHN
From church, huh?

LISA
I mean, technically. I did meet him at a church, of
sorts, it just wasn't our church.

JOHN
You're telling me... Do you know how much trouble
you could get into for this? Don't you remember
what this did... how you...I...

LISA
No, Dad. Look, I'm not you,
okay. You don't know what
it's like! This isn't just a
means to throw my life away

and binge to death. I'm just trying to make things easier.

JOHN

Don't you talk back to me that way. You don't think that's how I saw it, too. Martin had been missing for over a year already. Now who knows where he is. I was just trying to make sense of it all, but only made myself senseless, dependent. I...

Realizing that he has gone off on a tangent, and begun to lose Lisa's attention, he starts over.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(calmly)

Lisa. This could go on your record, you're supposed to go to college next year. Did you even consider that? What this means for your future, what you could be doing to yourself?

LISA

See, there it is again. You're just like the rest of them. The doctors couldn't explain what I have so they blamed me instead. Said that I brought too much attention to it, exacerbating the pain in stress.

JOHN

Don't start.

LISA

Oh, so you get a say, but I don't? You think I can just make it come and go whenever I please.

JOHN

But, Lisa.

LISA

Well, this way I can. It doesn't take much to melt a bite in my mouth. Then, in an instant, I can be numbed of the pain and restore my appetite, sparing myself the embarrassment of everyone's pity.

John is speechless at this point, with a look of confused frustration.

LISA (CONT'D)

Look, I'm not saying I'm giving up, I'm just over it. There is nothing that you can say to change my mind, unless you could finally diagnose me and get this over with.

Lisa tilts her head down and does a half turn around.

JOHN

Oh, come on, don't talk like that.

John reaches out to her and Lisa whisks his arm away, clearly angered.

LISA

Like what? It's not like I'm hoping it's something bad. I just need it to be something, something to validate the fact that it's not me doing this to myself, that this is real, I'm not faking, and I can finally stop killing myself over the feeling that I may be dying.

(deep breath)

So, about that bag...

JOHN

(speechless, thrown back)

I... I'm sorry.

John can no longer stand to stare his daughter down, recognizing that he can do nothing for her. He walks slowly back into the restaurant, beaten, leaving Lisa behind while still holding the bag hostage.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

He storms straight through to the men's restroom, catching Anna's attention. John turns on the faucet, intermittently splashing water on his face between peering back at the bagged treat, in temptation. Anna barges in, interrupting his concentration.

ANNA

Why did you make a scene? Is Lisa coming in?

JOHN

What? No "Is everything okay? What's going on with Lisa?" Your sick daughter!

ANNA

John...

JOHN

(putting his hand up)

I'm sorry, okay. I can't do this right now. I need to speak with your father.

John leaves Anna behind as he returns to his seat beside Alfio, gift bag in hand.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Alfio)

Hey, I was thinking... maybe, I will take that job after all.

Just then, Padre Vincenzo walks in, looking around, and Anna arrives from the back. Alfio gets up, clinking his glass.

ALFIO

Hey, everyone. I have an announcement. Oh, senti! I have an announcement. John, here, has just come to me for work, and I am going to give it to him. So...

(he raises his glass)

...to me! Nah, nah, nah, to John!

Alfio pulls John up and turns the gesture into a hand shake. John appears confused as the room fills with chants of "salute" and exchanges of "Cin, cin." Anna practically jumps up and down, as she proceeds to thank, if not praise, her father with kisses.

ALFIO (CONT'D)

(raises his hand)

But, let's not forget who

Brought us all together
today.

(again raises his glass)
To Martin and his safe
return, because no matter how
long it's been or whatever he
has been through, the
prodigal son will find his
way home. So, how 'bout it,
let's toast to Martin and
his eventual arrival!

He outstretches his arms as the servers bring in shots
of limoncello and cannoli. Lisa walks in amongst all
the commotion and begs John for them to leave.

ANNA
Lisa, come on, we're
celebrating. Your Nonno just
gave your father work, and
we're expecting dessert.

LISA
Ma, mamma, I don't feel
good, vogghiu ire a casa.

ANNA
E, Li, what did I say?

JOHN
I think we should go.

ANNA
Oh, you too? This is for
you.

JOHN
What about Martin? No, Anna,
please...

Padre Vincenzo interrupts.

PADRE VINCENZO
Oh, John, auguri... Uh,
congratulations. You can
learn a lot from Alfio. He
does good work, look at my
church.

(turns to Lisa)
And Lisa. I'm so sorry to
hear you have not been well.
La tua mamma told me that you
may want some help.

Lisa takes a sharp look at her mother and turns back.

LISA
No, grazie, Padre. I'm okay.

She looks back at John, checking for the bag, before
walking out.

ANNA
Ma, scusa, Padre. She said
she wasn't feeling well, we
were just leaving.

The family turns to move out, when Alfio gets up and
approaches Padre Vincenzo.

ALFIO
(with his arms
outstretched)
Padre! So glad you could
make it!
(embraces him and pats
his hand on his shoulder)
Excuse me while I see them
out.

Padre Vincenzo understandingly waves him off. As Anna
leads the way out of the restaurant, Alfio catches John

from behind.

ALFIO (CONT'D)

Ah, John... you leaving,
this is your party, too.

JOHN

(preoccupied)

Lisa feels sick, we're going
to take her home. We can talk
about the job tomorrow.

ALFIO

Oh, okay. You can come by
anytime.

We'll talk.

(nearly shouting to Anna,
raising his hand)

Ciao, amore.

Anna and John walk out, with Alfio looking out at them.

EXT. THOMAS HOUSE - LATER

ENTRYWAY

The front door is slightly propped open.

ANNA

She did what?

JOHN

She's lost, Anna.
Everybody's telling her what
to feel and how to act, it
just doesn't make sense to
her.

ANNA

Clearly. You're telling me
that she joined another

church!

John pushes into the house and takes the conversation
through the kitchen, to the laundry room.

INT. THOMAS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

KITCHEN

JOHN

Anna, I think you're missing
the point, here. She's self
medicating. We are supposed
to be the ones to take care
of her, to make her feel
safe, and take away the
pain.

ANNA

This is all your fault,
she'd rather worship drugs
than God. If only you just...

JOHN

Just what; how is this my
fault?

LAUNDRY ROOM

Anna begins separating colors and loading clothes into
the washer as she continues on to speak.

ANNA

You don't pray with us, you
don't pay attention in
church... she looks up to
you, and you don't give
her a proper example.

JOHN

Don't you put this on me.
 Lisa's a smart kid, but she's
 scared. She wanted answers
 and tried to get herself some
 results.

ANNA

And what are we supposed to
 do with her now? People are
 going to find out about this.

JOHN

No, okay? We need to get her
 help. I took the job with
 your father to make some real
 money, so we can take her to
 the best doctors. She needs
 to get better.

INT. THOMAS MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

INTERCUT between a dream of John's memories with Martin and his sleeping state, in bed. Various scenes combine and conflict, including those of working construction sites with Martin, sharing smiles and laughs, before contorting into the ransom gone wrong. Flashes of suggested drug abuse, including needles, pills, and blood shot eyes, are interchanged with shots of Lisa kneeling beside her bed. She begins pulling at her wrist when a loose strand is revealed on the edge of her sleeve. Lisa completes the sign of the cross as she gets up and moves toward her bathroom. She opens the mirrored cabinet and pulls out a pair of scissors, which she positions above her wrist when the shot captures the metal tongs separating. Suddenly, Lisa begins to audibly exhale as she grabs for her chest, causing her to lounge her torso over and clench her fists. She then rests her hand on the sink for support when she feels fibers under her fingers. She picks them up and immediately looks in the

mirror to find that she has just cut a section of her hair.

In a worried frenzy, she attempts to adjust this inconvenience by leveling out the rest of her hair before becoming infuriated with herself and sheerly cutting without a purpose as she climbs unevenly higher with each frantic clip. She then finds herself with the scissors backing her earlobe, and stops. A fever escalates with her fury, forcing her to drop the scissors and reach up to her forehead, holding off her impulse to throw up as she turns to the toilet behind her and collapses.

The sequence ends with an image of what appears to be a dead Martin Dwyer at the CRASH of porcelain. John startles up in a cold sweat, as if his body had just been revived by an AED. He gets up to reveal that there is no one in the bed beside him, and walks out of his room and down the hall to check in on Lisa. He looks in through the dark to see the light escaping from the crack of an opening left between the bathroom door and its frame. John walks in to find Lisa with her hair in tatters, shivering beside the closed toilet. It wasn't his dream, but a nightmare all the same. He reaches down to hold her, rocking her in his arms while holding onto her feverish forehead, attempting to ease her pain. CLOSE IN on John's face as he collects a composure of determination, looking over his daughter.

WARREN CHANG

featured artist

Born and bred in Monterey, California, Warren Chang (b. 1957) graduated from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena in 1981, where he earned a B.F.A. in illustration with honors. He thrived for two decades as an award-winning illustrator in both California and New York, when he transitioned to a career as a fine artist starting in the year 2000.

Chang has become renowned for his art since his transition to fine art 15 years ago, earning many awards and honors, which include induction as Master Signature member of the prestigious Oil Painters of America, the largest organization of oil painters in the United States. He is one of only 50 to receive this honor. His awards also include Best of Show awards in the Salon International in 2003 and the Raymar Contest in 2009. In addition his work has been profiled in many publications, including the covers of American Artist and International Artists magazines accompanying his articles on instructional painting. Now based in his Monterey studio, he is an inveterate and popular teacher, currently affiliated with San Francisco's Academy of Art University.

His work can be categorized into two main categories of biographical interiors and his paintings of fieldworkers. His interest in interiors reaches right back to 16th century artist Johannes Vermeer, and includes subjects of self portraits, family, friends and students in the interior environments of his studio, classroom and home. His intent is to create mood and emotion through his manipulation of light and use of close value relationships and subdued color.

Perhaps best known for his paintings of fieldworkers from the Monterey County area, this subject harkens back to such forerunners as Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Jean-Francois Millet, Winslow Homer, Eastman Johnson and Thomas Hart Benton. Chang's depiction of unidealized fieldworkers are unsentimental, yet at the same time celebrate the human spirit. Chang admits being inspired and influenced by the novels of John Steinbeck, books he read in his youth as well as the general ambiance of growing up in Monterey.



FALL TILLING

WARREN CHANG

oil on canvas



IMITATION OF LIFE

WARREN CHANG

oil on canvas



CHECKERS

WARREN CHANG

oil on canvas



DRAWN INTO THE LIGHT

WARREN CHANG

oil on canvas

AARON SHURIN

featured poet

Aaron Shurin is the author of fourteen books of poetry and prose, most recently *The Blue Absolute*, just out from Nightboat Books. Other works include: *Flowers & Sky: Two Talks* (Entre Rios Books, 2017), *The Skin of Meaning: Collected Literary Essays and Talks* (University of Michigan Press, 2015), and two books from City Lights: *Citizen* (poems, 2012) and *King of Shadows* (essays, 2008). His writing has appeared in over forty national and international anthologies, from *The Norton Anthology of Postmodern American Poetry* to Italy's *Nuova Poesia Americana: San Francisco*, and has been supported by grants from The National Endowment for the Arts, The California Arts Council, The San Francisco Arts Commission, and the Gerbode Foundation. A pioneer in both LGBTQ+ studies and innovative verse, Shurin was a member of the original Good Gay Poets collective in Boston, and later the first graduate of the storied Poetics Program at New College of California. He has written numerous critical essays about poetic theory and compositional practice, as well as personal narratives on sexual identity, gender fluidity, and the AIDS epidemic. A longtime educator, he's the former director and currently Professor Emeritus for the MFA Writing Program at the University of San Francisco.

TAKEN

Thank you for the pastry that opened like a creature in love. Thank you for your creature-like face that watched me be devoured as I love disappearing at last. The birds thank the breeze for the news of the trees by the iron bench outside when we were — when I was — in a buttery embrace — I am melting at last — I remember . . . I remember . . . the taste of your face or was it my neck in the grip of your jaw? I forget . . . I forget . . . It's the wind in my tree it's the song that I sing as my feathers are plucked by the pastry I ate as sweet and rich as your gaping mouth that swallowed me whole I remember I forget. Thank you for calming my quivering quills my twitching skin as you opened your buttery lips I love dissolving at last as you wipe my crumbs from your chin . . .

HOW STRANGE

*How strange to be forgotten without forgetting, when the (literal) fog descends — obscurantist — and the outlines of the houses fade but you don't... Lost traveler, squeezed out by the tunnel in a rush of speed and vanished in the mist. Was he asleep on the road when the signpost took a powder, the dictionary bled out, the stoplights went staccato on the incline? Now he remembers every right or wrong angle, every antediluvian prom dress, stiff as a bucket of steel, every carnivorous wrist corsage, too, each wavering smile leaked from the tunnel like a plume of exhaust, every shill and every thrill. No matter, nothing remembers him. Not his show-stopping kangaroo dance, not his fire-pot eyes with their ever-shifting embers, not his tidal-wave hair on a power roll of carbon hollows and caramel flows... Engulfing, enfolding mist and its perfect target — ephemeral interlocutor in a blurred nimbus — through the thick of which, he sees, unseen... Who will he be haunting now with his hunger and his chill? Echo on the clifftop: *helloooooo?* — tap on the shoulder: *who's there?* — whisper in the morning breeze: *who called my name?* — shadow streak across the postcard view: *what was that?* Listen: The foghorn howls...*

AARON SHURIN
poetry

AT ZENITH

for Sil & Craig

Sun at an angle in June backyard full bloom purple yellow orange pink . . .
then fluttering leaves a light wind rises sucks up the thick air . . . reveals
us perched on our wicker-ish chairs on the stage of the porch of the play
summer dazed . . . or as audience of three for the lush hungry grass and the
birdsong flinging from yard to yard and the fireflies blowing their bellies
in the dusk . . . we nod in the glow at the clink of our glasses raised — *so
many years* — settle like birds with their beaks under wing in their velvety
breasts unafraid unabashed and grow old . . .

S.T. BRANT
poetry

THE SIGN IN THE CLOUDS

Rain impacts the land as glass. All god's windows broken. Falling on us.
We part like this. Fragments; shards. We aim to love. Throw, don't aim.
Aim fails. Love is force. A throw. Breaks windows. Hits us, another's love
hits. We, windows, break. The rain is falling angels.

Out of love. With god. The rain is god's lost love. Lost love of god, lost
god. God is the rain in our clothes. Shards in our clothes. Shake out your
clothes, you will track in glass. Dogs will eat it. Shake it outside. For the
birds or others. Not our dogs. The key.

Windows can be different windows. Colors, sizes. Purposes. Windows
vary. Raindrops vary. Color, size. Purpose. Stained glass rain. Residential
housing rain. Presidential limo rain. Rainbows on the asphalt, rainbows
in dirt, rainbows in gutters, desert, on the mountain, outline of cars.

Shake out all glass. Spectrums to determine how in-love. Shake out rain.
Don't play with glass. Come inside. God's love. Broken glass. Don't play
with. Come inside. Rain. Come in love. Side. Come inside. Love broken,
don't, god.

عنوان شعر: قلب خنجرها

قلب خنجرها در دست آوارگان،
کودکی ات در خوک ها غلتیده،
تو در هنگامیکه زمان می بود وزیدی؛
زنبور، زنبور، زیرک از شهدهای رقص و آوارگی در سر،
چرا نمی گفتند به تو: عالیجناب ...
جناب بمب، بمبی در سرت!
بی هو، بی یک عرب در بیابان
ما پایکوب شتران، پایکوب وحشی ترین جهان پیش از ما!
بر روی تنی رقصیدی، بر روی زبان مُردی ...
کتاب می آوردی، بازی بازی انگشت توست
انگشت آویزان بر زمان، بی یک عرب در بیابان
بریدند پایت را،
ما با تو، ما بی همگان!

THE HEART OF DAGGERS

The heart of daggers in the hands of the homeless,
Your childhood has wallowed among pigs,
When the time was being, you breezed;
Bee, bee, nimble for the ooze of dance and displacement in the head,
Why did not they call you: Your Excellency...
Lord Bomb, a bomb in your head!
Without him, without an Arab in desert
We, the stampede of the camels, the stomp of the wildest world before us!
You danced on a body, on a tongue you died...
You had been bringing the book, the game is the game of your fingers...
A finger hanging over the time, without an Arab in the desert,
they cut off your feet,
We with you, we without everyone...

Translated by Negar Emrani

THE PATRIOT TAX

This is how you pledge; always stand up straight; always place your right hand across your chest, rest it on your heart; and don't be a smart-ass; say the words like they are hymns from the mouth of an angel; always be convincing; always believe in the pledge; this pledge is an allegiance and you must say it loudly and proudly; and don't be a smart-ass or they will not believe you; this is how you show loyalty; wear the shirt with a flag and the two towers; place a flag in front of the house; make sure everyone can see it; make sure to wave at your neighbors; place a sign in the window of the store; we are americans, we are your neighbors; always smile; always speak english; always pledge; don't be a smart-ass as I have warned you; *but they hurt dad*; he is fine; it's just a small stutter; trust the police; the police will help; the police protects; the law protects; *the police didn't help dad*; stop; this is theirs; this is not ours; this is where you live; so, this is how you live; this is the tax we pay; don't be a smart-ass or you will be dead; don't talk back; keep your head down; always smile at their glares; *even when they call me terrorist*? No, push them to the ground; you are not a terrorist; get good grades; excel in your career; show them you are an american; this is how you get through; remove your kara; remove your kirpan; remove your shoes; remove your belt; always smile; be cooperative; you will be "randomly" selected; they will want to probe your crown; they will want to inspect your luggage; there will be a small dot on your passport, apart from others; you must smile, you must cooperate; why do you refuse to cooperate; why do you talk back; I told you, stop being a smart-ass; they can have the barbecue on the road; their kids can play on the road; it is a public road; this is how you request; do not demand; we must ask for permission to use the public road; we must give notice about extra cars during the wedding; do not forget to give notice; how did you forget to give notice; the cars make them nervous; they will leave a terse demand in chalk; red letters on the driveway to match a red hat; dad will wash it away; no one will know; they can continue to wear red hats with a short, curt slogan; they can put up their red signs; *right up to the property line*? Yes, it is their land, we only live here; they do not bother us; don't let them bother you; survive; don't be a smart-ass.

THE ROAD BEHIND US

Your banner flies
so comfortably so

higgledy-piggledy. I am feeling
lit up ballistic even for the outcome, while you

frown darkly into the mint of your boots. Joy stretches up
infusing the details

of our bodies
lyrically even. It is painful how petty

some of our own kind
can be. The explosions under discussion are

occurring on the outside of
the horizon. Let us desire

to be joy together rising and rising until
neither of us goes down.

NATHAN SPOON
poetry

DEAR DAUGHTER

halfway in sand and halfway
in air where the world is sky water

and earth by thirds I look
at the image absentmindedly I hold

a stim toy and squeeze firmly thinking how
the figures featured are you and me

and how other figures rose from every element
to leave us for so long estranged Near

the dark frame is a small globe
I received as a gift from a departing

coworker I reach with my right hand
and give the length of it a healthy spin

MILLIE TULLIS
poetry

CONTEXT

a man in Moscow
cut off his
wife's hands
took her to the woods
and axed her wrists
ten times

once
a Russian peasant picked berries
before berrypicking time

her basket was hung
around her neck
clothing stripped
she was paraded
as townspeople beat
washpans

historians call this *rough*
music meaning
peasant justice
custom

Soviets had belt
burying ceremonies
where village men buried
the belt they beat
their wife
with

the first story
in Afanas'ev's *Russian Fairy Tales*
is a wife
who asks her merchant husband
to bring her a marvelous
marvel a wonderous wonder
and because the story

is a story he finds one
in the form of a goose
who lies down in a pan
to be cooked
and comes back
to be cooked again

but when the wife called the goose
to lie in the pan
she would not
and when the wife tried
to force her in
they stuck to it
and her lover who tried
to pull them apart
stuck

and the goose ran
them all into town
where her husband found her
out and beat her with his belt
crying
I'll give you a marvelous
marvel and a wonderous
wonder

MICHAEL CHANG
poetry

SOLITAIRE BOYS FOLLOW ME

-
-

As my head is bowed over meatloaf, I see God. Damn it, I think,
should've gotten wings. Dude, I tell God, I've had a really long day. I
make a mental note, the world is a mess but his hair is perfect.

-
-

He stands there, all musk & indecision, looking like he never misses a
session of SOULCYCLE, figuring out how to love me. After much thought
and prayer, he feeds me bacon & heart disease. It feels like home, truly,
as the color drains out of my ROADRUNNER sweatshirt. I confess, I don't
know how to make the prophecy better.

-
-

God fastens himself to my body, we are wild horses running in tandem,
poppies in his opium war. Sugar, I say, don't worry. I don't need
anything from TIFFANY. He looks relieved.

-
-

Sometime later, I spot him holding court at LITTLE CAESARS, my
invitation conspicuously lost in the mail. Another time, he's papped
on the Spanish Steps in his burnt orange polo, arm around a blond boy
named Jasper.

-
-

BETRAYAL, 背叛, REWIND, 倒帶

-
-

I leave God a voicemail. Tell me how you want it, I plead. Love begets
jealousy begets hate begets love begets nothing left. I hope I remember
not to die in worship. Problem is, I don't want to sleep alone.

MARIA ORLANDI

poetry

LIVERPOOL STREET

I'm leaning back, letting light dip into me,
Closing my eyes, still finding it with my fingers.
I can feel you looking at me; I can feel your eyes on my fingers.
Fragmented but not incomplete splinters of glass appear,
I barely need to open my eyes.

But we stand in the middle of that chaos,
Look up at a glass ceiling
That doesn't mean anything but that,
Doesn't mean anything except that the light is fractured and beautiful,
That I'm fractured too, in the light.
That in the light, you and I are separated by
Point point point, by a point, a point, a point,
But if we continued to drift around the station,
Eventually we could collide
In a silent eruption of luminescent shards.

Underneath the glass, and I can't find a familiar face,
Although there are meant to be so many of me—
I should be scattered across the room, reflected in every corner,
But the light takes my likeness and turns it away from me,
A side of my face I've never seen
Suddenly becomes a side of me I've never seen,
Suddenly becomes not me, or rather
Not a me that I know,
Not a me I'd like to know.
Not a me even you would know.

MARIA ORLANDI
poetry

AFTER READING THE EXPLICATIONS OF OTHER POETS:

After I finish this poem, I will stain this page.
I will decide in the moment what you should see alongside my words,
to best convince you of their...

I am not unused to smearing blood across the pages of a book.
It may unsettle you, (especially not knowing where the blood is from).
Yours to find, yours to interpret.

I am not afraid of opening my lips, a small beckoning to the world,
Letting myself drip slowly onto the page,
Minuscule bubbles forming and boiling on the surface of the sheet.

Perhaps I will dip my finger inside myself, twist and pull,
gathering something unseen, by myself or my lover's tongue,
And drag it across the page,
Watching it crust and dry with air's kiss.

It will unsettle you further.

Perhaps I will keep myself from the page,
Instead crumpling it and folding it, until it would,
So they say, reach the moon.
And then you may unfold it slowly,
So your fingers have touched the pages
That have touched the moon.

KELLY LENOX
poetry

TOWARD WHAT WE WERE SAVED FOR

The stripped house echoes. Dust
naked in the light. Walls smaller
without the art we lived into.

The questions also
echo.

No, no job yet for me.
No, he's there now,
looking.

Love Lizard—our beaded chameleon
with a belly full of nightlight—
beams from the mantelpiece. Its mouth,
open wide as ever, promises
answers better than mine.

The hearth's bricks tell stories
to rain's tender snare.

All we know is the weather,
dark and wet, that will wrap us.

Bats stipple the dusk.
I have not yet wept.

PITAYA FRUITS & PINEAPPLES

waiting for me on the dining table,
grandma had sliced fresh a perpetual memory
of my last night in singapore. i say
thank you, take a bite, and see
complementary colours dancing in my vision,
ultraviolet and the sun. suddenly
i am in rapture on my bed in year one. i blink again
and out of the negative space a silver phoenix is born,
spreading its wings for the first time, disrupting
the layer of geometry across my ceiling. it flies away
and diffuses into the scales of a creature living in these walls,
its blood shining, the spectrum of visible light
coursing through its veins. rainbow static propels me back
to myself, my mother's mother.
i slink back into this body, this mind, this memory of seventeen,
having seen a version of the world made just for me.

HOLLY DRIVE

For the 20th time that day, I picked up an armful of newspapers and maneuvered my way through boxes of junk, couches littered with cassette tapes, and stacks of *Time* magazines piled to the ceiling. With a thud, the newspapers landed in the recycling bin. As if it would help, I brushed my hands on my already dust-coated t-shirt and stared down at the front-page headline: "Reagan OKs Atom Smasher to Keep US Physics No. 1," Friday, January 30, 1987.

My grandpa had always loved the *Los Angeles Times*. He loved it so much, in fact, that he'd kept every issue delivered to him over the past 30 years. Although by that logic, I guess you could also say he loved empty toothpaste bottles and expired coupons. There were 50 empty boxes of Kellogg's Multigrain cereal organized into a pyramid in his kitchen. One day, when my Aunt Sally brought him groceries, he saw her marveling at the structure. "Can't tell you how many times I've bumped into those," he said casually, as if it were necessary to restack them each time they fell.

To say my grandpa's hoarding got out of control would be an understatement. The condition he was living in was downright unsafe: his entire house was a massive fire hazard. He was physically incapable of walking up and down the steps leading to his front door, and he was falling regularly. But he was also stubborn as hell. It was his house, and he was adamant on staying. That is, until a case of pneumonia led to a longer-than-anticipated hospital stay and several subsequent health issues. In his mind, he was just recuperating until he could go back to Holly Drive. To his three kids, however, it was the last straw: the house needed to be cleaned out, and they were going to have to take on this seemingly insurmountable task.

The look on my mom's face when we stepped into my grandpa's house was one of disbelief, as if someone had destroyed her childhood home—covered her sweet memories in pulverized newsprint and mildew. The spot in the corner of the living room where the sun used to shine so perfectly through the window became home to piles of old, useless mail. The bright red armchair that she used to read Nancy Drew novels in for hours on end was faded to pink and coated in dust. The pantry, which once held after-school snacks, was covered in brown, dried-up splatters from cans so old their contents exploded onto the walls. My brother and I pulled our shirt collars up to cover our faces from the dust, but my mom

didn't bother. While I gingerly tip-toed over the ripped-up magazines littering the floor, she hurried into every room, taking note of the damage and mourning the loss of her childhood home. I felt powerless—I hated seeing my mom so distraught. I was also mad at my grandpa for making her feel that way. I looked down at the trashed floor and tried to imagine what the house looked like before it was destroyed. What I saw in front of me was nothing like I had imagined while listening to my mom's childhood stories. I felt like I was watching a low-budget film adaptation of my favorite book—and the directors got the set all wrong.

A scream from the living room brought me back to reality. It seemed my aunt had discovered a family of mice living in Grandpa's old movie equipment; there was a hole in the projector, and the rodents had nestled up against the coil. We all exchanged a look that said, "This is going to be a long two years."

Unless they're well-acquainted with the reality television series, *Hoarders*, people often find it difficult to understand the depth of my grandpa's condition. "Oh, my mom collects stuff too," they'll say, referring to a closet of books or shelf of figurines. I don't blame them. It's hard to wrap your head around how someone could rationalize keeping decades-old grocery store receipts like they're winning lottery tickets. As a child, my mom didn't understand the scope of my grandpa's mental illness either. Her friends' houses looked tidier and nicer, but she assumed it was because they were wealthier. She thought it was just something annoying and weird about her dad. That was, in part, because of my grandma's demands that my grandpa consolidate his disaster to his own space. She worked hard to keep the common areas clean to provide a safe home for her children. Martha Stewart wouldn't give 2355 Holly Drive a trophy for home decor, but it was a good place to be a kid.

It wasn't until my mom and her two siblings went to college that Grandpa's hoarding got out of control. His piles of stuff migrated into the living room and the kitchen, and it soon became impossible for my grandma to deal with. She felt like she was being buried, both literally and figuratively. She moved out in 1991 and started fresh in a little apartment south of Hollywood. All of our family gatherings happened at Grandma's. Grandpa would, of course, come to celebrate with us all, but he never wanted his grandchildren to see his house. Somewhere in his subconscious, he must have known how horrifying it was.

And it was horrifying. Every time we came out of that house during the two-year cleanup project, we were filthy and covered in grime. My mom and her siblings would mutter expletives in exasperated disbelief as they dug through piles of trash. They did love their father.

Their feelings of affection were just suffocated under piles of molding *National Geographic* magazines. But once in a while, we would uncover a gem preserved amidst the destruction; my mom pulled out a metal cup from under a cupboard and called us into the room. "Do you remember this, Sally?" She and her sister would stretch out on the wooden floor in the patch of sunlight that shone through the kitchen window while eating sunflower seeds out of that tiny tin cup, she told us. The dusty stuffed bear I found living under my mom's old bed used to come alive with hysterical voices from Uncle Eddie. Aunt Sally still breaks down laughing when my uncle puts on the teddy bear voice for my cousin. Reliving and digging up their past struck a deep chord of recollection for my mom and her siblings, and all of this stuff—although the cause of unbelievable strife—also acted as a channel through which they could share their precious memories with their children.

My grandpa still had Aunt Sally drive him to his house every weekend so he could pick up his paper. As is the case with many psychological disorders, the origins of my grandpa's hoarding are unknown. But his kids knew their dad well enough to know how much stress it would cause him if he found out we were touching his stuff, so they did everything they could to keep it from him. He would talk about plans of going back to Holly Drive once he recovered, and my mom and aunt would smile and remain silent. They also didn't tell my grandma. She had been living in an assisted-care facility ever since her second stroke in 2009, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for her to process things. They didn't want her to worry.

"Oh, we were just at Dad's cleaning up a couple things," they would assure her.

While cleaning out what used to be the room my mom and aunt shared, I found a large glass case underneath a pile of clothes. In it sat a collection of beautiful hand-stitched dolls. When my mom was younger, my grandmother used to put on puppet shows at the local library. She would spend hours painting sets, writing scripts, and sewing puppets. Before her stroke left her left side paralyzed, Grandma loved anything craft-related. I have fond memories of her teaching me how to knit my first scarf—one that she now proudly drapes over her wheelchair.

One night, as my mom and I were about ready to head out, she sat down on the steps outside. She looked almost at ease. "You know," she said, "the crickets are the same."

I smiled and listened, trying to imagine what Holly Drive was like 45 years ago.

"The way the sun came in through the kitchen window this

CAROLYN KUIMELIS

morning... it almost felt normal,” my mom said, looking at the hills fenced off for development—the hills that used to belong to barefoot sibling shenanigans and long summer days full of doing nothing.

I closed my eyes. For a moment, I could picture Holly Drive the way my mom described it in her stories: peaceful, beautiful, untouched.

“I wish I could’ve seen it back then,” I said.

“Me too, honey.”

GAVIN COSGRAVE

poetry

ALTERNATIVE LORD’S PRAYER BY JESUS, BOB GOFF AND HAFIZ

And they taught us to pray:

Our father,

what whimsical

love-mischief

can we cause next?

STAINS SWEET AND STICKY

We planted a plum tree
several years ago,
now ripe plums arrive
every June.
We make jam that stains
sweet and sticky memories.

We lick our fingers
on the porch together,
the tree blossoms with us
until this winter.

Disease creeps through the limbs,
strangles several branches.
I try pruning, praying,
but my thumb stays purple, not green.

We wish for yesterday
on the porch together,
the tree withers with us.

I wait,
hoping our jam lasts through the winter,
hoping this tree has a second act,
hoping for plums.

I PROBABLY WON'T RETURN

At the mirror yesterday,
I ran into a version of myself from 1997,
the one who dated my drawing teacher,
the one with slick lips,
the one who bought back my childhood with a pack of watermelon gum.
Believe me when I tell you,
I barely recognized me too.

At the mirror today,
I ran into a version of myself from 2021,
the one with his shit in neat shit piles,
the one who's happily dating no one's brother,
the one who buys gifts because they'll save a life.
Believe me when I ask you,
Would you recognize me on the sidewalk?

Away from the mirror,
I wonder who I am today,
the one with flaming licks of hair,
the one married to God and wanting a man,
the one who gives himself away in small bow-tied bites.
Do you believe me when I say,
I hope to meet you today?

BYUNG A. FALLGREN
poetry

THE LADY PLUMBER'S SONG

I, the plumber, self-employed,
 With five children,
Proud as queen.
 Flexible time enables me to
Care for sick child, even
 Attend Paren'-Teacher conference.
On the way home,
 I drop by the cemetery
 At the edge of town,
To set the flowers at his tombstone
 Under the full moon.
"I fixed them all today!" I tell him.
 "The clogged toilets at the Sam's Club."
 So I smell it.
 I almost hear him saying
 With mocking gesture.
Only then do I recall the stench that
 I perceived as aroma of lilac,
My children in need of
 My support. My children,
 Yours and mine,
Force of my life.
 I am a lady plumber,
 Proud as queen.

A.A. VINCENT
poetry

THE HOURS YOU MISSED

you ever notice how certain nighttimes love
themselves / loud
like a crescendo that splits the air in half

notes? / how the atoms in your walls reverberate
with the grace of glass murals
left on the sidewalk / another night

& bottles of music are flowing
end over end / crouched
in the sorrow-cracks the sun missed?

/

you ever notice how particular lights spark
off bus wheels in early morning?
something so innocuous / the simple doing

the splitting wide against
rubber that burns / incense
on an altar of eastward days

you ever notice how the day throws
its mouth open / lets itself, lets its glory,
out the house to greet you? / so full of its only body

so full of its only voice / how
bright it is in its own soil / everything sings different
when the engine homilies into gear / you hear

yourself

A.A. VINCENT
poetry

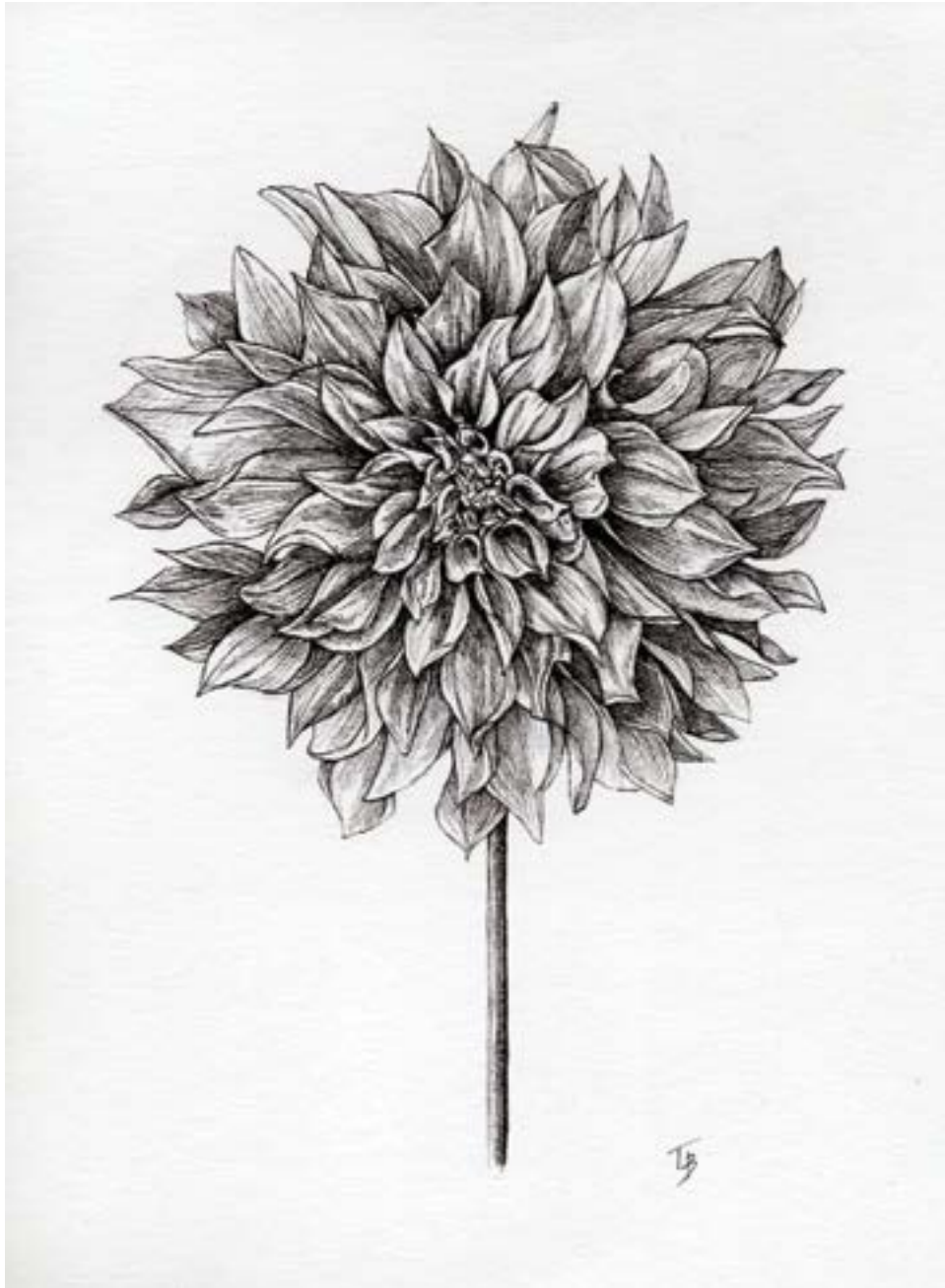
AN ASIDE

I'd like to be hugged
into a larger thing than I am
Not this simultaneous shattering
and shelter for others

AYESHA ASAD
poetry

THE TRAIN

tracks piled pebbles
unwraps softly like a rose bud,
condenses light beams
rupturing grass and balmy childhood –
when our thin metal bikes scrape its carriages
scattering paint and neon lettering
we hang them under muscled oaks
and dance into our train's encasing
where tin whets tin and
dims the monotony before our eyes –
for the slightest wisp of a season
we have kinged the realm



DAHLIA

TESS BERGHOFF
pen and ink



PEONY

TESS BERGHOFF
pen and ink

ON THE WAY TO CLASS

It is cool today
the air slides along my bones
like a lizard on a rock and
there is a smell I'd say low tar but I've never smoked a cigarette
most of the black eyed susans have lost their eyes
but not really
I suck on my finger after getting to know hurt
the pressure is easy and even easier to come by
I make up another name for you and
I've only ever said it in my dream
but I've been counting backwards in my sleep
the buildings grow closer together like
clouds in autumn
puffing
there's the cigarette smoke again
this time imagined
in the stairwell I can hear the doors like drums
like closing ears
like too far apart bodies and
I'll see you again
do you ever think about how we're pulling apart
the first image I think of is fresh rolls out of the oven
but what I'm talking about is continental drift
I think I'm standing still and you're eight hours away
but that's fine until I think about the fact that
we're spinning fast and your night comes quicker than mine
you always loved my flowers
I remember the days in summer that you'd be here
and gazing at the petals like they had something to tell you
and really I'm just standing here and I don't have anything
to listen to other than footsteps and the hum of the box
with the warning sign, too much electricity for a body and
isn't there always a part of us that wants to touch
what we shouldn't have maybe
I'd just like to have something to talk about

THE RAISIN AND OTHER SHRIVELED THINGS

Maybe I will exist again maybe I will be on the ceiling
maybe I will take light bulbs and melt them inside out maybe
I will escape the crowd and ridges will grow on my spine and

I will calcify maybe I will fray but maybe I'll learn how to tie
a knot a sailor's knot and the stadium will break up into little
pieces and that's how they play maybe I will become a bee

and paint my own stripes and maybe it's me who can save
the meadows and maybe I can learn how to rebuild forests maybe
I'm falling apart into spent tulip petals so I can

be reborn into many things and maybe I've always lived life
as a tulip maybe no one can see me and that's why it's so
easy to grow a garden of shadows and survive on a diet of nothing

and maybe I've spent every bit of myself trying to fit into the smallest
space in the room but the sky does the same thing and I am not trying
to contain any clouds and it's a newer thing but I can't breathe lately and

I'm wondering if I will ever exist again and maybe I should just
go outside and talk to the sun until I don't

ALIGNMENTS

Quincy was asked to speak in front of a bunch of Rotarians last Thursday night and after he was introduced, he walked up on stage and sat down at a piano left over from Wednesday night's ladies' auxiliary sing-a-long but Quincy didn't know how to play a piano so he got up off the bench to face a thunderous applause and of course the correct and polite thing to do was take a bow so he did and the applause grew even louder and he wasn't sure if they were applauding because he didn't play anything or they just really admired the arch in his back while he was sitting on the bench, the most beautiful alignment of vertebrae anyone'd ever seen so he decided to sit back down on the bench and the room grew quiet and Quincy didn't know what to do for an encore so he just sat there for a few minutes cracking his knuckles, the audience holding its breath when he noticed his fingernails were in pretty bad shape, long and chipped with cuticles askew so he chewed on the few that were out of line with the others and when he was done chewing and spitting, he rose from the bench to an even greater applause, more cyclonic than thunderous and when he got home which took no time at all walking on clouds, Quincy found his answering machine filled with requests, all shaky car owners asking if he could do his magic on wheels.

LEND

Last time Roger was asked to lend a hand to somebody, he didn't get it back for a month and when he finally did, he didn't recognize it as his as it had what looked like new flesh and was decidedly quieter, didn't crack and pop when he curled up its fingers and the fist it made was more gavel than sledge and he found himself waving a lot more now and to practically everybody, continuing to wave even after everybody'd stopped as if the hand he now held had a will of its own or had a lot of make-up waving to do or maybe the borrower had put a chip in it controlled through an app from a cell phone so Roger sought out the borrower and told him he'd like his original hand back and the borrower agreed, handing him, along with his hand, Roger's old transistor radio from the sixties which he'd once glued to his one good ear, one he will never again lend to anybody no matter what time it is.

NOT QUITE RIPE

Myrtle's in the fruit section sorting melons, cantaloupes mostly, mid-February when she finds a warm one with a power cord attached to where its stem used to be but nowhere on the cord's a switch, just a plug on the end for the receptacle and now she thumps the cantaloupe, sounds right, then sniffs it, smells ripe and so she tosses it in her cart and I can tell by the quickness in her step, you see I'm right behind her, fingering grapes, she can't wait to get this baby home and plug it in and I cannot wait either so now we're in her kitchen where she plugs it in: nothing, not a thing, no lighting up, no ballooning up, no hum, no toasty crackle of little white seeds inside, oh, for a moment back in the store Myrtle thought this melon might be a novelty clock radio like her lobster telephone and elephant refrigerator but no, so she gets a knife to cut it up and after each smooth stroke, the blade gets sharper, a sharpness you can see with your naked eye and when the knife begins to cut all by itself, she pulls the plug and the knife goes back into its block and Myrtle, Myrtle has gone off cantaloupes at least until they're in season.

YELLOW RIBBON 'ROUND

It was in all the papers. One winter night someone or something emptied out the pound, the one on Prospect Street. Dogs and cats alike, gone. The place reportedly smelled like roses after. Folks began calling the police, their representatives' local offices, saying they had found a dog, a cat tied to their mailbox posts or to a shrub near their front doors, each with a yellow ribbon loosely in a bow around its neck. What's more, what's most, it was reported, is each receiver was delighted, the cat or dog exactly what he or she had wanted and it showed up at precisely the right time but there seemed to be a catch. The ribbon around the animal's neck would not come off no matter what was tried, could not be loosened, could not be cut even with the sharpest scissors but it always stayed clean and bright. It was as much a pet part as a tail or paw or whiskers. What is even more impressive is these dogs and cats are still alive thirty-six years later. We got our beagle when I was just a kid and my neighbor down the street, her tiger when she was ten. Our plumber also got a pet, mongrel that it was, and found a way to get its ribbon off. He heated it with his blowtorch and stretched it and as you'd guess, poor thing immediately caught fire and that was that. Oh, did I tell you where my step sis got the ribbon?

DANIEL ARITSI
poetry

YOU RE-MEMBERS BEPOP?

Oh,

Rum-boy:

How we sweetdanced, *que no?*

(Me of mild bloodstream,

You of crabbin' Sun, skin-burnt

In a suit of rust).

Wharf x Sweat x Dark = our nightvolume filling

& Such

So very manyyears

Ago & Yet

I re-member

Every

Things –

Up&Downmoon thru:

- *Kissmeboy,*

As-often-as-stars.

DIANE AVERILL
poetry

MESSAGES FROM THE GARDEN

In August we read
cherry tomato nipples
with words so much sweeter
than those larger more muscular types

and comments from carrots that burrow deep
into the garden's flesh with
their yellow journalism, then
long-winded male-green zucchini speak

and the Money Plant contradicts a popular belief
by putting out a statement in round, translucent coins
holding seeds for investment in silver
that anyone can have for the taking.

Meanwhile
a slug's indecipherable calligraphy leaves notes
on all this incessant talk.

5AM IN GAUL

Ima get the bag. Ima run
a bag of money from Marathon

to Richmond for the ghetto
politicians, who could put money

on your head like Roman coins.
I gotta duffel full of heads. Bag full

of dead presidents. I need Larenz Tate
to wield a shotty in this poem.

I need N’Bushe Wright to pop out
the dumpster, let niggas know

if you try to throw black away
we hop out the trash blasting. I need Cleon

in this poem, I need a lucky head
in a bag. I need a bust of Septimius Severus.

A Numidian cavalry on the flank.
Scratch that. Ima need Queen

Latifah from *Set it Off* to sack a city.
Need all black hands on deck

to shuffle out kings & queens
& play aces. We just wanna be paid

in full. I ain’t talkin reparations or maybe
I am. I just know what it’s like to be broke,

to have niggas marching to take your every cent.
Therefore, Ima need Kirby in a getaway Impala

outside the city to escape the Ides of March.

FACING EXTINCTION

a wolf prowls up the block up the ave OG alpha
on these streets the hood is home is habitat
roam with a pack of flesh hungry jaws gold yellow fangs
like butta flesh guns and butta isn’t all a brotha knows
a wolf can eat 20 pounds of meat in one sitting
20 years is what my nigga Trae got for hunting
green to feed a young stomach
a wolf stalks scent hunts for red like it wears blue
I used to wear a nine in case a nigga thought I was prey
I’m predator homie rocking a top of the food chain
medallion over a jersey wolf gray Jordans stamp
paw prints in the snow I packed heat
in carcass bone cold pockets was dry so I hit
a few licks a few bullets spit in the distance
the growl of a car engine speeding
from the scene of another vigil
I hear a pack pray & sing
I hear shots howl
at the moon

DREAM[E]SCAPE

Fly across each ramshackle town off the bar Legs trail we finally land descended We're here cure AIDs or maybe poverty I don't have supplies I follow others	hanging from my human-size kite hands nearly slip worst of the stacked worn town brown fog
We're in a dump like trash people around don't want us Up North the border houses are nice there No billboards sell watered out Coors "Fresh! Out the bag" faded yellow 50's font.	
One woman sits still as the mirrored water East part of town drowned Child's pink bike half-submerged She's unstirred at swamp's center armchair bright rustic red cigarette smoke floats off her up -raised arm	
I stare at her she stares ahead Two of her still one me.	

ON MAILING POKÉMON CARDS AT THE GREENTREE POST OFFICE

Perhaps it's because he doesn't know me
he runs back to his mother's car for Pokémon cards

he spends our first minutes laying out the rules of a game I may never
understand

& perhaps it's because I don't know him
I look back in the rear-view mirror & drive forward
as I listen to his voice more than his words

imagining my father as a child playing Pegity
& my son grown into the imagine of that man.

Perhaps it's because he doesn't know me
he runs his fingers over the deck of his Pokémon cards

he doesn't share his sister's memories of walks to a painted-yellow
boulder
smiling in the woods

beyond the pine columns of our white house
& beyond the shade of the Crepe Myrtles in our yard
so he holds his cards as his life in his hands

& because his life is my heart in another house
I look in the rear-view mirror & I am afraid

as I was always afraid: of the problem of a two-body job search
of the weight of student loan capitalization

of a life's savings sunk by a starter house underwater in the great
recession

of a manic depression I could not name of the desires of a life I could not
afford

though we feast on the crisp crust sweet sauce & creamy cheese of Fiori's
 pizza
 & we watch the stars on the ceiling of Buhl planetarium

& we play in the water at Carnegie Museum on occasion
 I pay for these days for days I know he has felt my abandon

because he was so scared when we met
 he ran back for the safety of his mother's car.

Perhaps the day was enough to ease his mind or tire his mind
 or remind him of our shared bloodline

but on the way home he dropped his cards on the floorboard

as he talked about the Christmas gifts he might receive from his parents:
 his mom & her husband

& perhaps because I don't know him it's a loss I chose to disregard.

Perhaps it's because my only son had finally lowered his guard
 it's because I'll have a reason to reach out to him once again.

Perhaps it's because he was happy when he ran to his mother's car
 because I love him (because I love him) his leaving is so hard.

PASALUBONG

The Filipino tradition of travelers bringing gifts from their vacations back to their homes. It is also a tradition to bring pasalubong to houses when visiting. Nowadays, it's more often used to refer to when migrant workers send wealth back home to their families back in the Philippines.

when the *parañaque* heat shone waxen on
 the banana leaves wrapped around the rice cakes doused
 in caramel sauce we ate at a table some grandfather had beaten
 from stone
 older than my father's
 stories of the sea i recall
 the blurred pictures of cousins doomed by necessity.
 bed and wed
 in the hopes that someday
 they would leave the carabao herds behind for a house with air
 conditioning and
 dogs that they could both keep
 and feed.

babies equal security
 babies mean a man will
 stay and pay.

lola ¹ won't click her tongue
 that you didn't finish *iskuwela* ²
 and *tita* ³ will come over to say
 ay nako~ ang cute cute naman! ⁴
 cooing over
 your daughter while
 you go to work for as many hours as your body will allow
 and then some more.

when the *ninong* ⁵ from the States pushes
 five 1000 pesos bills ⁶ into your hand when he visits
 ("for the baby," he whispers)
 you don't /can't refuse it.

¹ grandma² school³ aunt⁴ oh my~ so cute!⁵ godfather⁶ ~95 US dollars

MELISSA BALLETE

he leaves tiny chocolates in the refrigerator that
his tiny pale-as-milk daughter offers to you.
she drinks sweet cola out of a plastic bag for the first
time
and says she wishes
she was born in the philippines
quietly, you savor another chocolate

rich, rich chocolate



WAITING...

GORDON SKALLEBERG

oil on wood



THE MOUNTAINEER

GORDON SKALLEBERG

oil on wood



UNDER THE BLUE QUILT OF FOG

NIJOLĖ RASMUSSEN

oil on canvas



SHELTERED MARSH

NIJOLĖ RASMUSSEN

oil on canvas

EMILY JON TOBIAS
fiction

PAPER CRANES

He'd been clear with you early on that having a family was never part of his game plan. You'd assumed he'd change his mind when he married you in a King County courthouse that stormy Thursday in February. You wore a black dress, forgetting about the holiday altogether. No bouquet, no corsage, not even a rose tucked behind your ear. Why? *Because I'm allergic, Liza, fuck. How many times do I have to say it?*

He was angry with you on the drive to the courthouse. Half-drunk - you only realized it because of how hard he gripped the wheel when you touched his arm. He said nothing. You lit a cigarette. He locked your window, leaving you to ash in your hand. Can you put this out, please? you asked. He looked straight ahead, mouth turned down. Baby, please? you begged, mouth forced up at the corners. You handed over the burning filter. He rolled down your window and flicked the butt out your side. You leaned back just in time, watching the thing get taken by the wind and rain. He took a long, deep breath before securing your side of the car.

You sat together waiting behind the bar in the gallery of the courtroom while an older couple finished their ceremony. The woman wore a long flowered dress. She was taller than her man with bright feathers in her hair. She reminded you of a peacock. She held a young girl's hand while the judge read the vows. You heard them kiss from where you waited. The woman was weepy, but gleaming, and she kept touching the side of the man's face with a tissue while tears rolled down hers. They were smiling, especially the daughter, and all three huddled at the end. The girl walked out between the couple, each hand in one of theirs. When the door closed behind them, the air thickened as if in a vault. Your left leg began to tremble.

Two weeks before, you'd lost the baby. The pregnancy was no shock given that you'd stopped taking your birth control pills after a conversation with your mother that ended something like,

When are you going to grow up, Liza?

Maybe never, Mother.

What else, Liza. *What else?*

What else is there, Mother?

Then, one Thursday night, he held up a small baggie, swaying it back and forth. After the first line, he ran his hand along your thigh. You sucked salt off the backs of each other's hands and clinked wine glasses of

cheap Tequila together until one shattered, leaving you holding just the jagged stem, as if in ritual. Liquor ran down your hand, your wrist, your arm. Like you, standing there, too high, on one last sundown of Hanukkah in your childhood home. The only teenage marking left on your body, a hot pink stripe against dark curly hair. You'd rushed home late from the 8 Bit Arcade, barely making it on time, your mother already in position at the dining room table. She loomed like a vintage portrait on the wall in the murky light from that ancient stained glass chandelier. *Barukh ata adonai*, you sang and lit the match... *Eloheinu melekh ha'olam*... the candle shifted... you reached to catch the menorah from falling, your sleeve inching up. When your mother saw the small crane tattooed on your inner wrist, she kept her eyes down and said, Disgraceful. That was *all* she said. Then she left you standing there with wax dripping down your hand.

Later that night, he grabbed the bottle and flipped the lights off in the house. Then he led you outside to his front porch, where you sat on the stairs in the dark, slightly apart from one another but angled in, knees touching. Your clouded head streaked the skyline into a million thrashing comets. He pointed to the giant ferris wheel. Said he'd propose up there, at the top. I'll throw a penny in the Sound for good luck. No shit, you'll say yes before the thing hits the water, he said. You laughed and kissed him, tugging on the back of his hair. He pulled his face away and said, If you're lucky, maybe I'll even put a baby in you by winter. You downed shots after each empty promise as if in sport. By the end of the bottle, you were puddled on the porch, fused into one another. It had been decided: yes, he'd stay with you forever; yes, he'd prove it; yes, he better; yes, you would. Then you went back inside, to his bed, more rigid than before. When a bright sun broke like a yolk behind Pier 66, you two were still wide awake, then hiding your eyes from one another. Somehow you knew there was a little girl in you.

You tried to tell him, you did. But that way he looked at you... the words were like dry bread stuck in your throat. If you could just get him to the courthouse, you'd tell him after the ceremony, you decided. Yes, right away, while he still had an oath on his tongue.

You'd already named the little girl Rose. And there she was, your child, in a puddle of your blood like a pistil wrapped in red petals. When you cried, salt from your tears spread dark on the bed. You bundled the sheets in your arms before your wound soaked through to the mattress, then dropped them into the washing machine before he could see. When he left that morning, you took a cab to the nearest Planned Parenthood.

How are you sleeping these days? the doctor asked.

Fine. Normal, you said. (Hardly at all.)

Lay back. Let me take a look. Just relax, she said while you spread your legs, each foot to a stirrup.

Right, you said. (Impossible.)

Any undue stress at home?

You crawl your behind back a few inches on the table, still bruised from rough sex on a tipsy (blacked out) Saturday afternoon. Not really, you said. (Bruises in fingerprints on your upper arms that time you were in his seat when the game started ... that welt from a playful snap to the bra when you took his fat joke too seriously ... shocked by the first slap to your face in his car when you were too drunk at daytime ... at a stop light, in broad daylight, on the edge of Occidental Park where a homeless lady selling roses out of a bucket watched. You remember how sad the lady seemed.)

What about alcohol use? the doctor asked.

No more than usual. (Chardonnay with a splash of OJ over ice for breakfast daily.)

Sitting up, you tugged on the hospital gown to cover your legs. Any halfwit would've seen the signs. You never did. The doctor removed her latex gloves as if you were her science project. You left her office with a Valium prescription and a referral to her psychotherapist of choice, specializing in addiction.

Give him a call, she said. He might be able to help you. In the meantime, try to get some rest. If you ever want to carry full-term, you'll have to slow your roll. The good news is you're young. You still have time. She winked and forced a grin, tossing her gloves in the bin on the way out the door.

You checked the clock on the courthouse wall. The second hand ticked. A court reporter dressed in pink filed her nails. She batted eyelashes at the oversized bailiff as he ducked under red cardboard hearts hanging from strings. Your phone rang. Your mother? *Shit*. Now? You hadn't told her yet. About the marriage. Not after the last chat. You declined the call quickly, stuffed the phone into your pocket, and there it was. There *she* was. Helena.

You ached for her, even years later, as if somehow she'd arranged the whole courthouse thing, decorations and all. Mystified, you asked around. Turns out, decorating was standard courtroom procedure for all the lovebirds marrying on Valentine's Day. Just a little something festive to sweeten the big day, the clerk said. You shuddered and kept your hand over her note in your pocket. How odd that you'd remembered to bring

it, like you needed to take her with you over the threshold with him. That note she'd passed to you from under her desk in the 5th grade while Mrs. Furlong's back was to the class.

Take it, Helena whispered, just take it, quick. No, I can't, we're gonna get caught, you mouthed, shaking your head. The paper crane sailed off her fingers, gliding to a stop at your feet. Before the teacher turned toward her class, you had the bird nesting in your cupped hands on your lap. Perfect and delicate. Open it, Helena signaled. Inside, she'd written her name in penciled cursive along the edge of the bird's wing - *Love, Helena Rose Halprin*. You folded it back up with just the tips of your fingers as the scent of spearmint rode in on a breeze from the open classroom window.

Then, in the courthouse, you suddenly smelled her everywhere—the girl you finally put your clumsy mouth against in seventh grade, folded on top of each other behind the wooden slats of your bedroom closet after school one day. Light showered Helena's earlobe, her shoulder, her bare chest where a gold Star of David hung. You breathed into her ear as if fogging up a window. Like this? you asked. I think so, yes, she said, that's good. Neither of you knew your way. You fumbled with the button of her jeans and slid your wet palm under her shirt and you thought you might be loved when her pulse beat into your palm against her back. Smiling in the dark, you swore there was just one of you.

She was supposed to be helping you study the Torah that day. Your mother had arranged it. That Helena, wasn't she beautiful up there reading her *haftarah*, Liza? You could really learn something from her, your mother said.

When she found you, your mother didn't bust through that door, no, she crept in, quietly. She stared at Helena's chest where the star was. You prayed Helena's faith would redeem her. It never did. Indecent, your mother said. That was *all* she said. Then she turned around, leaving you two standing there trying to cover yourselves, then each other. Helena cried. Then she left, too, which just left you, weeks before your own bat mitzvah when you were to become a real woman. Alone, red in the face. Turns out, Jet, the family dog, had led your mother right to the closet, following the crumbs off a plate of coconut macaroons you'd carried to your room. You wanted to kill that fucking dog.

She'd never speak a word about how she uncovered you. Your mother. Weeks later, you stood on the stage of the synagogue shaking. The room was silent except for Rabbi Rosen breathing hard through his nose next to you. You looked for your mother in the front row while uncurling the Torah. Before your eyes could meet, your mother turned hers

down and away. Her voice trembled when she forced her blessings while cold sweat rolled down your temples and the small of your back.

He nudged you with his elbow. What's wrong with you, Liza? Jesus, pay attention, we're up, he said. The whole marriage ceremony was already late getting started. Vows were forced, read like the end of some commercial for prescription drugs. When the judge pronounced you man and wife, there you stood, reaching back into your pocket while secretly wishing he'd eventually cave and want to raise some kids. He never did.

Some Tuesday in November, you'd seen him at a trendy spot on Queen Anne where *Cocktails and Conversation* was advertised across an A-frame sidewalk sign. Rain had smudged the conversation bit leaving the whole thing questionable. Your two remaining girlfriends ordered a cocktail each and closed out their tabs.

There's a cute guy over there, you'd said, pointing him out with a subtle nod.

Come on, Liza, who are you kidding? Sonia said.

What's that supposed to mean? you asked.

Tash rolled her eyes. Your life would get a lot less reckless if you just came out of that fucking closet you're in, she said.

If your mother had been there, she would've said the same thing with her eyes only. You imagined it would be that same cast down look she'd had that day when she'd come home early from work unexpectedly. And there you were, fifteen, smoking a cigarette under the garage overhang in a rainstorm, while Bill Braxton probably waited pantsless and shivering inside after he'd taken your virginity. You'd skipped school to share a joint with him first, and when you kissed him, he tasted like bubblegum. Let's do it at my place, you'd said. He resisted until your hands were down his pants.

You weren't surprised when your mother rolled down the driveway midday. Shameful, she'd said. That was *all* she said. Then, she sort of whimpered like a scolded puppy. You thanked God it wasn't Helena again and smoked your cigarette down to the end. By the time you went back inside, Bill was gone and your mother was shut up in her bedroom.

At the bar, your two remaining girlfriends went home before the hour was up. You ordered another drink, tried to look busy on your phone. A woman at a far table ran her finger around the rim of a martini glass; touched along a sharp collarbone to check her buttons; pleated a cloth napkin, gently, to set lengthwise across her bare knees. Beyond her, he lingered at the bar. You spotted him again resting on an elbow with cuffs undone and sleeves rolled, leaning into his hip, like some kind of

detective. He loosened his tie and unbuttoned his collar, shoving the tiny straw to the side of his glass to take a full drink from the rim. He sucked on an ice cube, then bit down. You watched him down his drink, how he crumpled the paper napkin and tossed it on the bar.

There was no first date. In fact, you skipped the whole dating phase altogether. After the second night out, you followed him back to his place. West Seattle, overlooking the city from a direction that disoriented you. He insisted you not face him when he spun you around and bent you over the living room furniture. With one hand on your nape, he angled you face down, your bare backside in the air toward him. He bound your hands in one of his behind you, fisting your hair with the other. His phone rang then, right when he was just about inside you. He paid no attention to the call. You saw his face reflected in the front window. He looked determined, focused, as if working out a puzzle, jamming pieces where they didn't belong.

You awoke in his bed the next morning, your tongue furred like a cat's. Your body ached. Shower running. Was he in it? You lifted the silk sheet to determine how far the night had gone. Bra, intact and clasped, one breast spilling out the right cup. When you touched along your hipline, an image of your mother sprang up like a jack-in-the-box at the absence of your underwear. *Fuck*. Pillow clasped to your front, you kicked your feet wild, as if drowning. Finally, there it was, your thong, stuck like a dryer sheet in a ball at the bottom of the bed. Hooked by your big toe, you slipped it on before the water turned off, as if he'd be shocked to find you impure.

Dizzy holiday months went on like this, your hangovers like skid marks on an otherwise romantic Sunday drive. Your two remaining girlfriends stopped calling, making things much easier on you. You'd grown weary of pretending. In the early days, you'd walk him to his office on 3rd Avenue in the mornings; head pounding, still slick with sleep and sex, him, clean-shaven, smelling of musk, just to kiss him out from under the umbrella and wait to see him again. Then, you'd stop home during the day to feed your cat, conversing with the feline about how well you thought things were going with the man.

On one of these mornings, he said, I will take care of you forever. You believed him. Move in with me, he said. I want to keep my eyes on you. You thought about calling your mother, right then and there, to tell her the good news. Maybe she'd be pleased by a man choosing you. You never did. Instead, you tilted your head down shyly and slid your hand into his back pants pocket to warm your fingers. He held the umbrella,

belting you down with his husky arm while you wedged yourself under his armpit.

Eventually, you'd forgotten to feed your cat for almost a week. No matter, as it turns out, the man required you to abandon the animal at the humane society before he'd allow you to move into his place. Small price to pay to be looked after like that.

On the Monday morning of your first anniversary, you wake after he's gone to work. For a moment, you wonder if you're still dreaming when you lie back with a vision of you and Helena in a car filled with rose blossoms. She drives ahead, you glance behind. A baby seat, strapped in, empty. In the rearview window, a sign says *Baby On Board*. You bring your hand softly to your belly and open your eyes. You'd skipped a period. It's then you know for certain.

In the bathroom, you open the vanity drawer to find your script of Valium. One left. Next to that, your birth control. One missing. *Holy shit*. You look in the mirror. Cup one breast in each hand and bring them close, darkened nipples against your fair chest. You return both sets of pills to the drawer without opening either.

You move back to the bedroom, sit heavy on the edge of the bed, head in your hands. The air is dense and you are still. The last time you saw her was before all of this. You drove her from the city to her mother's house in Ellensburg. She said she needed to get out of Seattle for a while. You took the long way. She opened her window, all the way down, bare feet resting on the outside rearview, top half of her stretched across the console. With her head on your lap, you looked down to see her. It was sometime in July, yes, you remembered that endlessness of blue sky. She sang that one song you both loved, Led Zeppelin, off-key, low, like at midnight, when you'd get high with her under the stars. When you were both younger.

You passed a wind farm on the way. White wings of turbines stood completely still like paper airplanes at the tip of a finger. You found some agricultural road off the highway and made a quick turn. You stopped the car in the middle of the field and laid a blanket from your trunk on the ground. Topped by one turbine's giant wing, she made love to you there, and after, you cried as if visiting a foreign country on an old visa. An almanac of where you'd been together marked in creases of your neck, written in the small folds between your thighs, hidden in the vestal spaces behind your ears. Each kiss a stamp on the landscape of your belly, each touch mapped out undiscovered land. She'd been moving on, concealing more and more of where you'd been together, waving you through

the line. You sensed that this would be the very last time.

When you finally arrived at her mother's home, you waited with the car running while she waved to you from the front door. Helena's mother took her daughter into open arms, hugged all of her tight. Then, they turned their backs and headed into the house still wrapped around one another. You waited until the door was shut and they'd disappeared to the back rooms before backing down the driveway.

You get up from the bed. Suddenly then, you yearn for your own mother. You'd say, Mother, I'm pregnant. (Indecent.) Mother, I'm scared. (Shameful.) Mother, I miss you. (Disgraceful.) You never did. Instead, you search drawers for something of his. You want to smell him, to be reminded of how angry he gets to show he cares. Like that musk of his you'd breathe in while between his legs. And the sour taste of him through your nose after how frustrated he'd get by being teased. Or the smell of his spit on your upper lip after he'd leave you lying there alone. He was always sure to thank your mother because Jewish girls gave the best head. You go to the closet, rifle through his dirty hamper. You step inside. As if you will be the next one worn, you hang yourself amongst his shirts. You close yourself in and crouch down in the dark. What's this? Something hard near your feet. You open the closet door for light and crawl out.

He'd hidden them from you all these years in an old box for his fancy shoes. Handfuls of letters from her. Each one a perfect, delicate paper crane, all tossed into a shoe box, as if fallen from the blades of those turbines had the wind picked up on your last day with her. *I love you, Liza. I've always loved you*, in cursive down the spine of one; *Where are you, Liza?* in block letters on the wing of another; a simple red heart on the beak of yet one more. The last one you open says, *This is my last flight*, in small careful writing and red ink. You touch each and every one with just the tips of your fingers. There is only one envelope crushed at the bottom of the box. You flatten the paper, gently smoothing out the wrinkles. In the far upper left corner, in her own fluid writing, is her address, still lucid.

Quickly, you pack one small bag. You dump the shoebox of letters in, holding the envelope with her address in your hand. When your phone rings, you know it's him calling to check in on you. He'd want to make sure that you wouldn't be late for your dinner reservations he'd made for tonight. You watch the phone vibrate and ring. For a moment, you think of answering. You never did. Instead, you step outside into the open ocean air. A stray dog sniffs its way up your porch as if following a trail a crumbs. When the dog notices you standing there, he begins to pant, staring you down in the eyes. You think he's smiling. Then he darts away

toward the rocky shore. When the door closes behind you, you can still hear your phone ringing in the empty room, and you'll swear forever it was the saddest sound you'd ever heard.

A previous version of this piece was published in Flying South Literary Magazine, No. 6, under the title "Red Cardboard Hearts Hanging From Strings."



AN UNUSUAL HARVEST

MARIANA PALOVA
mixed digital media



MAGICK

MARIANA PALOVA
mixed digital media



AND I KEEP DREAMING

MARIANA PALOVA
mixed digital media

NEAL HELLMAN
nonfiction

GLOVE STORY

“Say thank you to Grandpa.”

“Thank you, Grandpa.” Miles Moon Hellman stares at the bulky, faded object in his hands, sniffs it.

“It’s a mitt, Miles. Grandpa gave you his, uh, baseball mitt.”

In the spring of 1960, I was eleven and it was baseball season in the byways of Lower East Side Manhattan. We would play any terrain: broken concrete, asphalt schoolyards, the sandlot below the Manhattan Bridge. We weren’t afraid to slide and we never had rain-outs. A base was usually somebody’s wadded-up shirt. All our mothers wondered how we could possibly destroy that many shirts. We didn’t tell them. Eighteen latch-key kids, no grownups, no one over twelve years old, no coaches, no refs. Close calls were decided by a passionate form of conflict-resolution:

“He’s safe.”

“What are ya talkin? He’s out by a mile.”

“He touched the shirt.”

“No freakin way.”

“Are you blind? He touched the freakin shirt.”

“Fuck you. He was nowhere near the freakin shirt.”

“Fuck you. And your mother.”

“Your mother.”

“OK. OK. We give it this time, but next time, you gotta give it.”

“We know, dipshit. You give it, then we give it. That’s fair.”

“OK?”

“OK. OK.”

And we played ball.

There was always a shortage of mitts, barely enough for one team at a time, so every inning involved a complicated glove-exchange ritual. You were lucky if you had your own glove. You could break it in.

Breaking in a glove is an art, a delicate act of love that involves coaxing the glove with leather oil, and a long rest period with a ball carefully tied into the pocket. When it’s over you’ve pressed a secret groove into the glove. Your mitt might get passed around every inning, but it’s only going to perform its magic when it’s connected to you.

I was not among the lucky ones. I did not own a mitt. I had Dominic D’Angelo’s crappy glove he inherited from his brother with the decayed webbing that afternoon. The afternoon the grounder sped through

the webbing and then zipped between my legs.

“Get it, Hellman. Get it get it get it-”

Zoom. Zip. Woosh.

“Awwww, jeez, Hellman, my mother coulda got that one.”

It cost us the game. I made a pledge to myself that it would never happen again. This would take some real finesse.

“Why can’t I have a good glove, Dad? Everybody else has one—even Myron Bloomberg has a decent glove. I’m the only kid on the entire Lower East Side who does not have a glove, Dad. It’s embarrassing. I really, really need this one thing, and I’ll never ask for anything again, ever.”

“Who am I, Nelson Rockefeller?”

A standard answer for any request costing more than a nickel was “Who am I, Nelson Rockefeller?” It was a trick question. I couldn’t very well answer “yes” and “no” always ended the discussion. Today I would press on. “OK Dad, for one time, one time, just be Nelson Rockefeller, pretend you’re Nelson Rockefeller and take me to Modell’s and buy me a baseball glove.”

Solomon blinked. He blinked again. Then he smiled, then he drove me to Modell’s Sporting Goods in mid-town Manhattan and I left with a leather MacGregor outfielder’s baseball mitt. Written across the center of the pocket in bold black was the name Richie Ashburn, a Hall of Fame centerfielder.

The glove was twelve dollars.

Now I, Neal Joseph Hellman, became the fine-honed centerfield weapon I was always meant to be. I was always first pick. I could snag any wayward grounder before it knew which way to bounce, I could stand unflinching before the most ballistic line drive, and I never missed a popup, not even a high sun-in-your eye-popup. Solomon never came to see me play. But the old guys watching from the bench paid attention, “You’re good, kid. I mean you’re really good.”

Around this time there was big news in the neighborhood. Little League was coming to the Lower East Side for the first time. Everybody was signing up. We were all so excited. There would be a real field and coaches and refs. You got a jersey with a number and a matching baseball cap and a pair of spiked shoes. A uniform.

Did I mention that my parents were communists?

Malvina, my mother, and Solomon stood side by side for the talk. In a blistering speech Malvina laid out her position on the social dangers of joining any organization that wore a uniform. Uniforms were a form of fascism. “Who needs a bunch of men with nothing better to do telling you

how to play baseball? Leagues are made of rules by dictator types who want to make up more rules. Don’t let them fool you.”

Also, there were fees.

So, Malvina’s officially added Little League to the family boycott list, an extensive list that included Kraft American Cheese and The Wonderful World of Disney. And that was that. Solomon stood silent.

They built a chain link fence around the new field. I was banned by my parents but I so longed for the game, that I stood behind the fence and watched the first inning. They had Myron Bloomberg playing centerfield, the position I once owned. Myron’s shoes were untied, and he was staring off at the Manhattan Bridge.

I silently coached while I watched it unfold.

Wake up out there, Myron, be ready for a pop-up, it’s gonna be a high-sun-in-your-eye, Myron; so remember about getting your mitt up. There it is. It’s right over your head, you don’t even have to move, no, don’t run in, go back. Myron, you’re lost in the sun, get your mitt up, mitt up.

The ball drops ten feet behind him. He trips over his laces, throws late, throws way past the base. Everybody’s snickering. Myron is not baseball. I am baseball. I left the fence and never watched another Little League inning.

Baseball, it’ll break your heart.

We left the Lower East Side two years later and moved to Brooklyn. It was a new scene. There were Catholic schools everywhere. And Catholics. And Catholic baseball teams like Our Lady of Refuge. I secretly started playing in the Catholic League. It was going well. After my first two home runs, the kids quit calling me a kike.

I hadn’t heard much about the boycott list since we moved to Brooklyn, no new additions, a bit of Disney slipping into our lives. Maybe Brooklyn was bringing out the moderate in my parents. Or maybe the Lower East Side had just brought out the communist in them. Anyway, I sensed an opening.

One night I came home wearing my Our Lady of Refuge baseball jersey with its large crucifix emblem. I was thirteen by now and taller than both my parents. I had stature. So, I just stood there. Malvina and Solomon stood side by side. My mother was stunned. Solomon blinked.

“Now he’s with the goyim. What, you’re wearing a cross? You gonna go to confession, too?”

“It’s just baseball, Mom. Dad?”

Solomon blinked again. “Malvina, let the kid play ball.”

And so I did, all through highschool, and some in college. Baseball began to leave me after that, but the glove never left. In the ‘70s, when I had nothing but a few possessions and a van, I still kept the glove. I crossed the country six times with a baseball glove at the bottom of a plastic bin in the back of a van.

As soon as I owned an attic, it went into it, still in the same plastic bin, and there it stayed for about thirty years, right next to the gray metal slide projector and the carousel. This December it occurred to me that it should go to somebody new, somebody fresh.

“Grandpa gave you his, uh, baseball glove, Miles.”

Miles is only three. The glove looks enormous. It’s so old the leather is starting to fade. But you can still read Richie Ashburn. The stitching is tight, the lacing is strong, and so is the love. Miles senses this. He knows. He turns toward his pile of new gifts, a red fire truck, Babar books, a neon, multi-colored xylophone.

Everything child sized. He walks toward this shiny stack and gently places the old glove at the very top, like a bulky, faded star.

Miles Moon Hellman, a baseball name if there ever was one.

COMING AND GOING

I took the train from Brooklyn to the Port Authority bus station at six in the morning, the sky a grimy lightening gray as the night began to lift. I stepped out of the station into Manhattan and walked towards the glass doors of the bus terminal under the early morning clouds on which the imprints of the city’s lights could still be seen. Taking up a post outside, beside the bank of doors, I flicked my plastic lighter a few times before the flame obliged and leapt toward the cigarette that rested between my lips. Breathing in thick smoke I lifted my eyes to the luminescent screens all around me that spanned the length and breadth of whole buildings, their colors flickering on the faces and bodies of the crowd that seemed to move as one organism, presenting an organic ebb and flow in their coming and going. The billboard screens directly in front of me and above me were plastered with the thin frames of scantily clad models, their technicolor perfection looming over the morning masses.

I exhaled and turned my head towards my own reflection in one of the glass doors. I looked in wonder at the figure that stared back at me; she was slouched inside of a large shapeless sweater, her fingers stacked with jewelry meant to look romantic and bohemian that in the translucent reflection morphed into a sort of self-aggrandizement, a shameless overcompensation for what else was lacking. I reflexively lifted my free hand to the dark bruise-like imprints of exhaustion under my eyes, my fingers meeting soft sunken skin as I watched my reflection carry out the same action, staring back at me blankly.

Unfixing my eyes from my mirrored self, I looked through her, through the glass, and into the bus terminal, which was already crowded, full of people weaving in and out of one another’s paths. Viscerally, and suddenly, I became aware of being on the periphery of something, glimpsing myself as I existed to the crowds I was observing, as they existed to me, a mere fixture of ever-changing scenery.

I deftly flicked my cigarette to the side, half finished, collected my duffle bag from the ground, and walked into the bus terminal.

Once on the bus I looked at apartments in Maine: one thousand a month, well-lit studio, dogs okay. Heat and hot water included, ground-floor, nine-ninety-five. No smoking, guarantors accepted. After a while

I closed my computer and looked out the window, watching as the slabs of concrete and brick that stretched like overgrown trees towards the sky began to lower and morph into a blur of broad green forest and brief glistening stretches of the Hudson.

I read for a long period of time as the bus jostled in gridlocked traffic. As I did, I wrote down every word I did not recognize and paired it with its definition. I printed in neat capital letters in my notebook.

CANTANKEROUS
BAD TEMPERED, ARGUMENTATIVE, UNCOOPERATIVE

I imagined what my life would be like if I were to flee New York indefinitely. In my mind I began to create an elaborate fantasy of a studio apartment with large windows pouring sun onto old hardwood floors, of a menial service industry job, of the deep and comforting loneliness that weaves its way into the fabric of life in the small unknown towns of America. I decided that the sting and then relief of leaving my own potential by the wayside would feel something like pouring antiseptic on a wound.

I recalled lying in a red-lit room on a tousled bed in Chinatown, confessing to a lover that I had been told too many times as a child that I was intelligent. While I did not say this to the man as we lay naked and tangled together, I knew that it had crippled me, forced me every day to watch the promise of my youth slip through my cupped hands like fine sand. Not knowing what to say, he had laughed, and I had planted a soft kiss on his chest, tracing his tattoos with my left hand.

Stepping off the bus in New Hampshire, six hours later, I saw my grandmother sitting on a small stone bench in the dying light, hunched over a newspaper, all red lipstick and chemically blond hair, familiar drooping wrinkled face and gaudy jewelry. We greeted one another and I plastered a smile on my face and forced warmth into my voice. My grandmother drove us to a seafood restaurant in an upscale New England strip mall, and we sat at the bar, making easy banter with one another and the bartender.

In pauses in conversation I surveyed the restaurant. A handsome older man and a thin young woman sat to my left. The woman wore false eyelashes and batted them at the man occasionally. I thought about these people's lives, separate and together; in my imagined caricatures of them, the woman would return home that night to a Yorkshire terrier

and a one-bedroom apartment, peel off her false eyelashes, and call an old college sorority sister to gush about her first date with the newly divorced catch-of-the-town. The man would return to a barely furnished apartment and masturbate in the shower while fantasizing about what the bare arching back of the thin young woman would feel like against him.

I sat on my grandmother's porch for hours that night, hand never free of a cigarette.

VICISSITUDE
AN UNWELCOME CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCE OR FORTUNE
(UNPLEASANT)

Strange dreams infiltrated my sleep, and I woke up early with beads of sweat, cold and damp, on my upper lip; I was haunted for hours by the dream-image of an unfathomably large elephant in the center of a highway, within a decrepit, abandoned city sprawling out as far as the eye's reach, being whipped by men in coveralls who wielded glistening lengths of silver chain with bare, calloused hands. The dream was noiseless, the animal silent.

I sipped coffee on the porch and waited for my grandmother to wake up, mulling over the night's dreamscape. Eventually I allowed the images to slip into the recesses of my mind with the remains of my life's wealth of nightmares.

My grandmother drove me to a coffee shop down a road lined with houses that exuded purity, all New-England-white with brightly colored shutters and expanses of well-kept emerald lawns. Trees bent themselves in graceful arcs over the road, their summits showing touches of red and gold. The air smelled brackish and sharply fresh, and for a split-second I felt a surge of all-consuming contentment, my stomach turning over painfully with unnamed excitement.

I drank three cups of coffee while lounging at a wooden table outside the café in the late summer sun. I pretended to read but focused mainly on the other patrons.

My aunt met me at the restaurant attached to the café for lunch, and we talked about Alcoholics Anonymous, books, cousins, sisters,

brothers, and my aunt's seemingly unhappy marriage. My aunt was beautiful and glamorous; tall, thin, clad in designer jeans and a low square neck white blouse; she lived in a mansion by the sea, hardly ever went out, and filled her mind nearly to bursting with the lives and tales of others by reading at a steady constant pace.

Her wealth was obvious in her graceful gestures, hands flitting through the air like delicate winged creatures, but I noticed that when at rest her hands shook like prairie grass before a storm; her tremor gave away the soulful discontent that lay under her unmistakable beauty and dreamy all-American life.

My aunt drove me back to my grandmother's house and I took back her post on the sunny, plant-laden porch stuffed with lime green furniture and little glass tables.

SOLIPSISM
THE VIEW OR THEORY THAT THE SELF
IS ALL THAT CAN BE KNOWN TO EXIST

My mind wandered back and forth across well-trodden paths as I sat with my eyes lightly shut against the glare of the afternoon sun. Just days ago, I had perched on the windowsill in the living room of my apartment in Brooklyn, back pushed against the cold dark glass and feet propped on the small wooden coffee table. Neil Young sang softly in the background, and the room smelled of a candle titled "Library."

I was crying that night to my friend and roommate, vague threats of suicide escaping my chapped picked-at lips. My roommate had cried too but later admitted that the tears were selfish ones, bred out of the fear of grief rather than the fear of loss itself. The next morning was when I got on the bus and fled. My roommate had written me a letter with a poem scrawled in thick black pen and messy characters and left it on the kitchen counter. I wrote "I Love You" in sharpie on a package of Marlboro Golds and left them in return.

The next day, at my grandmother's, I got up early to go see an old friend in Maine. I was meant to borrow my grandmother's pristine white Nissan, the one that matched many of her neighboring retiree's own cars, but woke up to notes scrawled in thinning red pen scattered through-

out the house telling me not to go, full of vague and insufficient reasons, mostly to do with the Nissan and my grandmother's worry over its condition.

I was able to convince my friend in Maine, Kyle, to wrangle his big black pitbull into the back of his rust addled red sedan, that was a car practically held together with zip ties, and drive down to New Hampshire to see me in light of my grandmother's overnight peculiarity. My grandmother emerged from her room in a thinning brown cotton robe as I was preparing to walk down the seacoast to meet with Kyle, exclaiming in her nasally, thick New England accent that she hadn't slept a wink for worry about the shiny car that sat unused in her community parking lot.

I walked halfway down the long driveway until I was out of view of the house, and then took off my white off-brand sneakers and allowed the bottoms of my feet to burn and chafe against the rough black asphalt. The sun weighed heavily down on my shoulders as I walked the twenty minutes along the water. The crashing surf invaded the air with an oppressive, salty mist and the white and gray houses that line the waterfront shimmered in the thick morning light.

I squinted against the blindingly white sky as I watched the dichotomous native population breeze by around me.

I arrived early and took up a post, perched and cross legged, on the high concrete wall that separated the beach from the road and houses.

INDELIBLE
MAKING MARKS THAT CANNOT BE REMOVED

Kyle arrived and we walked his dog up and down the beach. It was hot, but I noticed that he kept his thick maroon sweater on the entire time. Droplets of sweat formed at the end of his temples and beginning of his long, black corkscrew hair. We talked about moving to China and teaching English together. I feigned sincerity in our hypothetical plans of escape, but was still disappointed in recognizing his excitement as a mere facsimile of my own false enthusiasm. We hadn't seen each other in six months.

After a couple of hours, the sun now launching its attack from directly above, we parted ways. I walked back alone through the beach crowd and felt as though I had said something wrong, or even served as a physically manifested reminder of Kyle's own insanities. I texted him a few hours later, but he never responded.

I realized that it was the last calendar day of summer as my grandmother drove me into town. She had tickets to a film festival and dropped me off at a café on her way. I sat on a plastic chair outside and drank a few cups of coffee over a span of hours, vaguely watching passersby. I mainly focused my attention on a man to my left; he was older, white, and wore upscale workout clothes. He had a sagging face and a portable speaker that played Spanish electronica propped on the metal table next to him. (He was there prior to my arrival, and remained there when I left. I wondered about him, pitied him even in his objective loneliness.) Another man sat on the cobblestones near the curb, shoulders turned slightly towards me, holding a cardboard sign with a messy scrawl of black marker that read “Homeless! God bless you!”

The man with the sign stared at me for a period of time before calling to me that I should smile more. I felt the urge to bare my teeth at him in feral recalcitrant defiance, imagining myself plastering a Cheshire cat like grin onto my severe features. Instead I gave him a half close-lipped smile and said thank you.

Thirty minutes later he waved at me to get my attention once more and offered to buy me a coffee from the café, stating that I looked like I “needed a pick-me-up.” I felt the sharp and sudden urge to burst into tears, hot pinpricks of moisture leaped against the dams of my eyes. I choked them back, repaired the cracks, and said no thank you.

DESTITUTE
WITHOUT THE BASIC NECESSITIES OF LIFE

I slept in the next day before heading to my grandfather’s 80th birthday party, thrown by his wife at their cottage by the sea. I mingled with my relatives and answered questions about my life with elaborate lies and an imitation of youthful excitement.

Mostly I sat off to the side, sipping sparkling water out of a cold can, and appraising the gathering of well-dressed upper-middle-class people (and their mannerly, equally well-dressed children) who made up my extended family. I felt a disparity between myself and these people, and I imagined that I could feel on my skin the heat of their disapproval. I looked down at the tattooed flesh on my arms with the sudden visceral sensation of otherness.

I stepped outside for a moment and allowed a sense of loss to wash over me, suddenly feeling like a child being swept under by a salty,

unforgiving wall of water. I had been in this house so many times when I was young, happy, and full of authentic energy. The house is now littered with photos of me at those ages, baring my teeth in an unapologetically joyful grin, all braces and big clear eyes. They seemed to me to be nothing but effigies of a person long lost to the harsh and unrelenting drum of time beating on.

My aunt drove me to the bus station soon after, and we shared a cigarette, passing it back and forth with the windows down in her sleek black Porsche coupe.

On the bus ride back I sat perfectly still, legs neatly crossed, and eyes fixed on every minute shift in scenery. As the bus wound its way into Manhattan, I let out a few hot, desperate, tears onto my cheeks.

I allowed my fellow passengers to filter out before me and took a moment to print another word in my notebook.

DETRITUS
A PRODUCT OF DISINTEGRATION, DESTRUCTION,
OR WEARING AWAY



L'ASCLUGAMANI DI ROSETTA

MARIO LOPRETE
concrete artwork



II BIKINI DI GIOVANNA

MARIO LOPRETE
concrete artwork

&

The witch doctor's purple beanie capped his cranial entourage of violet gauged earlobes and thin, middlingly effete beard with a firm exclamation point of punk.

He flexed his hand—slender, with a bulge of muscles in his thumb. His tattoo sleeve ended right at the point the veins in his hands started to diverge into an Alexandrian delta of arteries. He placed his warm, calloused hands on the sickly white expanse of my back. They feel like the sun. I don't tan.

I felt self-conscious about the irregularly-rimmed moles populating the northeast corner of my back. Wondering, again, if that one is cancerous. Quick mental run-through of the melanoma checklist. I need to go to the dermatologist.

I braced myself for the needle—I hate needles, ever since my neighbor showed off how she could stick one through the thinnest layer of her skin cells, the needle running underneath the thin veil of epidermis. She was a gross child—there it is, pricking the ridge of my shoulder blade.

The needle did not feel at all like what it is: a terrifying violation. I concentrate on the needle-pricks. I feel them more, without the numbing agent of fear. Rather than a stab, I feel a series of infinite, tiny abrasions, like a pumice stone rubbed across my back. Or a small hedgehog rolling around on my shoulder blade. Either way, it's hardly terrible at all; more therapeutic than traumatizing. Maybe there's something to acupuncture. Maybe I should book an appointment when I get home. I think Terri was telling me about a good place—maybe she got a referral at the spa—med spa?—she usually goes to.

Terri is so good at getting regular facials. Her pores look amazing. I've never understood how to reduce the size of pores effectively. I should stop drinking so many whiskey sours. Also I should stop getting a bagel with my morning coffee. Sugars make your pores bigger, and carbs are sugars. Which is odd, and unfair, really, because bagels aren't sweet but they still count as something sweet. It's unjust, honestly. Is everything sugar?

You're done.

The shaman pulls his hands away and gently blows on the design. His breath causes goosebumps on my spine—literal, not emotional goosebumps.

He scratches his ear and there's a streak of ink upon his purple

gage.

He washes the needles and his hands.

I go to check out the results in the mirror.

It's beautiful. It's the outline of Jerusalem, rising up out of the Kidron. The clearly-cut squat skyline of the rambling Old City rises, crisp and black into the horizon of my skin. I got it in honor of my Nonna. She would have died to learn I got a tat, but she loved Jerusalem with every fiber of her being. And, in the walls circling the ink city on my back, I feel her delight. The city is surrounded by strong walls, and circumscribed within—

Excuse me, what did you put there?

The witch doctor turns, and says nothing, glancing at my eyes in the mirror. He stares at me from under his impeccably threaded eyebrows, complete with a hoop ring piercing the highest point of the arch.

What is that?

The witch doctor turned back to his already immaculate inking station and continued to dust it with a red, gold-trimmed washcloth.

My face flushed slightly red.

This is really unprofessional. My voice raises to a strained pitch, trying to choke back not anger but tears. One tear escapes the knot of my throat and falls down my cheek

The witch doctor beckons me over, and I come away from the mirror. I feel the tear leave a trail of coolness on the heat of my flushed face. I ignore it.

The witch doctor motions for me to sit down in the chair in front of him, and he spins my chair so that my back is facing him. He gently leans my neck over and begins rubbing his hands with some concoction that stings like aloe vera and peppermint and he applies a bandage to the angry swell of fresh tattoo.

I'll give you a discount, he whispers evenly, without a hint of apology. *This one's on me.*

I am speechless.

He tapes the bandage to my back and instructs me to wash it well with soap in the shower before tomorrow morning.

I walk out of the dark interior of the musty apothecary shop—filled with taxidermied animals—into the blinding afternoon sun of June.

Sunlight bounces off the concrete, trapping the human traffic in an oven of light and heat. The sidewalks smell like the heat of piss-smoked cement—the scent of Greenpoint in full summer swing. The air is loud with sweat, bodies, and the chatter of *dzień dobry's* as shop doors swing open.

My mouth usually waters as I pass the Polish markets. But my back is itching in the sun. And my mouth is dry.

That night, I dream of the witch doctor. His face is green underneath his well-groomed beard. He is dancing with his brothers around a pot of boiling kombucha, its mother roiling around in the hot, acidic tea, like a demented jellyfish, sour and living. One of his weird brothers plays the banjo. I see my heart inside the pot. He's boiling an I [Heart] NYC magnet in the pot, too. It smells like sewer air. Someone throws in a dollar slice of pizza, dripping with cheese and grease. The witch doctor incants directions from Google Maps on how to get to Astoria from West 51st Street and 7th. His sister drops in a Metro card. My heart begins to be patterned with tiny little Empire State Buildings.

That's kind of gross.

I wake up a few moments later, and I forget my dream in the morning.

I don't take a shower that night and I don't wash the tattoo. I fell asleep reading *War and Peace*. I take a shower in the morning. When I peel away the bandage, I half expect to see it gone, just part of the Macbeth-inspired nightmare. But there it is: the ampersand into which the city is inscribed.

My Nonna's Jerusalem is marked with the curlicue of the ampersand's fat body. It might as well be the mark of Cain.

The holy city is surrounded by a sign that says it is not enough. It's incomplete without something else. Jerusalem &—

Just two days later, I go out with my friends to the bar that Maya, Joe's very young girlfriend, suggests. Maya is trendy—she listens to Troye and rappers I've never heard of. She knows bars where twenty-one-year-olds go. She reminds me of the endless possibilities of being young and stupid in New York. Eventually, she cheats on Joe with one of her twenty-one-year-old friends.

Young people can be very stupid and thoughtless, I think.

It's Saturday night and the Lower East Side's sidewalks are full of

garbage and women stumbling in scrappy, strappy stilettos. I am tired of the bar. I am super hungry—ravenous.

Jake, I say to my go-to roaming buddy—let's go get a slice.

As we leave the cover of the dark bar, he says: *Whoa, Sara. Is that fresh ink?*

He reaches out his hand as though to touch it, but he hesitates, as he and I both learn this new piece of etiquette. You can't touch the tattoo of a woman you want to sleep with but won't.

I eat a slice on the sidewalk with Jake, and I feel a weird twist in my chest like some bone has gotten dislodged. I think I've sprained my sternum. Icy tendrils of nervous pain spread from the middle of my breasts out around my left lung.

I take a breath in and it comes in ragged. Sparks of pain run up my nerves to my eyes. Everything is brighter: the woman arguing with her boyfriend on the street corner, the man who looks homeless rummaging through the recycling bags (we learn later he's an NYU student), the taste of the pizza, the close heat of the city night are all ultraviolet bright. How can I leave them? It seems impossible, like pulling away an IV connected directly to my heart.

Jake looks at me.

Are you okay?

Yeah. I just—

I feel like I'm getting a heart attack. My left arm is numb and my chest is tight.

That's weird.

I think about leaving this sidewalk playground paradise and I feel light-headed. Next thing I know, Jake is helping me sit down on the sidewalk.

Dude.

Did I faint? I ask.

My body is rebelling.

Stay here.

But I do leave. I board a plane at JFK and go across the ocean. I trade in crisp, crunchy bagels with soft interiors for the soft folds of pita dipped in morning hummus. I trade in Jewish delis for the ocean-roaring din of the *shuk*. I trade in the close heat of the subway for the crowded buses in high summer and Manhattanhenge for Old City's sandstone walls radiating blinding afternoon light into my eyes. I trade in garbage

and rats in the gutter for desert sunrises and clear starry nights.

The tattoo is a conversation prompt in bars, a centerpiece at workplace cocktail parties, a band-aid for awkward silences on bad dates.

My friend—we're laughing over cocktails at our brunch—accuses me of getting an Africa tattoo. He has no room to talk, because he has an ex-boyfriend tattoo on his wrist. In his ex's handwriting. He loses. Mine is not a trophy of a country saved. He thinks it's the mark of a culture appropriated.

Will you tattoo every place you live on your back!? My mother shrieks in displeasure and despair. How could one of her daughters be so wayward, so rebellious? Such reckless flouting of tradition can only bring bad luck.

Cats in the old city keep the rodent population down. I miss the rats. And I haven't seen a cockroach in months. But my neighbor has an infestation. She says I'm lucky there are no pests in the apartment.

It's getting to be dusk. I weave through the twilight of the closing *shuk*, ambling through the thinned crowd, now that the tourists and pilgrims have gone to their hotels. The venders are sealing up the bins of pickled vegetables, the bright pink radishes, and cauliflower, closing the lids on pungent vinegars, putting away the succulent sweets and nuts. My mouth waters as I pass the halva shop. My tongue wants both sweet and salty, something spicy and savory and saccharine all at once.

One night, I dream. I dream of the city. And it is clearer and sharper than the vision of the mountains across the city from my house. In this dream city, I wander to my apartment—the old one—and open up the door—unlocked. Odd. I shared this two-bedroom with my college roommate until she moved in with her boyfriend (they're getting married soon) and I moved into a studio in the West Village. It's on the fourth floor of a walkup so it's really not that bad.

I wake up crying, the city still swimming in my head: the floorboards of a home, an apartment I cannot get back to.

I begin to want things. I begin to want things badly. I want sex. I read a banal book in a bar near King George Street. Even though my eyes are on the page, I only see the men entering the doors behind me. My entire body turns into a lighthouse: *come here, ships*. All you who enter the dark and choppy waters of the stormy night bar, come to me. I want to be naked and touched. I want to be held and kissed. I want desperately for someone to kiss my hand. And my back.

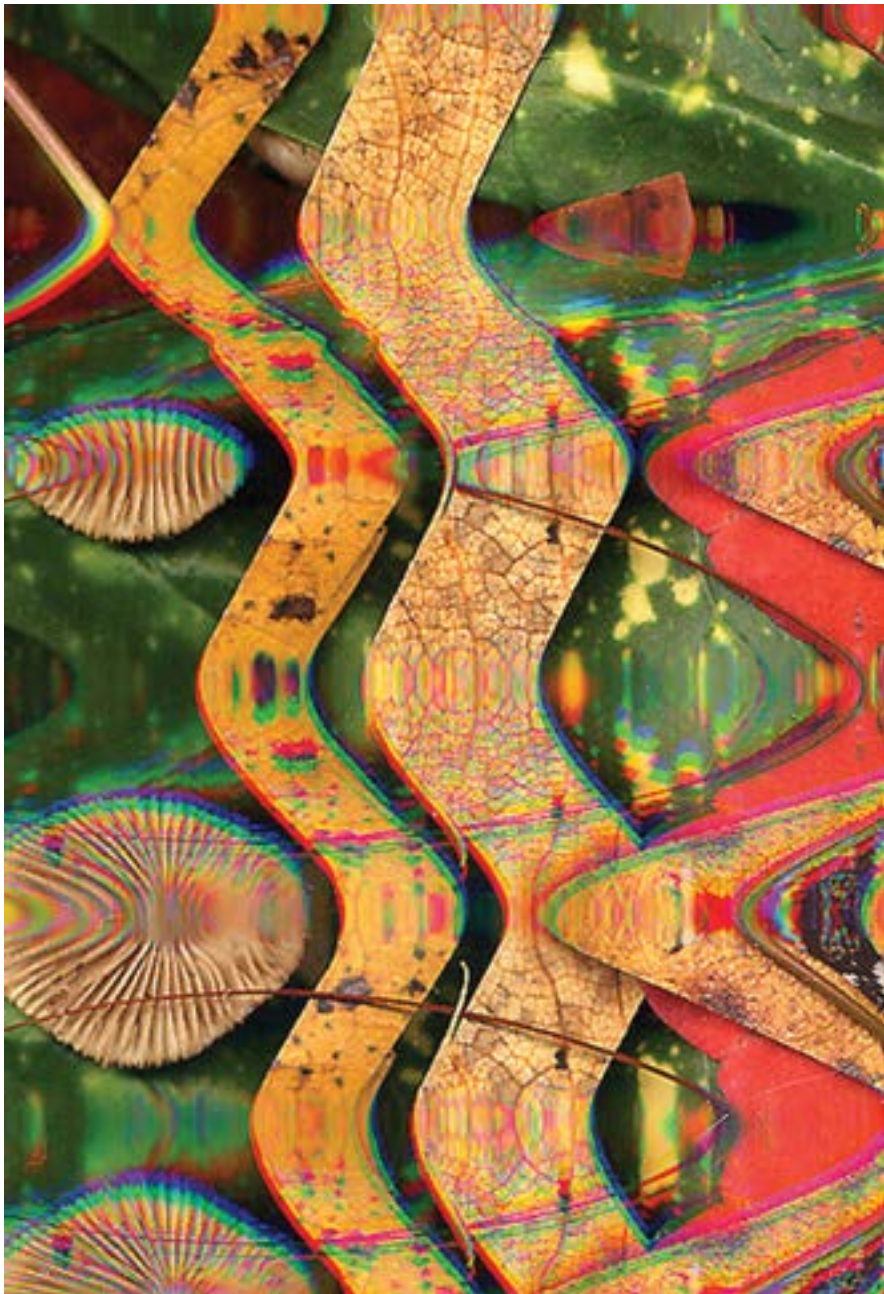
A mother stands in front of me at the grocery store checkout counter. I make faces at the baby and coo like a demented old maid. The baby coos and smiles back. *She's such a friendly baby*, says the mother. I cry because I want her baby. I want to hold a soft child like she does. I want to feel the weight of the child in my arms.

I feel itchy, like the people with Magellan's or Morgellons or whatever that disease is where you think you're infested with little bugs or threads. I feel an itch that's deeper than my dermis—some primordial ache. If I could just itch away the restlessness. The restlessness is a parasite that's weaving its life in with mine. Like lead contamination, it's seeping out of the environment and into my blood. Can blood itch? I scratch the ink until it bleeds.

At the nursing home, I sit talking with Nonna. I suddenly can't hear her. My ears are ringing with the fear that she will go—and she will go. It's what you do when you are 90. You start bidding adieu instead of *au revoir*. I want her to stay. I want her to live forever. I make my wanting the only thing I can hear or see. It will become a rope that will tether her to earth. The life inside of her cannot slip away.

I am one concave craving for something that's outside of me. I only have one verb now: want. I want and I want and I want. It's like the wanting never stops, never ceases. I want to stop wanting.

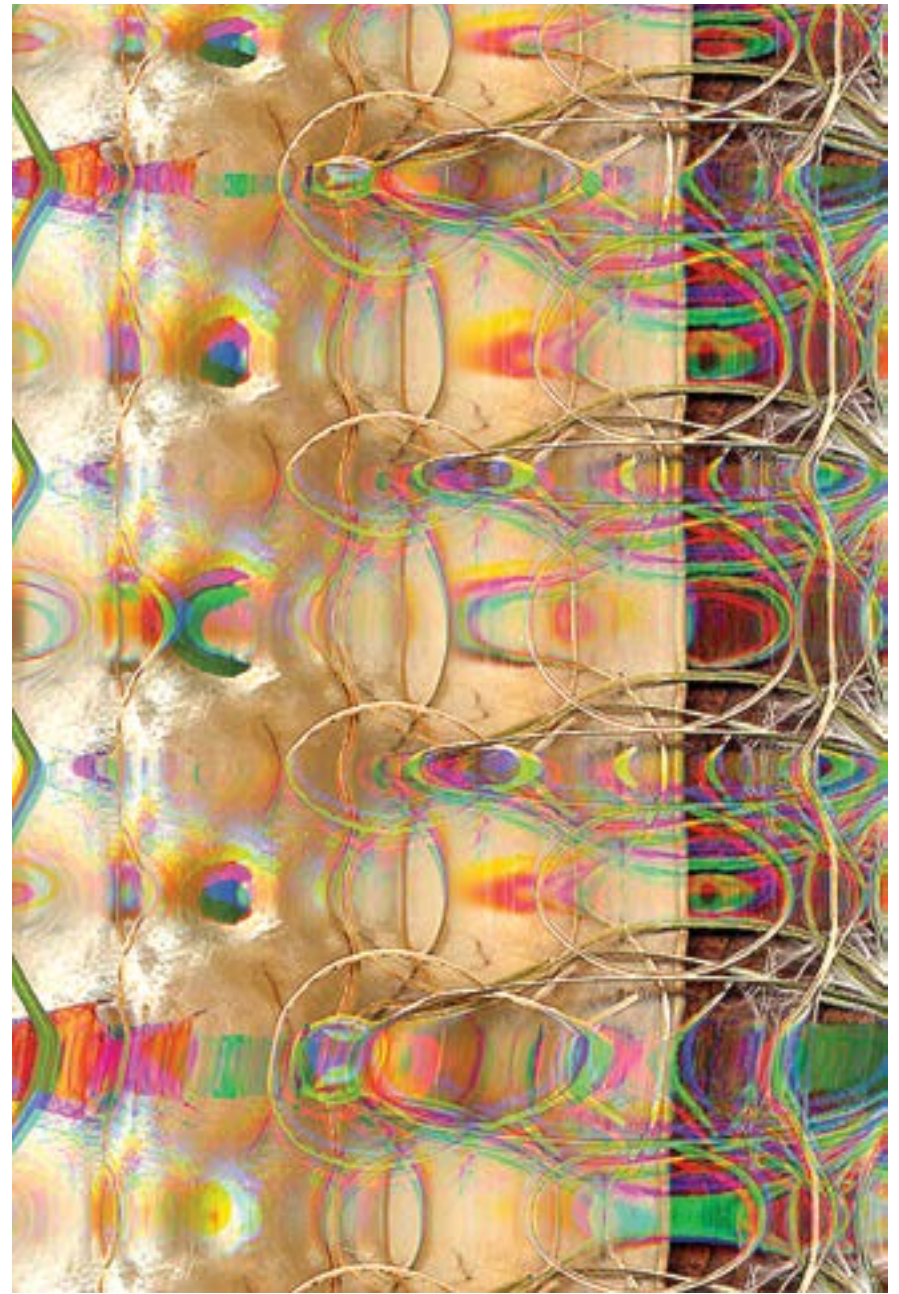
I want to be whole. A someone without need for anyone else: someone who is satisfied. I want to go back to the moment before I was uncontained. When I was a person without an ampersand.



IN LAWS OF GRAVITY (RELATIVITY REDEFINED)

ROBERT BHARDA (WARD)

templates comprised of natural and organic materials



DEPTH OF FIELD

ROBERT BHARDA (WARD)

templates comprised of natural and organic materials

KLAN RIBS

Just so we're clear, I'm not racist, the klan just makes really good ribs. And believe it or not, some of the klansmen are halfway decent people. Aside from the whole 'racism' and 'white supremacy' thing of course. But you have to believe me, I'm not racist. About two years ago my work buddy comes in gleaming about a meeting he attended the night before.

"What are you in such a good mood for?" I ask.

"Dude you're gonna think I'm crazy if I tell you this."

"Try me."

"I went to a KKK rally last night."

"The fuck!?"

"Ok first of all, I didn't know what it was. I only went on accident."

"How the fuck do you go to a meeting full of dudes in white hoods on accident?"

"See that's the thing. I joined this motorcycle club that meets at one of those halls at the Sheraton. I walked into the wrong room but I didn't even know it until I was halfway through the meeting. I walk in and ask the first guy I see, 'Hey you're the guys with the bikes out front right?' And I mean he's a klansman so there's already a 50/50 chance he rides a motorcycle, so he says yes. And I'm like, sweet, and I see there's a nice spread of food, a bunch of barbecue and soul food type stuff. And I'm starving, so I make myself a fat plate and this stuff is absolutely delicious, it got me thinking maybe the most racist thing the klan does is keep their barbecue recipes a secret from the rest of the world."

"Hold up hold up hold up, the white hoods didn't set you off?"

"Dude, the meeting is at a fucking Sheraton, they can't book that place if they all show up in hoods. So anyway the first half of this meeting, everyone is just chilling, talking about whatever, I'm chatting with that guy about my Harley. Then we all sit down and a guy gets up on stage, and even at this point I still don't know what I'm in for. He's looking around the room, saying he sees a couple new faces, and he singles me out. He's like 'I see we have a new brother, and I see you're enjoying the food.' And I'm like, 'Yea totally, shit's amazing.' That's when shit gets real. He starts talking about white power and everyone is saying amen and all that like it's fucking church. That's when I knew I was in too deep."

"So just leave the goddam place."

"Nah man, cause I mean it, I had a LOT of food. Even had a to-go plate ready. I couldn't just leave, that'd be rude."

"Oh of course, you have to fake being racist to avoid being rude. Makes sense."

"Please, just shut the fuck up and listen. So I gotta sit through thirty minutes of these racist ramblings because the last thing I need is to be on the klan's bad side. But with that barbecue they had, it was bearable. You should come next time."

"Next time! Motherfucker are you telling me you're gonna go BACK to a klan meeting?"

"I don't think you're understanding—not *comprehending*—how great this food is. Plus if you think about it, the more we eat, the less food there is for the klan, so we're *kinda* doing the world a favor."

"Dude, even if I was depraved enough to go with you, I don't think I'm gonna fit in too well, you know, cause I'm fucking *Jewish*."

"See that just makes it all the more beautiful. You'll be pulling one over on them and they don't even have to know. As long as you're not black, you can hide every other thing those fuckers hate. No one has to know you're Jewish or Catholic or if you suck twenty dicks a day. Just don't wear the damn yarmulka and eat the Kosher options."

"Ok first of all, you're an asshole, I just hope you know that. Second, I don't practice being Kosher, only the strict Jews do that. My sect of Judaism is pretty chill but I'm still Jewish."

"Dude, I'm pretty sure the owner of that hotel is a black dude too. The klan doesn't even realize that every time they book that place, they're putting money in a black man's pockets. What harm is it gonna do to come with me and increase the irony just a bit?"

So anyway, he convinces me to go with him the next week just because I thought it'd be funny, and the man was not lying. Those ribs and that brisket were ON POINT. And he had already made a "friend" there and they just talked about their common interests, bikes, football, regular coworker kind of talk. Every time the guy brings up racist shit we kinda just danced around the subject and brought it back to normal conversation. And I know what you're thinking, how do we make it through the rest of the meeting. Well it's easy when you can't even hear what they're saying over the sound of you munching on the best, most racist plate of down home cooking. And yea, they meet up outside of the Sheraton for other stuff where they actually have the burning cross and hoods and all that shit, but it's not like they know whether I'm there or not because you can't tell who's under those robes. So yes, I'm *technically* in the klan be-

ISAAC YELDER

cause I've been attending their meetings religiously just to demolish their short ribs and bratwurst and country fried steak. But I'm not racist.

JASON GALLAGHER
poetry

A FAKE LAKE TEXCOCO SUNSET

I'm afraid to admit that as a child
I preferred to be alone.

I played my *Legend of Zelda*. I read *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

I had sand.

No sandbox,
it was the dirt my grandfather used as a path from our garage. It led to the goldfish pond that had long been filled with peat and loam.
To me, this dirt path was a MesoAmerican fantasy world where jaguar gods and jade death masks lay just under the thinnest layer of sediment.
Where testaments to the hummingbird king were as pious as Christ's cross, and
Pelota was a game played with hard rubber not wound cork and yarn.

I would sit
hours on end
with brushes my father mined from some strange conference,
dreaming of being a
real archaeologist,

not Indiana Jones.
Alone
but not lonely
and finding that once I started
excavating dreams
I'm all bones. Memory
and history.

"Klan Ribs" is inspired by Josh Johnson's stand-up comedy performance at Le Poisson Rouge in New York City on July 26, 2017.



MT. HAMILTON SERIES

ANNIE ALBERS
film photography



MT. HAMILTON SERIES

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film photography



MT. HAMILTON SERIES

ANNIE ALBERS

film photography

EDITORS' SHOWCASE

volume 107 / issue 02

As we were putting Volume 107, Issue 1 to bed last fall, I found myself thinking about all the incredible talent of the student editors in creating this publication, and how most of this year's staff would be graduating in the spring. Wouldn't it be wonderful, I thought, to have a section of the spring issue to celebrate their creativity as writers and artists, as well as editors? While the *Santa Clara Review* has a long-standing policy of not publishing work by the editors while they are on staff, we decided that adding a section to the magazine to supplement the regular publication was a fitting way to celebrate this year's editors and say bon voyage to the many seniors as they set off on seas literary and otherwise. They also asked if I, their faculty advisor, would like to include some work. I decided to dig into my past and find some poems from when I was about their age (okay, I've had a few more decades to make edits). And so this section came to be, with poems ranging from a woman turning the tables on an attacker to stories about aging escorts trying to restart their lives. We offer you the work of this amazing staff, set beside all the fine writing and art and varied voices from around the world that grace these pages. We hope you enjoy it.

KIRK GLASER

faculty advisor, *Santa Clara Review*



WHAT'S UP

RHIANNON JANESCHILD

oil on canvas



JUNGLE PRINCESS

RHIANNON JANESCHILD

oil on canvas

ERIKA RASMUSSEN
poetry

FALLING BACK INTO ORBIT AFTER VISITING A PLACE OF DOOM

Nobody asks
from what nebula do you trace your ancestry
from what palette were you scraped
yes, birth of a star
iron tongue to taste
this is who you are

molten history joy drips like a spark plug
a scatterbrained memory of heat and space sugar

here's the thing
about kissing Jupiter
cupping that giant storm
to your face

it'll break every charm
of sticking your head
in the dirt
and even nihilism
can't argue with
all of those moons

and another thing
this one concerning
Saturn it'll teach you
a marriage you can
count on
replace doom
with an exchange
of untallyable vows

for I do lawfully wed
this mystery

ERIKA RASMUSSEN

proclaim to forsake
misery,

looking through telescope at the sky this is who you are
this room a little appetizer
and on the horizon sits a place
where breath and planetary motion
are one

the family tree calls
from light years away
asks a few startling questions that come
with a hint of hydrogen

how do you bend with your light
what bruise of color snaps you

where do you see your edges expanding
and how slow how fast must they catapult

how many mothers are you willing to acknowledge
and will you let the earth
and sky continue to mother?

I have made a choice
and calling stars kin
is my favorite reality check

ERIKA RASMUSSEN
poetry

LIPS PART AND

Nobody's got my tongue but the cat sure looks hungry. Slide toothed lick across the mouth to check for cavities, words meant for the open. Run slack in the batter of our earth, language hides under the glut and I don't blame it. Simmer is to truth what shelter is to honey. Against my molar rests a verb: overcome. The feral of my brow hopes for blood but the tone of my prayer lusts after the tail of the galaxy, reverent. Chewing on the air between rock face and enamel, hoping for smooth delivery—*swallow and walk*. Emerging from the undersoil a phrase calls loose the horizon and the screen falls down, until no single lie rests easy, until meaning is beat out of stardust.

MY FATHER'S HANDS

Blue, orange, and purple gummies
I wanted to enjoy my treat
But the bit of lavender plastic
Went into the dark blue water
Without hesitation I jumped in
Engulfed in the dark water
I clutched the plastic in my chubby fingers
I couldn't swim
I couldn't breathe
Sinking like a rock
My feet grazed the slimy bark of fallen trees
Until
whoosh
His hands grabbed me
We rose to the surface
Like two dying fish
My tiny lungs stung
Gasping for air
The whole time
His strong hands
Carried me, supported me
Two sturdy branches
Never breaking
This wouldn't be
The first time
His hands would save me
They firmly grasped my bony shoulders
"Skeletor" I had been called
As I hadn't been eating in my grief
When Grandma died
Wiping my salty tears
That clung to my face
The way morning dew rests upon freshly cut green grass
Or sap to pine needles
Ruining their perfect form
Stroking my long knotted hair
Being ever so gentle

Letting the matted strands be
Strong but loving hands
These hands would write out
The hardest math problems
Slowly looping each stroke
Making the numbers dance
Using the protractor with God-like accuracy
Always right
They were always right
Strong but smart hands
As time passes the hands
They have dark spots
Wrinkles form
Giving them folds and bumps like the Californian foothills
The hands
Get weaker
Get slower
And become fragile and weak
I will be the eyes
Telling the hands what I see
Describing the vibrant colors and faces that pass
I will be the brain
Explaining to the hands
What is happening
If we should worry or be merry
I will carry the hands
I will do the saving
One day these hands will be underground
With 6 feet of dirt separating them from the Earth
In a wooden oak box
Clasped on a broad chest
That no longer fills itself with air
It will not rise again
Not on this Earth
And the hands will turn to dust
Forever done
Doing the saving
But
Remember
They never dropped me
Not once

TOSSING BACK INTO A CLEAR SEA

*for my father
Eleuthera, Bahama Islands*

Running out of air I stuck a thumb up
and took the spiny lobster from you.
It stared black-eyed, clawless, dumbly scraping
its legs against my hand. I kicked, pacing
the smallest bubbles that fizzed and popped
around me, measure of the nitrogen dissolving in blood.
Fish and coral faded to green and blue below
as if I pulled their color with me, dying out of the sea—
that trick of distance, object and eye,
water bending back long waves of light.

I surfaced under a noon sun taut in the air,
gone the feathered angel I rose to underwater.
Head hollow, the sky a hard blow of sound—
clack of boat against waves, water slapping itself,
gull-cry cutting a plane through the air.
I tossed the lobster on the deck,
shrugged the tank from my back,
and floated light and easy in the waves
when a crack hit the base of my neck—
the mate twisting the lobster's tail
from its body, its legs clawing to hold on.
He tossed head and thorax over,
saving the sweet muscle.

You surfaced, eyes puzzled behind your mask,
laughed as you asked what the hell sank past you,
then nodded, seeing the mate drop the tail in a bucket.
I didn't tell you how he turned away and grimaced
when liquid spurted from its body,
about the snap still popping in my neck.
Instead I said how small it was compared to ones we caught

in the Sound, boiled whole for the meaty claws.

We broiled the tail on the beach, the mate showing us
how to baste it with coconut and salt. Silent in the glare,
we inhaled the fatty smoke as good as food,
then ate, ready for another dive.

That night as we went to sleep you told me how the mate
said the head and body would continue to crawl across the ocean floor,
parrot fish pecking at the guts, how you'd seen it
trail down through filaments of light, its dark liquid spilling.

HOW MARCH COMES IN

Elm tops blossomed with snow
under a late winter moon,
as if the cold tried to impregnate the earth,
rework the ruin it had envisioned—no,
my vision of a white painless life,
that grate of scratched and frozen ground
made bare by thaw, dusted white again,
a place to lie down and dream
before the cold belly rubbed over the fields
and heaved up clumps of garden mud,
dirt-brown crystals of ice and air,
the structure of memory.

I wanted to keep death
frozen and perfect in those cells
that crunched underfoot as I plowed
the steaming shit into the ground.
No matter what comfort I tried to wall
between dead edge and dead edge,
calling the manure a disease that the dirt
longed to swallow, thinking so fresh
and laced with the oil-choked haze
it smelled like death, I knew
the ground would court it, disperse it;
the bacterial heat would gnaw
at the layers of snow and crust
until the mute fog of spring licked bare
the rich, wounded land. No matter

what form of stillness I thought I wanted:
I was a pulse that moved over the land
nourishing whatever space I could hold,
the tiller a fear-blind animal chewing furiously down,
the rattle of its piston an angry creation I held to,
a ragged shadow of my beat.

PRESSED ROSES

The hands of your timekeeper stood stagnant
Twenty years after their march began.
Tiring too quickly to hold you steady, they let you fall.
Your own hands were sand, slipping away.

Your hair, thin spindles of tan thread encompassing
Tired, pale skin that once shone brightly,
Covering bones- fragile flowers compressed
Under years of pressure.

Each day you prevailed, practiced that dazzling smile,
Glued yourself back together like a child's
Papier mâché project. Beauty composed of a
thousand
shattered
pieces.

But you were (have always been, will always be) exquisite,
a sight fierce to behold.

As your hands neared their halt
You sensed the time grew close.
Our final conversation, you told me you loved me,
You thanked me for my love,
But now I know it was not enough.

Pulse fluttered softly, until
Your chest ceased to rise and fall.

I wept at your funeral,
I weep for you still,
But I refuse to lay flowers on your grave,
Refuse to allow another beautiful creature

wither before my eyes.

We were supposed to grow old together, remember?
Numb to the pain of time passing.
With each major event marked by your absence,

JULES XENAKIS

The chronic, bitter nature of sorrow grows more potent.

Each day begins bearing this lead jacket,
Constricting my rib cage—which once rattled from laughter
While we sipped rosé under your canopy of tapestries
Admiring the cinemagic of *Jaws*—
But now
 aches with each shallow breath.

I climb this mountain without a peak,
Steep, rocky trail stretching before me,
No goal in sight,
Only the perpetual climb to make me strong.

JULES XENAKIS
poetry

SAND INSCRIPTIONS

I am so sorry I could not save you,
from the shore lapping against your ankles.

I am sorry your words were drowned
in the slapping of the waves, my own mind engulfed
in the soothing melody of the ocean

as you whispered, “I’m fine.” I let myself believe
that smile, so bright, eating you alive. Loosening my grip,
Fearing my hands would crumble with yours,
My own lying teeth, smiling, “I know”.

I let you go.

I am sorry to be writing with hands too
weak to save yours from sinking. I often think of the sand,
at the shore being torn
away by the tide. Where you once stood so strong, so proud.

I imagine you waiting for me,
smile unshackled, free from the unrelenting current.
I still hear your breathing when I’m dreaming,
rocks hitting back hard against the drumming of the sea.

Do you read my letters in the sand? I know the tide takes them,
too. But maybe,

to you

on the wayside.

I hope you’ll read them and know—that I know—
I should never have let go.

THE ADULT CHILDREN OF IMMATURE PARENTS

Her eyes begged for death, but her smile would eat you up.

Namratha spent her childhood in service of her parent's needs. She knew she was dumb but she got into the local law school nonetheless, as it was her father's wish. She married the tall, chubby Mysore-man without finishing her degree, as it was her father's wish. She never questioned her parents who knew what was best for her, as it was her mother's wish. She gave birth to her first son a year after marriage, as it was her husband's wish.

But fuck, this son was her own. This child didn't have to sway to the wishes of her mother, her father, her husband, her sister, her uncles, her aunts, and her friends. She would tear at the very fabric of the universe so that this child could have it all. In Sanskrit, "Shambu" translates to "the source of all bliss," and so it was named.

She was married off to a man who worked as the "executive associate representative" of an Italian marble company in India. She didn't need to learn what that meant because he couldn't keep that job, or any job at all for more than a few months. But she knew that Shambu wouldn't be the same. This child would give her all she never had. It would praise her, help her, and truly love her.

She did truly love it, even though it will only remember her loudly screaming and beating it. She locked its room door until it finished its homework. She lied to it if it didn't do as she said. She cried in front of it when it got bad grades. She counted its every calorie but it had gotten fat and ugly. It went to the best school in town but its teachers said it wasn't smart. She cried more, lied more, beat it more but none of it was working.

Eventually, its eyes went blank. It still had that adoring smile, but its eyes didn't look at hers anymore. It didn't smile when they went to the toy store. It didn't cry when she beat it. It didn't complain every night when it massaged her feet. Her adoring son was finally fixed.

At weddings, all the aunties asked her, "Namratha, you have to tell me! What did you do to make your son so perfect? I wish my children were as obedient and smart as him." With that trained Indian modesty, she said "Oh, he's not that bad. He used to complain a lot and he's still pretty fat." Her coy smile hid her childish elation at making the perfect son.

It would grow to be a fine man. It tirelessly worked towards every goal she set. It would study every night after school, study every weekend,

get into the best law school in India, graduate at the top of its class, work at a prestigious law firm, make a pretty penny in bribes and after a successful law career become a prominent High Court judge. It didn't know these weren't its dreams but hers.

In my room hung a picture of Parvati and Ganesha. Goddess Parvati was the incarnation of divine love and undying devotion. She molded a doll from the sacred Haldi paste, infused life into it and created her servant and son Ganesha. I was also born in the service of a mother. She had birthed me. She had molded me. My future was drawn by her whims. My past was carved by her moods. A world without her was a purposeless world, and I thought that was love.

The *love* that bound us ensured our mutual destruction.

In middle school, I began to wonder, why do other parents read bedtime stories to their children? Why did the other children seem so happy and carefree? Why didn't any other kids talk about getting beaten? Didn't all parents scream and break stuff when they got mad? I wondered why other kids did not fear their parents.

I do not know how to describe the slow, creeping feeling that the center of your devotion is a false god. But when it hits you, and reverberates through the centuries past and future, you will know it. In a child's vocabulary, the only word I had for this feeling was "death."

I did not want to believe it. When I told my teachers, my aunts and my friends, they did not want to believe it. They knew my mother to be a kind, sensitive woman. Was she a kind, sensitive woman? Who would believe a child when he called his mother a wolf? How could a child even communicate to the world that he lived with the devil?

When I realized there was no escape from her, that's when my eyes went blank. I had severed all my emotions because that was the only way I could survive her. I dreamt of being a robot so that I could stop feeling all her words. I dreamt of Grandpa scolding my mother for being so cruel. Grandpa would barge in with his walking stick and hair slicked back, and would give her a tight slap across the face and then compliment me for being such a good robot. I knew Grandpa would do this if he weren't blind and tied to a chair.

I told her about how every day before going to bed, I climbed up to the roof's edge and just stared at the mortar road below. I could not hesitate or be scared when the time came to jump. I practiced every night. I planned every action from who I would punish in my letter to what angle

would smash my ugly face to unrecognizability. Death was the only thought that didn't make me unhappy. It would come, it did not matter whether it came in a century or right now. Nothing would be lost upon death. When I finally got the will to tell her, she told me to get back to my homework.

I will never know what love is.

In a cramped hospital room she lay soulless. Still. Cold. Dead eyes. Blank stare. A few minutes ago, she screamed like a terrorized animal. But as the baby slid out of her, she felt her life slip away with it. Yet, the world was hurtling forward, planets moving and people thriving, while she lay still and dead. The world hurtled at her.

She did not resent this newborn. A second child, and maybe a second chance at perfection. But then her husband died and she was busy putting on a show for the funeral. She wasn't surprised when she got the call from the police station. He always loved his Old Monk rum and his Harley Davidson and mixed the two quite often. She began wailing when the guests started pouring into her house. The wails were for the guests and not a reflection of her emotions. But she still felt nothing as she let out those guttural screams in front of every uncle and aunty on the planet.

They didn't have a funeral for the baby.

Before it cut off all ties with its "family," it sent her one last message:

"You've asked me why I don't talk about Papa's death. And it's because I saw that you weren't emotionally available for me to tell you. Getting bullied, coming out and crying myself to sleep every night: there were so many other problems I've had to deal with on my own. You were so caught up in your grief that you couldn't be there for me.

"I'm tired of waiting for you to have an epiphany and suddenly realize that you've been a fucking bitch. You'll always be this parasite, hungry for attention and validation. You're always selfishly asking me to show and prove my love to you. I do not love you.

"I've said this a million times but you never listen. I don't care if you're listening anymore. I have grown to accept you for the shriveled human being you are, and it has made me so much stronger. I can deal with the weight of the world now after having dealt with you."

I can see Namratha read this as she moved into her father's studio. She was again alone with her father. This senile man's body was tied to a wheelchair, but his eyes were as lustful as those school days.



KOWABUNGA

MADELINE GOLLIVER
photoshop & photography



ABANDONED LIGHTHOUSE

MADELINE GOLLIVER
ceramic sculpture



BAOBAB BOOK

MADELINE GOLLIVER
ceramic sculpture

MADDIE SYKES
poetry

SLOW DOWN

“Slow down,”
he said to me, as I read aloud from a book,
sitting outside in the early spring sunshine,
a laugh riding his words as he spoke.

“Slow down!”
he warned, as I flew by him on his longboard,
trying to make that corner turn that constantly evaded me,
a caring caution in his tone.

“Slow down...”
he whispered, as I kissed him,
lying in the dark, a movie playing in the background,
digging up a desire I had buried long ago,
his voice soft and guiding.

“Slow down,”
he said, to our relationship, to our future,
to the life we could have had,
his voice detached, matter-of-fact,
lacking the pain that stuck my own heart.

All he ever said was slow down,
when all I ever wanted to do was to run,
and leap,
and bound.
Toward him.
Toward us.
But he was never mine to lose.
And....what if I didn't want to slow down?

WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND

Barks beg me, after every cage I pass, to take them away from these concrete shelter walls.

Every cage but one.

At first, he is so quiet I don't even notice him until the volunteer points to the back of the cage. A gray-brown lump lies on gray stone instead of the dog bed. I think he's sleeping.

"This one arrived about a month ago. Found him bleeding somewhere off the I-5," she says.

Strangers etched a skeleton of scars into fur, lines from teeth and nails the same way his nails dug into my side. Half crescents tattooed with my blood and scabs. They match the moon that peeked through his bedroom window that night.

"Doesn't play with the toys, he barely behaves like a normal dog."

Bald patches and short fur necklace his neck. I can't wear necklaces anymore because the weight of the chain is too similar to the weight of his hands against my throat, my chest, as he shoved me down on the mattress. No air left in my lungs, no words left on my tongue.

I didn't beg for him to stop.

But I wished for it in my eyes.

"No one has tried to meet him since—"

"Can I meet him?"

She leads me to the back entrance of his cell, cacophony of dog voices quiet as the walk back afterwards from his apartment to mine, shelter lights no brighter than street lamps.

Her key twists and the dog raises his head in response to the metal *click* that rings across his cell. The volunteer hands me a few treats.

"Go on, he won't bite."

I walk slowly towards the dog and stop to kneel about five feet away from him. He stares at me and I look slightly upwards. I read somewhere that dogs take staring as a sign of aggression. I open my hand. He can see the treats.

The dog stands.

His skin is sunken into his body, ribs visible. He lumbers towards me and his nose grazes my fingertips. My hand is wet. Paws move forward a few more steps and he lies back down; his head is last to fall, and he rests it in my lap.

His eyes stare into mine and I see the pain of no longer believing

in trust, the terror that I will never have this type of connection again.

Mirrored in the large brown irises of a pit-bull terrier.

I look across the kennel to the adoption volunteer. "I'll take him."

TAKING OUT THE TRASH:

she picked up the shoe
matching the outline ground
in the dirt outside her kitchen window;
she glanced at a screen, bright as the stars
peeping through the pine branches; under
recent calls 9-1-1 and "*there is nothing we
can do until a crime has been committed.*" she
avoided the dirt-encrusted hands that traveled
across her skin; the fingers that left the black-blue
reminders she'd find across her arms/legs/back, the
palms wrapped tight around her wrists as her
throat dried from her repeatedly ignored **no**;
she held tightly to the handle, like he'd done,
as he pressed metal to her temple while she
clutched her hands around the steering
wheel, foot heavy on the gas of a car
she longed to turn around; she
watched rain trickle from the
blood moon tattooed on
his forehead; drip down
his nose like tears he'd
never see from her.

she knots the
bag taken from his
jean pocket, a plastic
thud in the water, the
lake ripples into
stillness as he
sinks.

ARE YOU PROUD OF ME?

I'm sitting here resting on a bed nothing interesting is happening really I
barked at the tiny thing making noise in the sky going by it didn't land in
the yard so that's good I did my job you will be proud of me and rub my
head I love it when you do that because it makes me happy and I don't
have food anymore I ate it all and there's a loud wailing in the distance
and it hurts my ears I don't know who's crying but I feel sad for them and
THERE YOU ARE you came outside finally I'm so happy I'm so happy I'm
running to you and you're rubbing my ear and oh it's so nice and it's such
a good day and now I want to play with you because you're here so we can
play and you're patting your leg and looking at me so I need to come over
to you so I am and I will always follow you because you love me and give
me food and you throw the round soft thing and I will follow your feet
and look up at you because I want to know if I'm making you happy am I
doing it right do you want me here because I want to be here and it's just
great that you're with me but you're going back and you say something
to me and now you're gone from me and I don't know how it opens so I
nudge my nose to try to find the scent and figure out where you went but
I never know when you will come back and I want to be right here for
exactly when you do I don't want to miss you so I'll wait here because this
is a good way to spend some time since nothing interesting is happening
really.

TRUTH IN STONE

The first time your aunt from out of town came over and she heard them in the distance, she ducked her head and flashed her eyes in panic at you with each *pap pap pap pap pap!* but you barely looked up from the cards you were holding, “Go fish,” you said, because that sound came a little too close to the house one night, and you woke up to them wondering if they were already in your room, too scared to bail off of your bed so you curled up into the fetal position instead, your navy blue comforter becoming a womb as you covered your ears and buried your lanky limbs into yourself, praying to God that they didn’t come here, praying for the silence you had never fully appreciated until they ceased and you shook, remaining curled under the blanket until your father ran in your room and threw the comforter off of you, the winter night air no longer feeling cold to your freezing body, and then you noticed the warm wetness around your thighs, and you realized you had pissed the bed for the first time in ten years, listening to the high-pitched vibrato of sirens, their blue and red flashing lights illuminating the yellow tape and broken bodies like a bad stop-motion film, becoming part of the background noise while children play in the backyard, chasing their whiffle balls as they roll towards the chain-link fence, floating in through open windows on a summer’s night, their wails echoing in your ears as you drift to sleep, waking up to a newspaper the next morning where the headline “Man Shot” is in 12-point font on the third page, sitting next to the ad selling the 2003 GMC Yukon, and by the time you turn eighteen you’re too used to the sound of sympathies, the disappointed *tsks* and elongated sighs, the long hugs and heavy hands on your black suit jacket as you listen with a bent head and a lump in your throat to the chief of police reading off empty promises about reform, as he drones on in his smooth voice about how your best friend was a good kid and you feel your nostrils flair and the heat rise to your cheeks because he would never know how *good* of a person he was, never know the jokes you laughed at over chocolate ice cream, never know about his dreams of becoming a pilot, never know that he was the only person in the world you knew who refused to eat french fries with ketchup, never know about the countless hours he spent helping his siblings finish their homework before starting his own, but now the only thing you have left of him is the truth in stone in front of you.

THE PERFECT FOUNDATION

*“Dear Ms. Hapenburg,
We regret to inform you that...”*

Serena slammed her phone down on the splintered wooden coffee table. She couldn’t take it anymore. With her sister Amanda’s help, she had applied to well over thirty entry-level make-up associate positions, but what began as a hopeful endeavor had devolved into an hourly reminder of the cage in which she lived. She had earned her G.E.D. and passed through cosmetology school, but there was no escaping her shadow. Some companies could overlook her criminal record, but Valencia chased her everywhere.

Valencia Sassoon had been born when Serena was thirty-seven years old. Although she had slept with more than a few boys in high school for cash or usually jewelry, the majority of her transactional relationships had faded with age. When she dropped out of high school and then met Gary in her late twenties, Serena put that life behind her. Glamour was her middle name, and working at Clinique gave her everything she desired. She could party, model, and come home every night to the man of her dreams. However, in her late thirties, when her marriage was long in the rearview mirror and she had mostly recovered from the stigma of her ten months in prison, Valencia was the one who had helped her rebuild her life. When Serena took on her XXX alter-ego, men fell at her feet, and she had enough money to find a place to live and to lead a semi-normal life.

The Mr. Hyde to her Dr. Jekyll, Valencia tantalized Serena with the mirage of a perfect life. Johns fawned over her and gave expensive gifts, but it never was the fairytale facade that it seemed. At the end of the day, the men would return to their wives, families, or jobs, and Serena would be left alone, still struggling to afford rent or groceries.

In the dim of her studio apartment, Serena shuffled to the refrigerator and pulled out a bottle of her favorite pinot noir. She knew it was the last she could afford for a while, but the pain was too severe to meet sober. She had truly believed that telling Amanda would fix everything. Just two weeks ago, the two middle-aged women had sat at the exact same kitchen table and formulated a plan. Much to Serena’s surprise, Amanda greeted her honesty with pure kindness.

“I’ve been working as an escort for almost twenty years.” The words had almost tumbled out of Serena’s mouth. “And I... I can’t do it

anymore.”

Amanda nodded silently for almost sixty seconds and then reached toward her sister’s hand. “I promise I’ll help you find your way out.”

Serena would never forget the way it felt like love would solve everything. The bond that ran between their two held hands was impenetrable. However, in the weeks that followed, Serena was reminded of the reality that love is a thing that needs to be earned — it isn’t given freely, and especially not to felons and soon-to-be-ex-escorts.

As she sipped her pinot, tears carved rivers into her cheeks. Why couldn’t the world see that she had been fighting a losing battle since day one? When her father killed her mother, he was put behind bars and the nine children were all tossed into group homes and an unfair foster system. Amanda had fought her way out, while Serena remained trapped for fifty-seven years. But now, with the plastic surgery bills mounting from her attempts to stay in the game and compete with younger women, Serena was days from losing the roof over her head. The money just wasn’t there, and no one would give her a chance. Serena couldn’t just be Serena. Valencia was always there, too, wrestling for control.

Serena’s phone plinked again with a new notification. Even in her despair, her heart raced a little at the hope of maybe just one interview invitation.

“MRB2960: *Girlfriend Experience* —
8 Hours / \$800 total”

“Shit, exactly what I need,” Serena whispered under her breath when she saw the escort opportunity. She didn’t want to take the job. She refused to take the job. She wouldn’t do this anymore. One more muted notification noise, this time for an emailed application response.

“Dear Ms. Hapenburg,
We regret to inform you that...”

It was a harsh reminder that MRB2960’s job was the only thing that would keep her off the streets. Without those eight hours, Serena wouldn’t even have enough money to buy food for the upcoming week. She had seen it happen to friends who fought to find their way out. Like her, they would submit application after application to no avail, all while cancelling overnight jobs. In allowing a dream to take priority, these women would wind up homeless, turning tricks far worse than the wealthy johns that escorting attracted.

“See you at eight, the usual place.”

Valencia responded to MRB2960’s message. Serena had no right to her body if she couldn’t save it.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

volume 107 / issue 02

Annie Albers is an artist born and raised in rural Nebraska. She is a double major in Studio Art and English from Santa Clara University. She works in the mediums of drawing, printmaking, and painting, and photography. Her work has been shown in SCU Juried Art Shows. Her photography has been published in the London Evening Standard.

Ayesha Asad is an 18-year-old freshman at the University of Texas at Dallas. She writes for *The Mercury* and hosts “Mercury Morning News,” a college radio news show. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Blue Marble Review*, *Eunoia Review*, *Skipping Stones Magazine*, and *TeenInk* and has been recognized by the Creative Writing Ink December 2019 contest.

Daniel Aristi was born in Spain. He studied French Literature as an undergrad and now lives and writes in Belgium. His work has been recently featured in *The Main Street Rag*, *great weather for MEDIA* and *Stonecoast Review*.

Diane Averill’s books, *Branches Doubled Over With Fruit*, published by the University of Florida Press, and *Beautiful Obstacles*, published by Blue Light Press of Iowa, were finalists for the Oregon Book Award in Poetry. She has had two other books and three chapbooks published since then. She holds an M.F.A. from The University of Oregon and taught at Clackamas Community College until her retirement.

Melissa Ballete, Santa Clara University ’20, is a Filipino writer and Bay Area native whose inspiration comes from a deep longing for change, in the empowerment of the individual and the beauty of nature. She firmly believes that we are defined by the songs we sing, the hearts we mend, and the worlds we build.

Tess Berghoff is a Philadelphia-based artist with a love for drawing, painting, and embroidery. A recent Studio Arts graduate from Santa Clara University, she is passionate about all things handmade, whether it's paper roses from old journal entries or personalized, embroidered raincoats. She takes pride in the stories behind her craft, leaving a piece of herself in each of her works.

Originally from New York City, **Robert Bharda** has resided in the Northwest U.S. where for the last 35 years he has specialized in vintage photography as a profession, from salt prints to polaroids. His illustrations/artwork have appeared in numerous publications in the U.S. and abroad, currently on covers of Naugatuck River Review, Blue Five Notebook, book covers and within recently published Catamaran and Cirque. His portfolios of images, as well as his poetry, has been featured in numerous publications including Cahoodahoodaling, Blue Five, Superstition, AADUNA, Serving House Journal, and many more.

S. T. Brant is a high school teacher in Las Vegas. They have publications in *La Piccioletta Barca*, *RIC*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *After the Pause*; forthcoming in *Concentric Magazine*. You can find them on Twitter @terriblebinth.

A native Californian, **Anthony Caruso** moved from northern city to central country life before following his family back to Trabia, Sicily at the age of 19. It was there that he first tried his hand in the entertainment industry with radio and film. Anthony eventually returned to the States a newlywed to start a business and family, five kids strong.

Marialisa Caruso ’20 is a graduating senior at SCU with a major in Finance and double minor in Creative Writing and International Business. She intends to use this seemingly incoherent background to one day found her own self-sustainable business with profits yielded from producing various forms of visual and written media that each evoke the essence of life.

A founding member of the *Pine Row* editorial board, **Michael Chang** (they/them) is the proud recipient of a Brooklyn Poets fellowship. They were invited to attend the Kenyon Review Writers Workshop at Kenyon College as well as the Omnidawn Poetry Writing Conference at Saint Mary's College of California. Their writing has been published or is forthcoming in *Yellow Medicine Review*, *The Summerset Review*, *The Broadkill Review*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *UCityReview*, *Chiron Review*, *Thirty West*, *Map Literary*, *Armstrong Literary*, *Love's Executive Order*, *Funny Looking Dog Quarterly*, *Straylight*, *Juked*, and many others.

Born and bred in Monterey, California, **Warren Chang** (b. 1957) graduated from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena in 1981, where he earned a B.F.A. in illustration with honors. He thrived for two decades as an award-winning illustrator in both California and New York, when he transitioned to a career as a fine artist starting in the year 2000.

Chang has become renowned for his art since his transition to fine art 15 years ago, earning many awards and honors, which include induction as Master Signature member of the prestigious Oil Painters of America, the largest organization of oil painters in the United States. He is one of only 50 to receive this honor. His awards also include Best of Show awards in the Salon International in 2003 and the Raymar Contest in 2009. In addition his work has been profiled in many publications, including the covers of *American Artist* and *International Artists* magazines accompanying his articles on instructional painting. Now based in his Monterey studio, he is an inveterate and popular teacher, currently affiliated with San Francisco's Academy of Art University.

His work can be categorized into two main categories of biographical interiors and his paintings of fieldworkers. His interest in interiors reaches right back to 16th century artist Johannes Vermeer, and includes subjects of

self portraits, family, friends and students in the interior environments of his studio, classroom and home. His intent is to create mood and emotion through his manipulation of light and use of close value relationships and subdued color.

Perhaps best known for his paintings of fieldworkers from the Monterey County area, this subject harkens back to such forerunners as Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Jean-Francois Millet, Winslow Homer, Eastman Johnson and Thomas Hart Benton. Chang's depiction of unidealized fieldworkers are unsentimental, yet at the same time celebrate the human spirit. Chang admits being inspired and influenced by the novels of John Steinbeck, books he read in his youth as well as the general ambiance of growing up in Monterey.

Gavin Cosgrave is a senior at Santa Clara University and an aspiring adult in the real world. He produces the *Voices of Santa Clara* podcast and is the opinion editor for *The Santa Clara* student newspaper. In his free time, he enjoys cooking breakfast and hiking with friends. He can be found at gavin-cosgrave.com.

Byung A. Fallgren is the author of several books, mostly eBooks, for Young Adult and Middle Grade. Also, she has published her poems in *The Avocet*, *a Journal of Nature Poetry*, and *Talking River Review*.

Jason Gallagher was a contributing editor at *Evergreen Review*. He is a member of The Unbearables collective and has had work appear in the first two issues of *Post[blank]* and *The South Florida Poetry Journal*. He has had his book reviews published in *Sensitive Skin* and *Gainsayer*. He lives in Upper Manhattan with his wife, fellow poet Brendaliz Guerrero.

Seyed Morteza Hamidzadeh was born on August 31st, 1991 in Mashhad, Iran. His poetry can be found in magazines all around the world such as the *WAF Anthology*, *eFiction*, *Zouch*, *Vivimus*, *Five Poetry*, *Maudlin House*, the *Literati Quarterly* & *Denver Quarterly*. Also, his two books, titled *Exile Me* and *Eyes of the Middle East (Olhos do Oriente Médio)* published in the United States and Brazil.

Neal Hellman's stories have been featured in *The Porter Gulch Review*, *Phren-Z* and in *The Rose*. He has been a writing student of poet Ellen Bass and novelist Roxan McDonald. Neal is the director of "indie" record label Gourd Music. He has also created books of arrangements for the mountain dulcimer for Mel Bay and Hal Leonard Publishing.

Brent House, a contributing editor for *The Tusculum Review*, was born and raised near the Mississippi Gulf Coast. He teaches writing in the cloudy, cold, and ironically-named town of California, Pennsylvania. Slash Pine Press published his first collection, *The Saw Year Prophecies*. Currently, he is writing a series of poems located in the space between two houses.

Sukhvir Kaur is a first generation citizen of South Asian descent. She is a J.D. working as a program manager for a non-profit organization by day and an aspiring writer, scribbling away under fluorescent lighting by night. Throughout her legal career, Sukhvir worked closely with immigrant communities and continues to support her Punjabi-Sikh community through her non-profit work.

Carolyn Kuimelis is a sophomore at Santa Clara University pursuing a major in Economics with a minor in Sociology. She is an Opinion Writer for *The Santa Clara* and is involved in SCU's chapter of Spoon University. In her free time, she enjoys reading, baking, and painting. This is her first piece of work published in a literary magazine.

Callan Latham is a poet and a writer. Her work has recently appeared in *Crêpe and Penn*, *Electric Moon Magazine*, and the *Ohio's Best Emerging Poets* anthology, among other places. She attends the University of Iowa and spends her days wishing for the sea.

Kelly Lenox's debut collection, *The Brightest Rock* (2017), received honorable mention in the 2018 Brockman-Campbell Book Award. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Gargoyle*, *Hubbub*, *EcoTheo Review*, *Split Rock Review*, and elsewhere in the U.S and abroad. She has received both Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominations. Kelly holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Visit her website at www.kellylenox.com.

Mario Loprete graduated from the Accademia of Belle Arti, Catanzaro (IT-ALY). "I live in a world that I shape at my liking, throughout a virtual pictorial and sculptural movement, transferring my experiences, photographing reality throughout my filters, refined from years of research and experimentation. For my Concrete Sculptures I use my personal clothing. Throughout some artistic process, in which I use plaster, resin and cement, I transform them in artworks to hang. My memory, my DNA, my memories remain concretized inside, transforming the person that looks at the artworks into a type of post-modern archeologist that studies my work as they were urban artefacts."

Evan J Massey is a United States Army veteran who served his country in Afghanistan.

Norah Mortenson was born in Ireland, and has lived many places, but now, regrettably, lives in Minneapolis where she did most of her growing up. She has a dog named Elvis, works at a local architecture firm, and in her time off can be found writing or drawing in her favorite coffee shop.

Maria Orlandi is an undergraduate student interested in poetry, literature, and illustration. When she is not tied up in academics, she loves to frequent

farmers markets and spend her time drawing fruit. She is originally from Minneapolis, MN, and hopes to live somewhere warmer in the future.

Mariana Palova (Mariana Paola Urzúa Pulido) is an enthusiastic alchemist who, from time to time, likes to do a bit of magic. Born in Jalisco, Mexico in 1990, she decided to dedicate her life to a constant search for her own personality, which has led her to become a self-taught writer and artist. With a special weakness for nature, occultism, folk music and a disastrous degree in graphic design, her visual work (a mixed media of photography, oil, and digital painting) has been nationally awarded and exhibited in more than fifty shows around the world. Her first novel (*Nation of the Beasts: The Lord of the Sabbath*), first self-published in Spanish and subsequently acquired for its publication in Mexico and the United States, won the Best Fantasy Book of the Year Award by the prestigious Foreword Magazine. Nowadays, her biggest dream is to get a comfy cabin in the woods and live peacefully happily as a creator.

Nijolė Rasmussen was born and raised in Lithuania. Since 1992 she has lived in Denver, Colorado, USA. 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 enjoys writing poetry. Nijolė has had many exhibitions in Denver and one solo exhibition in Chicago.

Renée Darline Roden has an M.T.S. in systematic theology from the University of Notre Dame and is currently a New York City-based writer and playwright. Renée's plays have appeared at The Tank, Open Booth Theatre, the Bushwick Starr, Dixon Place, and Triskelion Arts. Her writing has appeared in America, Commonweal, Howlround, Church Life Journal, and Veritas Journal.

Jia Seow is a sophomore at Santa Clara University. Born in Singapore and raised in the Bay Area, her cultural identity informs much of her work. She has been writing poetry since her freshman year of high school, and published her first poetry collection one year later. Jia has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, and is an alumna of the Reynolds Young Writers Workshop.

Aaron Shurin is the author of fourteen books of poetry and prose, most recently *The Blue Absolute*, just out from Nightboat Books. Other works include: *Flowers & Sky: Two Talks* (Entre Rios Books, 2017), *The Skin of Meaning: Collected Literary Essays and Talks* (University of Michigan Press, 2015), and two books from City Lights: *Citizen* (poems, 2012) and *King of Shadows* (essays, 2008). His writing has appeared in over forty national and international anthologies, from *The Norton Anthology of Postmodern Amer-*

ican Poetry to Italy's *Nuova Poesia Americana: San Francisco*, and has been supported by grants from The National Endowment for the Arts, The California Arts Council, The San Francisco Arts Commission, and the Gerbode Foundation. A pioneer in both LGBTQ+ studies and innovative verse, Shurin was a member of the original Good Gay Poets collective in Boston, and later the first graduate of the storied Poetics Program at New College of California. He has written numerous critical essays about poetic theory and compositional practice, as well as personal narratives on sexual identity, gender fluidity, and the AIDS epidemic. A longtime educator, he's the former director and currently Professor Emeritus for the MFA Writing Program at the University of San Francisco.

A native of Arild, Sweden and now residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico, **Gordon Skalleberg** transitioned to full-time artist after years in the family's business. His relocation to New Mexico inspired new imagery, a distinctive twist on Southwestern features - desert landscapes, mountains, open skies - in a semi-abstract landscape-style. Skalleberg has shown in galleries and exhibitions in Sweden since 2007; more recently in New York and Santa Fe. Since 2015, he has participated in the prestigious annual Studio Tour in southwest Sweden. Occasionally he accepts commissions - a recent example being Netflix engaging him to paint portraits of Uma Thurman and Tony Goldwyn for a production. His work is in museum, corporate and private collections in Sweden and the United States

Nathan Spoon is an autistic poet with low academic fluency whose poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *Mantis*, *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, *The Scores*, *Oxford Poetry*, *South Carolina Review*, and elsewhere. His debut collection, *Doomsday Bunker*, was published in 2017. He is co-editor of *Queerly*.

Charles Springer has degrees in anthropology and is an award-winning painter. A Pushcart Prize nominee, he is published in over seventy journals including *The Cincinnati Review*, *Faultline*, *Windsor Review*, *Packingtown Review* and *Tar River Poetry*, among others. His first collection of poems entitled *JUICE* has been published by Regal House Publishing. You can visit his website at <https://www.charlesspringer.com>. He writes from Pennsylvania.

Emily Jon Tobias lives on the coast of Southern California while pursuing her MFA in writing at Pacific University Oregon. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee in 2017 where she obtained her bachelor's degree in creative writing.

Katya Trushchankova is a Santa Clara University student who discovered

her interests fit better in an independent major she called Marketing as Community Development via Arts, which she doubles with an English major. After dabbling in spoken poetry, she decided it's time to try publishing her work. This is her first publication.

Millie Tullis is an MFA poetry candidate at George Mason University. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Mud Season Review*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Juked*, and *Ninth Letter*. She reads for *Phoebe* as assistant poetry editor. She can be reached on twitter @millie_tullis.

A.A. Vincent is a Black and invisibly disabled poet from the Midwest. She currently resides in the San Francisco Bay Area, and is pursuing her Master of Fine Arts in Writing at the University of San Francisco. She has had poetry published in San Francisco literary journal *Quiet Lightning* and nonprofit magazine *Street Sheet*, as well as a creative essay on being a poet during the pandemic in *SF Weekly*.

J. Marcus Weekley lives in Xinzheng, China and enjoys mostly horror and international films, including *Tucker and Dale vs. Evil*, *Beautiful Thing*, and *Run, Lola, Run*. Marcus' writing has appeared in Poetry International and The Curator among others. His book of ekphrastic poems, *Singing in the Merman Cemetery*, came out in 2019, and Marcus is also the Editor at *PRO-EM* <https://proemjournal.wixsite.com/proem>.

Isaac Yelder is an English major in his third year at Santa Clara University who grew up in both Detroit and Phoenix. He loves Tiger Woods and the Detroit Pistons, and has yet to find anybody who can compete with him in Mario Kart. His life is heavily influenced by rap, from 90s west coast to modern mixtapes being published on Datpiff.

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SANTA CLARA REVIEW

volume 107 / issue 02

CONTRIBUTORS

ANNIE ALBERS / AYESHA ASAD / DANIEL ARISTI / DIANE AVERILL / MELISSA BALLETE / TESS
BERGHOFF / ROBERT BHARDA / S. T. BRANT / ANTHONY CARUSO / MARIALISA CARUSO /
MICHAEL CHANG / WARREN CHANG / GAVIN COSGRAVE / DANNA D'ESOPPO / BYUNG A. FALLGREN
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