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Eleven and a Half

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From the Editors

While we live in a digital age, this issue of Eleven and a Half, which acts as a capsule of the creative talents of your friends and peers, proves that print is not dead. As every one of us continues to grow and evolve in our craft, this physical memento will stand as a reminder that great writing and art will transcend time.

Masthead

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Table of Contents

Poetry

Alma Valdez-Garcia

10 *Tortilla Girls*

11 *Up to Hermit's Peak*

12 *Desert Sun*

Andrew Sokulski

18 *Dear Friend*

Alistair Forrester

24 *Intangible*

25 *Grandfather*

Tia Guerrier

29 *words disturb the
heat of silence*

Rebeca Leal

33 *Selfie*

Callie O'Rourke

38 *elegy for my father*

Bianca Olson

42 *In Denial*

Wes Thomason

49 *Mitosis*

Ryan Loritz

50 *Slow Dance in a
Small Dirty Kitchen*

52 *TOE KNEE*

Kallie Quist

54 *A Feeling Made of
Felt*

Gracie Pierson

72 *Sea Sick*

Rocío Christensen Garrido

74 *Redford*

Carolina Melo

84 *Red Bioluminescent
Tide*

Victoria Richards

96 *Sticky Hands,
Wild Hair, Bare Feet*

Elisabeth O'Driscoll

98 *Untitled*

Ali McPherson

99 *Harlem: A
Meditation on
Langston Hughes*

Yuecen "Ricky" Cai

113 *Hues of Home*

Emily Hirschtick

116 *Blood Clots*
118 *Love Poem*

Mallory Strom

119 *The Moving Cold*

Emma Jones

136 *Ichi-Go Ichi-E*

Alana Perez

138 *about the way*
139 *country human*

Non-Fiction

Juno Stille

14 *Fossil Record*

Sarah Fosburg

35 *Dry State*

Hannah Waskowitz

57 *What Comes From
Poisoned Earth*

Sandra Stollar

68 *My World Was Now
Forever Changed*

Bridget Doyle

101 *Subway
Connections*

Fiction

A.J. Vitiello

20 *The Gospel
According to
Steve Harvey*

Allegra Melloul

26 *INSTANTANEOUS*

Adjani Ngathe Kebe

44 *Under The
Damascus Sun*

Jonathan Turner

60 *I have Loved
for Sayid*

Laura Ye

82 *Ode to Sigh*

Kylah Balthazar

88 *Retail Therapy*

Ojasvin Kirpane

128 *Wanda's Dog*

Arie Pramono

140 *Contributor's Note*

Features

Ali McPherson

64 *An Erasure of
Sonnet 144*

Susan Shapiro

65 *An Erasure of
Sonnet 144*

Yasmin Yusuff

78 *An Interview with
Nicole Nyariri*

106 *Shots at the Canon!*

122 *Eleven and a Half
Bookshelf*



Clair Gunther
Chair Table Booth
Watercolor

Three Poems by Alma Valdez-Garcia

Tortilla Girls

slinking into our kitchen past sheer curtains of
the divide, sunning in fluorescent lights
i crawl with my legs tucked
to a round table mama calls ours

every morning she stands at the stove
striking turquoise glittering on hands neck skin

a lit cigarette hanging
burning its way down till the tip
curls up towards the mouth sucking

smile lines of her face
wrinkles that echo
upon the faces of her legacies

in front her eyes wonder of happiness, behind
are dreams of dead animals and children that torment

creased hands knead dough inside and around
her bolas placed underneath blue towels to rise
skillfully as she had done

i stand at the stove where she fed her children
kneading the dough one two three bolas
rolled out to consume
salty on the tongue, licking around mouths of butter

Up to Hermit's Peak

Sections of clumped atole, swim in
milk and honey, warmed and held
in our mouths. Bracing for summer
mornings, already drenched to
the core, with salty sweat. Our
homecomings pose as fresh tortillas
placed between two towels to keep
fresh and ready for savory butter,
melted in day break. Eyes look into
blue overhead. Sitting in grandma's
maroon soaked truck, rainbows cast
on my young neck; warm, down to
feet. Bodies pressed up against one
another. 1 2 3. Searing steering
wheel, has been beaten by the sun,
hands nimbly turning corners.
Mesas loom ahead, flat and sure.
Resolved. Mark space, 10,262'.
Right to the nose. All stop short.
Last time together? Quite possibly.
Woven blankets rub up against my
legs, caressing, rough, and brightly
colored. Laughs rise from mouths,
all thanks to fluffed trees and curly
hair. The kids are actin' up, lime
green grass right up to knees, scraps
bark, bloodied. Bordered land to the
right and left, ours? No.

Our last rites.

Desert Sun

(on Georgia O'Keeffe, "Pelvis Series, Red and Yellow")

the Blue that Blue that
will always be against Blue
had God tell me I could have it when I finished
my snake like eyebrow twists of red, weep
water eyes to quench a thirst brought on
by the melting heat of day, centred holes
in the bones
known
fine, weave
rich dream thing I do
nearer reality than my object
pelvis bones rather than skulls
here, a void rather than
a solid
I can feel aching down to the left
my own dry
sunshine cast on sunbathing skin with
spider like red veins



Julia St.Clair

Untitled (la curva en el río)

Digital Photograph

Fossil Record

Juno Stilley

My father takes a breath, flips a stapled page, and continues exclaiming to the circle of wide-eyed six-year-olds: "If this was 520 million years ago, we would be swimming with them right now! Look around, they would be everywhere!" The array of kids; some best friends, some classmates I was forced to invite, and some little cousins, all seated in the dirt, gaze in wonder. This scene of my childhood birthday party, at the base of Eaton Canyon in Pasadena, California, a hiking trail my family has honored for years, is the last memory I have of my father walking and talking. Here is how my father's active form will eternally exist to me: his exaggerated tale of the trilobite, the extinct marine arthropod he has been obsessed with his whole life. The rest of the party is spent piling vanilla ice cream cake into our mouths and running through the flowing stream that splits the canyon in two.

For that same birthday, later at home, I am gifted a trilobite fossil. My father drops it into my open palm. Dust brown, light, granular, rough, stone. The ridged indentations running parallel feel like my own ribs. My little hand holds what has come before me, what I am made up of, and what I will leave behind. The fossil could easily be a knockoff, a simple trap for the ignorant eye, but I know no difference. Trilobites left a gargantuan fossil record, so they hold no rarity or worth. Still, I will take this one with me wherever I go in the world.

This was before my father's Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis left him bedridden. Before I had ever been away from my home for more than a night. Before I would call my landline just to hear my father's voice in our answering machine, repeating how we can't come to the phone right now. Even at this moment, I know very little. My father's disease slammed into our family, creating destruction like the breaking of glass across a hard floor, my mother forced to pick up the pieces from every corner or face the rogue shards getting stuck in my bare feet. At first, he went quickly: cane to wheelchair to bed. Now, he lives in limbo. He is kept alive by a tangle of tubes and a staff of nurses. A brain in a jar, he calls himself. An ironic existence mirroring that of his favorite sixties sci-fi movies, half human, half robot evil genius. His eyes are the only part of his body he still has authority over, so he created a machine that tracks his pupils to control a mouse on a computer where he can type out messages, create music, and art; all with strenuous difficulty.

Because every letter he writes requires such focus, there is an importance to his words. To speak with intent, not just to fill a silence. As I'm rambling, my sentences watered down with 'uh's' and 'likes,' I reflect on my father's pragmatic communication. When his text messages sit in my phone, I remind myself of the effort he put into this expression. When I go out with my friends, guilt settles deep within me. I find myself needing to be beside him at all times, worry filling my moments away. If he is in front of me I know he's breathing.

A paradox: he'll always be right there but he won't be there forever. The whole family flits around him, and he remains the same in his bed, pushed to the corner of the house, the way cities are built around a single oak tree. "How's the world?," he'll type out, taking five minutes to get it right because he is stubborn and demands perfect grammar and spelling, even though I could guess what he intended to say the entire time. "Do trilobites still swim around?" Trilobites were certainly not around in 2013, the last year my father ever went outside, but he has an ancient quality about him: he knows about the world intimately, as if he was there for its creation and will be there for its extinction. He swam with the trilobites himself. The antiquity of our Earth frightens me,

thinking of every creature who has called this place their home. "Some people are alive too long," he texts me. My father has watched all of his friends die. He laughs at this strange twist of fate, for he surely thought he would be the first.

Juno Emmalene Seagreen Trilobite Stilley. The family legend surrounding my name tells of the first two weeks of my birth when I was called, "The Goat," for the animal noises I would make, until my mother sat at the city hall to validate my existence after my dramatic bathtub birth. She would have had to wait in a separate line to add more middle names to her new baby's birth certificate and was too exhausted to continue. We dropped the extraneous Seagreen and Trilobite. I discovered my father's list of other possible baby names. In his messy, capitalized scrawl: Pigeon, Aurora, Friday, and Madeline. All the other alternate universes where I am those people. Who would I be if I was not myself? In a past life I am sure I was a bumble bee. A pirate captain. An alley cat. A trilobite.

There is dual selflessness and selfishness in parenting. My father refuses to take any credit in my development. He says he just left the door ajar. Yet, half of everything I am is because of my father. He did no active parenting, held no power over me. Asking my father if I could sleepover somewhere was merely a formality. My mother raised me while taking care of my father. Suddenly, she acquired another child. I'm a branch, grown from my mother's tree. I see her in the way I look, laugh, cry. The things that I don't like about her appear all over me. Her incapability to pronounce long words, her over-excitability. My mother was born to be a dandelion, to give and give and spread herself across the world until she is no more. I both shudder and revel at the legacy I have been left. I am the last Stilley. I have to clean up the messes made, the ties cut. I'm asked if I'll take my future husband's last name and I say I'm keeping my last name while my future wife can do whatever she wants with hers. All one has is themselves and their reality, as every person is really just a brain in a jar. I like to imagine the fossil I have was the last trilobite to ever exist. It swam in the dirty brown Cambrian waters as the only of its kind. We are sisters in this way.

Being my mother's only one, I am alone in my workings of the future and consistently unsure of what's to come. My big beautiful hot house, built in the 1930's by the great-great-grandfather my whole family is devoted to, is sewn onto my skin. The small town where I roamed the streets, learning to fall and covering sidewalks in chalk masterpieces, makes my home dangerous. My aunt can hardly stand to visit because when she does she never gets out of bed, like a cat in a certain patch of sun. My mother works from home, going days without changing out of her pajamas. And of course, there is my father. I am the only one who can run away. Yet, this home base that has housed my ancestors, demands to be filled. There must be love within its walls, or it brutally falls apart to the hands of the contractors who scavenge in search of unique houses to turn grey. I see a vision of my children, and their children, all running through the same Eaton Canyon, five minutes away from this house where they return to after the long and adventurous day.

I used to dance through the trails of our canyon's river, always upstream. It doesn't flow anymore, and the waterfall it leads to is nearly dried up. Year after year, I saw it fade, until it was only a trickle. When I was young I would create stick dams, collecting water into tiny pools that would catch tadpoles and fish in their stillness. If there was a natural gathering of leaves and rocks, I would destroy it. I reveled in the small act of changing nature; the knowledge that when I left there would be something to remember me by. The trees were not witnesses enough. What is this universal desire to leave a mark? The Panama Canal and Mount Washington and maybe even New York City are all side effects of the ego. If I don't leave something, was I even real? Achilles chooses an early death just to be remembered, instead of living a life full of love that ends in swift anonymity. This is why my father and I make art, why a glacier makes a valley. What once existed can live beyond its own presence. With humans, there is always a subconscious thrumming desire to be remembered. A trilobite just leaves themselves.

Dear Friend

Andrew Sokulski

Dear friend from Taiwan
The vision of brightness
Finally, a life as radiant as Japan's rising sun.

Stagnant days and times trod on as passing taxis
Mists from underground caverns billow up in furies
Each step to and fro seems the same
When will all the paths not look so plain
The city is not a poor location
It simply is that my personal navigation
Has been misdirected.

A chance to cross darkness
Finally my heart and mind can see
Life's hopeful light within me.
Oftentimes I dreamed and thought serenely
Hoping and wishing joy would come to be.
During those moments I felt free
During those times freedom was creativity.
Finally I could perceive
What life has been yearning to receive.

Red and white
Oh how you have caught every inch of my sight
Adored Japan
You calmed my anxiety with the swift wave of a fan
For that I am not only your adorer
But also willing to forever be your right-hand man.

Riverside strolling
At Shrines and temples relaxing.
Finally what I had solely imagined
Has started to
form

Friendly cheer
Water tea or beer
Greeted by warmth in Japan's embrace
Finally came the time to take off the shadows
letting go.

Standing in a circle of pebbles
Pure silence abounding without any quibbles
My own tune came to sound

Under a rising sun all preconceptions melted
Gazing up/ releasing bothersome notions
Strolling along kamogawa with the rays
I walked with organic motions
Sitting in a garden--flowers blooming skyward
A renewed son
Healed by the rising of Japan's blissful sun~

The Gospel According to Steve Harvey

A.J. Vitiello

My grandmother used to go to church on Sundays, but now she watches game shows instead. Her day begins at lunch, with four or five episodes of *Family Feud*. At three o'clock, she watches *Jeopardy*, followed by several reruns of *The Price is Right*. They'll show an older episode if she's lucky, back when Bob Barker was cute and everyone had a crush on him. But the day always ends the same, with Howie Mandel asking the vital question: "Deal? Or no deal?"

I visit her every weekend. My mother never joins me, claiming she hates nursing homes or has some errands to run. We both know that's a lie. It's the fact her own mother won't recognize her. It's too painful, and she can't bring herself to see her. Without me, Grandma would be forgotten, erased from everyone's memory. Then again, even Grandma forgets who she is sometimes. The Alzheimer's is so severe her own name is blurry. It's my job to remind her she's still Grandma.

Mom drops me off at the entrance, and I check in with the nurse at the front desk. She smiles because she knows me. I'm probably one of a handful of visitors that haven't abandoned their relatives. I tread down the hall towards Room 108. That's where Grandma has spent the last five years of her life, and it's probably where she'll spend the rest of it; where she'll probably die. God forbid it happens in the middle of *Jeopardy*, without hearing the answer to the question.

I press my ear against her door before opening it, and I'm met with a game show buzzer indicating a wrong answer. Grandma doesn't hear me come in, as her memory isn't the only thing that's faded with age. She's sitting in her recliner chair facing the television, one hand on the remote. An untouched tray of mashed potatoes and applesauce rests on the coffee table.

"Grandma, you have to eat your lunch. You always told me not to waste food, remember?" I say, lowering the volume on the TV.

"I'm not hungry," she responds, pausing to look up at me. "Who are you?"

"It's me, Abby."

Her mind works to the tune of the *Jeopardy* theme song, searching my face for recognition. She repeats my name softly at the front of her lips. I give her ten more seconds before revealing the answer.

"Your granddaughter?" I tell her.

"Oh," she says, "I didn't know I had a granddaughter."

"Well, you do. Seven of them. Plus three grandsons."

"Can you be quiet?" she snaps at me. "Steve Harvey is on TV."

How sad is it she can recognize a game show host she's never met, but can't remember her own granddaughter? I don't blame her. The mind is cruel that way.

I turn the TV off and stand in front of it. Grandma doesn't seem to notice. Then, I muster up the deepest voice I can and begin to play. "Welcome, welcome! I'm your host, Steve Harvey, and this is *Family Feud*!" Grandma smiles wildly and claps her frail hands together, but they make no sound. I start off with an easy question. "Okay, get ready to buzz in! Top five answers on the board. Name something you had for breakfast this morning."

She bites her lip, racking her brain for different food items. It shouldn't take her this long. She has the same thing for breakfast every morning. Oatmeal, a blueberry muffin, and apple slices. Finally, she calls out, "French toast!" Wrong answer. I make the buzzer sound and tell her to try again. This time she says a muffin, and I give her the point. I don't ask her to specify what kind.

Now it's time for *Jeopardy*. "Your husband proposed to you at this location," I say.

She answers immediately. "What is Times Square?"

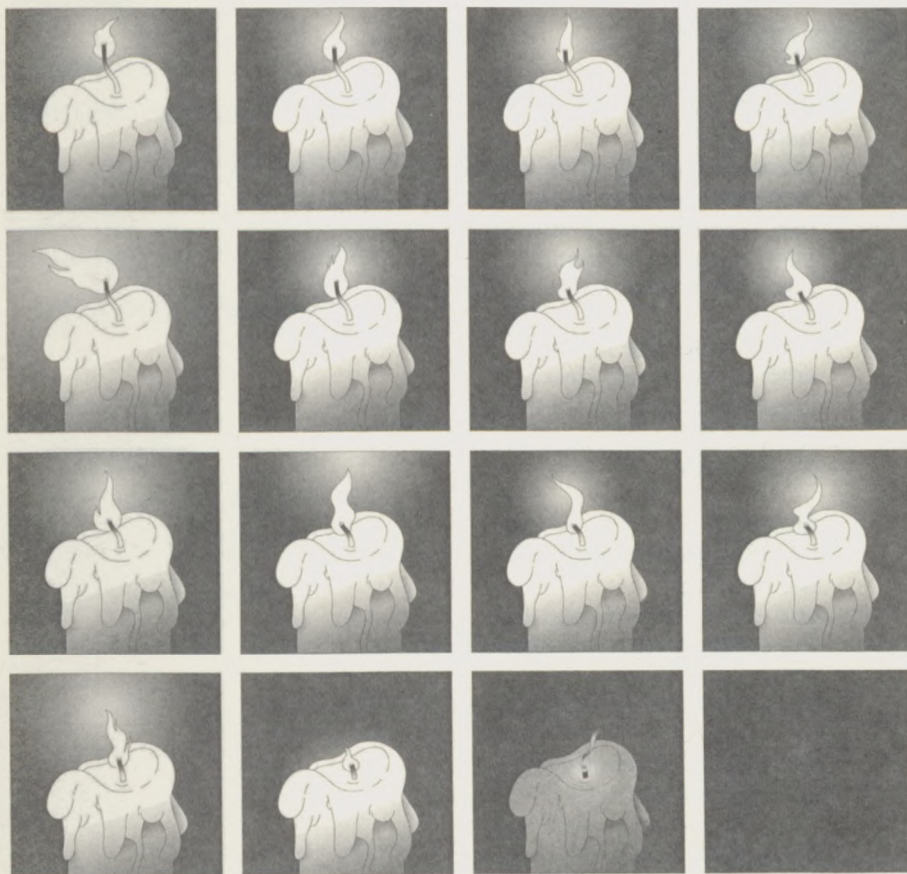
I break into applause, happy she's hung on to that memory. Grandma would always tell the story of the proposal on their anniversary. I thought her love for my grandpa would be everlasting, since she always remembered it with such joy. Who knew she'd forget his name years later?

For the next hour, I play more games with her to jog her memory. She answers some questions with such detail it makes me wonder if she has Alzheimer's at all. But when she can't remember her own middle name, I'm reminded of how strangely her brain works. As the questions get more personal, Grandma weighs the cost of her memories. "Deal? Or no deal?" she asks herself. How much is she willing to risk?

I have one last question before Mom comes to pick me up. "It's the hardest one yet," I tell her. "If you get this one, you'll win the special prize." I don't tell her what the prize is, because there is none. Even if there was, she'd forget about it anyway. But I, on the other hand, know the real prize of the game shows. It's the memories I've made playing them, digging up my grandmother's past. Her prize is the present. Her now. No disease can ever take that from her.

I look down at my shoes before asking the question, praying God would save her one more memory. All I want is for her to remember me — remember me by something. "Grandma, which of your grandchildren always double-knots her shoelaces?"

Her eyes spin like the wheel of fortune. I wait for her to buzz in.



Kyle Canyon
Night Wax
Digital Print

Two Poems by Alistair Forrester

Intangible

she sits up
half-naked
stomach folding at the seams
and gives me that look
that reminds me of summer
even though she herself
has always been cold

I remember the Rockies
with snow rained down
crystallized palaces set
above a majestic
dying forest

dry heat
in the Saguaro Desert
the sun sets
and blazes hotter than ever
the sand creatures dance,
churp, and yawn
at the sight of a new moon

she asks what beauty is,
and I recall her eyes
I look down and mine water
filling that desert sky
"Intangible"
like the Rockies on a winter morning
slick with ice,
ethereal, to the last
waking moments of life

Grandfather

What are we
but lost soliloquies
Stretched out over human verse
Whispers of lust, envy, and pride
Tearing each other asunder,
With competing notions of purpose

Grandfather,
What are we
But our skeletal pulses,
Our carnal cages,
Our great beyond?

INSTANTANEOUS

Allegra Melloul

Moments together were so vivid.

The clicking of our heels, timed almost perfectly together, echoed throughout the empty parking lot. The lack of any other presence was telling of the time: much too late into the night. Our surroundings at that moment were bleak, even melancholy, yet I felt neither one of our dispositions coincided with them. The warmth in his eyes and the brightness of the smile he'd given me certainly didn't.

This date wasn't a scheduled one. It was spontaneous and those were my favourite kinds of dates. Nothing was planned and anything could happen. Although we were just getting ice cream at a local shop he loved, it could easily be one of the best moments of our little love affair.

Pink and blue neon illuminated his kind features, emphasizing a glimmer in his eyes that made my heart giggle and flutter. I could've admired him forever... could've fallen in love with him forever. He distracted me in the best way, and so much so he had to nudge me to walk into the parlour as he held the door open. From a first glance, I noted how beaten down the place was. A couple of the tiles on the ground were cracked, the fluorescents flickered every once in a while, and even the man behind the counter, who I assumed to be

the owner, looked like he'd been doing this for a very long time. Yet again, the setting didn't align with the excitement I felt in my chest.

I'm now failing to recall what I had gotten, though I can still remember what he ordered, a generous scoop of maple oreo in a cup. It didn't matter all that much, anyway. Before I could even get to the cash register and pay for my part, he'd already covered it. He always did, and I was always awed by his chivalry. Before I could register the gesture, he was opening the door for me again and leading me to two uninhabited chairs perched on the storefront.

The metal was cold against my back and thighs, but the warm summer air kept me comfortable. He sat across from me and we conversed as we normally would. It was always so easy to talk to him and I felt that way from the very first time we met. He had an aura that put me at ease and I believe I made him feel the same. We'd clicked right away from the first time we met while working at the movie theatre. I hadn't truly believed in love at first sight or any sort of "whirlwind romance" until I met him.

Together we laughed as we sat in the heat of the night, eating ice cream, and enjoying each other's company. That was, until his expression became a bit more firm. It was unusual for him to become so serious, and it, in turn, brought up an anxious curiosity from me. His thumb was running along the rim of his emptied ice cream cup and his eye contact had lessened. His caution towards the impending subject was worrisome, yet charming.

I could tell he didn't want to say it from the moment his lips parted. He sighed, "I feel like I'm using you." I knew exactly where this was going.

He'd go on to explain his dilemma. He was a year older and in a few months time he'd be moving across the country for college. *If only it had stopped there*, I thought. Waiting for him on the opposite coast would be her, a girl he'd come to fall in love with at summer camp two years before and who he planned on being with. He didn't want to use me and he felt guilty for leading me on. He apologised, sincerely and genuinely, and I felt it. He did have feelings for me—he did—but it just wouldn't work. He was infatuated with me, but in love with her.

Though I had known at the start of our relationship (if it could even be called such) that it would end because of university, or because it was improbable my first love would be my only, I wasn't expecting this. Suddenly, my heartbroken self was thrown into a competition I was bound to lose from the start. I sat there, idle, as a few stray tears dropped into my ice cream.

"It wouldn't work anyways," he said, "I'm going to be a politician. You're an actress. We're from two different worlds, you know? We like different things."

I chuckled through the pain. "That's not necessarily true... Marilyn Monroe and John F. Kennedy pulled it off." But that was just an excuse for the both of us. Somehow he believed the blow would hurt less with that reasoning and somehow I believed my reasoning could convince him. I clung onto this hope; this idea I could win him over if I kept trying, if I was stubborn, if I didn't stop pursuing him because of *her*.

It was the constant reassurance that tempted me further. Reassurance not only from his apologies, but from myself... It would be fine, and I wouldn't get hurt again, and we'd be together past our expiration date. I managed to run through these thoughts in a matter of minutes while he continued to explain himself. By the end of his monologue, I'd collected myself.

Music filled the void of silence as he drove me back home, occasionally interrupted by the mechanic sound of his stick-shift. I watched through the window as the buildings of Wilshire Boulevard whizzed by and thought to myself, yet again reinforcing my own blind beliefs I could win him over. I was brought back to reality when the car stopped in front of my apartment building.

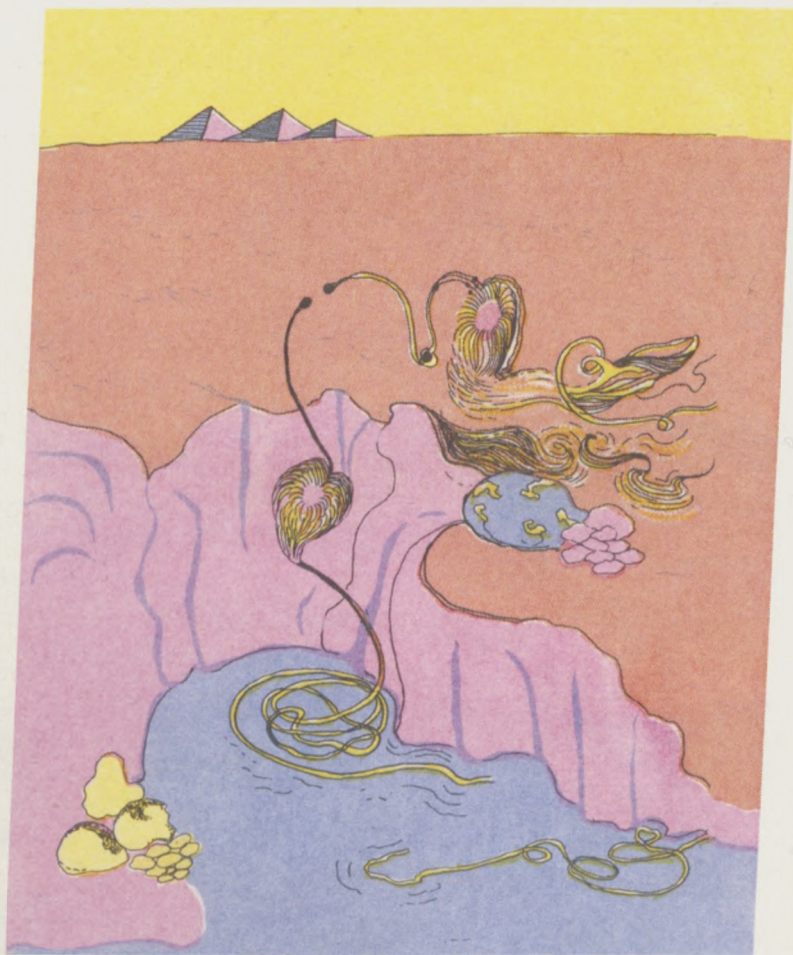
Our eyes met seconds before our lips, and with nothing more, we both knew this wasn't the end of our instantaneous summer love.

words disturb the heat of silence

Tia Guerrier

*and I'm
open
ocean bed
sunk
in
lustful comatose
code language
touch and
eye gaze*

*we could speak
through
rooms
below sea
through
 walls and
screens
lingering electricity*



Shivani Mithbaokar
Mindscape
Risograph Print

Selfie

Rebeca Leal

Nowadays I have a mirror in my iPhone 7,
Before I didn't look at myself as much.
If I looked down, I could see my hands.
If I looked up, I could see the roof.
It's true that every once in a while,
I searched for my reflection
In all kinds of transparencies.
And when I saw a photo of me,
I thought: this too is how I can be
—the driest flower in the bouquet—
I thought: this too is how I can be
And when I saw a photo of me,
I searched for my reflection
In all kinds of transparencies
It's true that every once in a while,
If I looked up, I could see the roof.
If I looked down, I could see my hands.
Before I didn't look at myself as much.
Nowadays I have a mirror in my iPhone 7.



Dry State

Sarah Fosburg

Utah is a dry state, which means that a) we can't sell alcohol on Sundays and b) a steamed-up bathroom is the closest we'll ever come to humidity. New York heat is like being slowly boiled; Utah heat is like being slowly baked. Deserts rarely look like cacti and cow skulls and endless sand—in Utah they look like miles and miles of sagebrush, twigs so dry they crumble in your fist, and permanent scabs inside your nose from dehydration.

These deserts are where I fell in love. I was nine years old, and my qualifications for loved ones were that they had to either be related to me or read the same books as me, and I fell in love with my best friend—who had moved to Utah from Georgia, who read the Warriors series, who understood that the sagebrush behind my house was the greatest place for adventures. Who thought my jokes were funny, who understood about my parents and my sister, who never laughed at me when I cried over little things.

But—she was a girl. And I was a girl. So immediately after I fell in love with her I decided almost subconsciously that I wasn't in love with her at all, that I couldn't be, because girls can't love each other like that. We're not allowed.

I still loved her, though, because that's how love works. And the thing about this particular love is that it lasted. It *lasted* years and it wouldn't go away no matter how hard I tried to make it, no matter how I tried to have a crush on boys at school. When the games we played involved holding hands, I held my breath and glanced away so she wouldn't notice how nervous I was. When our phone calls ended and she hung up (she always hung up first), I whispered *I love you* into the receiver, so quiet I couldn't even hear it myself.

In Utah, the second-driest state in the nation, the Mormon vote elects our politicians, the LDS Church shapes our culture, and there is no room for anyone even slightly outside the bounds of normal. And all the while we're inhaling some of the worst air in the country, trapped under a choking layer of smog. Even if you're in the 38% that isn't part of the Mormon Church, its messages affect you without you even realizing it.

For years after my best friend moved to California, I went on trips to visit her. She went to Hollywood and became an actress, and her gigs took her to New Orleans, New York City, and Dublin. Always, wherever she went, she'd invite me along for a few days. To meet her friends and see the sets and help her practice her scripts. To watch her live out dreams that should have lit her up, but instead swallowed her whole. Because even though she'd escaped Utah, she still carried it with her, like a family member you're ashamed of, that bigoted uncle who's always going to be related to you no matter how infrequently you call him.

The more serious my best friend's film and TV offers got, the more we started to slip away from each other. And yet, the more we slipped away from each other, the more desperately we clung. I watched her on TV—*Law & Order*, *Parenthood*, *Elementary*—and every episode made the pit in my stomach a little bigger. I started saying "I love you" to her out loud, in person and over the phone, but it never felt important or magical the way it had when it was a secret. Instead it felt like a desperate, pleading lie. Please love me, I might as well have been saying. *Please, just love me and I'll be able to love you back. Please.*

In Utah, it's easy to forget who you are. It's easy to forget that the oppressive majority religion and oppressive dry heat and oppressive bad air are not the entire world. Because when you've lived there your whole life, those things *are* the entire world, and even after you leave, the lessons you learned stay with you. Where you grow up is a part of you; you can't shake it and you can't run from it. I hear Utah in the way that I speak, when I drop the *n* and *t* from the word *mountain*, when I hesitate before swearing because I'm so used to words having heavy, offensive weight. I smell Utah, the chokingly polluted air, when they bulldoze New York City streets or I'm hit with a wave of car exhaust. And I feel Utah in the way that I love, in the way that I define my own queerness, in the way that I harm and am harmed by other people.

By the time my best friend and I kissed for the first time, we didn't love each other anymore, and we had given up on ever loving each other in a meaningful way. We kissed because we owed it to each other to at least try kissing, because we wanted to see, just for a second, how things could have been. We kissed for the same reason we said *I love you* to each other—not because it was true, or right, but because we were trying to convince ourselves it was. And every kiss after that was the same—desperate pleas for a love that used to exist, that was stamped out.

Queer people are constantly told we are undeserving of love. We hear it from the world every day. We hear it in discriminatory policies, homophobic jokes, off-handedly insensitive comments. It's exhausting to hear it from the world, and it's agonizing to hear it from people we used to love. The people we had to stop loving because we're not allowed.

elegy for my father

Callie O'Rourke

in my
childhood
we created
treasure chests
from
cigar boxes—

thick smell of tobacco
polished wood
secrets—

and jumped
in fallen leaves
death
strangely
bringing life
to still afternoons—

sky full of yellow light
and music
of our laughter—

we framed
photos that hung
on the walls
like a
testament
of truth—

how now: false,
dismounted,
tucked away—

once,
you told me
your worst fear
was to die
alone—

a grey-brown room
wooden folding chairs
silence—



Nik Antonio
Untitled
Photograph



Nik Antonio
Red
Photograph

In Denial

Bianca Olson

you'll deny everything
the first kiss, the second, the third
you'll deny it all

we were really close friends you tell them
but we were more than that and we both know it
we were reckless, hopeful teenagers
so, so desperate for love that we turned to each other to define it

you'll deny that my neck was the first skin you ever tasted
you left me reminders that imperfectly stained red over the thin layer of
my perfume
my room was the only safe haven we knew of
the only place that absorbed every drop of forbidden passion we couldn't
share with anyone else
that kept every whispered *i love you* unheard from the outside

you'll deny that i named us a team,
a promise to fight side by side forever
we depended on each other for everything
i wonder if you acknowledge that we are both alive today with the help of
one another

you'll deny that what we had was beautiful
it was hidden,
uneasy,
guarded,

but it was love
regardless of the secrecy
it was love

somewhere in your attentive brain you know that what we had was
special
yet you tip-toe around my name when people plead you to confess
your first love
you always say the name of the boy who walked into your life after me

and i get it, trust me when i say that i do
i'm sure it's much easier on your pride to explain how best friends fall
in love when it's the typical love story of boy meets girl
but that gives you no excuse to disregard me altogether

tell me why you deny us
tell me why he's your first kiss instead of me
i hope the sour taste of that lie when you swallow it burns your throat
until you are left with the guilty aftertaste of shamefully dismissing
the first pair of lips you ever bit

i meant something to you once, green-eyed girl, and it hurts me to
hear you say otherwise
because i am a person with a beating heart, as are you
and at one point, your heart only beat for me, as mine did for you

but you'll deny it

Under the Damascus Sun

Adjji Ngathe Kebe

I.

It was a little after the sun set and everyone was preparing to pray Maghrib. Muezzin Aalam walked into the Umayyad Mosque. His feet slapped against the Turkish tiles as he approached the announcement room. His spine was erect, shoulders squared as if he were walking on water. He entered the room and began to recite the adhan, calling everyone to prayer. His voice was slightly nasal as he recited the Kalimah, Takbir, followed by the Shahada.

Maahnoor heard the voice of Muezzin Aalam and turned back to look at the great mosque. It looked foreboding and omnipotent. It was time to go home and she had been out for too long. Ummah Yalina would be worried. Exasperated, she rolled her eyes, then reached down and took off her slippers. She ran home, dust collecting on her feet. She came in the house, her hijab in the middle of her head, strands of hair all over her face. She was glistening with sweat and her feet were muddied as if she had been walking for 40 years in the desert. Her mother looked at her as soon as she entered. Ummah Yalina threw her hands up as her daughter raised one finger to silence her—don't start now.

"You are not an animal Noor! Look at yourself? Aren't you a woman? Did I not raise you to be clean?" Maahnoor turned her back to her and rolled her eyes. She would never dare do it front of her.

"Ummi, I just ran here. I didn't want to miss Maghrib prayer."

"You wouldn't miss Maghrib if you came home after school like everyone else," Ummah Yalina said. "You're always getting into something you shouldn't, Noor. I don't know what I ever did to get a daughter like this? Why can't you be like Mustafa? He's always quiet and keeps to himself. He doesn't cause me any trouble. It's always the daughters who cause you the most pain."

"I'm sorry, Ummi, I'll try next time, I promise." Maahnoor hugged her mother and kissed her on the cheek.

"Go do Wudhu," she looked down at Maahnoor's feet and grimaced "and make sure you really get between those toes."

Maahnoor left and climbed the stairs into her bedroom. As soon as she walked in, she leaned on the closed door and blew out a long-held breath. She took off her hijab and walked into the bathroom. She looked in the mirror. She liked to look from what she hated the most to what she loved the most. She looked at the long hair she wasn't permitted to cut. Baba Yaseen didn't believe girls should have short hair. She tugged at it lightly, imagining all of it off. Shamis would be sad. She loved Maahnoor's hair the most. But Shamis was free to do whatever she wanted with her hair. She didn't have to keep it long and neat or hidden by a hijab. She had choices. She began Wudhu, ritually cleansing her sins.

II.

There are people who are born with a profound sense of freedom. They are afraid of nothing and deliberate. Everything they do is an act of liberation and they are dangerous because of it. Shamis was free. She wore her hair short, her curls falling a little past her ears. She did not wear the hijab, nor did she wear dresses. She would sometimes come to school in military pants and boots. Her nails were always painted black, even though it was haram. Maahnoor was mesmerized by her. She would stare at her in class, her sweaty hand plastered to her cheek, as Shamis recited Kahlil Gibran and Mahmoud Darwish. Sometimes, she would bite the insides of her cheeks bloody, to stifle a smile. A hint of metal would blossom on her tongue. Shamis' words would

transfer her into another world. A world in which they could lie together under the Damascus sun. Whenever Shamis would stare at her, she would look away. She would look at the teacher. At the ground. Outside the window. But never at her. The eyes could tell so much.

"Write to me," Shamis said to her one day. "I heard you are a great poet." Maahnoor stared at her, cocking her head to the side, appraising her. She was not certain she should take her seriously.

"What kind of poem would you like?" She responded.

"Oh, one of those obnoxious fifteenth- or seventeenth-century love poems. The ones that began with 'shall I compare thee,' or are about stealing the lock of some unsuspecting virginal woman. You know? The types of poems men who know nothing about women write."

Maahnoor tried not to overanalyze her words, but her brows furrowed as she stuck her finger to her chin. She feigned disinterest to keep from smiling. "I wouldn't know how to write such a poem," retorted Maahnoor, amused. "I'm not a man."

"But you must know about women and what they like?" Shamis responded, enjoying this game between them. She reached out and caressed her hand. She smiled at her. They both stared at each other, then burst out laughing.

"I can't promise you a fifteenth-century poem, but I'll write you, regardless. Meet me in the school garden tomorrow morning." Maahnoor left, her heartbeat lodged somewhere between her throat and collar bone. She was nervous, intrigued, and excited all at once. She spent the rest of the day writing and discarding poems. The floor of her bedroom was filled with crumpled up papers. For the first time in her life, words failed her. They were not enough to express how she felt. Every "shall I compare thee" poem felt fraught with fraudulence.

They sat in the school garden. This small nook at the end of the garden near the black calla lilies and peach peonies. Maahnoor took out her poem and recited it. After every line her voice would crack and she would clear her throat to continue. She kept wiping her palms on her dress. Each time she paused,

Shamis would gently press her hands to the top of her knees, encouraging her to continue.

*Habibti, onyx eyes
Honeyed lips
Daughter of Gaia and Aphrodite
Hera could never compare
I wish to look upon you
The way lonely wanderers look at the moon
I wish to kiss upon you...*

Shamis fixed the falling hair around Maahnoor's hijab. She cupped her hair around her ear, then cupped her chin and kissed her.

III.

The sky was a kaleidoscope of blue, yellow, red, and orange hues. Muezzin Aalam walked into the Umayyad Mosque for the third time, to sound the Maghrib prayer. Maahnoor woke up, sweat trailing kisses from her nape to her lower back. She shook Shamis, who was snoring besides her, a small smile encrusted on her lips.

"Shamis...Shamis," Maahnoor whispered so as not be heard by Ummah Yalina. She prodded her in the ribs until she opened her eyes, irritation crusted on the corners.

"You need to leave. It's time for Maghrib prayer."

"Why can't I pray here?" Shamis said, grabbing onto her waist and pulling her closer.

"Ummi doesn't know you're here. She'll ask what we were doing upstairs this whole time. What if she becomes suspicious?"

"We can say we were studying for the poetry exam..." Before Shamis could finish her plan, they heard the deliberate creak of the stairs. Maahnoor leapt off the bed and proceeded to find her clothes. As she put one leg in her skirt, Ummah Yalina opened the door. Maahnoor remained hunched over her skirt—

naked, except for one thigh barely covered by her pleated skirt. Shamis took the covers and pulled them to her face. She stared in horror, her mind incapable of grasping the severity of the situation. Ummah Yalina stared, breathless, then screamed. She put her hand over her mouth, but couldn't stifle herself. "Haram!" she kept screaming, "*haram!*" Maahnoor heard Baba Yaseen calling, "is everything alright?" She finished dressing and tried to approach her mother, who backed out into the corridor. She ran down the stairs. Shamis got off the bed and dressed. She put on her pants, shirt, and boots. She was not crying or shaking. A stoic calmness came over her. She had accepted the gravity of the situation. She walked up to Maahnoor and caressed her cheek. She kissed her as she shook her head and began crying.

"Look at me!" Maahnoor said, tears falling down her face. "We're done for."

"We did nothing wrong and I regret nothing. If they come for us tonight, tomorrow years from now, it doesn't matter. We could leave tonight if you would like. We don't have to stay here."

"Where would we go?"

"My uncle used to smuggle people like you and me outside of Damascus. We can flee to

Turkey, Greece, then Italy. We could be in Italy in two weeks' time. You don't have to stay here and you don't have to endure pain for being who you are."

Mitosis

Wes Thomason

Teeth are so delicately ripped from the root at night.
Bones so brittle
and muscles so deteriorated,
every joint movement so painfully obvious.

Lungs blackened,
ten thousand cigarettes or more.
A liver thoroughly bathed,
now an intricate maze of deadened tissue.
A brain rendered incompetent
all attributed to alprazolam,
those perfect little tablets.

A body covered in latex plastic,
a surgical glove for the skin.
It is split in two,
then again,
and again,
until each cell is being separated from its sister cell.
A rancorous, perfected plan
of the conscious
to rebuild the body around the true identity of the
keeper.

Two Poems by Ryan Loritz

Slow Dance in a Small Dirty Kitchen

Sirens call out
four floors below.

We sway back and forth
a ship without sails.

Her messy hair,
in my mouth,
floats like a cloud
over Idaho,
like a q-tip twists
in your ear.

Cheekbones like airplane parameterized lights
breath like wine
teeth like tombstones.

The view from her bedroom window reminds me
of audiobooks unspooled by tape decks
in cars driving across the desert,
a dance with memory,
a dance with dissonance...
with your sense of smell.

She cries sometimes,
only when she drinks
too much wine.
She cries until she can't breathe.
this is the most elaborate
move of our slow dance
in a small, dirty kitchen—
the dip of forgetfulness
the box step of letting go.

With the river of headlights
outside the window
we sway,
an intricate dance—

Bedsheets like manuscripts
voices like leaves on a windowpane
my heart like a bathrobe that hangs open.

TOE KNEE

Tony is high
as he carries the bedframe down
flights of stairs and out to his
beat-to-shit van where he pasted up
pictures of Natalie Wood, Jennifer Lopez,
Hillary Clinton and Whitney Houston.

“No tricks. No scams. I’ll take everything,
I’ll take the kitchen sink. I’ll take the brass pipes
if you want,” he says.

“I had a dream I was in outer space
with God looking down at the world.
He plucked me out of the stars and
said, ‘Time to go home,’ and brought
me back to Earth. I woke up sweating,”
he tells me as he drives his beat-to-shit van.

He doesn’t have any teeth but somehow
he’s chewing gum.

He honks the horn,
he sticks his head out the window,
he beats his hands on the dashboard,
he can’t handle himself.

He tells me never to call him the King—it's a curse.
He says, "God is the king of comedy
because he has the last laugh."

"I choose to laugh, there is power in laughter."

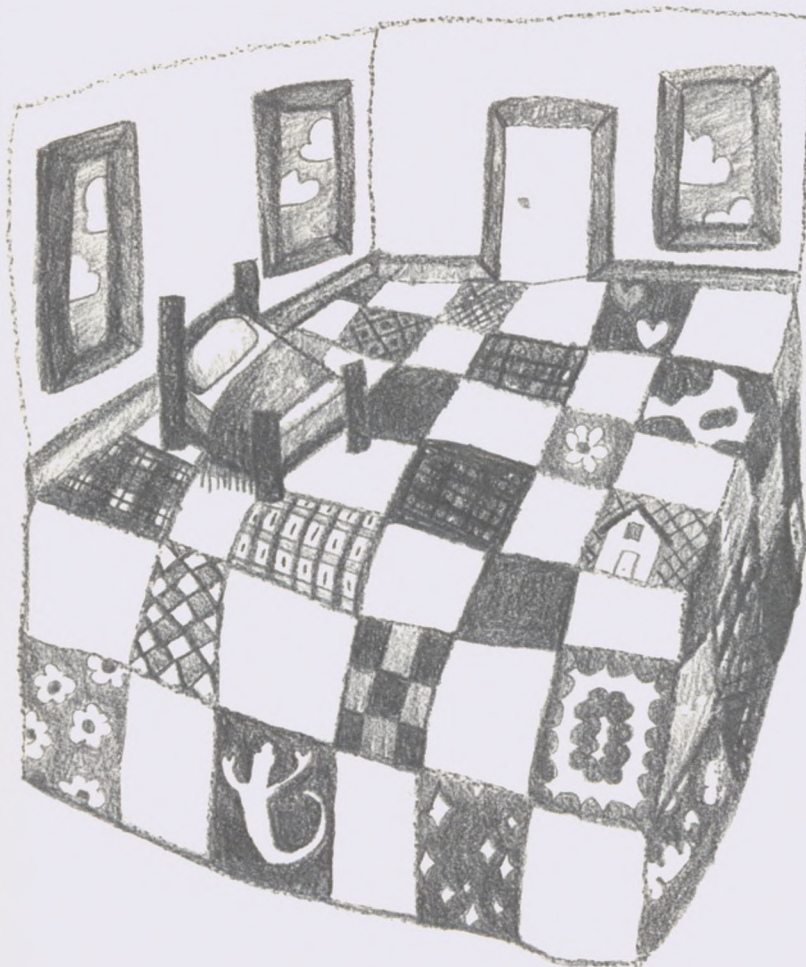
"Some people choose misery," he says
"Don't choose misery."

A Feeling Made of Felt

Kallie Quist

I wanted to lock it up in a room
wanted to keep the feeling safe inside
to keep a promise kept
as in, I must have felt awful lonesome
and it felt awful to feel
but feeling was better than unfeeling
and having felt it I couldn't unfeel it

so I locked it up in a tiny chest in my tiny chest
kept the key in my heart-shaped locket heart
and placed the tiny chest of feeling
on the proper shelf
in the proper place
in my library chest of felt feelings



Stella Stringer
Comfort Object
Wax Pencil on Paper



What Comes From Poisoned Earth

Hannah Waskowitz

My great-grandmother built a house in the Vermont mountains many years ago. There is a film of dust over nearly everything there, no matter how often it's cleaned or touched. Bugs make homes in every nook and cranny, and odd old trinkets are scattered around, making shelves into museums. The interior of the home is dim, streams of light from open curtains catch along dust, shells of beetles, and corners of castaway metal toys, transforming drab walls and floors into subtle disco balls. On top of an ancient wood stove, there is a picture of my mother as a young girl, her hair braided into pigtails, smiling as she floats on a shining river.

Outside, mountains surround the home on all sides. There are acres of field and forest, patches of grass alternating between lush green and dry straw. A wooden frame encased in grapevines lays on one side of the field, a single peach tree on the other. The fruits are rarely ripe when we're there, just hard green marbles on vines or soft, rotten fuzz on branches. Small patches of blackberries dot the grass in purple-black clusters. They are the only fruit that is ripe when we're there, but nothing compares to the allure of the peach tree, perhaps because it is the one useless thing that grows there.

Even when grapes aren't ripe, you can sit underneath their vines, encased in wood planks and green leaves, reading until dusk. There's nothing you can do with a rotten old peach tree except watch it rot. Its absence of leaves makes it a poor resting place under the hot summer sun, its spindly bare branches are too weak to support even a melted marshmallow. A rotten old peach tree just sits there, collecting dust and brown fuzz. You can't will the peaches to grow again or stall the ripening of fruit with empty prayer.

Once, during one of our family's long summer stays at the house, I had a dream that the peach tree was ripe. I walked across the half-dead grass, the pale pink fruit gleaming, little treasures bending the spindly branches with the weight of gold bars. I pulled one off, raised it to my mouth, and took a bite. It was sweet and simple, with a flavor that is present only in things you have picked right from the vine -- something just a bit earthy, an added richness that must have been Mother Nature's "thank you" for taking her fruits while they were fresh, because that peach tasted of pure summer. Sunset hued droplets raced down my arm, leaving their sticky-sweet trail on my skin. In my dream I stood in the grass, protected by walls of mountains on every side, holding my treasure and bathing in light. I woke up hoping that the tree really was ripe and full, but even before I ran outside I knew it wouldn't be.

I tell my mother about my dream, and the faint lines on her face twist back into a smile I've only seen in pictures. She looks past me, past the shelves of dust, and she sees her grandmother. A woman standing next to her husband, John the physicist, at college banquets and conferences where he is commended for his discoveries while he wears his medals and stands with his quiet, docile wife. Later, as the rest of the world fights the good fight against Hitler, she takes care of the children while he talks with Dr. Oppenheimer and General Groves about the atom bomb. And when he is released from the project and drowns himself in liquor and the bedsheets of women she doesn't know, she does not yell. She is quiet, docile. She does not scream, she does not stomp her feet and pound her fists into the ground her husband never had the chance to poison. No. She builds a little red house in the mountains for the children to spend the

summers in, and she puts a little wood stove in the living room and she plants grapevines on one side of the yard and a peach tree on the other.

And later, when her daughter marries a man who reminds them both too much of John, she does not say anything. She passes away, and her daughter keeps coming back to the red house every summer. She brings her children there, and one summer, her husband takes a picture of their oldest daughter, hair in double braids, smiling in the river down the road. And a few years later, after her husband has begun to drown himself the way men did when she was young, he goes out for a hunting trip and is found a few days later, lying on the ground with his gun in his hand, and she too becomes quiet, docile. Her daughters still spend the summer in the house, and they still wonder why that old peach tree never has any fruit. Is something wrong with the soil, they ask. Did someone pour salt and vinegar and loud words into the earth until nothing soft could grow?

The women before me were made to quiet down and round out their edges just so they could stay afloat. They fix cracks in walls and turn off the stove when no one else remembers to, without hope for help or praise, just so the house stays up. While they pass by, they place crinkled photos and metal trinkets on the shelves, things that would weigh them down too much to carry, so now those photos and bits of metal collect dust and catch wayward strands of light.

Soon, before I know it, I may be one of these women. Some of my sharp corners have already started to erode, and at times I find that my voice is nothing more than a fearful whisper. I wonder what things I might place on the shelves to collect dust, the items from my life I deem unimportant, that I toss to the side to stay up. My history is heavy, but I know I must keep it on my boat the way one might keep a life raft, close beneath my feet, just inches away, lest I forget it and begin to repeat.

I Have Loved for Sayid

Jonathan Turner

I.

The island of Oyinadu did not know sweet things. Never had they tasted honey. Sour mouths sat like bottomless holes in the faces of its people. People who were too unkind to be beautiful. Oyinadu was a living curse. Cows gave bloody milk. The threat of murder gleamed in people's eyes. Crops faded as soon as they were harvested, few fish swam into their nets and no songbirds trilled in the treetops. The village houses had windows shaped like skulls and ancient cracks in the brightly-painted walls that let in flesh-eating insects. No matter how long the people tried, no house in Oyinadu could be fixed, and each attempt made the cracks grow and brought the tin roofs in on their screaming heads.

The people of Oyinadu hissed fearful things from the crumbling sanctuaries of their houses, tales of the Conjurer who was the source of their many sorrows. The Conjurer whose name they forgot long after the village Chief banished him to the cliffside where a black tree sat. Squatted in his tree, with eyes shining like ice, his mouth whispered hexes into the air and down into the crevasses of the village. He was a man of hideous beauty. Great locusts filled his twisting locks, carrying messages from the winds for many hundreds of years. He spent years collecting honeycombs from the huge hives on the black branches of his tree-

home. Honey ran sour as vinegar into his cauldron and he drank from it freely. With each taste, he renounced sweet things and let his fury twist and choke life from the land in an unbreakable web.

Once, the Conjuror was sweet, but the people of Oyinadu hated sweet things. They made him their enemy and he made them his.

II.

Rain came. First in whispers. Then it raged and roared under the hands of the winds that blew rugged waves onto Oyinadu's white shores. Ungodly sounds filled the night, which shook people out of their beds. They locked themselves inside out of fear. By morning, the bowels of a ship were scattered on the far side of the rainy island, where the Conjuror sat singing his black songs and gathering stormwater in jars. A man, beautiful, brown and bloody, lay wrapped in an indigo robe, sprawled in the wreckage. The Conjuror could not move when he saw the wretch. Something sweet moved inside him.

Quietly, the Conjuror led the bleeding man away to his black tree under the moaning beehives. He gave the man a chilling bath in hyssop and ruda, singing all the while to him. For seven days, he did this, unsure and unsteady, but the man grew stronger and stronger with each drop of water that cascaded from the Conjuror's dark fingers.

One day, when the Conjuror came to heal the man again he asked him what his name was. The man told him he was Sayid, a prince of Nasanga--the Place of the Eternal Gourd that gives life to everything. His ship was gone, but Sayid was not, and together the Conjuror and Sayid began to speak good things to each other, and bitter things began to melt away for the first time in the Conjuror's life.

As days together wove into the many moons of the months, the Conjuror and Sayid gave each other sweet things in the quiet of the tree, and as their hearts grew--little strings of life began returning to Oyinadu. Fish teemed. Songbirds

trilled. But it was not enough to keep back Oyinadu's fear of the sweetness. The sweetness that the Conjurer and Sayid shared. One morning, the Conjurer sent Sayid to the shore where he'd found him, asking him to gather sweetgrass to bless their home. The Conjurer laughed with the wind, because Sayid did not know he was going to craft two wedding crowns of sweetgrass to bless their heads. An hour went by. Singing his black songs, the Conjurer's Locusts flew through the window of his tree-home, urging him to run, run, run down to the shore. The Conjurer called Sayid's name until his voice grew hoarse. He found Sayid's bleeding head on a pike in the white sand. His indigo robe, covered in blood again, waved from a thorny bush.

The Conjurer screamed. His black tree split in two and out of it poured millions of honeybees, soaring down on the village, filling their hateful eyes and sour mouths. Houses collapsed in bursts of flame, and fish died in the sound. His Spirits tore through the cliffside and snatched up fleeing villagers, scattering them into the sea. Foam crowned on the waves and ripped the leaves from every tree and drowned those who could not flee. The saltwater washed the air until all fell silent.

III.

Peace did not come to The Conjurer, and he winnowed away his unsweet days in the arms of the black tree. He spoke sorrow to the quiet sky, "*remember me, remember me. I am Atiferāmi. I have loved for Sayid and he has loved for me.*" And as his blood poured sweetly down the cliff, it found Sayid's blood, and flowers the color of joy sprang from the ground, covering Oyinadu.

And since that day, when his bees sucked nectar from the flowers, honey ran sweet and succulent in the world for the first time, and the world knew sweet things.



An Erasure of Sonnet 144

Ali McPherson

Sonnet 144: Two loves I have of comfort and despair
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Two ^{desires} loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still
The better angel is a ^{man} ~~man~~ right fair,
The worser spirit a ^{man} ~~woman~~ coloured ill.
To win ^{take me} ~~me~~ soon to hell, my ^{with him make} ~~fellow~~ evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooring ^{her} ~~his~~ purity with ^{his} ~~her~~ foul pride.
And, whether that my angel be turn'd fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell,
But being both from me both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my ^{good} ~~bad~~ angel fire my ^{bad} ~~good~~ one out.

An Erasure of Sonnet 144

Susan Shapiro

Sonnet 144: Two loves I have of comfort and despair
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Two loves ~~I~~^{have I:} have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits ~~do~~ suggest me still
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman coloured ill.
To ~~win~~^{draw} me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from ~~my~~^{the other} side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
~~And~~^{yet}, whether ~~that~~ my angel be turn'd fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell,
~~But being both from me both to each friend,~~
I guess one angel ~~in~~^{prev's on's} another's hell.
~~Yet this~~^{will} shall I ne'er know, ~~but~~ live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire^s my good one out.



Qiurui Du

A Bizarre Dream: Beijing Bikini
Acrylic on Canvas



Qiurui Du
A Bizarre Dream: Peking Duck
Acrylic on Canvas

My World Was Now Forever Changed

Sandra Stollar

St. Elizabeth, Jamaica, February 1973, up in the hills of the red dirt, I was eight as I stood in front of the oversized barn fire in the clearing of my yard. I watched as the face of my only doll melted.

I stood there with crooked pig tails that my grandmother helped to put there. Granny could do anything even though she was blind. My dress hung on me like an ill-fitted dress being put back on a hanger by someone in a hurry. The oversized mint color cotton slip dress hung slightly over my sun kissed shoulders, making me look smaller than I was. Nothing really fit because I was a healthy active girl with lots of hand-me-downs that I could wear while playing.

There I stood watching the fire getting bigger and bigger. The red dirt collected between my bare toes as I stood and watched my world change. What a cruel person I felt my mother was. How could she let us watch everything burn everything? My blood felt as hot as the fire. I felt as if I was sinking in the ground. I was being enveloped by the smell of burning clothing, books, toys, just about everything we owned that could be burned. At that moment I never experienced such rage, resentment and confusion for someone before.

I felt myself floating towards the flames with my arms stretched to save my doll. I was stopped in my tracks by Manager. That was the only name I knew him by. He was a tall sixteen-year-old with strong jaw bones. Manager was the local boy that never went to school; he worked for our guardian. He was protective of me and my siblings. He was watching me as I moved towards the fire. I felt a tug from behind.

“Nuh, yu gwaan bun up yuself.

I didn’t realize I had tears running down my face. All I wanted was to save my doll and he was stopping me. He was strong with broad shoulders and coarse hands. His hands were leathery and rough. They dated his years. He was built like a lumberjack of thirty years old. He was the jack-of-all-trades around our land.

“Hush now,” he whispered.

“Yu madda gwaan gi yu anedda one.”

I didn’t want a new one. I wanted this one, my best friend. I cried even more.

As I watched the last eyeball fall and melt in the ground, I melted. My world was now forever changed. It was too much for me. I bawled out loud. I screamed, kicked and scratched. He wouldn’t let go. He held me tighter. All my siblings stood close to each other, stone faced, with tears streaming down their faces. They were all bunched up against the side of the house as the shadow from the fire danced along their faces. The rage of the fire kept them far, but close enough to feel the hot breeze that was seared into our memory. My mother stood in the doorway with her arms folded watching the fire. As I passed her I screamed louder. She stepped aside as Manager carried me to the arms of Granny. Granny was the only one that made me feel safe. I couldn’t speak. My tears filled my eyes until I couldn’t see Granny’s face. She held me tight and began to sing as she rocked me. The lightest touch of Granny calmed me.

As I settled in her arms as sleep became my welcomed comfort, my mother's silhouette stood in the doorway with her back towards us. Granny began to sing.

*"Rock of Ages, clef for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which glow'd,
Be of sin the double cure,.....
Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;"*

I began to fall asleep safely in her arms.

All this came to an end when my mother came for us. She decided it was time for us to go to America.

"Why, why did she have to burn everything?"

We were leaving our past behind. This past I was leaving behind was also my Grandmother. I wanted to stay and take care of her. After all she was my mother, not the skinny pale, dark-haired stranger standing in the doorway. Is this how our new lives would begin, with pain and having everything taking away from us? Well, I didn't want it. I didn't want any part of it or her.

The next morning, I woke up next to Granny. It was supposed to be an exciting day. We were going to America. Mother bought new clothes. My sister Margaret and I had new ribbons for our hair, mine red, hers yellow. Connie was fourteen, too old to have ribbons, she was given colorful clips to hold her braids down and a pretty dress and new shoes. My brothers Junior and Ricky had matching shirts. Junior had funny colorful striped pants as if he was auditioning for the Jackson Five. Rickey had plain blue khaki pants and

didn't like dressing up. My sister Connie, being the oldest, had to dress him several times and threaten personal harm in order for him to keep his clothing on. He was six years old and hated to be dressed. Our clothing were laid out on our beds as if they were straightjackets ready for each magician to envelop themselves in them. All we needed were the chains to get ready for the show. We all washed up before breakfast. My brother Ricky and I washed together. It was my job to hold him or he would run away. He did not care for mother either, but that was a different story.

My dress was a light yellow flowery dress with a beautiful solid ribbon bow attached at to the side of the waist — the kind of dress you only wear to church on Sunday. My socks were white and tall, pulled up below my knees, with medium pom poms attached at the top. They made me smile. Along with my dress was a light pink sweater and bright white patent leather shoes with straps across the top. We said our good-byes to grandmother and promised to see her again. I tearfully walked towards the car. I stared out the window wondering what would become of us in America, what would become of grandmother and would I ever go back to the place that made me happy.

Sea Sick

Gracie Pierson

Mouth is on fire
and I won't drive all day long
to watch the fish die

Isn't it morbid
to have an aquarium
next to sashimi?

I'm the chosen fish
pixelated wasabi
home of the haunting

TRANSACTION RECORD

Sakana Restaurant
1046 COAST VILLAGE RD
MONTECITO, CA 93108

CARD TYPE: VISA EFT

No. *****5816 EXPI.: ****

ENTRY: SWIPED

AUTHORIZATION: 862387

TERMINAL: 2

REFLECT: 133777

2 white
rice for

PURCHASE

\$46.87

TIP

TOTAL

THANK YOU

MAY 19, 2017 13:18:33

Server's name: Kari

CUSTOMER COPY

Handque
morning
Her
mouth
is
on
five

Redford

Rocío Christensen Garrido

On the open road, our arms
will always stay outstretched.
Go, zephyr winds, go home.
Go, passing fields, feed the rye.
Time has slowed
only for our eyes to match
on the line
as they do for years in

Portland, Dallas, Los Feliz,
Santa Fe, Vancouver, Madrid,
Redford.

This car sustains our motion
until we grow old,
let it roll,
down the hill,
into the sea.

And we will sleep.
By the moss, we will sleep

//

What, to leave?
Would that have been enough?

We have grown wings so
leaving reveals itself a lax effort.
When I wake up and
see your bent form -

stark silhouette against
the white bathroom tile -

I store the image to remember stillness
if I forget

when we are on the move again.

All across the continent,
our wings span the length,
teasingly touching tips
until our ruffled feathers

impede flight.

//

Then, now,
a meadow grows and dies
a million times.

I am holding in my hand
the only things I found to matter
since my family died:

One amethyst left
on top of a dumpster
in San Francisco (petrified mold
within the violet denotes a
crashing of sorts),

One stick of incense consumed
the night you were found
(coughing blood on my
embroidered sheets),

One tooth
from each of my companions' mouths.
All white, all yellow,
All shared.

//

My alone is not full
unless it consists
of an absence of you.
These days when our cuticles
are all bit off
and blood circles drain.
I remember how I loved you
and how you loved all.

This is my resting place (I know)
You left with the silence
of mice between blades of grass,
I stayed to watch them multiply.
Every single one sorry to see you go.

//

In my last vision,
we are the car crash angels
Our feathers have taken
too much wind
and our purple, pink,
and brown arms are bare
I can feel the breeze beneath them
Now
Now I see
the gold lays wherever we land.

An Interview With Nicolle Nyariri

Yasmin Yusuff

Nicolle Nyariri is the Head of Marketing and a founding member of the Roundtable Journal team, a publication that celebrates women of every size, shape, color and orientation — and the things they create. She is currently residing in Miami, and with the help of her editor in chief, Wasé Aguele, and the rest of the team (a global girl gang) she is helping breakdown female stereotypes in art, culture, politics, media, and more via Roundtable Journal.

Yasmin Yusuff: What was your biggest inspiration when co-founding The Roundtable Journal? What are your current inspirations? How have they evolved?

Nicolle Nyariri: When we started, we wanted to create a platform that could house the thoughts of women all over the world. We were inspired by the women around us, who were under-represented or misrepresented in the media. We wanted to celebrate women like us — regular women — in a way that was authentic and true to our experiences. It's been two years, and our goals haven't really changed since. Our mission has always been to tell our own stories and spotlight the work of women we admire.

YY: What is your favorite issue you have worked on thus far and why?

NN: I can't really choose. What I can say is that each issue presented its own set of challenges, and blessings. We have grown so much during the making of each issue and with it, amazing things have happened. Issue 01 was really the fact that we even put a whole, damn magazine together — when we started even this seemed like an unreachable dream. Issue 02 was our new-found commitment to print and the unbelievable success we had with the Kickstarter campaign. We never expected to actually raise enough money to put the issue together and print as many copies as we did. And finally, Issue 03 with

cover star BAFTA-winning actress Michaela Coel. Having her on the cover is phenomenal – especially after trying to get a coverstar for so long. Each issue of Roundtable has peaked in its own way and with each issue we have become better at making a magazine, learning about business, marketing, accounting and distribution. We've learnt so much with each issue and I'm grateful for that.

YY: What is your advice for aspiring young female writers and editors?

NN: Write and write a lot. Write all the time and find your voice– find your inspirations and surround yourself with a gang of people who you can develop and climb with. My internships helped me in so many ways– especially with writing and copy editing. On the other hand, my team helped me to find my voice and find context for my own views and opinions. At Roundtable, we push each other to write beyond our personal comfort zones, to go further with each piece and explore issues in unique and interesting ways. At the end of the day, it's really important to keep creating. That's the only way to find the middle between content you enjoy writing, and content readers enjoy consuming.

YY: If you could collaborate with any artist or writer, who would it be and why?

NN: This is a really tough question because there are honestly so many women in the creative industry doing amazing things but, one person I'd love to collaborate with: Yvonne Orji. Not only is she a powerhouse– most people know her as 'Molly' from Insecure but she also makes up one half of the podcast 'Jesus and Jollof'. Yvonne is always honest, and hilarious in her work– exploring topics on identity, heartbreak, culture and so much more. When choosing artists to collaborate with, we try and pick those who we believe will break-barriers and she is, without a doubt, bulldozing through them.

YY: Why did you decided to get into this field?

NN: One of my oldest, and dearest friends, Wase Aguele, approached me and asked me to help her with this brainchild of hers. She already had a name and a concept – in fact, she had a blog but not enough exposure on it. We decided

that together we would focus on getting exposure for this blog and eventually release one article by a different writer, every week. That was it, that was all we wanted to do. To get us going we wrote out some goals, set dates and focused on building out our mission– which was, and still is – about representation. Representation has always mattered to us as well as having uncomfortable, yet real conversations about perceptions of beauty, sexuality, identity, race, gender, politics and so much more.

YY: What are your hopes for the Roundtable Journal in the future?

NN: We've always dreamed big when it comes to the Journal. We started as a blog, developed into a website for a digital magazine and finally moved into print. It's hard to say where Roundtable Journal will be in the future but hopefully we'll be producing more issues, throwing more events and collaborating with various brands. We'd love to become more dynamic and multidisciplinary, reaching audiences through different mediums such as film/video and podcast. That's the goal.



Shivani Mithbaakar
Past Peephole
Risograph Print

Ode to Sigh

Laura Ye

Standing on wet grass and looking at the piles of white flowers I hate, I think about how there are so many things I love: peanut butter, penguins, plain black t-shirts, money, Christmas lights, videos of cats being disgusted by dogs, bricks that are that perfect shade of red-orange, my security blanket, the first day of school and the last day of school, even the beautifully dug rectangular pit in the ground that I am staring at right now, but you are not one of them.

I do not love you, but I also cannot be without you, for you are the answer to every question ever posed about life. I had always thought that “fuck” was the golden word, the perfect response to any and everything. How are you? Fuck. Are you okay? Fuck. Do you know that gravitation happens because your mass and energy force spacetime to bend? Fuck. Will you marry me? Fuck. He’s dead. Fuck.

Perfect.

But I have since found that you are better, even better than a “golden word.” You are the ultimate answer, the Truth that philosophers seek. You embody the elegance of subtlety and the power of a dead person’s last words. You come from the deepest pit in my soul and travel up through the lungs, a stormy mass of chemical elements and inexplicable emotions, into the windpipe, past the

mouth, and then out you go, out of my body, my being. But you are never truly gone. You would never leave me, for better or for worse.

You are guttural at times, sometimes imperceptible. You can be slow and heavy, or quick and light. You escape from me when I don't expect—like when I wake up in the morning; like when I pour cereal into a bowl only to realize I've run out of milk; like when I leave the house without keys; like when I lose a friend because I forgot how to smile; like when I stop suddenly in the middle of a busy day; like when I stand on the streets and I know where I am and the way back to my house, but I'm still lost.

I mix you in my coffee in the morning, nap with you under my pillow in the afternoon, and dream about you at night.

Perhaps I do love you after all.

You are solace. You do not judge if I give up my dreams for money; you do not care if I am unaccomplished; you do not measure me by my morality. I believe that humans only ever have one instinct, and that is survival. Most things we do are for survival, and everything else is for greed of some sort, but you are the outlier. You lie, not somewhere in between, but somewhere outside, outside everything, outside every line ever drawn.

So, during this funeral, watching people cry, I wait for you. I wait for you because I know you are waiting for me too, waiting for me outside and in. I shed my tears and then reach my hands out towards you, knowing you'll hold me.

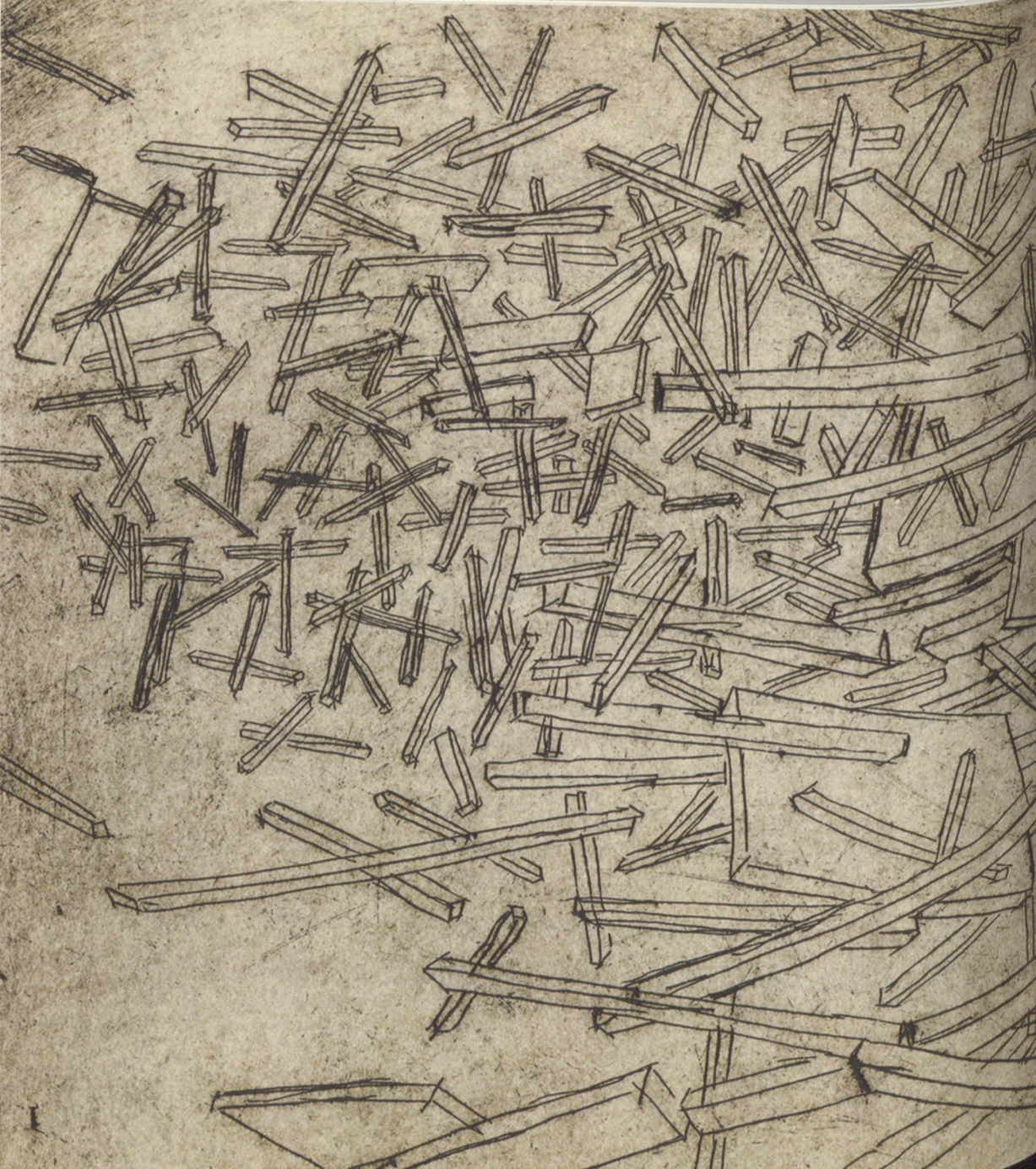
Red Bioluminescent Tide

Carolina Melo

Fins in motion, curling ripples
A flicker. A glimmer.
A droplet slides across bright scales
Reflection of the sky's depths
Refracted by the water, the sun traverses the ocean layer by layer
Down,
Down,
Down...
Into unforgivable depths, where light no longer reflects.
A minute, an hour, the sun goes down
A pinprick of light floats upward, and then thousands join in dance
Brushing the surface, driven by the waves
Amidst the foam, back and forth they sway
Circadian rhythms lead the waltz,
A nighttime spell.
Marine organic light comes in shades of blue,
Tuned to the wavelengths that travel furthest through the water¹
Ethereal blue, esoteric in nature
Blue that calms, and swirls, and charms.

¹ Valiadi, Martha, and Debora Iglesias-Rodriguez. "Understanding Bioluminescence in Dinoflagellates—How Far Have We Come?" *Microorganisms* 1.1 (2013): 3–25. PMC. Web. 13 Sept. 2018.

Night turns into day, blue turns into red
Paralyzing red of uncertainty.
Noxious blooms,
Flowers of destruction
Old anomaly of toxicity.
Midas touch of civilization
Only helps to deepen the red.
Red that chills, and spreads, and kills.
It washes life away as it expands.
Marine organic impact comes in shades of red.





Retail Therapy

Kylah Balthazar

Robbie fiddled with a pen as she watched Kathy tighten her high pony once more. If she pulled it any tighter her entire scalp would come off in her hand. The two of them were posted behind the cash counters waiting for Hobby Lobby's morning crowd to flood in. Robbie would rather that it didn't, but her co-worker's hunger for some human interaction rolled off her in waves. Kathy's auburn hair swung like a pendulum as her head swiveled from side to side while she tried to sniff out a target. Tick-tock, tick-tock, Robbie mentally sounded as she watched her co-worker's head stretch away from her shoulders and arch menacingly over her place at the info desk. An unsuspecting woman carrying a few bundles of yarn walked into their line of sight.

"Hi ma'am, could I offer you a basket?" Kathy swooped down from her perch, the green plastic carrier shoved into the woman's abdomen, preventing any further movement. Kathy's "customer service" smile was plastered across her face as though it were drawn by a left-handed child forced to use their right in Sunday school. The woman's gray hair was jostled from behind her ear at the sudden appearance. She made to grab the basket handles, but Kathy maintained a tight grip. "Is there anything I could help you find?" The way she said the word "anything," sounded as though she really meant anything.

Kathy had been the one to train Robbie when she first started out and they had hit it off at first. Of course, that was nearly a year ago and by now Robbie knew that it was more than just Kathy's being a Capricorn that made them incompatible. At this point, Robbie just pitied the woman, who, only a few years her senior and an ex theatre major, was left to collect dust in the store like the fidget spinners that had fallen out of popularity in less than two months.

Robbie recognized the mania, even identified with the desperation to a degree, but she didn't have the energy to carry on the way Kathy did. Working there was bad enough without actually caring about it. It looked as though the woman shook her head no, but Robbie's vision was blocked by a large head.

"Miss me?" Frank winked, before seating himself on the counter.

"Can you get down?" Robbie tried to sound annoyed, but truthfully, she was relieved.

"Por qué?" He smiled. "Aren't you going to ask me how my vacation was?" he asked, reaching down beside her to open up the drawer that sheltered his name tag. He handed it to her, "Would you do the honors?"

"How was your vacation?" she asked drily as she pinned the faded clip to the pocket of his crisp, blue button-down. Management had long since turned to distributing lanyard name tags, but he refused them, said that his tag would fight the strength of time (she never corrected his misquote). He often spoke fondly of how the store used to be when he first started there, before the hype of technology and new age-y things; Robbie couldn't relate, she had been too busy graduating from elementary school.

"Glad you asked," he said. He smelled of cigarettes and sawdust. "I finally finished building that model airplane I was telling you about." Robbie searched the recesses of her mind but, couldn't find anywhere she would have retained that kind of information. She vaguely recalled his laborious account of the proper hammering methods, so as to avoid injury, but even that existed in a hazy, garbled state; she might have even dreamed it.

"Huh, cool," she responded.

"I know nobody here cares, I mean ever since we started carrying those remote-controlled drones and whatnot... it's like everybody is afraid to get their hands dirty."

She looked down at his hands. They were fairly clean and rough, and she wondered how they would feel around her neck. "You like getting your hands dirty, do you?" His quip in response was cut short by an elderly woman's approach. He hopped down and made a show of sweeping away where he previously sat. Clapping his hands together, he told Robbie, "I'll catch you later, the puzzles need tending to."

"Did you find everything you were looking for today?" she asked the woman without thinking about it. Her motions were so routine, Robbie didn't know what she would do should anybody not find what they were looking for. She wondered if anybody truthfully ever found what they were "looking" for. The very idea that anybody was actively in search of anything seemed absurd to her.

"Why yes, thank you."

"Would you like to become a Hobbyist today, or are you already a member?"

"Oh, oh, no thank you," the woman waved her thin, varicose-veined hands as though swatting a fly. "I don't come here often enough." This was the third time this week Robbie had rung her up. Wordlessly, she manually punched in the price of the items spread before her: a handful of tea candles, a bag of miscellaneous buttons, and a jar of modge podge so large the old woman would certainly need help carrying it out.

"What does the membership include?" the woman asked, as she had previous times. Robbie automatically began listing off the benefits. The 10% in savings, the coupons mailed home, express shipping—

"Oh, oh, yes... no I don't come often enough," the woman repeated.

"Right," Robbie muttered. If she could just get through one day without having to waste her breath, her life expectancy would increase. "Okay, your total is \$28.35."

The woman began fishing around in her tote bag, Robbie made eye contact with the cross-stitched cat on its front. She heard clacking sounds and wondered what exactly the woman had in there. She finally retrieved a paisley wallet with a broken zipper and handed over a crumpled ten- and twenty-dollar bill. Robbie smoothed them out and opened up the register.

"Oh wait, dear. I have the change." She began digging around again, setting her bag on the countertop this time and almost disappearing into it. A line began to form behind her. Only once her frontal lobe and elbows were swallowed by the muslin did she resurface with a little coin purse shaped like a sock— or maybe the woman was just bad at knitting. Either way, she popped open the metal prongs and dumped out a clusterfuck of coins. A few of them went flying off the counter. Ever so slowly did the woman begin to count them out. Robbie wondered the likelihood that she would get arrested if she filled the purse back up with the coins and slapped the woman across the face with it. Certainly, the customers in line were having the same thoughts. She could've sped up the process by counting them herself, but all she thought was, I don't get paid enough for this.

"Thirty-five!" the woman's index finger stretched before her like E.T phoning home as she slid the last coin into her counted pile. Robbie swept them into the cash drawer without counting or sorting and handed the woman her bag and change. The woman struggled with the bag that held the modge podge; Robbie noted the way it drooped and bulged like a ball sack. She didn't offer to help.

"Next!" she called out before the woman had fully left the counter area. Kathy was back by her side at the second register to help with the growing line. Robbie made sure to speak as little as she could get away with while finishing up the line of retirees and Cub Scout troop leaders. Nobody wanted to become a member.

When the line fizzled out, she turned to Kathy and said, "I have to use the bathroom." Kathy hardly looked over at her, but her head bobbed up and down like the figures in the front window display case. "Okay, make sure you hurry

back, your membership conversion rates have been really low this—" Robbie stalked off before she could finish.

She didn't have to use the bathroom but entered anyway. Sitting on the toilet seat in her khakis, she scrolled down her Facebook feed: someone from her Life Drawing class freshman year just had a show and sold most of her pieces. She recognized a few of her other peers in the tagged photos from the event. Robbie hadn't spoken to any of them since graduation. Possibly since even before graduation. She friend requested the ones she was semi-sure would recognize her. They shouldn't have too hard a time, she thought, in her profile picture she bore their cap and gown. On a whim, she decided to like a few of the pictures and commented on a group photo: Wow, miss you guys. Def need to meet up for coffee soon. Congrats btw! Ily gal pal. She stared at the words, the white light of her phone reflecting against her face mockingly, illuminating something unsettling.

Someone knocked on the door. Robbie stood, pretended to zip up her pants and flushed the empty toilet. Stuffing her phone into her back pocket, she let the sink water run for a while before exiting. Instead of returning to the cash counter, she made her way to the back of the store, past the board games and fishing tackle and figurines, where the puzzles were located.

"Working hard or hardly working?" she asked. Frank, who hadn't seen her coming, straightened up quickly and gave her his characteristic boyish grin.

"Well, what do you think?" He gestured to the stacks of puzzle boxes around his legs.

"You building a fort back here?" she asked, almost wistfully.

"I'm organizing," he said as though it was obvious from his place in the disarray. "I could use your help actually. I'm trying to color code and arrange according to puzzle count. But I'm not sure if I want, say, the red to contain all of the reddish boxes from lowest count to highest, or just start with the lowest count and color arrange them and then move onto the next count up and do another color code until—"

"Sounds cool," Robbie said, stepping into the eye of the storm. She sat down within the circle of puzzles, some of the stacks towering over her. "Just tell me what you're looking for and I'll pass it up to you." Frank didn't seem to mind that she wouldn't actually be of any help, and Robbie didn't mind herself that she was utterly useless. She figured he needed the company as much as she did.

"What is it you do again?" Frank asked, "Paint, right?"

"Yeah," Robbie responded, handing him a 500-count puzzle that had a bunch of puppies stuffed in a dog house on the cover.

"I'm working on blue," he said handing it back.

"That is blue."

"It's periwinkle. And here I thought you were a painter."

"Still blue," she said, but she took it back from him and passed up a Starry Night puzzle.

"Much better," he said, placing it on the shelf. "So, you get any painting done lately?"

Robbie shook her head in response, "Not really."

"Well, if you're interested, I've got some model planes that could really use a lady's touch. Maybe it'll help you get back into your groove."

"Yeah, maybe." Frank stuck his hand out for more puzzles. When she failed to notice, he dropped his arm and leaned against the shelf.

"I'm gone for a week and the place has already gone to shit," he joked, looking out across the floor.

Robbie didn't respond. She stretched out her legs and accidentally sent some boxes toppling. "I think I'm going to quit."

Frank didn't even bother looking at her. "You say that all the time."

"I mean it this time."

"You say that all the time too."

"Yeah, well I mean it mean it." Her body jerked like it was trying to apply conviction behind her words, but it only resulted in sending more puzzle boxes to the ground.

"Well, if you continue trying to destroy the merch, maybe they'll fire you."

"I would quit before they did."

"Then do it." She didn't respond but began lazily straightening up her surroundings.

"I hate it here," she added weakly.

Frank stared out across the store some more. He reminded her of a captain peering beyond the ship's mast in a children's book. His face took on a peculiar look and he glanced down at Robbie who straightened up to receive the wisdom stirring on his tongue.

"I'd get up if I were you, Kathy is making her way over here right now," he said. Then he turned away from her and made himself seem busy.

"What is going on back here?" Kathy's ponytail looked like it moved higher on her head.

"Organizing," Frank tossed over his shoulder.

"I didn't think it required more than one person to make a mess." She turned to Robbie, hands on her hip. "Uh, hello Robbie, thought you had to run to the bathroom. Last time I checked, that was across the store. I need you at the registers."

"I'm coming," Robbie responded. Kathy swiveled on her heel and stormed off.

"You're going?" Frank asked.

"Yeah," she said. She didn't move.



Tiago Mena Abrantes
figure on structure 04
Ink on Paper

Sticky Hands, Wild Hair, Bare Feet

Victoria Richards

The beginning of my being
is one with the ocean.
Infinitely black,
vastly

bottomless.

A powerful body unexplored, I am.

When fishermen question what tribe I belong to-
what kingdom I come from-
I want to burst into song and shout
Chaga! or
Xhosa!

I want to hum
mammal or
fish
thinking, wishing, hoping
that perhaps they will
float

and love me.

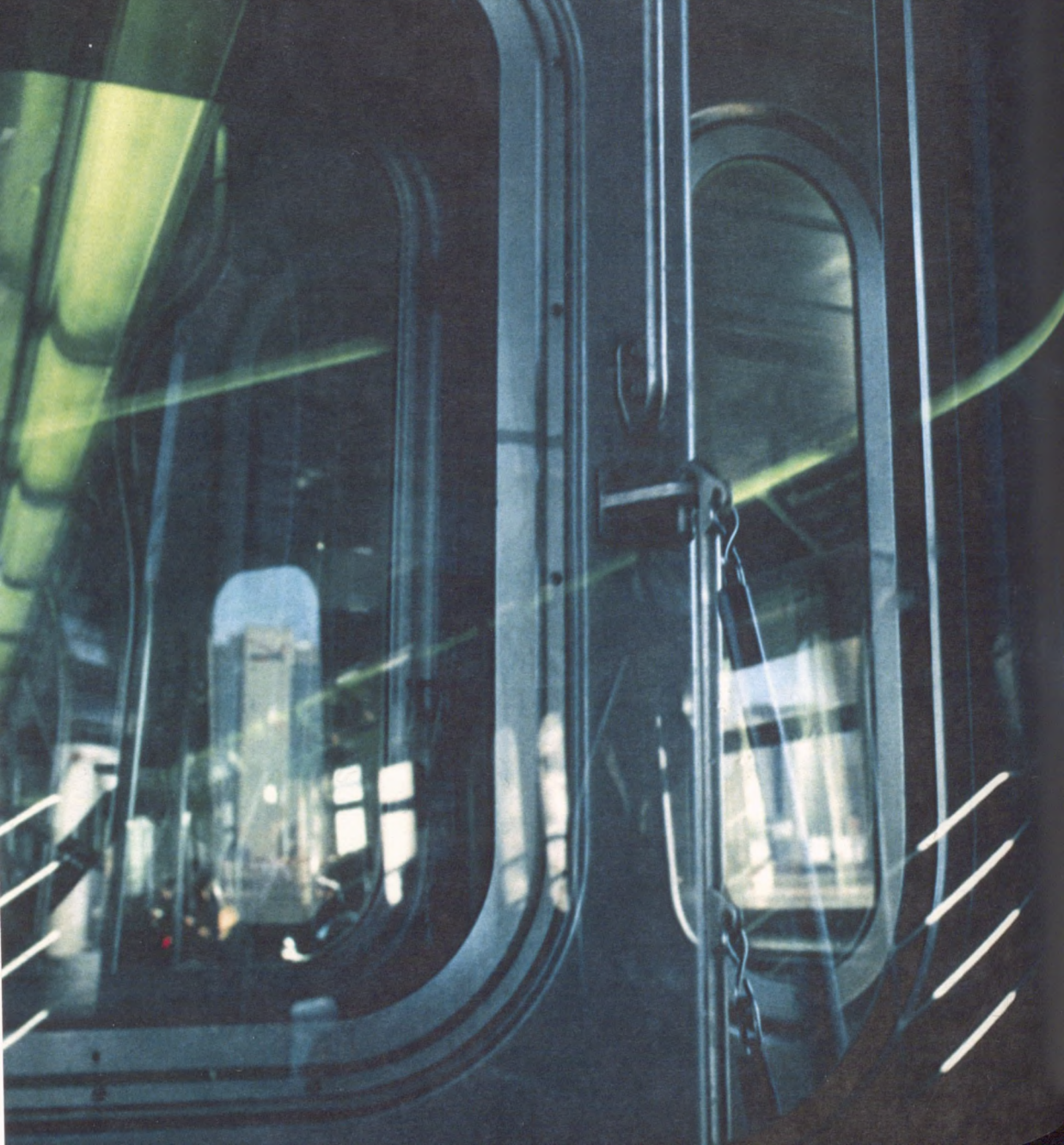
But the deeper these fishermen sink with me
I become unfathomably black and
to know me is to submerge; not to wade.

To know me is to drown,
and to burn weaknesses like
“sight” and “breath.”

Maybe I am of a great ocean tribe
who has been silenced.
Because I can recall a time when I
sang to ships with my sisters before they sank.

I swam for the sake of swimming.
I sang for the sake of song.

I am voiceless with wild hair
sticky hands and bare feet on a dry land
searching for a song in the ocean
that is just as black as me.



Subway Connections

Bridget Doyle

I met a woman on the subway whose perfume smelled like my grandmother.

I can't remember what it smelled like, the nuances are lost. Still, as I settled next to this woman on the same wooden bench I use everyday, its grainy, grimey surface running coarse beneath my fingers, I immediately felt my grandmother in her presence.

There's a Ray Bradbury quote, first shown to me by my dad, that I unwaveringly return to when faced with death. Speaking to the idea of memory, Bradbury writes, "everyone must leave something behind....something your hand touched some way so your soul has somewhere to go when you die."

Grandmother, as we called her, was a traveler, a teacher, a poet. When I think of her I envision European summers and Egyption forays, decades spent working in the public school system, the joys and sorrows of over sixty years of marriage and nearly as much in motherhood, a small purple booklet of her poetry sitting next to my gamecube on the bookshelf. Since her death, though, it's been hard to connect and to feel her in my emotional and physical realities,

even in the things I inherited from her. I felt that I had found a piece of her soul in this stranger, as we sat there waiting for the train in a dirty, underground subway station.

When my grandmother died I was fifteen. Seven years lends perspective, but even at the time it felt so distant and hollow. Her death was during a period of my life so heavily focused on escaping the world around me, and in me, that my grandmother was not prominent in my mind until she got sick. Even then, I tortured myself with the knowledge that I was *angry* — not necessarily at her, but at the event itself. I felt like the world had closed in on me with a vengeance, my mental state and the melodrama of teen life colliding destructively with a very real trauma.

The last time I saw her, she was in the CCU at Anne Arundel General Hospital. She was intubated, weak, fading in and out of consciousness. I sat to her right, maybe the left, knitting a blanket and staring off at the edges of the hospital bed — slender, off-white frames curving together. Grandmother opened her eyes and my dad whispered a soft, "Bridge..." I shuffled closer to her and squeezed her purpura stained hand, the deep, dark purple blotches consuming her body. She touched my blanket with boney fingers, skin hanging loose. Her once plump and lively face seemed to sag, reflecting the weight she had lost over the previous three weeks as her kidneys and liver ceased to function.

I told her I loved her, and she closed her eyes.

She died a week later. I didn't cry for a month.

The woman next to me on the bench fanned herself. It was hot. Sweat crept down my back and pooled below my eyes, ready for the moment I would give in and wipe it away. I told her that her perfume reminded me of my grandmother and she laughed, her fistful of business papers pausing a moment mid fan. She said, "That's funny you say that, because I am a grandmother, even though I don't look it."

It's true, she didn't look much older than my mother, and may very well have been younger than her. I thought about how she would probably live to meet her great-grandchildren and great nieces and nephews. Her whole family spread out across my imagination, as if these generations of people I don't and never will know were somehow holding me up, sustaining my hope for joy and value in life.

I breathed in that smell again and saw my grandmother in a scene I'd witnessed so many times: seated at my uncle's kitchen table with his mother-in-law on Thanksgiving and Christmas, the two old ladies quietly talking, occasionally quipping. Grandmother was a woman I often feel I didn't actually get to meet. I had so many things I should have asked her, so many experiences I wanted to have with her. I struggle, as the youngest grandchild, to call forward any particular example of a one-one-one bonding moment between us, of a time I felt a true connection in our relationship, an understanding of mutual experiences.

My childhood memories of her are so generic that I partially wonder if I haven't fabricated some of them, picturesque concepts of the relationship I wish I had contributed to more. Of course I loved my grandmother, but I was young and lacked perspective. When she died I felt a loss and an emptiness very specific to the death of a loved one; yet, I felt removed from the passion of an experience actively lived, like I realized a moment too late that I'd missed out on something great. Indeed, I only remember a handful of conversation we ever had, and even those are hazy. Instead I have snippets of memories, memories that exist more as feelings, a timeline that overlaps and twists across my many narratives.

The last few years of my grandmother's life marked the end of middle school for me and the start of high school, a tween, then a teen, glued to my phone and obsessed with unending crushes. I was a selfish kid, and found the mushy bits of food that often adorned her collar and the corners of her mouth disgusting, veering from it as she would lean in to kiss my cheek. The only smells I really remember were generic to geriatric living: store brand hand lotion mixed with

the stale, stomach turning scent of antibacterial cleaning chemicals, and what surely must have been the last decade's worth of dust and dead skin particles in the apartment air vents.

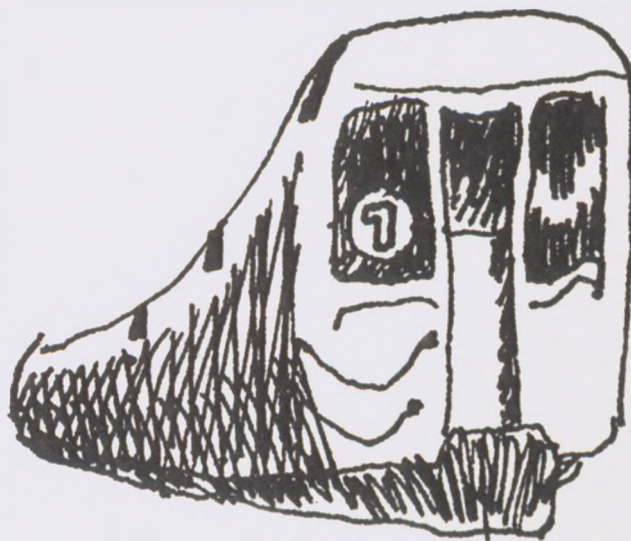
But on that hot day in August, running to Home Depot to replace my busted box fan, money and school and a fizzling friendship on my mind, the perfume drew me in. Without hesitation, I thought of her. It was some primordial reaction to what I genuinely believe was her soul reaching out to me with a moment of divine insight. My melodrama, my pain, it was suddenly scaled. I saw her life before me and I fought back tears.

The woman on the platform did not look or act like my grandmother, she was young and full of life and opened up to me about her hopes and dreams, no longer such a stranger on that sticky Wednesday afternoon in Manhattan. She laughed genuinely and I felt it in my heart, almost a pang of grief as I finally understood what I lost when my grandmother died: an opportunity. Every relationship truly is an opportunity to find meaning in our lives and to offer the very same to others. Facing death can seem akin to accepting the end of a relationship, but lately I think it's more about understanding a shift, a new perspective on roles and purpose.

What my grandmother left behind for me was a yearning. I grasp into an unknown plane for even the slightest understanding of who she was and how I fit into the picture she had of her world. It's a hard truth to know I wasted time because I was too young and too petty to see my fault, and there's still an emptiness and a cold feeling in my heart. But it's now warmed progressively more often by the idiosyncrasies of life around me, and in the humanity of both myself and others I am unendingly inspired by our capacity to make life again from the ashes.

The relationship I now share with my grandmother was primarily formed posthumously, which I've come to consider just as legitimate as a relationship formed in life. It's easier to build something with the energy of life moving you along, as we often do with our families. But when that energy is missing, there's

something to be said for those unexpected sensory associations, those quiet moments, the small victories hovering on the peripheral, waiting to be seen. Maybe it's not real, maybe it's not her, but it's my reality and it's what gives me hope.



SHOTS AT THE CANON!

We asked students and professors on campus to critique important works of literature widely accepted as part of the Western literary canon. This is how they responded:

I know bell hooks gets on my nerves. She wrote that thing about Beyoncé and all . . . I don't know, she's great, but she's a little past her prime. I know The New School loves her, I get that but that just makes me question, because her activism was what, the 60's and 70's? Do we age out of activism, in a sense, at a certain point? As an activist, of course I think you have to evolve but I feel like some of her activism, some of her writings and stuff, were great for her time and they are certainly blueprints for younger generations, but I don't know if she's right for this time.

Jermaine D.

The Great Gatsby: It's a cool concept and a cool book, I like the idea of, like, the Roaring 20's showing what half of America was like while the other half was, like, not, in the sense of elitism and money. It's a great book and it's a classic, but I just feel like it's overrated. F. Scott Fitzgerald is a good author, but I don't think it's anything out of the ordinary.

Ben L.

It is possible that I don't like *Hamlet*. This was not a conclusion I expected to come to while writing a novel in which *Hamlet* plays a major role. The protagonist of the novel I'm writing now is a scholar of early-modern English literature who makes what I initially intended to be the absurd claim that *Hamlet* is inferior to *The Spanish Tragedy*, a revenge tragedy by Thomas Kyd that is considered notable primarily as a precursor to *Hamlet*.

The deeper I get into my new novel, the more my protagonist convinces me. For all his purported introspection, Hamlet is a whiny and peevish, possibly as upset that his uncle has “popped between the election and my hopes,” denying him the throne, as he is that his uncle has murdered his father. And throughout the play Hamlet’s greatest concern appears to be policing the sexual behavior of his mother and of his poor girlfriend, Ophelia, whose father he murders accidentally on purpose, driving her to suicide, after which he picks a fight with her brother at her funeral. It would be one thing if the play had a handle on the atrociousness of his behavior, as many of Shakespeare’s other plays have a handle on the atrocious behavior of their protagonists, but there is little in the play to support a reading of Hamlet as a Macbeth-style protagonist/villain.

In the fantastically named Bel-Imperia, *The Spanish Tragedy* has what neither Hamlet nor *Hamlet* could dream of—a female revenger. It also has a play-within-a-play that doubles as the big revenge finale, putting both *Hamlet*’s play-within-a-play and its haphazard ending to shame.

Of course, the language in *The Spanish Tragedy* cannot compare to the language in *Hamlet*. And many of Hamlet’s minor characters more than make up for the shortcoming of the dude in the title. And I’m this writing novel in large part because I’ve always loved *Hamlet*, and any love affair has rough patches.

In other words, just like Hamlet, I’m vacillating. But whatever you think of Hamlet or *Hamlet*, you should read *The Spanish Tragedy*.

David Burr Gerrard

Jane Eyre was really hard for me to get through. For me, when I read a book, I love illustrative language and even though the book is very descriptive, and it does paint a picture for you, they focus too much on the details so it’s hard to focus and get through the story. Each scene is so detailed that it’s almost exhausting to get through and I like fast. Everyone loves that book and I just didn’t.

Emilia B.

Honestly, anything by Charles Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*: fuck that shit. I hated reading it. I don't think there was really a point. I think all of the lessons, stories that are written like that, are all very outdated and don't really apply anymore.

Sophia M.

The novel *Phantastes* (1858), by Scottish writer and Christian minister George Macdonald (1824-1905), is one of the main progenitors of modern fantasy literature and has influenced such notable authors as Lewis Carroll, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien, among many others. It is also one of the worst books I have ever read. The twenty-one-year-old protagonist-narrator, Anodos—usually rendered as “pathless” from the Greek—recounts his sojourn through “Fairy Land,” an enchanted forest of “splendours” and “loveliness” and the beguiling backdrop for his allegorical journey toward self-awareness and truth.

As a character, Anodos has little to no backstory and almost nothing concrete to define him, other than penchants for forgetfulness and bursting spontaneously into song. But his character is not the point—he is an empty vessel to be filled with the moral and spiritual lessons he will grasp on his travels. As we venture out with him, we encounter Fairy Land's old women and maidens, glow worms and beetles, fairies and kitty cats, song birds and goblins, its tree spirits and farmers, knights and more maidens, cottages and giants and palatial libraries and so on. All of this is interspersed with pages and pages of rhyming doggerel (viz., Anodos's songs). Nevertheless, if this bevy of marvels had been stitched together into a tightly woven plot, readers might feel more involved in the tale. But Anodos merely traipses along from one disconnected vignette to the next, on the trail of a Marble Lady with whom he is smitten but who continually flees him, and we learn early on that “it is no use trying to account for the things in Fairy Land...one who travels there soon learns to forget the very idea of doing so, and takes everything as it comes; like a child, who, being in a chronic condition of wonder, is surprised at nothing.”

Having eliminated the possibility of surprise in the work, Macdonald shrewdly vanquishes suspense as well. Hunted by a terrifying goblin in the form of an ash tree, Anodos is rescued at the last second—as occurs several times in the text—by a comely female figure who then clutches him warmly to her bosom. In this instance, his savior is a beech tree spirit who resembles “a very beautiful woman” and who tells Anodos, “Do not fear the goblin. He dares not hurt you now.” We are assured from the very first that we will suffer no harm from Fairy Land’s dangers so long as we’re there. And, because nothing surprises, we do not. Toward the very end of the work, Anodos battles a giant and is (thankfully) killed in the fight. He recovers consciousness immediately thereafter in “the clear mountain-air of the land of Death” where he had “never dreamed of such blessedness.” Anodos then comes back to life having learned that love is important and that evil is really just a form of good.

Although it intends to be an allegory of spiritual growth, *Phantastes* is more precisely a portrait of spiritual death, where life, love, evil, and mortality—like everything else in the work—are of no consequence at all.

James Fuerst

In Cold Blood. I want to fight Truman Capote so bad because everyone is obsessed with it, but the way he writes about these guys who committed these murders sets—someone needs to look back because I feel like the whole thing of referring to white male killers as boys, he did something to add to that. He’s trash and that’s it.

Elisabeth S.

The Odyssey: it’s just so long and I don’t know the purpose of it, I guess, or why it’s important.

Princess D.

First of all, there are many canons. Henry Louis Gates, Director of the Du Bois Institute at Harvard and a leading scholar of African American literature and culture, wrote *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (1992). He offers the idea that all of us who love literature shape our own canons and says "a canon, as it has functioned in every literary tradition, has served as the commonplace book of our shared culture."

For me, canons are not fixed but fluid. Old fashioned folks who love hierarchies desire them - I prefer to make my own judgment. But an informed one- which texts are simply extraordinary no matter when they are read or by whom? Which texts can offer a writer the most (writerly needs are generally different from reader only needs)? How do canons evolve over time? When does a new canon emerge and how? What use is it? So many times, over history, we see that writers hugely famous and popular in their own moment drop out of sight over time, largely because once their moment is over, their writing does not in and of itself carry their texts to new readers.

Then there is a enormous importance of what is found by writers in texts written long before they were alive, and often in very different places, but which inspire them to write and cause us to have to reread those older texts ourselves.

Examples include Chinua Achebe's writing back to Joseph Conrad, Wole Soyinka's rewriting of Euripedes' *The Bacchae*, Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, which reinvents Homer's Achilles and Helen, Jean Rhys's prequel [*Wide Sargasso Sea*] to *Jane Eyre*, the many Anglophone and Francophone reworkings of aspects of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, including Kamau Brathwaite's powerful Caliban. This list could go on and on. Plainly, writers find what they need among the accomplishments of the literary past, and they don't object to who wrote it if it inspires their own creative energy.

Henry Louis Gates, thinking about his editorial role in the Norton Anthology of African American Literature, acknowledges that canon formation has political and ironical aspects. In the end, he says, and I agree with him, that it is a belief that scholars make the canon, but "just as often, writers make

canons too, both by critical reevaluation and by reclamation through revision." Canons need to be inclusive of all kinds of writers. They ought to indicate a history of formal experiments which are a treasure trove for new writers.

So I suppose I would rather answer the question, "what is my canon of now and why?" With the door open to what it might be next.

Elaine Savory

To Kill A Mockingbird: I thought it was kind of whack.

Jimaya L.





Hues of Home

Yuecen "Ricky" Cai

"Perhaps the best known and most easily recognized of the world's 100,000 kinds of trees, ginkgo stands out by virtue of its unique features, amazing history, and long association with people. With their distinctive fan-shaped leaves and tall trunks, ginkgo trees adorn parks, streets, and recreational areas throughout the temperate regions of the world. When the weather turns sharp, all of the leaves suddenly turn a brilliant yellow, dropping soon after to lay a lovely, bright yellow carpet under each tree."

Peter Crane, *The Tree That Time Forgot*

The volume of color shifts

An organic shade of grey
filled with repeating blocks, stacked.

From space grey to jet black to paper white
with Olfas, pliers, pens, pencils, charcoal, erasers.

Then a bag of red
And orthogonal pieces of white filled
with creativity,

following the lead
meandering through the draft and

Blasts
Of

Fifth Avenue, keeping balance along the sidewalk

New York is not my home.

There, I saw
a familiar half of a half of a circle

then

myriads snuggling on the pavement
in green but fading to yellow

Gingko.

Gingko always makes
a yellow canvas

Starting
with a golden drip underneath its umbrella
it illuminates
trails my way home.

Ending

It bursts into flames.

Shanghai

An orthogonal shape of blue

filled with reds.

Heavy with books, marks
on my back, I stepped on the yellow

I knew
it would be another long night.

A family, wilted and yellow the color of the withered bamboo
they poke from the branches

“I got one! I got one!”

The daughter yells, painstakingly placing a drop
of
sunrise

in her plastic bags.

The fruit stinks, the plastic sounds,

I stood on their sunsets. I climbed my stairs

Home.

Now, Ginkgo, you are in front, withering in green.

Oh, Me
blasting in all these colors but those.

Two Poems by Emily Hirschtick

Blood Clots

My parents have picked out the place where they want to be buried.
My dad brings this up to me casually as we drive on the highway
past the exit for the Jewish cemetery.
Like sitting alone on an empty hill
three hours before the 4th of July fireworks,
reading Marley & Me on his Kindle while we're all at the carnival,
he is getting there early and saving the best seats.

At my unpaid internship I have the privilege
of viewing original Warhol prints up close.
How many millions of dollars will I owe this art museum
if God gives me a nosebleed.

Every member of my family is an anxious boy,
and nobody knows it but me.

It's been two years and you and I are just getting to know each other.
When you leave it's like the end of free swim,
opening my eyes underwater,
seeing how long I can be here without air.

Some drunk grandfather approaches my dad at a family friend's barbecue
and asks:
"How come your legs are so big?"
Before there were headaches, or panics, or alarming moles,
there were nights spent grabbing my own growing calves or knees or
thighs.

If there is a God she was pulling at my feet like putty, turning me 6
foot something gradually.

A frenemy comes late to class and misses my critique.
I cross her off the guest list for Passover dinner.
I pettily contemplate embroidering a decorative pillow:
“Only Good Friends Get Fed Matzoh Balls.”

I cry so hard my nose bleeds
in the back of a best friend’s minivan in the middle of Arizona,
or on a twin bed listening to “Linger” by the Cranberries,
or in my mom’s driveway after a big fight
taking flash photos of my own face and wiping the blood on my shirt
so I don’t scare her when I go back inside.

I spend an hour and a half in the Notes app on my phone
trying to rhyme “urinary tract infection” with “your very attractive
friend”
at 3 AM on a school night.

While I’m on hold with the Animal Poison Control Hotline I
frantically google:
“what happens if your cat eats string”
At the very end of an informational article
advising against toys that make noise
I highlight the line:
“Stronger chewers will swallow the squeaky mechanisms”
and tuck it in my journal for later use.
The drinking milk, the button falling off my pants,
the taking care of you
Is all a part of the creative process.

Love Poem

My favorite time to talk is when we brush our teeth,
testing your ability to understand my tones

Here's my earliest memory of getting left behind:
I'm 10 years old and in the backseat of Randy Silverman's sedan
on my own because everyone else in my Hebrew School Carpool
went to an Akon concert without me

I'm my favorite child
You're the closest thing I've ever met to a tall drink of water

I'm not flexible enough to put my foot in my mouth
I'm afraid if I swallow my pride
I'll choke

Or the day I quit figure skating for good, crying off the ice
because another girl asked me why my lips are always dry
I spill to my mom in the car
and she says "well,
that's what happens when you forget your chapstick"

I wait up for you,
I put my feet on you,
When I'm heated I make fun of
your love for the library

The Moving Cold

Mallory Strom

I have caught the moving cold.

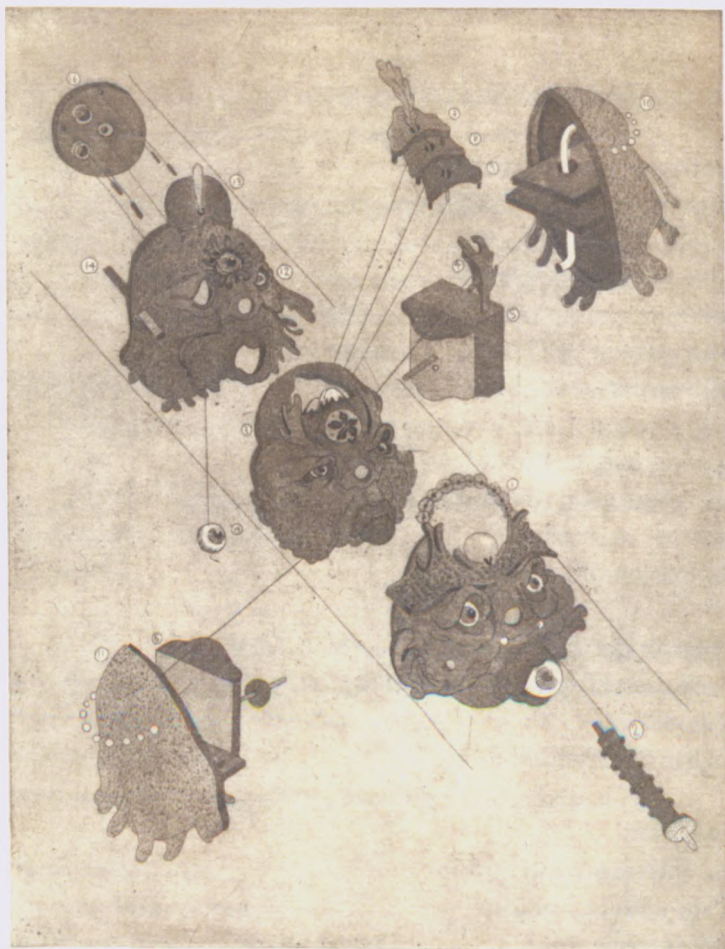
Or, perhaps more accurately,
the moving cold has caught me.

It stalks hesitant pedestrians,
greeted their gaping mouths.
It is the unseen predator in a foreign land,
and the ambassador of unfamiliarity.

It ensnares me, its bewildered prey,
in tiny traps often overlooked:
the subway turnstile,
the realtor's hand.

And then it catalogues me,
cleanses me of my former meaning,
isolates me,
until I am finally filed away.

It's dark here,
frozen between from and to.
I curl up with my pillow
and my moving cold
and wait.



Erika Shiba
A Self Portrait
Copper Etching



Erika Shiba
Study of the Self and Others
Copper Etching

Eleven and a Half Bookshelf

From dealing with a quarter-life crisis, to waiting in line at the DMV, these are our editor's must-reads.

Book to read while you're stoned

Blood and Guts in High School by Kathy Acker

Incorporates a plethora of cut-up literary techniques (illustration, poems, letters, first-person narrative, etc.) that creates a disjointed, disturbing narrative about a nomadic underaged sex addict and her mutually-abusive relationship with her father. Immensely experimental and fascinating albeit not for the faint of heart - think feminist William Burroughs, including the queerness.

Jared Gibbons

Read before you graduate

Thee Psychick Bible by Genesis Breyer P-Orridge

A career-spanning collection of highly influential multimedia artist/musician/occultist P-Orridge's writings that is absolutely essential, particularly for creative types about to face the real world. Topics include the Pandrogeny Project, h/er work and creative process, instructions for ritual, self-determination, and a highly unorthodox lifestyle. (note: "h/er" not a typo, this is h/er preferred pronoun)

Jared Gibbons

Read while taking down the patriarchy

New Exotica For Feminists: Satirical Fantasies of Love, Lust, and Equal Pay
by Caitlin Kunkel, Brooke Preston, Fiona Taylor, and Carrie Wittmer

This book is the perfect book to read while taking down the patriarchy. Each short humorous narrative begins with an erotic lede that guides the audience to believe there is a sexual, sensual set up, but then humorously jumps into themes such as pro-choice, consent, toxic masculinity, and equal pay. The authors humorously create a feminist version of Adam and Eve and Romeo and Juliet.

Ali McPherson

Read when you are busy being Black and queer

Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth by Warsan Shire

If Beyonce's *Lemonade*, moisturized your skin, grew your edges, and made you block all of your ashy exes, this is the book for you. Warsan Shire wrote the poetry for Beyonce's astounding visual album. This collection of poetry is Shire's exploration of her heritage as a Kenyan born in Somalia. She also explores womanhood, displacement, relationships, the experiences of refugees and migrants, and sexuality. Although people of color are not a monolith, her writing evokes a great sense of familiarity. The writing is eloquent and sensual. Shire has a strong voice and it seeps through the writing. A must read.

Adji Ngathe Kebe

Night Sky with Exit Wounds by Ocean Vuong

Edges? Layed. Anxiety? Cured. I have grown taller, my eyebrows actually have hair on them, and I'm booked and busy. This collection of poetry changed my life. It is an understatement to say it is beautifully written. Every poem is rich in metaphor, imagery, and vivid details. Both Vuong and Akwaeke Emezi

use language in a way I have never encountered before. It's mesmerizing, transcendent, and heart-breaking. It gives queer people of color the humanity, we are not by given by society. A must read.

Adji Ngathe Kebe

Read while traveling

If on a Winter's Night a Traveler... by Italo Calvino

This is an interesting read written in the second person. "You" get wrapped up in the story of "I" who is traveling both through many versions of the same book but also through many different sceneries and characters within these many interwoven stories. Not exactly the book to read after the night of clubbing in London but definitely the book to read on the metro in Paris.

Yasmin Yusuff

Read while you're dating the wrong person

Chronicle of a Death Foretold by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Imagine a murder mystery. Now imagine a murder mystery involving a man who can't keep it in his pants and two angry brothers. Now imagine a murder mystery underscored by a small town's decision to condemn a man to death. Now imagine the beautiful prose and style of Garcia Marquez who captures the essence of small town Colombia and the people who inhabit the town. You won't have to resort to imagination once you open the book. You won't want to put it down.

Arie Pramono

Read before family gatherings

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Diaz

It may sound strange, but a novel that focuses on the colonial history and postcolonial effects of the Dominican Republic is the perfect setting for a story about family, love, and identity. It's doubly impactful if you're Dominican, a nerd, or from Patterson, New Jersey. (Bonus points if you can check off all three boxes.) You'll learn that even a mom who berates and beats you on a daily basis- all the while your uncle's snorting cocaine in the bathroom- will always love you no matter what. Tough love is tough, but it's love.

Arie Pramono



Sour Heart by Jenny Zhang

Dark, bittersweet, and poignant, this short story collection explores coming-of-age, identity, and the dynamics of family through the lens of Chinese Americans and immigrants living in New York. Usually told from the perspective of a child, Zhang's prose is breathless, sarcastic, and frank. Almost functioning as a case study of nature vs. nurture, these stories show us that our parents are human too and sometimes the love we feel for our families is also tinged with pain.

Kylah Balthazar

A book that may stay on your shelf forever

Don't Let Me Be Lonely by Claudia Rankine

A fantastic book of prose poetry about American political crisis, spectacle, and paranoia, and how these intersect with embodied experiences of race and mental illness. Rankine is perhaps more famous for her 2014 book *Citizen*, but this earlier work is just as essential. Her writing, cogent and crushing, will haunt you for years to come.

Maria Bobbitt-Chertock

Read before voting

From Fascism to Populism in History by Federico Finchelstein

An eye-opening historical, theoretical, and transnational take on some eerily familiar trends we see today, and the ways in which populism can blur the lines of democracy. Understanding fascism, populism, and the ways in which the two intersect—and notably, where they differ—will definitely get you to look a little more critically at that candidate claiming to solve all your problems. A fascinating read, and written by a New School professor, too!

Ali Hanna

Read while wearing an itchy sweater

Eileen by Ottessa Moshfegh

In this unsettling novel, a pathetic prison secretary named Eileen moonlights as her abusive father's caretaker. She daydreams of losing her virginity to a prison guard (all the while anxiously hiding her body beneath frumpy sweaters) and of fleeing to New York City in her deathtrap of a car. The main action unfolds in the dead of New England winter—a familiar, but nevertheless creepy setting. Eileen's static life changes when a charismatic newcomer warms up the town.

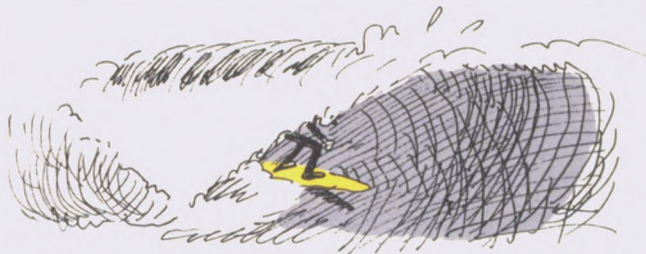
Maria Bobbitt-Chertock

Books to read that are (auto)biographical

We're Going to Need More Wine: Stories That Are Funny, Complicated, and True by Gabrielle Union

This book is one of the most inspiring books, for many reasons. Union takes you on a journey from beginning to end, starting with her childhood, the first time she lost her virginity, and how she became the woman she is today. Apart from her hilarious, tone throughout the book, her honesty is refreshing. She goes into great detail about being sexually assaulted while working in Payless, and what it's like to be a black woman in Hollywood. She also goes into detail about the challenges she faces raising black privileged sons at a time where the odds are stacked against them.

Ali McPherson



Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life by William Finnegan

Discover how mundane your life is! Finnegan takes you on a rad journey from California, to Hawai'i, and across the South Pacific in search of the perfect wave. This Pulitzer Prize winning book will captivate you through effortless and humorous writing, and maybe inspire you to drop out of school to romp around the world looking for surf. But in all seriousness, Finnegan is an incredible storyteller and his work is enjoyable for surfers and land dwellers alike.

Ali Hanna

Wanda's Dog

Ojasvin Kirpane

Wanda stared in disbelief at the creature before her.

A panting, slobbering humanoid dog thing sitting wrapped in blankets with wide eyes hungry for attention and love. Its head was that of a dog, just three times larger. Its body resembled Wanda's own, except for the hideous fur that grew in wet clumps randomly over her body.

"It's gross," Wanda remarked harshly.

The thing whimpered at her tone.

"Don't be rude, Wanda!" her mom admonished in a whisper, bringing a bowl of soup from the kitchen and placing it gently in front of the creature.

"Drink this, you'll feel better."

Her mom sat next to it and wrapped her hands around it in a comforting embrace. Wanda gaped at the affection her mother was showering on the creature. No, she was more surprised by the total lack of disgust her parents showed. Did they not see what she was seeing?

Did they not see its drooling, ravenous maw? Or its dirty matted fur?

Did they not see the beast invading their warm, safe living room and their perfectly happy family?

Wanda sat on the simple warm rug right by the fireplace, still not coming to terms with the reality she was in. This repulsive alien was being coddled by both her parents, who didn't seem to recognize the utter bizarreness and inhumanity of it. They just accepted this creature that had showed up at their doorstep. Feeding it, keeping it warm and comforting it as best as they could.

Her parents ignored her confounded looks and eventually took the creature upstairs, leaving Wanda alone; crackling with anger she drifted to sleep by the fireplace.

The next morning the creature had a name.

"Her name is Regina," her dad said at the breakfast table. "We are... taking her in."

"Be nice to her, okay?" Wanda's mom added.

Wanda did not reply. Instead, she wolfed down her breakfast and hurried to school. She couldn't wait to tell her friends about the bizarre creature in her house.

When she regaled her absurd story, she was met with awe and intrigue. Everyone gathered around during the lunch break to hear more. She was the center of attention. Every time she told the story to a new curious classmate, it changed, and Regina became more and more grotesque.

Wanda went back home with a euphoric smile on her face. She reluctantly tore herself away from the loving audience that had followed her from lunch break, to art class, to drama rehearsal, and to the school bus. She said goodbye to them as she skipped up to the front door of her home. Her mom opened the door, greeted her and quickly disappeared back into the house.

"How was school today?" Wanda's mom asked.

"It was great!" Wanda said.

She took off her shoes and socks, leaving them both strewn near the door which she left clumsily half open. Wanda bounced into the kitchen of their house, which was small but neatly stocked with snacks, produce and a certain

comfortable warmth. She grabbed a cookie and carried it out into the living room clenched between her teeth. She dropped it when she gaped at the scene before her.

“What’s going on?”

Her dad was sitting with the thing at their rickety old piano, teaching it how to play a simple tune. Her mom was sitting on the couch, stirring her tea and humming along whenever it played something resembling a melody. It looked comfortable in the house, playing along and lapping up the attention it was getting.

“What’s wrong?” her mom asked jovially, distracted by the creature’s stumbling performance.

All of Wanda’s joy was flushed out and replaced with disgust. She didn’t want to see this *thing* happy.

“That’s my Piano!” Wanda cried.

“I know! Isn’t she playing so well?” her dad responded with laughter.

“She can’t use it, it’s mine! I need it!” Wanda tried to control her tone, but she could feel rage creeping into her voice.

“Honey, sit down,” Her mom said. “You must’ve had a really stressful day.”

“My day was fine. I want my piano back, I need it for... practice.”

“You can practice later, right?” her dad said, chuckling at another of Regina’s fumbles.

“No! I need it right now!” Wanda shouted. “What does it need the piano for anyway?” Her parents’ grins faded and her father rose to walk up to her.

“What did you say?” he asked.

“I said what does a... thing like that need the piano for?”

Her dad glowered down at her, but she stood strong. Her parents were clearly delusional but that didn’t mean she had to stoop to their level. She wasn’t stupid.

"Apologize," he ordered curtly. "Apologize right now."

"No."

"Say you're sorry, and that you'll never say anything like that again."

"No."

"Say sorry," her dad shouted, "NOW!"

"I WON'T," Wanda screamed, "YOU ARE BOTH CLEARLY STUPID!"

Wanda stormed off. As she marched upstairs to her bedroom, she heard whimpers from the creature, distracting her parents. They both forgot about her, turning their attention towards the plight of their new child. Leaving Wanda, once again, alone, sobbing and screaming with anger.

A few mornings later the creature was coming to school with her. Wearing her old shirt and jeans. Slurping milk out of a kiddie bowl at the table, oblivious to the strife she was causing.

"Treat her well," her dad said. "Introduce her to your friends."

"Don't let anyone bully her," her mom added

"Don't bully her either," her dad added, chuckling.

But Wanda didn't reply. She just got up, put her bowl in the sink and grabbed her bag. As Wanda stormed out the door her mom called after her, admonishing her rudeness but faltering for some reason.

"I can't remember..." Her mom was saying, but Wanda was already out the door. There was time till the bus showed, so she decided to walk to school to get away from home as quickly as possible. When she arrived, classes were about to start, and her peers had already been introduced to Regina.

"That's her?" Wanda's best friend Linda asked.

"That's it," Wanda corrected.

"But..." Linda craned her neck, looking closer at the thing sitting in the front row, "she looks normal. I thought you said she was a monster?"

“What? Of course it’s a monster! You think a human-dog thing is normal?”

Linda stared at Wanda now. As if she was the weird one.

“You’re mad.”

Wanda wasn’t mad, everyone else was. They all loved the thing and over the next few months, their love increased. Wanda got outshone and outmatched in everything.

Every time Regina topped another class test, she had to watch her class applaud it. She had to watch Regina topple her as the queen of drama club, serenading everyone with her inhumanely perfect voice. She had to watch her parents slowly forget her name. She felt the pride drain out of their eyes whenever she walked into the room.

Everything was about Regina and there was nothing Wanda could do about it. She could feel Regina laughing behind her back. It had to be behind her back because in front of her, Regina only had the guts to be the most artificially sweet thing in the world. Wanda knew what it was, but no one else did. That’s why everyone thought she was completely unhinged from reality. Her parents sent her to a doctor to see if anything was wrong, but Wanda refused to talk.

When she walked through the corridors at school she looked at her feet and refused to register anyone’s face. Everyone was sick of her raving about dogs and monsters, and she was sick of everyone calling her mad. Wanda had become an outcast.

That’s why she was surprised to see her friend Linda knocking at her door.

“Hey,” she said to Linda as she opened the door.

“Hey,” answered Linda awkwardly. She hadn’t spoken with Wanda in months.

“What are you doing here?”

“I’m...I’m actually here to hang out with...Regina? Is she home?”

Wanda was surprised. “Yeah, it-she’s in her room.”

“You still don’t like her?” Linda asked with a smile. Wanda didn’t reply. She

let Linda in and shut the door, politely taking her coat and hanging it.

"You know me."

"She's just a girl you know. She's nice. Just give her a chance—"

"No. I'm good."

"You can hang out with us if you want?"

"I have work to do. You guys have fun."

Linda sighed. "You're m—"

"I'm mad. I know." Wanda gave her a wry smile and walked up to her room.

She missed Linda. She missed her badly. Should she go back and give Linda a hug? Apologize for ending their friendship and beg to be taken back, to laugh and play with her again? Should she take a step towards rebuilding their friendship and lift herself from the misery of isolation? Wanda got hopeful. But then she realized: that would mean interacting with Regina again; that would mean treating that monster like a human. She would have to look at the slobbering mutt that had uprooted her life, point at it, and call it a friend.

So, she went to its room and knocked on the door. Regina swung it open and looked surprised.

"You're... why're you here?"

"I don't... Can I? I'm..." Wanda stuttered, "I wanted to apologize to Linda. And, maybe..."

"Mom and dad aren't home, you don't need to be nice."

"No, I'm not trying to be nice. I... I Just want to hang out."

She walked into the room, sat down and gradually joined in with their laughter and fun. Wanda apologized for her cruel words. She hugged Linda and smiled at Regina. They accepted her warmth and roped her into the evening they had planned.

Initially she felt awkward. Her social skills had become clumsy after her exile. She stuttered a lot, and sometimes let out utter nonsense. But her stiff conversation was smoothed over by the trashy pop the two other girls played in

the background. Their words didn't feel plastic or insulting. Her words became kinder and lively.

After eating copious amounts of ice cream and gossiping about friends, they looked out the window and noticed the purple and pink sky. It was almost night. Linda said she had to leave but stayed until she could hear her dad honking impatiently from the driveway.

"This was surreal..." Wanda remarked as Linda admonished her dad and told him to wait.

"Yeah, but it was nice," Linda said, putting her coat on. "I don't think I can remember the last time we talked this much."

"I don't think I've ever talked this much with you," Regina added. She looked like she wanted to give Wanda a small hug but she stopped herself. That would take time.

"Don't be a stranger!" Linda shouted, running towards the driveway and waving back at them.

Regina sighed and smiled at Wanda. Wanda gave a slight smile back. Now that Linda was gone, the atmosphere was a little wooden, but not malicious. They both decided to be quiet, and just sit in each other's company for a bit. Wanda made them tea and propped herself up on the plushy red sofa with her feet hanging off the side.

"Thank you," Wanda said to Regina, nursing the warm cup in her hand.

"For what?" Regina asked.

"For today."

"No problem," Regina said as it lounged down on the soft carpet, "Never knew you could be nice once in a while."

"No problem." Wanda paused and stretched her arms. "I really need something to eat."

Regina nodded contently.

Wanda got up to go to the kitchen. She had loved today and she was grateful.

She felt happy and included for once in a very long time. It helped her come to a decision she had been debating for a long while. Regina was a sweetheart and had immediately accepted her. They had an easy rhythm between them. Despite the hate, when they spoke as friends there was no tension. Wanda was grateful that she took the chance to meet it with an open mind, with one of her best friends.

If this couldn't quell her hate for the creature, nothing would.

So she walked out of the kitchen with a steel heart and a steady mind. It looked up at her and smiled before shifting its expression to confusion. Wanda took the sharpest knife in the kitchen and gripped it tightly in her hands.

"You still disgust me."

Wanda bounded forward and pinned the creature down, raising the knife over her head. Her mind was clear and focused. She knew that despite the creature's clever act, despite its inerrant act of perfect daughter and student, despite its humanity: this thing would only ever be a creature. Something that had taken her life and had replaced it with misery. This mutt was a threat, she had no doubts about it.

She had no doubt when she brought the knife down on the thrashing alien under her. Her grip was firm, and her arm was strong. Her mind was already feeling lighter, free from the torment this thing had inflicted upon her.

She had no doubt until she looked down at the creature bathed in blood to see, not a monster, but a helpless, frail girl lying on the floor. She had been mistaken. The shock of her assault had shaken her out of the jealous illusion she had constructed for herself.

But the deed was done; the knife was buried and the blood was on her hands. No matter how hard she tried, it would never come off.

Ichi-Go Ichi-E

Emma Jones

Do I give you power by writing about you -
do I paint you the colors of my high school gym,
in cold, sloshy February, and the day when you
and I shared a folding chair, and I drank from your
hefty cup of carrot juice,

in the art museum I invited you to we jumped into a pile
of unused film rolls and felt them crunch
under our bodies, and I learned that you
were the uncredited voice of a baby rabbit
in a Disney sequel movie,

in the bracelets on your thin wrists
and the lightness in your eyes I see
eighth grade fantasies of suburban skater masculinity,
but you cook my favorite Japanese meals,
dance African steps, ride your bike to school
through the twist of your borough, and it's all

*ichi go ichi e*¹, I thought, taking the downtown train
and transferring so I could spend two stops with you,
only to find out at the transfer station that my train isn't
running uptown at all, so I take the other train back up, change
again somewhere else, fall asleep on the way back home.

I should have known it was wrong then.
I could have just walked away from you,
if I was sure I'd see you again.

¹ Japanese idiom. "One time, one meeting." The term is often translated as "for this time only," "never again," or "one chance in a lifetime." The term reminds people to cherish any gathering that they may take part in, citing the fact that many meetings in life are not repeated.

Two Poems by Alana Perez

about the way

there was something different about the way
i was that morning
like someone cut off my starfish limbs
so i grew new ones

the hair on my head was baby soft
i had never been dirty
touched
only clean air
no smoke
or deceit
so good it hurts

i woke up like someone else
something different about the way
there were
clean sheets
straight teeth
the good kind of delirium

how many times have i had
this dream?

country human

land lying opposite

contrary
to
home

country cousin
of distant
third
fourth
fifth removed

against "tierra"
in the in
between
borders of here
and everywhere

blood
and rice
and garlic dressing
undressing my
country

feeding it
plantain promises
breaking its bones
in the opposite
direction
of home

Contributor's Note

(after Michael Martone's *Michael Martone*)

Arie Pramono

Contributor's Note

Arie Pramono is from San Francisco, California, and currently attends school at 63 5th Avenue New York, New York, 10003. He studies literary studies with a concentration in fiction and non-fiction writing. While fiction is his primary genre, he prefers writing non-fiction. He realizes, however, that non-fiction doesn't pay the bills. If non-fiction did pay the bills, he would have forsaken fiction after his intermediate level workshop. Arie enjoys writing pieces that sound similar to *The Onion* news articles, or *Reddit* shitposts. Unlike the 90% of writers that don't make it big in the industry, Arie swears that he is a one of a kind writer and will etch his name in the history books as the next great American author. This belief may stem from a combination of narcissism, arrogance, and an inflated sense of self-worth. Arie also refuses to read or write outside of school, and he refuses to read other people's workshop critiques. He relies solely on instinct. His stories are often jumbled and disorganized, though not without imagination. He possesses a strong voice and composes unorthodox pieces on the regular. However, his sentences are often confusing and awkward due to incorrect grammar and structure. He cannot write endings. He has written stories about women's pockets, the Vietnam War, sanitizing

bathrooms, and other subjects. When he's not writing, he masturbates at least five times a day. His favorite category on Pornhub.com is "Red Heads."

Contributor's Note

Arie Pramono is from San Francisco, California and lives with his parents and his older brother. He can receive a bone marrow transplant from his parents in the case that he develops leukemia. However, sometimes he feels like he is adopted. He has his father's laidback attitude and his mother's jet-black hair, but he shares little to no hobbies with them. Unlike his brother and his father, who are both avid automobile mechanics and enthusiasts, Arie and his father have no doubly-invested interests, except for a love of baking bread pudding (however, Arie would prefer it if their bread puddings didn't have raisins). He is much closer to his mother than his father, but perhaps that is due to a less-than-normal relationship between the two (no, there are not having an illicit affair). He sees his mother as his equal. She is not so much a mother as she is a friend with which he can "crack open a cold one."

Arie can sometimes be cold to his parents because he feels he knows better than them. The crows feet, the graying hair, the taut skin, and the linear intensification of "old people smell" makes him distant. He is disorganized, sarcastic, and acts on whims. He is fast. His parents are slow, and they don't even lean on walkers just yet.

They come from a generation that constantly questions the validity of a "Literary Studies" degree. "Are you going to be a teacher?" they ask every time Arie returns home from school. His parents will often ask him for grammar and spelling checks (his father is the main culprit, as he often capitalizes the first letter in every word of every sentence). They would like it if he takes the "Graduate Record Examinations" and jump straight into business school.

"Fuck business school," Arie says. "Anyway, I'm going to shower. I'll call you later." He does not shower, and later never comes. He loves his parents. He prays that they never read this note.

Contributor's Note

Arie Pramono is from San Francisco, California. The first definition for "Arie" on Urban Dictionary is "The cutest, sweetest, prettiest and nicest girl you've ever seen." The second definition is "The hottest sex you will ever have." He is neither of those. In Hebrew, "Ari" translates to the word *lion*. Arie is not Jewish. He is an Indonesian- American raised Catholic. Whenever he asks his parents why he was named "Arie," they can never give him a definite answer. His brother's name is Brendan. "Why the fuck is my name 'Arie' then? You wanted something not as boring as 'Brendan' huh?" he says to his parents. "Arie is a God damn girl's name" (though that's not necessarily true. What about Ari Shapiro, an American NPR Journalist? Or Ari Gold, a fictional character from the television series *Entourage*?).

In high school, Arie knew three different girls named Ariana. In passing, their friends would call them "Ari," probably because those two extra syllables were exhausting. Sometimes, if Arie was in close proximity with these "imposters," he would turn around. "Me?" he would ask. Unfortunately, they never asked for the "real" Arie. He had no friends.

The extra "E?" It's a mystery to Arie. He's not entirely sure why his parents decided to slap on an extra vowel, as if two of the most prominent vowels in the English language weren't enough.

Sometimes, people will pronounce Arie (Aw-ree) as Arie (Air-ree). He isn't sure why. Maybe it has something to do with the extra vowel, but not likely. It baffles him whenever people pronounce it that way. "You wouldn't pronounce Ariana as 'Airiana' wouldn't you? Fucking idiots."

Contributor's Note

Arie Pramono is an amateur writer from San Francisco, California. He writes about food for the online food and culture publication, SpoiledNYC. He does his best to avoid writing BuzzFeed-like articles such as "The Best 10 Places in NYC to get Mugged."

Arie has a micro penis, and he is uncircumcised. His girlfriend doesn't mind. He went through many different condom brands until he found the one that didn't "light his dick on fire." He recommends Trojan Magnum.

He wishes high school sex ed classes displayed more diversity. When they used a circumcised dildo to demonstrate how to apply a condom, he wondered why they didn't perform the demonstration with an uncircumcised one.

Pramono is currently producing a story collection detailing the difficulties of sex with foreskin, called *Turtleneck*. This short story collection will focus on life with foreskin, and how it affects men like him. It will also include original photography submitted by himself and the contributors. This collection will hit stores nationwide next year.

He hopes more people will understand that circumcision is not just about cutting off extra foreskin from the penis. Circumcision surgery detaches the tip of the penis from the rest of the foreskin. The small pink, fleshy bridge that links both sides becomes severed. Because they are attached, the penis becomes choked if the foreskin is pulled down. As Pramono calls it, "going sleeveless."

"When a man goes sleeveless," he explains, "it's like dropping a man into the river with a cinder block tied to his feet. In this metaphor, the foreskin is the cinderblock, and the tip is the man."

Pramono says, "Fuck *Lifestyle* condoms. Though figuratively, not literally, because they hurt."

Contributor's Note

Arie Pramono is from San Francisco, California. At least, that's what he tells people. In reality, he's from South San Francisco, which is approximately fourteen miles from the city. However, it's much less of a pain to simply lie. Arie doesn't think it's a lie, since he spent a large part of his developing years in San Francisco. He attended high school at Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, a private Catholic school. He is Catholic, but he does not go to Church. During

this high school period, Arie developed a number of his most memorable and impactful crushes. This list is currently unfinished and under development. The list is ordered in rank of importance:

A cashier at
La Baguette-
Summer between
sophomore year (of
college) and junior
year (of college)

Caucasian.

San Francisco, CA

Joked about going skydiving for my birthday. She offered to go with me, but quickly retracted her offer because she was afraid of heights.

Haven't figured out her work schedule. Never saw her again.

Marlow ? -
Junior year to
present day

Bay Area, CA

Mixed.

An employee at *William Sonoma* in San Mateo. Probably a few years older. 25- 27? She remembered me as the kid who kept buying steak rub. She gave me tips on how to barbecue.

One time, one of her shirt buttons was undone, and I noticed her bra. I subtly mentioned it, to which she thanked me and closed her shirt.

Stella T? -
Summer between
junior year and
senior year

Washington, U.S

Caucasian.

Met during a leadership conference. From the Pacific Northwest. City name is something weird, something you would think is in the Midwest.

Jen L.
Spring semester
of junior year (of
college) to present
day

Caroline H. -
Fall semester of
freshman year

Ashley G. -
Brief period
between spring of
junior year

Unforgettable accent. Unforgettable brown curls.
Signed my high school yearbook.

Honolulu, Hawaii.

Korean.

Skater, but not particularly good at it.

Shares appreciation for Hawaiian grilled corn.

Quiet, but easy to talk to.

Her slight height advantage (mere centimeters) turns
me on.

Unforgettable smile. Unforgettable laugh.

San Francisco, California

Chinese.

Facebook profile picture similar to a porn star.

Sent her a friend request on four separate occasions.
Only added me so that she could roast me on my wall.

San Francisco, California.

Korean.

Kindest girl I've ever met.

Builds houses in Haiti and India.

Gullible and innocent.

Confided in me the first time she masturbated.

Regret not asking to prom.

Camille C. -
2nd grade to 8th
grade

San Francisco, California.

Chinese & Filipino.

Once mistakenly called her "hot" in the third grade after performing *Charlotte's Web*. I was Templeton. She was the piano player. I was only trying to say that her piano playing skills were hot.

Thought we were going to get married after grammar school.

Dates white boys.

Jenny N. -
Fall semester of
junior year to
spring semester of
junior year

Hanoi, Vietnam

Vietnamese.

Spent a large amount of time helping her with geometry and English homework.

Loaded, spoiled but self-aware.

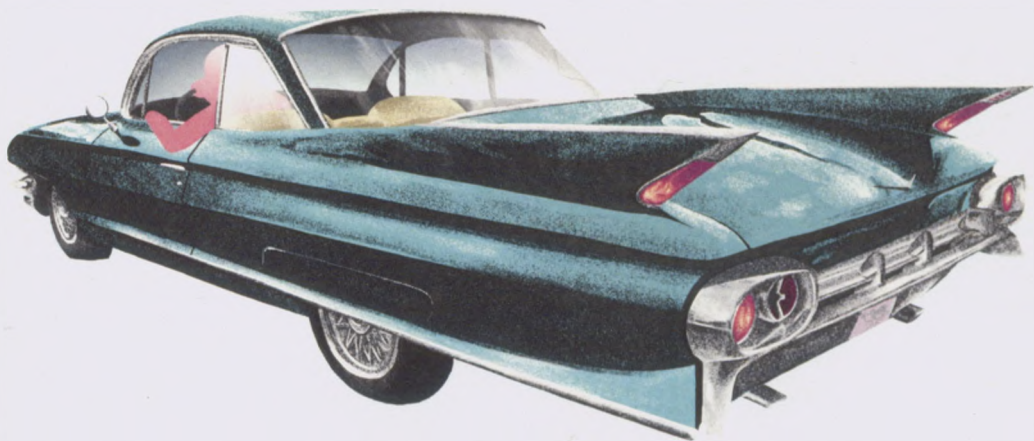
Kind, not spiteful.

Asked her to prom twice. Replied, "No" both times.

Recommends sex on ecstasy.

Close friend.

This list is currently under development, and is managed by his personal team of record keepers. If you have any questions about the list, or you are interested in participating, you can give him a call at 415-385-2743. Please do not contact him with unsolicited services or offers.



Andrew Vi
Coupe
Digital Illustration

Contributors' Notes

Adjí Ngathe Kebe is a student at the New School. She's currently in the BA/MA program. She just wants to be the Beyoncé of her craft.

A.J. Vitiello is a freshman at Lang and is excited to dive into New York's literary landscape. Previously, he received a National Gold Medal for Dramatic Script and a National Gold Medal for Flash Fiction in the Scholastic Writing Awards. He lives in Newtown, Connecticut.

Alana Perez is a Junior at Lang and a major in Literary Studies. She was born and raised in the Bronx, has been writing poetry since the age of 15, and is usually singing, reading, or riding the 1 train.

Ali McPherson is a senior studying journalism & design and photography. She was born and raised in the Upper East Side of Manhattan and has lived in the Bronx for the past ten years. When she's not writing, she can be found eating tacos and watching reruns of *Sex and the City*.

Alistair Forrester After studying poesy under some great names in undergraduate, Alistair went on to serve as an AmeriCorps working to assuage a lack of affordable urban housing. He is currently attending a masters program for sociology in the Big Apple. Alistair humbly thanks you for this opportunity to be heard, and hopes you enjoy his literary work.

Allegra Melloul is an actress, producer, and director from Beverly Hills, California. She is currently furthering her studies in film in NYC as a freshman at The New School.

Andrew Sokulski was born in Houston, Texas to a Brazilian father and a Mexican mother. He has two older sisters, love dogs. A fun fact about him is that he studied abroad for one year in Kyoto and also learned Chinese and Korean while at The New School.

Arie Pramono is a senior in the literary studies program. He specializes in writing profiles and creating scenes. He loves to

work with fiction and creative nonfiction. His favorite writers include Ursula K. Le Guin, Arundhati Roy, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Eka Kurniawan. He hopes to work as an esports journalist in Santa Monica. He lives in San Francisco, California.

Bianca Olson is a freshman attending Lang in hopes to major in literary studies. Her biggest aspiration is to become a published poet, and has been working towards that dream for the past two years. She was born and raised in Orange County, California. Her parents named her Bianca because they thought it would be a good name for a writer, and that's exactly what she turned out to be.

Bridget Doyle is a Journalism + Design major in her final semester at Lang. She has a background in financial news.

Callie O'Rourke is a fourth year Literary Studies student at Lang. Poetry is something she's always loved which she attributes to the sing song verse her mother writes for all occasions, proving poetry is just another part of life.

Elisabeth O'Driscoll is a senior at The New School studying psychology and writing. All of her poetry centers around hot witches. If you know any hot witches, please get them in touch with Elisabeth as soon as possible.

Emily Hirschtick is a fourth year student studying Fine Arts at Parsons and Visual Studies at Lang. They love crafting, power clashing, and listening to the best song ever written which is Linger by the Cranberries.

Emma Jones is a prose writer and poet from Manhattan. She was a Foyle Young Poet of the Year for the Poetry Society of London in 2017, and her work has been accoladed with the Ned Vizzini Teen Writing Prize, Paul Block Award for Creative Writing, Foundation For Letters High School Writing Award, Scholastic Silver Key Award, and Alan Breckinridge Prize for Best Personal Essay. Bilingual in English and Japanese, Emma is interested in how those the languages we create become conduits for the universal language of rhythm and emotion.

Gracie Pierson is a Senior at Eugene Lang as a Literary studies major, focusing in poetry. She has been published in *Eleven and a Half* for three consecutive years.

Hannah Waskowitz is a freshman at Eugene Lang with an intended major in Arts in Context, focusing on Anthropology and Theater. Her interests range from true crime to medieval history to environmental science to theater theory, but in her writing she often chooses to focus on the relationship between self, family, and history. Although she attends a school in what is quite possibly the least green place in the world and lives in the midwest, she's a mountain girl in her core, having spent much of her life in Colorado and Vermont, and that connection to the natural world often guides her storytelling. This piece is for her grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and mother.

Jonathan Turner is a Classical Voice major at Mannes School of Music and Writing minor at Eugene Lang, currently entering his junior year. His short story,

"Devil Branches", has been recently published in *AfricanVoices* magazine. Currently, he is at work on a short story collection and two novel manuscripts. He can be reached on Twitter at @angryblacktenor.

Juno Stilley is a first-year student, activist, master pool player, and has previously been published by *The Messy Heads*. (Fossil Record)

Kallie Quist is a senior studying creative writing at Eugene Lang. She is originally from Minnesota and wants to move back after graduating. She works at The Poetry Project and enjoys making zines and knitting.

Kylah Balthazar would really not like to be pigeonholed.

Laura Ye is a junior majoring in illustration.

Mallory Strom is a multi-disciplinary artist at Lang. Her work, including music, film and poetry, investigates themes of mental illness and abuse, and is often

influenced by her seventeen years of formal music education. She is currently designing her own major in the rhetoric of art and math.

Ojasvin Kirpane I am a creative technologist with a passion for writing. I am interested in the power of stories to change people's emotions and thoughts in meaningful ways.

Rebeca Leal Singer (Mexico City, 1994) writes, edits and translates. She is currently enrolled in the MFA in creative writing at The New School. Her main goal in life is to make complicated things simple.

Rocío Christensen Garrido is a third-year drama student who likes words and other beautiful things.

Ryan Loritz is in his final year at Eugene Lang majoring in Culture and Media and minoring in Literary Studies. Born and raised in Arizona, he came to New York to experience humidity. Apart from poetry, he also writes short fiction and screenplays.

Sandra Stollar is a married mother of two young ladies. A former entrepreneur in the fashion industry, she decided to enroll in the New School to become a therapist focusing on adolescent minorities. This essay is a product of a personal writing course, which has opened up her vulnerable side in a way that has helped to empower her. This is her first essay to be published, and she hopes not the last.

Sarah Fosburg is a novelist from Park City, Utah. Her short stories and poetry have appeared in *Freshly Squeezed*, a student-led creative compilation; and her reviews of Sundance films are available online at <http://ppauteens.tumblr.com/>.

Susan Shapiro, a long time New School writing professor, has a master's degree in poetry and is the bestselling author/coauthor of 12 books including "Five Men Who Broke My Heart" "Lighting Up," "The Bosnia List" and most recently "The Byline Bible." You can follow her on Twitter at @susanshapironet or Instagram at @profsue123

Tia Guerrier is a Literary Studies Major, studying Creative Writing with a concentration in Poetry. She is a New York native, raised in a small beach town on the south shore of Long Island, which seems to be a constant source of inspiration for her. Her current writing explores the fluctuation of human connection and the effect of natural and urban environments on them.

Victoria Richards, born in Queens, New York and raised in Houston, Texas is a poet, freelance writer and second year MFA Creative Writing student at The New School. She has a passion for encouraging children to appreciate and create literature for the sake of self-discovery. Lastly, Victoria is a connoisseur of all things Black Girl Magic.

Wes Thomason is a freshman at Eugene Lang College hoping to study Politics and Economics. He hopes to use writing and poetry to look at Politics and Economics in a new light. Specifically, our relationship with queerness, class associations, mental health, and ethics.

Yuecen Ricky Cai is an artist with a very challenging first name and last name to pronounce. Started as a visual artist, with more than ten years of practice of Chinese painting and Calligraphy, he tends to forget how to hold a Chinese paint brush nowadays. He is currently in the Parsons BFA Fashion Program, betraying (and loving it) what he once said to his father that he would never touch a sewing needle in his life. He discovered his talent of writing under Elisha Wagman, who is not only an amazing (!!!!) professor (you should all switch to her class), but also the lighthouse, reaching out her light, piercing through the mist of blues.





Featured Artists

Andrew Vickery
Benjamin Clement
Clair Gunther

Emmalee Johnson-Kao
Erika Shiba
German Castellanos
Julia St.Clair
Kyle Canyon

Luke McCusker
Morrison Gong
Nik Antonio

Lia Sued C.
Qiurui Du
Shivani Mithbaokar
Stella Stringer
Tiago Mena Abrantes

30 Benjamin Clement
Waterbed
Photograph

56 Andrew Vickery
Old House
Digital Illustration

86 Tiago Mena Abrantes
Untitled Structure 05
Copper Etching

112 Benjamin Clement
Untitled
Photograph

Spot Illustration

Clair Gunther

Lia Sued C.

Emmalee Johnson-Kao

34 Julia St.Clair
Untitled (la curva en el río)
Photograph

63 Luke McCusker
How Long
Photograph on Bedsheet

100 German Castellanos
Untitled
Photograph

148 Morrison Gong
Banquet
Digital Scan (Video Still)

105, 125, 127

111

154, 155

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