

Hawaii Review

Occupying Va

OCCUPYING VA the betweenness

Hawai‘i Review #85

“Va is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships and the contexts change. . . . A well-known Samoan expression is ‘Ia teu le va’—cherish, nurse, care for the va, the relationships.”

-Albert Wendt, “Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body”

Here in the occupied islands of Hawai‘i, whose sovereign space was illegally overthrown in 1893, and around the globe, people are advocating and active in movements to reclaim and change relational spaces. What we say about space today might be a litmus test for the unrest around us, as well as for our own efforts of nursing and care. Hannah Arendt insisted that the world is not a thing but a moving field of relations, a space we all continually make. What might it mean to occupy relational space? Can va be occupied? We occupy, but we also hold, and share. What would be the story of such a space?

This is the first of a two-part series.

Fall 2016

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the va: between teeth and tongue

1.

when she first taught me to brush my teeth
my mother would gaze into my open jaw, inspecting
the texture of my breath
she would search for sharp
mint, tap water, spit, and pink
fluoride chewable scents, assurance
there were no gaps in her teaching, no gap
in my practice for preventing things
from falling out of my head.

2.

every night, I tend the spaces
between my mother's tongue
and my grandparent's Tonga, bristling

between risk, guilt, absence, mistakes
the nights I go to sleep without remembering
the weeks, months, and years I go
without visiting

3.

bite, floss, bleed, remember—
repeat the spaces between
your teeth, tongue them
as shapes of the sacred

the va: between pages

taha.

You want

the va?

well

I don't have it.

wouldn't be

able to hold it

even if I was born

better

understanding

place and time—

what is a poem

about

va

but a grasping

grasping

grasping

at what I am

unfit

to hold

Lee Kava

ua.

I belong between

no one's scissors

I am dis

jointed

thread, un

wound

lengths of

not being

present

for birthdays funerals weddings

my loyalties un

trusted—yet

I belong between

no one's cutting

my pieces are sharpened

by my own

teeth—
that is the va

I am cut from.

tolu.
the va I write
I grasp at

in
a poem

about
a word

about
a concept

of space time
so old

it wouldn't fit
in the pages

of a
single issue.

fa.
va belongs
to my grandparents
to aunties uncles cousins brothers sisters who

tauhi va

from first breath—

the va
cannot be
fully

explained

in English.

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Judges' Statements for the 7th Annual Ian MacMillan Writing Awards

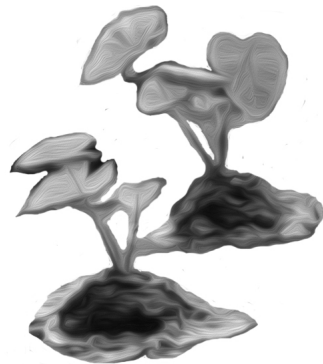
Established in 2010, the Ian MacMillan Writing Awards honor Professor Ian MacMillan, a founding spirit and long-time advisor of *Hawai'i Review*. The author of eight novels and six story collections, MacMillan was an acclaimed writer and admired faculty member who taught for 43 years in the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Creative Writing Program.

Craig Santos Perez, on his selection of Leah Shlachter's poem:

Thanks to all the poets who submitted to the Ian MacMillan Poetry Contest this year. There were many worthy poems, but I have chosen "To Make a Dish Hawaiian Just Add Pineapple" to receive the prize. The speaker of this poem writes about being othered, exoticized, and demeaned for their mixed race identity and ethnically ambiguous appearance--an experience many people can relate to. I appreciate how this poem explores its theme through an innovative form: there are various voices, collaged text, and spatial arrangements. I also enjoy the emotional tones of the poem, as well as its use of food to symbolize hybridized identity. Overall, this poem was served with a spicy personality and a complex prosody.

Shawna Yang Ryan, on her selection of Emeka Chinagorom's story:

"Now That You Are Black in America" captures the reader at both the emotional and intellectual levels. Contextualized within this contemporary American moment of systemic racism and police brutality, it is also the timeless story of a mother's concern for her son. In a gentle and powerful way, it confronts the danger of being black in America, and how immigration transforms one's perceived identity. The narrator's voice is natural and unforced, lyrical with the speaker's idiosyncrasies. The use of the direct address to the son (and by implication to the reader) creates a chest-tightening intimacy. "Lovely" is a strange word to use for such powerful content, but this story is lovely—full of love and beautifully written from the first line to the last.



Poetry Introduction

“The term translingual conceives of language relationships in more dynamic terms. The semiotic resources in one’s repertoire or in society interact more closely, become part of an integrated resource, and enhance each other. The languages mesh in transformative ways, generating new meanings and grammars.”

- Suresh Canagarajah, Linguist & Literacy Scholar

Samoan poet and writer Albert Wendt offers the term *va* as a relational space, tied into the Samoan expression ‘*Ia teu le va*’ - to nurture relationships. In keeping with this movement through and across relationships, the poems in this issue of the *Hawai’i Review* offer relational spaces within language and among languages.

Represented in the following poems, we find examples of at least a dozen tongues and varieties of English - words appear from Tagalog, Tongan, Spanish, French, Hawaiian, Pidgin (Hawaiian Creole English), Hebrew, Greek, Latin.

Poems in Japanese and Chinese dialog with their counterpart English translations. English speakers from the Philippines converse with Iranian poets who write in an English inflected with poetic traditions from Farsi and Arabic.

The poems in this collection “are the perpetual present tense of the Hawaiian language,” “the bleat rousing all provinces,” and “this endless weave from land to sky to the compassion of *vasa*.”

They “fry tilapia while singing stories of distant relatives,” “bring summer, samovar, and hookah,” “flash one shaka,” and “wave anemones.”

Crocodiles, whales, and dragon fruit populate these meditations on the avenues and arenas of communication.

In Leah Shlachter’s award winning poem, “To Make a Dish Hawaiian Just Add Pineapple,” we see relational spaces open up in food culture - plum and apricot give birth to pluot, and dialog between broccoli and kai-lan result in broccolini. Food and nourishment converse in the region of the *va*.

With much gratitude and mahalo nui to all of our contributors, I invite you to enter the spaces of resistance and plurality represented in this volume.

Fiction Introduction

What exists in the relational space between a mother and her son; between that son and the network of people who are his family and community? What exists in the relational space between this same son and a police officer who may perceive and react to his blackness as a threat, before seeing anything else?

How can a person live within and respond to two very different spheres of community relations?

How do communal relations affect an individual's sense of self, or self-worth?

These are some of the questions the stories in this issue invite you to consider.

We create, nurture, or neglect what exists in relational space; these spaces connect us, and form the nature of our relations with each other and our communities. When we act towards another person (or ourselves) with empathy, tenderness, hostility, or antipathy, what is in the relational space between us, and between us and our larger communities, that informs and impacts our action? Relational space, *va*, is everything.

Our theme is specific, yet its scope is vast; there is no *us* without *va*. Relational space is communal and, by extension, personal; and it is political. Each of the stories in this volume considers what exists and is created, nurtured, or neglected in relational space and place. Just as there are myriad relationships, so too do each of these stories speak from a particular place and with a distinct voice.

We are honored to be able to give space for these stories and poems, and hope you find yourself in conversation with them, and that they touch and enrich you. They certainly have for us.

Fishing

Today's pure theater
 asks that we must marvel
 at the scene laid out:

a pair of boats, fastened
 together, bedecked
 with garlands, palm leaves,

flags, paper lanterns.
 Even the waters
 of the lake are picture-

perfect, rippling against
 the oars, the creaking
 rudder. Stipples of light,

wind, the sky reflecting
 itself as itself.
 And there must be music,

fingers to pluck
 arpeggios from a harp.
 A song floats.

Each net is a lattice,
 language riddled
 with holes. The fishes

glisten, though in fact
 are incidental.
 Just as a crocodile

makes an appearance,
 zing of surprise,
 bewilderment.

Our eyes must only
 be alert, watchful
 of what might come,

what might rise
 from the bottom,
 what might fall.

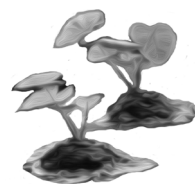
Fastfood

I was six when I learned
it was my right as an American
to eat the dead.

My father
fries a patty of beef mashed
with onions and peppers that sprout
from its form like the sheered branches
of a tree. The smell of the meat, always
burnt yet still dripping with grease,
invades the shore of the children's room.
There are no open windows to disperse
the soldiers of aroma that force me
to enter the smoky kitchen,
confront a pulverized mass
still wet with blood.

He tells me
my senses lie, I should not
be nauseated and trembling,
there should be enjoyment
in the unshapen lump that
he's manufactured
with love and a fist.

We will use the store bought bread
to give it completeness: a facsimile
of a dollar menu my family emulates
with less ingredients. This is the lesson
of my father—tear away my rougher
edges and bleach my exterior
so the unfriendly mixture
that dwells beneath
is easier to consume.



Now That You Are Black In America

I want you to hold out your ears and listen.

Hold my ears?

You are not too old for this, for *this* is a matter of life and death, and I am not about to sit and watch the only nut I have roasting in the fire burn. Besides, I am your mother. I carried you in my womb for nine months, and if I say draw your ears, you should ask me how hard. So now hold your ears.

Your father and I have taken to watching American news more than we watch Super Story. We want to understand what is happening over there. Our hearts are up to our mouths in worry. We still do not understand most of it and we rely on your Uncle Benji to explain sometimes. He says there is nothing happening now that did not happen when he was there as a student. I cannot imagine what it feels like being so young and finding yourself in a place where you are suddenly black before anything else. Especially in a place where it is the worst thing you can be.

I do not want to say I told you so, but I wish you had listened to me and chosen the scholarship in London. Uncle Benji – always the headmaster – agrees. He says that it is not as though people do not encounter racism over there in London, or anywhere else for that matter where there are people of different colors. But he says that racism in London is just like their humor – it is not apparent; that you have to be looking for it to see it. Unlike in America where everything they are serving you is in your face, delivered to your very doorstep like it is mail.

Have you held your ears, are you listening?

I hear you.

No. No, this is not one of those “I hear you” moments, only for you to go on doing what you have been doing. Understand that this is life and death for us. Your father and I had gone through hell before we had you. I was then at an age when pregnancy was nothing short of a miracle; you cannot imagine. So you must take this serious.

You worry too much, Ma.

Worry too much? Worry too much? Are you planning to kill your father and I before our time? Eh? Are you?

Do not cry, Ma. I am listening, I promise. I am holding my ears.

Good.

On TV, the other day we listened to a man who said that the biggest problem facing young black men in America is getting home after they leave the house. We want to make sure that in four years, you will be back to us safe and sound.

Now listen.

I raised you well. It is unfortunate that I have to instruct you again on some of these things as though you were a small boy. If you were here, these are things you should not have to worry about, but now that you are black in America they matter a lot.

First of all, you have to know the rules and follow them.

About police. I do not assume that any black person in America is ignorant of how encounters involving black people and police officers end up. It is

on TV every day. You must know and follow the rules and do everything right.

How is your little car? I hope all is well with it. Uncle Benji and your father now think it was a mistake to have given you money to buy it in the first place. I only wish we could afford something better, something newer so that it would be less likely that you have one of those dreadful encounters. Although I have now seen on TV that having a newer car is as much reason to have a police encounter as driving a jalopy as long as you are black. So my son, please take good care of your car.

Do not drive with anything broken or any expired document. I would rather have you go hungry than have anything out of order in your car. Always have your license. Are you still in the habit of forgetting your wallet? If you are, take a picture of your license with your cell phone as that is one thing young people never forget to take with them. I am not quite sure if doing so would help anything, but it is something.

Do not over speed. Stay in your lane. It is better to arrive at your destination late than not to arrive at all. If ever a police officer stops you, be very respectful and use as many “sirs” as possible.

Do not argue.

Do not cuss.

Do not talk back. Keep your hands where anyone can see them. Explain whatever move you are going to make. Say you have to open the door and get out or have to bring out your license or have to unfasten your seat belt.

Do not forget to add “sir” to whatever you say. Speak correct English. Did you lose your accent yet? I hope not. I saw on TV that Americans have an ear for people whose tongues are thick on their words. Your accent could divert attention and show that you are a different kind of black in a place where black has only one shade.

Smile.

Say you are an only child and that you have an old mother back in Nigeria who would die if anything were to happen to you. Saying that might not mean a lot in that country where human life is trivial, and dogs have more dignity than black people. In a nation of the most intelligent people, I find it unfortunate they do not understand how one person’s untimely death can ruin many lives. They do not see how one life is like a road leading to others and those others leading to much more. It would not just be your father and me who would not survive if anything were to happen to you. It would also be your uncles and aunts who cannot wait for you to do well in your studies, get a fine job and help them with your cousins. So it is not just your life; it is many lives now and generations down the line.

Uncle Benji is not quite sure you should mention that bit about Nigeria. He says you cannot be sure if the police officer has received one of those emails from a Nigerian prince who has a large inheritance coming and wants help to see it released. If so, then just say you have a mother who would die if anything were to happen to you. Hopefully, the police officer has a mother as well who has trained him well and whom he loves.

Do not get involved in anything illegal.

Do not be at any place where you are not supposed to be.

Do not touch anything you are not supposed to touch, eat or drink anything you are not supposed to.

Make sure to do all you have to do during the day and be back at your hostel

before the sun goes down. I always told you that if anything were to happen to anyone in daylight, there are more chances there would be people there to witness and offer help if it is needed.

I forbid you to go out at night.

If it ever became necessary that you go out at night, never wear a hoodie, even if it is cold enough that your ears are freezing. Remember not to have your hands in your pocket, and walk where there is enough light.

In fact, I forbid it. No going out at night.

When you walk, walk upright. Do not lean forward or draw back. I hear they call such senseless way of walking *swaggering*. I forbid it. Walk like the nineteen-year-old with strong bones that you are.

If you go to a store, make sure the security cameras capture your face in full. If you have to, walk up to the camera and show your face as clear as possible. You do not want to be another case of mistaken identity. We saw it on TV where this black man spent five years in prison because he looked like someone they saw on a security camera stealing things. They said both men looked alike. Uncle Benji says that all black people look the same in America when there is a crime.

If you are going to buy anything, do not linger in the aisles. You know how people like to caress items before they pick them off the shelves, as though wooing the items to come with them. I forbid you from doing that. Have a list of what you want. Go where they are and get them. Again, never linger. We saw it on TV where one guy was wrestled to the ground because he was lingering and someone thought he must be stealing something. He had blood all over his face. I have never seen that much blood in my life. My heart leaped out of its place when I imagined that it could be you.

When you are out and about, do not walk too closely behind anyone. Not behind men so no one will accuse you of picking anyone's pocket, and not behind girls so they would not say you are sniffing their hair or looking at their buttocks inappropriately. Even the suspicion of those looks very bad on a young black man.

Dress fine. Wear clothes your size. Never wear clothes that look like they could be hiding anything in their extra folds. Your father thinks tight clothes make men look queer. It is better for people to think that you are queer than dead. Iron your clothes. Tuck in your shirts and always wear a belt. Never let your trousers sag; it is displeasing to the eyes and very irresponsible.

I forbid a tattoo on your body; it would give me a heart attack.

Never wear an earring; it makes a boy look queer. On TV, the other day, we saw this boy; he had earrings in both his ears, one in his nose, one above his left eye just where the eyebrows end, one in his tongue and another just under his lower lip. Your father and I are still arguing over how he holds the one in his tongue and under his lower lips in place. Uncle Benji says it is some magnet, but we are doubtful. The point is, it is not a good sight on a boy. Tattoos and earrings on men make them look like they are wearing something bad, like a bad odor or something worse.

I would have added that you should not grow any dreadlocks, but there is no need since you are already going bald like your father. Unless you want to look like a vulture caught in the rain, the way bald men look who leave those hairs that begin halfway on their heads. Cut your hair close to your scalp, not completely shaved. Men who completely shave their hair have a frightening look which is exactly the look no black man in America should want right now. So cut your hair low to the

scalp. That way you will still look in order even when you forget to brush it, as I know you would.

If you must be friendly with a girl, use a condom.

Ma!

Shut up and listen and do not Ma me. Having a child when you are yourself barely a child is one of those issues that make black men in America look bad. On TV they say it is how trouble starts for many black people in America. All those babies born to people who are themselves, babies. Boys and girls dropping out of school to care for their children, settling for jobs only people for whom there is no future would do. Low income, frustration arrives, then one bad choice after another. Numerous broken homes. That is exactly how I heard it on the TV.

Please, my son, that is one chance you must never take. All the time and money we spent on the best Catholic education you have received was not for you to go and become another black baby daddy in America. If I waited that long to have a child, I am in no hurry for a grandchild. So use a condom. Find a homely girl, one you intend to marry someday. Find a homely black girl, not one of those I see on TV who wear purple and navy blue hair. Good if you can find a Nigerian girl in your school, better if she is a nursing student and from a good home, best if she is an Igbo girl. We do not want you to get involved with a girl who cannot keep a home, or who would not care for us when we are old and have to live with you.

Your father just found a friend's son who is coming to America. I am going to give him some egusi, ogbono, ground crayfish, some dried ukasi and onugbu leaves, and some okporoko. It is nearly six months since you left, and you must be running out. I do not want you to get in the habit of American foods. On TV, they say the worst American foods are those in cans and the chickens they pump with things to make them look ten times their size. As much as I do not want you dead, I do not want you unhealthy.

Be safe. We are praying for you; rosary every day and a candle at the Blessed Sacrament every Sunday. Pray for yourself too. Cover yourself with the blood of Jesus every day before you leave the house. So that when bad things are in front you will be behind; when they are behind you will be in front.

Uncle Benji sends his greetings. Aunt Ijeoma sends her basket of blessings. Uncle Kenneth sends his greetings. Aunt Chi asks when you will send her the American shoes she had shown you before you left. Uncle James wants an American smoking pipe. Uju wants an American baby doll with pink lips and gold hair. Peter wants a toy machine gun. Mama Ejima from the store down the street says to tell you she has not been selling as much bean cake since you left; she sends her blessing.

I will wait a few weeks and send your regard to those who sent their greetings and blessings. Those who just want you to buy them things will have to wait until you finish school and get a good job.

Please, my son, hold your ears and listen. Know the rules and keep them. Take all I have said here to heart. When you finish school and return, you will not have to worry about most of these things again because here you would not be black. You will be just like everyone else.

Your father and I send you our deepest love.

I hear you, Ma.

Admonishment

My mother warned me of getting dark
when I returned home after hunting
imaginary creatures in the fields—
the only monsters I could slay.

I think of the magazines in Tagalog
next to the basket in the water closet
with one singer's face
on cover after cover,

her visage much paler
than the women in the kitchen
who fry tilapia while singing
stories of distant relatives.

I picture my mother
with her multitude of siblings
during her visits
to Bicol in the Philippines:

Amongst all of their round faces,
she is a contrast, her skin
painted like porcelain
to mirror a starlet across distant oceans.

In the American mornings, she stands
before her looking glass, applies
the cleanser, the lightener, the brightener
before she puffs powder.

Today, she leans down next to me,
sniffs the air,
turns away, tells me
I smell like the sun.

Last Rites

for the Filipino-Black child

I long for a return to a childhood
 where women roll lumpia
 while swapping stories of
 children that I am not. But I am

in America. One drop and I look over
 my shoulder and recite the tenets:

When the red and blue
 lights flash in the rear view
 mirror, switch the radio
 to the pre programmed
 classical station.

When the man in blue
 approaches on the sidewalk,
 make no sudden movements.
 Stay polite, make sure he knows
 about school and family.

Answer
 all of his questions.
 Keep the voice even.
 Breathe. Hold back tears.
 And pray.

After I'm declared guilty
 for my own homicide

I ask, place my body
 in the ocean. Write my name
 on water. The Pacific
 is my mother.

She will carry me home.

If My Mother Had Named Me

I would have kept silent
in the church in Naga City
when the collared man in black
drips the surrogate blood,
splatters my barong stitched
in ivory that covers
my infant form.

I am more careful
with the *bol-itak*
on my uncle's shelf
and its edge does not open
a mouth that fills with crimson
in my palm, exposing a kinship
with Bicol and Alongopo.

My tongue
does not twist
when I say *salamat-po*
and a smile comes easily
to my lola's lips when she listens
as the women pass
lumpia wrappings around a table.

But on the first
day of kindergarten,
my teacher stumbles
when she reads my name
from the paper in her hands,
looks around the room,
uneasy.

But my father has the victory.
It is an hour before midnight
when I pull the wrinkled dictionary
from a dusty cabinet, silently mouth
the Tagalog words that are unfamiliar.
I kneel, fold my hands, look to the sky
manalagin.

But I hear nothing.

New Wave

The boom box next to the banana tree
whines about a karma chameleon
before it shouts and everybody
wants to rule the world.

A zombie splits the water
crashing onto a rocky beach
and I learn to moonwalk
in a typhoon.

I was not the kids in America:
these are Filipino songs
from Filipino islands
with a brown visage
singing brown ballads
for brown loves.

Beneath a sky dark with fruit bats
before a 747 steals me
across the Pacific
when I am six

there is no music television.
The video never killed the radio star.
Art is ambient and all citizens
are cosmopolitan.

Christopher Rose

An Ending, A Beginning

I want to learn how to disappear. I try to do it every chance I get but I am always found out. Someone fishes me out of the water. Someone turns on the light. Someone gives me a passing glance, looks away, and looks back. The only time I nearly dissolved was when I was attending a protest one afternoon. I remembered being angry at having a voice I can't use, I remembered people needing bodies more than they need voices. I remembered everything that is not worth having. I was a brown girl in a sea of other brown girls and it was almost perfect, I was almost gone, I was almost not myself. Haven't you said that time is a Möbius strip? Or was that a smidgen from a false memory? We kicked the ground willing the earth to explode. I believed then as I believe now that anything that has a geography offers me the potential to vanish. I am in Point A until I am in Point B and in that distance I have ceased to exist. I am brown and the wings of birds are brown and horses are brown and the shell of eggs and almonds and old buildings and tree barks and coffee and coconut husks. I am grateful, I am among wild things and sane things, I am among living things and dead things, I am a star anise I am a decaying leaf I am my grandfather's leather skin I am disappearing

T. De Los Reyes

Kayumanggi

I make my living
thanks to the benevolence
of white men

A borrowed language
is what I feed my children

I was born
between vicissitudes

I sleep in between
longitudes and latitudes

Sometimes I want
my dormant outrage
to have more weight

Alas, I am merely
as brown as the earth

I am nearly
as unnecessary

If they make me lie down
naked on the ground

I will disappear

T. De Los Reyes

My Blood

You have shot me seventy times seven
I'm bleeding
Calling for help while carrying to my own cooling bed

It is my great grandfather's people
The same one who was tied to the railroad tracks
For stirring up the darkies in his day
It is he who nurses my wounds with a potion
Made from trees not yet known to man

He rubs it into my skin and hums a unfamiliar rhythm
I begin to moan and join the humming
I'm healing

We are healing
One people connected in a song of freedom
Building a protective wall around that
Small dark child in a school that
Counts his head and orders additional prison cells and prison beds

We are with him
We will teach him our father's ballads
We take back our bodies from a country
That wants to play slave master a night
And diplomat on foreign soil when the sun is high and shining

We are healing
Healing our relationships with each other
Healing our relationships to our mother earth, careful what we have taken from her
Healing our relationships with our beautiful brown bodies
Healing the need for pills to delinquent cancers that feed on us from too many
cheap noncombustible foods
Healing our attempts to buy assimilation without paying for liberty

Then my mother's mother's people join the song
With feathers, beads and chats – there is no difference
I hum along to their songs too
Healing the seventy-five trillion images of us that say we am subhuman
Healing the fear of dying for treason
When black, brown, or red self-love is equal to resisting arrest and a terrorist act

The angels come and lay hands on my soul
They whisper that we will rise up in the morning
They remind me to heal today
As I have been shot for what was said to be a gun in my hand
They whisper leave the - who shot you until tomorrow
When I can stand up and call out cowards with power and strength

And tomorrow
My people will find them
We will find you
And we will take away your guns
Then get on with the business of sharing the land, the water, the country
Sharing a future
That includes our children
And even your children's children

Not seeking vengeance, but justice
As we are people of ancestral wisdom and faith
But still we will teach our children to be steadfast
And to guard the gate.

Calliope

They knew she was without people
And called her weak
Weakness was twelve
Her arms bled from lack and want
She carried too much
Spinning around non stop
She guarded the boundaries of her world

While half asleep
They had gotten in
Caught her off duty
One eye closing the other shut
She was maimed in the house of the poem
A stanza repeating over and again
They had gotten in
Caught her off duty...

It was her rage
Massive forces deep inside –taped behind her heart
Changed her name from Weakness
To Whisper and from Whisper to Scream

Scream was thirteen
Her arms shattered from hurt
She carried too many memories
Spinning around non stop
Puffs of sound in a dying French horn
All pitch but no air

Compelled to defend herself Scream changed into a Flame
She blew fire in their faces
Quickly charred hands and noses
They fled
Even right must be controlled
Wisely measured and dulled out as corrections
Bend at a downward angle as not to hunt, not to kill, not to murder

With fire and light Flame danced in the smoke of all that burned in her path.
She changed her name to Calliope
By 35 Calliope learned to paint
Wide and soft strokes with her flame

Her canvas the sides of mountains and deserts sands
All were invited to witness the beauty
But none got close enough to Calliope to burn.

On Battling (Baltimore Strut)

Gray cased in gray, shaken
and truncated like timber,

the bleat rousing all provinces,
calling each seed to surface

and insist on a redress. This trumpet
of grief and homespun placards

is met with gunmetal treads
bruising the fruit stands, mustard

gas suffocating the night's
coruscation. As elbows

lock before store fronts
to shelter shop windows

from the wallop of pitiless
Kevlar, as flares browbeat

boulevards and arsenals
are dispatched across the wet

gravel, a single shirtless
seraph unfurls himself

upon the tarmac. Flexing
faux leather he gyrates, feather

glides, thunder claps then jukes
toward the 16,000 pound

armored personnel carrier.
Each step in rhythm, his feet ignite

the pavement like Michael's in Billie
Jean, he cranes his neck,

becomes cross and shrieks
to remind the intruder *your tanks*

are no match for my moon walk.

Vincent Toro

Promesa (HR 4900)

Song to ward off venture capitalists.

The tinto shipped
from our ancestors in Galicia
flirts unabashedly with giggling hens
on the veranda. Tio Frank
is praying to his pipe, the smoke
cradles his bajo sexto
as he croons, conjuring the flota

that dislocated us from the last
century. Junior rocks the ricochet
like a sorcerer of Brownian
motion. He is a garrison perched
across the ping pong table
like an eight limbed
colossus. In the kitchen cards

are slapped like sinvergüenzas
round after round in an endless
game of Texas Hold 'Em that holds
the cousins hostage. The winner
is never the sucker
with the ace, the winner
is he who talks shit with Fidel's

fuerza bruta, an eight hour
fusillade of slick digs and relentless
boasts. Beside them abuelita
plays Zatoichi with the lechon
asado, ropa vieja is swallowed
by vagrant cangrejo
and bored nieces running

on fumes from chasing
the dog around the chicken coops.
This party was supposed to evanesce
long before sun up, but the coquito
is still spilling, the tias
still stalking the counter-
rhythms of the timbale like Bolivar

across the Andes. The road
at the end of the driveway is shrapnel,
the privatized water too steep
for our pockets, but we got tariffs
on this tanned euphoria

so no vulture
funds can raid and strip

the assets from our
digames, our '*chachos*, our
 oyes, our *claros*, our
'*manos*, our *oites*, our *carajos*,
 our *negritos*, our *vayas*,
 our *banditos*,
our *pa que tu lo sepas*!

Vincent Toro

Sad women

I am all the sad women,
women who bring loneliness to bed.
Cold passes even the surface of the house;
Beneath the wallpaper it becomes jaundice
It will catch my eyes.
Alas, I hear the tired songs,
the flower sellers under the red light,
even if the snow has the town's ears covered
all events happened in white
even the crow's footsteps.
Even if the spring comes
and gives her pink earrings to the garden tree,
brings Summer, samovar, and hookah
and sleeping under the mosquito net to the porch,
it makes no difference to me.
I am all the sad woman
who stare in the mirror
and, stealthy,
count the wrinkles on their foreheads.

Elahe Fayazi

Between My Body and the World

In my hair, despair is growing longer
its root is in me, however

like earth I'm smooth
in the center of it

if I put my memories in a tent
and myself in another tent

my eyes would disappear...

I'm as if I've come out of a seed
I'll go back into that seed

I'm a footprint of a horseshoe
on the face of daytime

between my body and the world
I should put a distance

The Shepherd

You were the wrath of a rock with mouth opened.
With a face through which death has passed, you came back
with shoulders which changed the wind's path.
Your hand disturbed the sleep of guns,
the sleep of mountain

“Don't leave the valley alone,” you said
“Keep the spring in the village
and put on the winter around your arm.”
With the sorrow of a shepherd in the rain you sang
and began to walk away;
You left your grief for clouds
to take the valley every evening
to take my chest
and darken the walnut trees.

The Call to Recall

My native tongue twisted,
Lost for words,
In the absence of use.

A mysterious boat ride,
To an unknown island.
A navigator have I searched,
Blind:

A peony on board,
Luxuriously pink,
With gold striking its core,
Withering away soon.

Head back to my motherland,
Fresh water overflowing high cliffs,
Showers down and shines above.

I drink and unfold, preserve
a peony.

Marianne Chen

古い森

食べてはいけない実だと知っているのは、食べてたおれた経験が伝わったからだ。そこへ行けば食料にありつくと知っているのは、そこを発見した経験を伝えたからだ。伝えることをやめた時、ひとりひとり一から同じ失敗、同じ発見。経験はDNAではなく知性に伝わるから、進化とは緩やかな学習の積み重ねが生む飛躍である。

と、人類がおしえてくれたのはいつだったか

ご神体としての山にはヒトの形跡があり、森自体が芸術作品のようである。トイレは和式でも洋式でもアラブ式でもなくて、タヌキのフンか熊かヒトか、土のふところは落ち葉深く星の反対側まで養分をつなげているから、ここが自宅だと感じたヒトが人びとになり、何かを伝える儀式が続く。今日、黄色い花が咲いたかと思うと、次の日、ピンク色が揺れていて、虹色に変化する森の植物カレンダーに人びとは<詩>を読まずにはいられない。風は森の外と内で性質を変えて、内側に吹いてくるものを<夢>と名付けた。夢は追いかけるものじゃない。向こうから、包み込んで導いてくれるもの。もっと先へ行ってみよう。太陽と月を頼りに伝説が始まるのだ。

神話は個体それぞれに違い、東へ行く者あれば南紀行あり、北も西も、積み重ねられた来歴はそれぞれの神話として、他者に伝えずにはいられない。伝えられたものを吸収し合う時、個体は個体のままでホモサピエンスとなり、そうして何千年も経つうちに、たとえばぼくの人格の森に原始人の詩がこだましている。

札束でゆすり、兵器で脅し合い、何がしかの権威で誘導し、凝り困まって群れて排外する、そんな特徴しか記されないなら<現代人>は気の毒だが、ついそう言いたくなる昨今、<彼ら>とひとくくりに呼ばないでくれと言っても何類に分類するであろう未来の考古学者たちを、ぼくは古い森に案内しよう。そこにはいつも新しい森が夢の方角に内蔵されていて、めぐる血液や神経がそれぞれの時空の顔で待機しているだろう。まだ時代の名前を貼り付けられる前の、夢の呼吸。それらを見渡す<現代人>の心の旋律が涙の成分を含んでいるかどうか、じっくりと見てもらおう。森の風がどうして彼、彼女の時代の方へ渡っていたのか。共に考えるために。

Old Forest

We know what not to eat because we have heard about the experiences of people eating certain foods and then collapsing. We know places where we can find food because those who discovered them were able to inform us. If these stories cease, then we'll start from scratch and, one by one, have the same failures and the same discoveries. Because these stories are transmitted not through DNA but by our intelligence, their evolution is characterized by the accumulation of slow learning that gives birth to tremendous productive leaps.

That being said, when did humanity carry out this teaching?

If we consider a mountain housing a *shintai*, traces of *Homo sapiens* can be found, and the forest itself appears to be a museum piece. The style of the toilet is not Japanese, Western, or Middle Eastern, and the droppings of the tanuki, or the bear, or *Homo sapiens* on the bosom of the earth, along with fallen leaves, contribute deeply to the nourishment of the planet, all the way to its opposite sides, and here, feeling at home, *Homo sapiens* becomes a people, and ritual conveying something continues on. Today, I wonder if the yellow flowers have blossomed, and the next day, with the color of pink swaying in the air, the calendar of the forest vegetation's transformation into rainbow hues will mean that people cannot help reading <poetry>. Wind changes its fundamental nature both inside and outside of the forest—on the inside, it bestows the name <dream>. A dream is not something we pursue, but rather something that embraces and leads us. Let's try to move toward the future. Sustained by the sun and moon, the legend has begun

Legends differ for each individual. If there are people going east, or people heading south on the *Nanki*, or traveling north or west, their accumulated histories form each of their legends, which need to be shared with others. When this information is absorbed from one another, the individual qua individual amounts to a *Homo sapiens*, and no matter how many millennia are passing by, in the forest of my own individuality, for example, the poetry of early humanity reverberates like the *kodama*.

Extorting for rolls of banknotes, menacing one another with weapons, leading with nothing aside from authority, with discomfort, difficulty, and crowdedness fomenting xenophobia—if we are only able to remember these aspects, <contemporary humans> would appear pitiful, but nowadays when you get the urge to reminisce, even if you're asked not to call out with <them> all together, it seems that you belong to the same class in this taxonomy, and I intend to give future archaeologists a tour of this old forest. There, the new forest is always a part of the direction of dreams, like an internal organ, and circulating blood and the nervous system may place the face of their own space-time on standby. The time before the name of the era is affixed, the breath of dreams. Let the archaeologists ponder if the <contemporary humans> surveying these things have hearts with a melody that contains the ingredients of tears. Why does the forest wind move toward the direction of his and her era? For the sake of wondering together.

水神

落ち葉くるくる竜のうろこに
光の蛇の木漏れ日だ
水辺の時間
あちら側に風がわたっていく

旅館跡の廃屋に
社員旅行、接待、旅ブーム
バブル時代の亡霊か
行楽客も見あたらず

山里跡の奥の溪流は
それでも鳥の楽園で
歴史を知っているかのような
それぞれの翼のうた
冬眼前の獣たちも聴いているだろうか

滝がぶつかって流れ出す
命の活動の記憶

Ken'ichi Sasō

数百年前この溪谷で
木材労働の人夫たちが見た
二羽の鳩
毎日仲がいいのでこの土地は
鳩ノ巣と名づけられた
飯場のくらしも木の運搬も田畑同様
水の恵みがすべてだから
水神様に分厚い手を合わせ
崖の小さな祠に酒でも供えたか
鳩の夫婦はそこで
男たちにどんな夢を運んだだろうか

瑠璃色の清流は
海へ出る頃には工業地帯のどぶの色
夢の分だけ何かがくすんでいくのだろうか

ゴミだらけの都会の駅でも
鳩は霊鳥だろうか
平和の比喻は
まだ生きているだろうか

二十一世紀のマグリットがいるのなら
十七世紀の森の人夫の記憶に乗せて
翼のシンボルを
夢のはばたきを
こぶしの叫びを
愛のいろどりで
溪流に飛ばせ

流れ果てた小さな祠
むき出しの崖の上
しづきをあげる時の流れから
伝説のかけらを胸にひろって
ぼくは愛するひとの肩を抱いて
水神に
心の手を合わせる

Suijin

On the scales of the dragon of whirling fallen leaves
what shines is the snake of light filtering through the trees.
The waterfront's time.
From the distant side, wind will move across.

At a dilapidated house that used to be a *ryokan*,
a company outing, a reception, a travel boom,
the ghost of the economic bubble era—
neither these nor tourists can be found.

A mountain stream flowing through what used to be a village
is nonetheless a paradise for birds.
Seeming to understand history,
the song of every wing—
before hibernation all the beasts listen to it too, perhaps.

Water from the waterfall splashes and flows away.
A recollection of life's activities.

Ken'ichi Sasō

Several hundred years ago, in this ravine
woodcutters saw
two doves.
Because they were harmonious every day, these grounds
became known as the pigeonhole.
Because, just like the crops, life in the workers' quarters and the transport of lumber
rely on the blessing of water,
the workers put their thick hands together to praise Lord Suijin.
A possible offering of sake at a small *hokora* by the cliff—
There, the pair of doves,
what dreams did they carry to those men?

The lapis lazuli blue of that pure stream—
by the time it reaches the ocean, it's dyed by the mud of industry.
I wonder if dreams can make something grow dull.

Even at a station in a city stuffed with trash,
are pigeons still a sacred bird?
Has the parable of peace
continued living?

As long as there's Magritte in the twenty-first century,
we can evoke the experience of those seventeenth-century laborers in the forest.
The symbol of the wings,
the flapping wings of a dream,
the outcry of fists—
with love's colors,
fly with them all to this mountain stream.

This desolate small *hokora*.
The top of a naked cliff.
From the time the stream offers its spray,
we pick up and hold the fragments of legend to our chest.
Embracing the shoulders of the one I love,
in my heart,
I put my hands together for Suijin.

Translated by Noriko Hara and Joe DeLong

ヒトの境内

野郎猫に導かれて夜の神社だ
 狐、獅子、狛犬、鳥、虫
 ももし、ちょっとよろしいですか
 手水の上の竜は仙人の里からパンダと来たか
 鳥居をはじめ赤い基調は韓のくにの史跡と似ている
 陰影の明かりはシャンソンの街灯か
 やまとうたの匂いがするお神酒に揺られて
 森は海そのものだ
 体いっぱい伸びをしてから
 目を閉じて
 木々の波音を聴く
 船が着て
 時代の服装で人々が降りてくる
 いつ頃からこの界限にヒトが住んだか
 由緒書きの行間から
 数百年前の少年少女が駆ける
 やあ、こんにちは
 瞳の光が共通点だ
 風が気持ちいいね
 蛇や馬や猿に囲まれて
 大人たちが祈っている
 どんな明日があるか
 生きていくしかないじゃないか
 その明日はどんなだったか
 死者たちの連続が断絶をかかえて
 夜の森に波うっている
 お賽銭には税込も外税もないし
 世の中格差ならここは平等でいい
 現実が血なまぐさいならこれからは非武装でいい
 泣き、笑い、怒り、しんみりして
 暮らしてきたから
 いままた素手を合わせて願うのは
 愛するひとのこと、自分のこと、みんなのこと
 白竜電車がまちを舞う深夜
 数えきれない命の絵馬から
 明日の波音が聴こえてくる

The Shrine Precinct of *Homo Sapiens*

Led by a stray cat, I arrive at the shrine of night.
 Foxes, lions, stone guardians, birds and bugs.
 Excuse me—is now a good time to talk?
 It seems the dragons above the *chōzubachi* water are pandas from a hermit's home.
 The red coloration, including the torii, reminds me of historical Korean remains.
 And the brightness amid the gloom—is it the streetlight from a *chanson*?
 With the scent of mountains and song, the *omiki* sake can make you sway.
 The forest is the ocean itself.
 I stretch out,
 close my eyes,
 and listen to the sound of trees' waves.
 A ship docks.
 Dressed in the clothing of their era, passengers disembark.
 I wonder when *Homo sapiens* started living hereabouts.
 From the lines of this historical lineage,
 the boys and girls of a few hundred years ago run around.
 Why, hello!
 Their eyes share a certain light.
 The breeze feels great, doesn't it?
 Surrounded by snakes, horses, and monkeys,
 adults are praying
 What kind of future awaits?
 There is no option other than living.
 And how did that future turn out?
 The continuity of the dead, as well as disappearance,
 rustles in the night forest.
 Offerings are tax-free
 and inequality exists, so it's good to be here as equals.
 If reality is bloody, we should be disarmed.
 Because I cried, laughed, got angry, fell silent,
 and kept on living in that way,
 what I, with my hands together, now wish for
 concerns the one I love, myself, and everyone.
 The midnight when the trains of white dragons go dancing.
 From the countless *ema* of lives, where visitors can write their wishes,
 I hear the sound of the future's waves.

気配の祭り

朽ちかけた狭く急な石段
苔いろの風の森
けものの影をまとしてゆらめく存在の幻
忘れられた人びとの気配に林の境内は
夕暮れの無音の祭り

一日が二十四時間ではないように
夢の深みに抱かれて
千年は一瞬だ

人の心が大銀河ならば
明かりを求め、闇に憩い
回転するそれぞれの物語は流れ星か

石段を登りきると
山がどこまでも
青くつながる
このどこかをずっと歩いて

旅人の祈りはいつも
星の下、星の上
歩き続けなければいけない
先人の祠を見つけて佇んでは
自らの道のりを振り向いて呼吸する

ざわめく幾百年のくいま>
命の視力は限りなく
夢見ることしかできない人間だから
力尽きて自ら宇宙になる日まで
見つめ続ける

そんな存在の無数の気配が
夜の林の境内に踊っている

The Festival of Indications

Rotten, narrow, and steep stone stairs.
 The forest through which moss-colored wind blows.
 The apparition of some flickering existence clad in the shadow of wildlife.
 In the presence of forgotten people, the precinct of the woods
 hosts twilight's soundless festival.

As though one day is not twenty-four hours,
 in the embrace of the depth of dreams,
 one thousand years is a moment.

If a person's heart is a large galaxy,
 lay claim to the light, rest in the dark.
 Is the rotation of all these tales a meteor?

Whenever you finish climbing these stone stairs,
 the mountain will blueely attach
 to anywhere in the world.
 You will traverse all of this anywhere.

The prayer of the traveler is always
 below the stars, above the stars.
 You will feel compelled to keep walking.
 Finding our predecessor's *hokora* and lingering there—
 you turn to face your own way, and you breathe.

The <now> of several rustling centuries.
 The eyesight of life is unlimited.
 People can do nothing but watch their dreams, so
 they will use up all their energy, and until the day when they become the universe,
 they will continue watching.

The countless indications of this existence
 dance in the precinct of the night forest.

失蹤的船家

船家 在深山遇到你時
你低著頭 在湖裡照鏡
我便知道你乃來自冬天
你出生時大地湧起濃霧
誰也看不清你
你便走到老遠的烈日裡
看湖裡那張好看的臉
看得終於連你也認不出

船家 在湖跟前
我便嗅到家前的泥土
也嗅到母親在做菜
聽到屋旁叢裡的夏蟬
也聽見母親叫我
門前一地雞蛋花
我家是大海後的秋天
我的弟兄在門外守候
你來 我為你煮一碗熱湯

船家 我們出海吧
你的小船在哪裡？
大海討厭離開的人
每逢黃昏海邊總下大雪
要離開的人找不到路
記得那場可怕的大雪吧？
從此沒有人看見你和我
大海也美得看不見你和我

船家 看到陸地嗎？
你過來看看
水不會動
雲不會散
春天不會來
冬天不會去
我是騙你的
我的家早已毀了
我的城早已葬了
我愛的人都死了
我的陸地已沉沒了
我們並沒有地方去
你在海上放下我吧

The Missing Ferryman

Ferryman when I saw you deep in the mountain
 You lowered your head into a lake's mirror
 And I knew that you were from winter
 When you were born the earth gathered fog
 No one could see you clearly
 And you've gone far beneath a glaring sun
 Looking at that nice face in the lake
 Looking until it's unrecognizable

Ferryman when I'm in front of this lake
 I can smell my old home's soil
 And smell my mother's cooking
 I can hear summer cicadas in the bush
 And hear my mother calling me
 Egg flowers have fallen at the door
 My home is an autumn behind the ocean
 My brothers wait for me by the door
 You can come I'll bring you hot soup

Ferryman let's go out to sea
 Where is your little boat?
 The ocean hates those who leave
 Whenever it's dusk the shore gets heavy snowfall
 Those who leave can't find the way
 Remember that frightful blizzard?
 Since then no one has seen you or me
 And the ocean's so pretty can't see you or me

Ferryman do you see land?
 Come over and see
 The water won't stir
 The clouds won't disperse
 The spring won't arrive
 The winter won't go
 I've lied to you
 My home's been long demolished
 My city long buried
 My loved ones long dead
 My land long sunk
 There's nowhere for us to sail
 You can just drop me off in the sea

The Breach

Spring, 1952

The air hung cool but heavy at Kapālama in the early evening. The muted sound of a hundred and fifty voices lilted through the dense mist and over the waves to a hundred thousand radios. The campus sat, regally, on a mountainside, as a general surveying the common people on the plains below. Like a barracks, its buildings were uniformly beige with green tile roofs, but taller, grander, claiming aspirations that, for now, were above their station. On the grounds sat a round high building from which the muffled sound came. Entering, one could hear the class reach a crescendo, as the director signaled them to stop in a pitched silence. The silence lasted just a moment as a roar filled the corrugated iron gymnasium to its rafters. Charlie, one of the senior singers, caught his breath. Bedecked with lei, Headmaster Oleson announced, "And the winner is ... the class of 1952!" Seniors always won.

The letter in the mail was thick. Addressed in pica type to Charles A. Makekau, the envelope read, "Harvard University – VERITAS" in crimson, and was postmarked Cambridge, MA 02138. He'd been waiting all day, every day over spring break, doing nothing else. His heart pounded so hard he was sure his Japanese neighbors could see it beating in his chest. Back in the house, Charlie took his mother's stainless steel letter opener and delicately sliced open the envelope, careful not to make any tears. The letter, on fine parchment, began: "Welcome to the Harvard class of 1956!"

The next day, feeling good, Charlie regarded himself in the mirror. He thought he looked Chinese with Hawaiian coloring and lips. His jet-black hair was slicked back and to the side. The overall effect was handsome enough. He looked at his body. His stomach was flat from youth but soft from indulgence and frailty. He thought of a girl he would see in Smith Library – something welled up in him, but he fought it off. He took a dress shirt off a hanger. He was appalled that men had recently started wearing florid blouses – he liked his shirts crisp and lily-white.

In the last days of high school, he seemed to form an unspoken bond with the two boys who were going to Stanford, Jerry Kamoku and Randall Ho'opi'i. The popular boys gave him big grins and raised their chins toward him as they passed in the hallways of Paki and Bishop Hall, as if to say, "You're one of us." But they were athletes, going on baseball and track scholarships. Charlie was no athlete, nor was he on scholarship. He was going on brains, paying full tuition. But all agreed he was bound to be one of those success stories, a doctor in the new Honolulu, where racial boundaries were just beginning to loosen. He was happy to be leaving. Kamehameha was much too restrictive, like a mold that spat you out the way it wanted you. One exception was Pop Diamond, his photography teacher. He seemed to genuinely love the idea of a school for Hawaiians, while not trying to change them, or make them brown facsimiles of himself, like so many other teachers did. From Pop, Charlie gained an appreciation, if not a love, of opera, and with that a hint of the magnitude of Western culture.

Despite his brains, and because of his ambivalence, he had difficulty coming up with advice for the class in his salutatory address. What did he know about the world after spending the last half-decade in the Smith Library? The speech, despite all the usual references to song contest victories and innocent pranks – like the one about the boys who had nearly fallen off a cliff trying to get a peek into the girls’ dorms – seemed to fall on deaf ears and mute faces: “... and so, we beneficiaries of Princess Pauahi’s legacy must stay the course...” His impression was that it was a total failure. Dr. Oleson approached him after the ceremony. He didn’t seem to think the speech a failure – Charlie had said utterly conventional things. “Charles,” he said, as if they were friends, “do you know you’re only the third Hawaiian ever to go to my alma mater?” He beamed as if his connections, not Charlie’s incessant study or his mother’s unceasing pressure, had gotten him accepted. Charlie knew he wasn’t the first. Alsoberry Kaumu Hanchett had gone to Harvard a half century ago, had gone on to become a doctor, graduating from Harvard Med, as Charlie intended to do himself. He was also aware that the first Hawaiian doctor was Matthew Makalua, from Lahaina, like Charlie’s own family. Makalua had gone to London’s Kings College in 1866. There was a tradition there he would uphold.

Summer, 1952

Before he left, there was a party, a big ‘aha ‘āina. His mother, Mui Makekau, a tiny and imperious but subtle woman – at times an outright fascist – said in front of the whole family and their Japanese neighbors, “We’re proud of you Chah-leh, show them at Hahved what we locals – we Hawaiians – can do!” Sometimes he forgot she was a little bit Hawaiian. As everyone clapped, Charlie thought *How could you possibly know? You who still speak Pidgin?* He didn’t know himself, and had to admit having only a vague and foreboding sense of what he would soon face.

He would miss his friend from childhood, Keola – a calabash cousin really, as their fathers were friends back at Lahainaluna. Keola Kawai was already working down at the docks after graduating from Farrington, but was a golden gloves boxer. His father, Uncle Joe, who’d been the toughest guy in Lahaina, trained him. Uncle Joe used walk down the street with his hands on his hips and if anyone brushed against him, he’d knock them down. He did this more often, and more to haole, after the Massie case in ‘32. Uncle Joe befriended the Kahahawai family when he moved to Honolulu, and around them he was a different man: merciful, kind. Unlike his father, Keola didn’t have the temperament of a boxer. He was quiet and thoughtful, and in those days he hadn’t been knocked about the head too much. He’d won all his fights. “Chah-leh,” he said, his soft voice contrasting with his hard build and reputation, “no fo’get about us maka‘āinanas!” A hearty grin sprang to Keola’s face. Charlie looked at him almost tenderly. “I won’t forget you, Ola. Never.” They sat together, content with the quiet respect they’d developed towards one another. A formidable pair, Keola could drop any man in the room with one punch, Charlie could debate circles around them, and they could have done these things to each other, but would not.

Fall, 1952

'Umi Perkins

Charlie boarded the clipper ship. Gaining speed along the water of Ke'ehi Lagoon, the chopping ceased, and the pontoons lifted off the lightly rippled sea. He crossed the vast expanse of the Pacific. How could Hawai'i be a part of America if *this* separated it? It seemed endless, but he would come to know that it separated his home from another realm entirely, another world, not just far away, but alien. He stayed in California with his Uncle Sam, who'd been there since before the end of the war, and who half the family had given up on. The other half bragged about him between matches at Kam Bowl. Uncle Sam worked at the docks at Long Beach, made a lot of money and had a plastered-on grin. His manner was sickly-smooth, giving Charlie the vague impression Uncle Sam was juggling too many women, too much alcohol and, perhaps, awaiting an impending tragedy.

A week later, Charlie got off a train in New York and took a bus to Boston. The campus straddled the Charles River, the first real river he'd seen. Old, but stately red brick buildings made the skyline jagged in a way not entirely different, he thought, from the way it may have looked in the seventeenth century. But the historic buildings were flanked and juxtaposed by Harvard Square, a mottled, steamy, miniature version of the more literate sections of Manhattan. The newer business school on the Allston side of the Charles was connected to the older Cambridge campus by matching crimson brick bridges. He checked in to Eliot House. The common room had a grand piano. His suite had a Persian-style rug and a fireplace. His new roommates walked in gleefully, quickly pausing, seemingly taken aback by his appearance, and then just as quickly seeming to decide they would like him. "Hey buddy, I'm Alfred, Al..." "Harvey." "I'm Charlie," he said as he shook their hands haole-style, and a grin slowly appeared on his face, mirroring theirs. They were from Brooklyn and Long Island and had both gone to school in New Hampshire, at Exeter and St Paul's. Harv Shapiro was the first Jew Charlie had ever met.

After an impossibly short time, Al said, "We've got to do something about your clothes!" They went to Brooks Brothers and got him fitted. He was dipping into monies he shouldn't have this early in the year, but it was worth it. He would write to ma for more. After the measurements were taken and the suits ordered, Harv said "Now ... to John Harvard's!" and there was no refusing him. Charlie spent far more than he meant to on beer and whiskey that day. This became a Friday ritual.

There were two other boys from Hawai'i at Harvard, but they were from Punahou. He ran into one of them, Howard Brigham, at a finals club called The Fly. Howard had a chance to get in, and so did Al. Charlie didn't fool himself, he knew he didn't have a chance – it was mainly a post-Exeter club. The young men there wore robes, smoked cigars, played pool and acted like kings. There were shameless flirts and rumors of oral sex in small rooms and closets. The club was filled with free women who had read Mary McCarthy's *The Group*, but who weren't going to get pregnant. He knew from the Honolulu papers that Howard was a champion swimmer. "Charles, isn't it? From Kam School?" "Charlie." Howard

was with a group of other boys, and one of them said, “So you’re from Hawaiyah, eh?” Another said, “By the way, how are ya?” His laugh excluded Charlie. Howard laughed nervously. These Punahou boys were conflicted mavericks who rebelled against their families by not going to Yale. *Noblesse oblige* required them to be cordial to a Hawaiian, but networking meant sticking with the Blue Book families their grandfathers had met while lobbying for Hawai‘i’s annexation. The kama‘āina families cherished these connections above almost all else.

Charlie fooled around and got to second base with a Lesley girl. “Where are you from?” he asked. “Summah-vull.” He knew Somerville as a working class town of triple deckers adjacent to Cambridge and Lesley as a college with an ongoing insecurity complex simply for being next to Harvard. He knew that it was probably a big deal for her to go to Lesley. She would say “I seen” and “whatchamacallit” and he wondered why his Kamehameha teachers – all mainland haole – acted as if mainlanders all spoke the King’s English. Her ideas about Hawai‘i were such that there was no way to even begin to bring them to an approximation of truth.

When he told Al and Harv of the encounter with Howard, Harv said, “Forget those goy snobs!” Al said, “Right. Besides, you’re almost there, Charlie...” Where he almost was he knew, and knew not. The next time Charlie saw him, Howard looked at him without recognition.

In those early days he’d stand on the steps of Widener Library, then go into the stacks marveling at how much knowledge there was in the world. It almost made him weep the way Henry Ōpūkaha‘ia had at Yale in 1810: “There’s so much knowledge in this building and so little in my head!” By the time he was in High 11th grade he had devoured most of the books in Smith Library, but that was a tiny room, named for the right hand man and childhood friend of Lorrin Thurston, who overthrew the Queen. This, by comparison, was the largest private library in the world, named for a victim of the Titanic tragedy. The sense of how little he knew was crushing and exhilarating. His one consolation was that he knew, at nineteen, that he was young and still had time. He would browse the shelves for hours at Widener or in any one of the two dozen bookstores in Harvard Square, especially the scholarly Harvard Book Store and the Coop, when he should’ve been doing chemistry labs.

His first class was zoology. During the dry lecture he wondered why a doctor would need to know about animals. His second class was Gov. 10. He heard the term “Gov jocks” as he waited in the hallway, and seemed to notice better physiques, under the required coats and ties, than in zoology. But this class wasn’t dry. It seemed to hint at an underlying order of things, a political structure. The version of this order that existed in Hawai‘i would shock his professor and his sheltered classmates, who would find it despotic, brutal, unimaginable. The unthinkable, a change in concentration – from pre-med – welled up in his mind, but he fought it off.

When Charlie was called on, Professor Wadsworth said, “Make...?” “Mah-keh-kau” Charlie corrected. “Cow?” How could his exalted professor, famous on four continents, know that he was named after his great-grandfather, the warlike chief of the battle of Nu‘uanu in 1795? Charlie had even written a

short story about “Chief Makekau” in *The Cadet*, of which he’d been editor. Under King Kamehameha he had slaughtered men, and this professor wore a smirk. But he had to admit to himself he was more like his professor than he was like his ancestor.

Later, he began to speak out in class about the inequities of life in Hawai‘i and Puerto Rico, another U.S. Territory, where they had taxation without representation. He even mentioned the unlikely rise of John Burns, a cop turned politician – actually he had lost every race so far – and how he had called Hawai‘i’s system one of “economic strangulation.” He told the story of Joseph Kahahawai and the Massie Case, and how honor killings still took place in America’s fringes. His classmates, from Connecticut and Newport, downplayed his protests as anecdotal, not representative of American political life. But how could they know what life was like on the edge of American empire? How his hardscrabble Portuguese friends from small kid time, like Skippy Gomes, scratched out a living as newspaper boys in Kauluwela, their skin becoming wrinkled at eleven or twelve? Yet he was covetous of these scions of the East Coast establishment families. While he championed the Kauluwela boys, he grew unrecognizable and unintelligible to them, the last trace of Pidgin draining from his speech into the gutters of Harvard Square.

At Kamehameha he had dominated class discussions, even in history, though he was known as a science kid. Here, occasionally the entire class disagreed with him. He felt himself shrink as the bile rose in his throat. *How could they all be wrong?*

He went late at night to The Tasty, a tiny dive of a diner right in Harvard Square. The air was cleaner at night, better for his breathing. He ordered eggs and asked for ketchup. The cook, who was also the waiter, looked at him funny. But an odd-looking fellow with shabby clothes would come in and take the attention away from Charlie. He had a funny-shaped head and a queer mustache. He’d always order apple pie and ice cream. The cook, who was from Southie, slammed it down and said, “You eat like that, pal, and you’re gonna get a heart attack!” The odd fellow replied meekly, “I only rarely order this...” The cook shot back, “Bullshit! You order this every goddamn night!” “That’s not true...” he came back, but his voice drifted off. His manner of speech made Charlie wonder if he’d once gone to Harvard, and whether it was possible to fall so far. Charlie saw him once at the Harvard Coop in the philosophy section, and once at Out of Town News reading *Foreign Affairs* and was baffled as to why he bothered to read such things when he was so obviously not a student or professor.

He got a D on a zoology test and left the class feeling as if life was ending. It was his first D. He’d never gotten a C. When he complained to his roommates about his difficulties in his science classes, they tried to reassure him: “Small fish, big pond, all of that, old boy...” They were both business majors and had no academic troubles that would matter. They would go effortlessly on to Wall Street and summer in the Berkshires or on the Cape. They sat around like English earls sipping tea. They constantly made quips, trying to outdo each other Oscar Wilde-style. When they discussed annuities and the amortization of investments, Charlie tuned out their unintelligible chatter. But they were more clever than

wise, Charlie thought. Once in a while, at end of term, the clacking of Underwoods could be heard from their rooms.

He only survived the first term by staying in the dorms over Christmas and combining that with the reading period before exams in January. There were few distractions to keep him from study as Boston's population cut in half when college students were on break. He did well enough in Gov. 10, pulling a B, which he told his mother about. "Anywhere else it would be an A, Chah-leh." He didn't tell her that his overall grade point was around a 1.7. He would do better in the spring, he told himself unconvincingly.

Spring, 1953

For the first time, he began to procrastinate. He erratically read philosophy – Descartes, Mill, Kant – in no order, with no plan, and when they weren't assigned. It did help in barroom conversations to drop a philosopher's name. (The ritual at John Harvard's now included Wednesdays and Saturdays). "Kierkegaard claims..." made people think he was deep and erudite, and they began calling him "Charlie the barstool philosopher," which gave him a certain perverse pride. It also made him feel phony, like the characters he'd heard about in *The Catcher in the Rye*. He'd stumble home in the snow over the rough, uneven brick sidewalks, centuries old, questioning his own integrity aloud in front of Harv and Al, who gave each other significant looks over his stooped shoulders.

He bought a record player, and listening to music became an activity, not just background. Jazz was a revelation, especially this new jazzman John Coltrane. Charlie was thrilled to think Coltrane had been stationed in Hawai'i and made his first recording there. He felt sure that Coltrane had listened to the Kamehameha song contest in '46 – everyone in Honolulu huddled around their radios in those days to hear the classes compete on the Friday before Spring Break. How different his music was from those predictable songs! Every song ending in "Ha'ina ia mai," with no bridge or refrain. His roommates found Coltrane repetitive, but Charlie felt that in playing two adjacent notes over and over, back and forth, he was looking for the space between them. When *A Love Supreme* came out, it was obvious that his playing was a spiritual practice and Charlie wondered if that space between the notes was, for Coltrane, where God resided.

He began to work in the Eliot House gardens, though he had shown no inclination towards plants before. He was now taking botany, but it seemed to bear no relation to real practice. He even learned how to weed the flowers and get the dead material off, revealing the fresh plant beneath, and casting off the chaff. The deadwood was tossed to the side of the building, forgotten. All this was to avoid his chemistry work, and it tore at his insides like a spade.

Summer, 1953

It took a week to make the trip, cutting his summer short on both ends. *On the Road* had come out and he thought of his cross-country train ride as a Kerouacian misventure. He was far too timid to hitchhike or even drive. Kerouac's

prose, though, burned with an intensity he felt but could never match.

America stretched out in its endless sameness, except for the Rockies and California, where vistas were breathtaking compared to his truncated island world. America wasn't really states, as they'd been taught at Dole Elementary, he realized, but regions – the green and rocky East, the brown, flat Midwest, the grey Western plains. But, the Pacific! What was once simply endless now began to feel more like home than Cambridge or Honolulu. The breach, he called it. He felt he was crossing seas and centuries. He wasn't entirely comfortable in his skin or his suit in the East or in the islands, but here, in this space that America claimed to bridge, but he knew could not, nothing welled up nor needed to be fought back.

Many years later, his cousin recalled that at family gatherings, in the heat, Charlie had worn his Brooks Brothers suit, a felt hat. And carried a walking stick.

The relatives spoke of him in hushed tones, the future doctor. He sounded like a radio host, and looked like a local Frankie Avalon. But he had already argued with his mother about his spending and about possibly changing concentration, from pre-med to government. "Who ever heard of 'government' as a major? And how many Hawaiians you know in the government? It's not the Twenties anymore!" He was too tired with the heat to explain that Harvard's Government Department was older than the field of political science. "Things are changing, besides, I'm no good at it, ma..." "You were at the top of your class in science at Kam!" How could he explain that his classmates now were from the best prep schools in the world and he couldn't compete? Kam was still mainly producing social climbers and the climbers of telephone poles.

The uncles at the gatherings would approach him and ask, "How's Hahved Chah-leh, good?" *If you insist on its being good, why ask?* "Swell." Then they'd invariably burst into the Kamehameha school song. What the hell did "Allurements that your race will overwhelm" mean, anyway? Hawaiian culture? Religion? Incest? Most of the kanikapila in those days consisted of crass hapa haole music, but occasionally the old timers would sing something profound in Hawaiian. Maybe it was just the way they sang; even a simple song like "Ahi Wela" was given a certain weight. He thought of Saul Bellow's question "Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus?" and thought surely the old songs from Kingdom days sung at these gatherings were the caliber of Verdi or Miles Davis?

She was at one of these gatherings. Grace Lee. She lived up in Pacific Heights and had gone to The Priory. Other girls, from blue-collar neighborhoods, were literally hurling themselves at him. But she lived in a rambling Rococo house in the Heights, granddaughter of one of the early Chinese merchants in Honolulu. She wore glasses and a dress, tight at the right places so as to still be tasteful. She seemed interested and they chatted innocuously, but he drank and by night's end, he lay on the couch passed out, his arms, his stomach, his partly open lily-white shirt, flaccid. And the faint smell of vomit. Like everyone else who stayed past midnight, she was somewhat taken aback, but was gracious in a way befitting her class, and curious to better know the scholar-drunk.

He knew he was only one generation from the lanes in Kalihi and any relationship was doomed. His family had upgraded to a house in Liliha, a modern

ranch-style that faced its back toward Oahu cemetery. Liliha was at the foot of Pacific Heights, but never quite there. He still remembered how narrow those lanes at his grandma's were, and how he could almost reach from one fence to another as he walked along. How close those houses were to each other and how far from his comfortable lower-middle class life. There was no real middle class in Hawai'i, but his mother had married well – Chinese had been rising for three generations by then, though not yet threatening to displace the haole elite. And despite the Hawaiian name and mixed background, his father, dead now but well insured, was more Chinese in his ways than anything else. Also named Charles, everyone called him Kele. Trying to make it in the white insurance industry had essentially led him to an early death. But Chinese like him were the only social exception to the fact that Honolulu was still just a big plantation town. Charlie would laugh inwardly when his aunts, clinging to the meager status they held as Kamehameha grads, said in their singsong voices, "I loved growing up in Honolulu." To him it was an ugly, blighted little town of warehouses, bars and brothels left over from the war. The way they said it was endearing though, their accents retaining a little bit of Pidgin from youth, before the Kamehameha speech pathologists beat it out of them. And there was just a trace of a British accent in there. *Left over from Kingdom days?*

Before returning to Massachusetts, he went out on the town with Keola. People seemed to imperceptibly turn their shoulders to let Keola by, except for the GIs. In Chinatown, they closed down the Pier Bar and caught a jazz show at Aloha Tower. It was the kind of jazz they listened to on the East Coast in the forties, so Honolulu was ten years behind as usual, but Charlie had a good time and was more relaxed than he'd been since returning. He and Keola seemed to have little to talk about – who was having a baby, who joined the union, who got in a fight or joined the service. "Harvard's changed you, Charlie," Keola said, noticing his normally dour mood had lifted slightly. Charlie, of all people, knew this was true, as he tasted the bitterness. Keola would be the only one to speak the truth.

Fall, 1953

He tried to study, but his roommates were always going out, carousing or just hanging out in the square. Sometimes they seemed to be doing nothing but posing, their Brooks Brothers suits cutting dashing figures, and speaking in clipped literary phrases, which suggested, but did not prove, erudition. Charlie wondered, "For whom?" They'd say, cynically, "Lesley to bed, Wellesley to wed, and Radcliffe to talk to," but that didn't seem to Charlie to justify the time they wasted. These Exeter, Andover, and St Paul's boys never seemed to have to study since they'd read everything in prep school. Charlie found himself missing literary references, trying to read those books, and falling even further behind in his assigned reading. The book everyone was talking about was *The Catcher in the Rye*, which led him to take a couple of trips to New York, generally worsening his attitude and his grades. There he took in high and low culture. Puccini's *La Bohème* was sublime, but Benjamin Britten's operatic version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was too modern – he couldn't quite get atonal music. The New York prostitutes were more

hardened and insipid than the ones in Honolulu and he hadn’t seen junkies or queers like these. He observed but did not engage. On the bus back to Boston, he read Hemingway’s *Old Man and the Sea*, and it made him homesick and nostalgic for the quiet fishing trips he’d gone on with his dad and grandpa, until later when Hemingway blew his brains out.

“Charlie! Phone call!” Normally they would call out the last name, but no one attempted this with him. Charlie picked up the pay phone in the hallway. Calls from his mother were extremely rare. “Chah-leh, your Uncle Sam died.” He looked at the crack in the wall. The plaster needed replacing. Of course, the building was from 1690. “Don’t you care about anyone but yourself?” Charlie returned to the moment. “I’m very sorry to hear that.” This was how he’d gotten through Kamehameha, by saying the right thing, not by meaning it. But he wondered, *if Uncle Sam couldn’t get there, who can?*

Before Christmas, Charlie asked Al to drive him to the train station, since his trunk would be hard to take on the T with all his new clothes. Al demurred, making a lame and transparent excuse about his sister, who Charlie knew was at Wellesley and had her own car. Charlie felt an overwhelming nausea that was a kind of revulsion at the thought that everyone, despite all the “Buddy” and the “Hey pal,” was entirely out for themselves. It started at the bridge of his nose and sank to his stomach and made him feel seasick. He found it hard to breathe. It dawned on him that he’d been a project, one Al had now given up on. He felt he would never be there, and everyone, other than he, had known it all along.

Christmas, 1953

The letter in the mail was thin. It read “Harvard University – VERITAS” in blood-crimson. Veritas – truth. His nose turned up into a sneer as Charlie took the letter opener again and carefully slit the edge. Though he saw it coming – he hadn’t been asked to go home last Christmas – his head spun. This last time over the breach had been his last. The only part of the letter he remembered later was “You will always be part of the Harvard class of 1956.”

He fell into an abyss, and only left his room to raid the liquor cabinet or throw up in the bathroom. When the hards were gone, he went for the wine, some of it his father’s vintage. His mother only confronted him on Christmas Eve, when he chose to make one of his forays to the wine rack. She was beside herself and more disheveled than he’d seen her, making preparations for Christmas. She looked as if she scarcely recognized him. He was pale and bloated, his eyes shadows. “What you tink you going do now?” His lip curled into the kind of wicked smirk he’d seen at the finals club. “What I ...tink?” Their eyes locked, and he knew what she was thinking. She had passed the English standard test to get into Roosevelt, only one in her family, and Pidgin only slipped out in the most fraught moments. He softened his look, and hers turned to a panicked beseeching. He turned into his room, sat on the bed he never left, and downed two glasses. He thought of the breach of his trust and the false bill of goods he’d been sold, for which he’d willingly paid his family and culture. He thought of the turmoil on both sides of the Pacific, and how neither side could ever understand the other.

The unknowing innocents on this side and the clever wicked – unknowing of his world – on the other. And then, the Pacific between. The peace of it took his breath away and he fell, ineffably, into the breach.

Keola came over the next day. He went into Charlie's room because his mother would not. He came out and, without looking at her, shook his head, wordlessly staring at the floor.

The official cause of death was an asthma attack. Everyone was at the funeral: Keola, Uncle Joe, Pop Diamond, Grace Lee, Jerry Kamoku, even Dr. Oleson. They offered their condolences to his mother: "He was a fine, brilliant and cheerful young man..." She wondered why they came if they didn't know him. He was buried at Puea Cemetery in Kalihi, three plots over from Joseph Kahahawai. Kahahawai's grave reads: "Born December 25, 1909, killed January 8th, 1932." Charlie's reads: "Born December 8th 1932, died December 25, 1953."

Epilogue

Luriyer "Pop" Diamond's book *Images of Aloha* is dedicated to two Kamehameha graduates, Randy Ho'opi'i and Charles Makekau Apo, "whose lives were far too brief."

Aaric Tan Xiang Yeow

‘Cher

Remarkable, what they unearth as gifts. A rusting sand-flecked key; an abandoned nest; brown crusty pods with scarlet seeds in rows. The white star of a flower on an open palm.

*

What is it that she uses to fan herself? A fern frond unfurls its spiral tip, leaflets shivering, as she chants ‘cher, ‘cher, ‘cher, ‘cher. Take this, she says, don’t worry, I’ll pluck another.

*

Tugging my elbow, he leads me towards a mimosa clump, pink furry blossoms hiding beneath a stone bench. We squat, waiting for it to relax, only to tap its leaves once more.

*

This key, dull bronze with rusted teeth, does it unlock a drawer, box, room or home? I imagine a grandmother, her fingers across unkempt grass, searching for this loss.

*

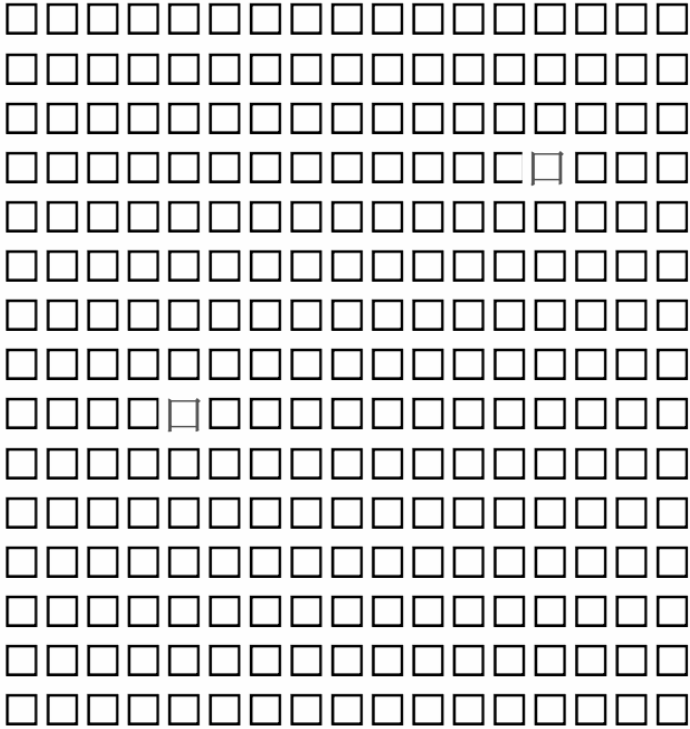
For whom do they bloom and over what, wither? The class left a spray of tiger orchids alone, aware that beauty plucked will vanish the way wounds do. Peace, their lives are tough too.



*

Soon, lessons must begin. He offers a garden snail pinched between fingers, its brown shell lacquered with morning dew, its soft stippled body squirming, sagging towards moist earth.

Error Script

I



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Error Script

II

Not an update about shrubs coloured with parakeets.
Not a note on wasps slipping into wombs of wisteria.
Not another word on the nest of a sunbird, swaying,
fastened from branches, feathers and brittle leaves.
Not these

but this:
an unreadable script from an aged father too distant
to slip ten dollar bills into his daughter's silver purse.
She imagines him, a Japanese songbird crying alone
to its backyard with pollen dust and swollen fruits.
His email is a grid of almost-squares, neat, corrupted,
too complex for a laptop to understand. She uncurls
an index finger,

tracing rectangles.
Two stand out. In her native tongue, they're mouths;
in flatted space, apart; in a crowd, alone, doubtful.

Ordinary Psalm with Hillside Stations of the Cross

Station where Jesus knows his mother.
Where he is nailed through his palms.

Station where I remember reading
The Children's Picture Book of Holy

in the doctor's waiting room. *Jesus*, I asked,
what if your father hides in your closet with a knife?

Station where Jesus sleeps in his death clothes,
because resurrection ends better

than the beheaded raven behind the church,
a pale cord tethering something beaked and slick

to the folded iridescence.
Station where the faithful consider if cruelty

begins as curiosity
about how the sacred and the flesh cohabit. *Jesus*,

I cried the night my father slammed my head
on the garage floor, *is there a Heaven for children*

whose rage is not as invisible as they'd like?
Tonight, I carry home the bird

and bury it under our redwood.
Station where the dead give up language,

their skeletons guarding the spiritual syntax
of our dreams. Later, as my daughter sleeps,

her ear on the pillow reminds me of an orchid
with its spiraled pale. Its small wound of listening.

Station where I need to bend my face
against her beginning. *Jesus*, I say

to the troublesome lamb of beauty and torment,
even if this is not a world that keeps us, we are made of it.

Julia B Levine

Ordinary Psalm with Peril

Precarious, from the old word meaning full of prayers.
All of it, this nearness, this afternoon

waking like a god out of dream
with handfuls of knotweed and salami and the sea

rolling its gluttonous, luminescent body against sky.
The way we walk these hills, calling out the mere clothing

of the wildflowers --*Cats claw, foxglove, silene*--
as if to button delicacy briefly inside.

This untranslatable door where the outside
is on its way in, a fishing boat rocking on water,

the dock ripped from its mooring.
This late in our rapture, we know the weights,

the anchors hold down nothing.
That precarious means everything is at stake.

Here, in this ecstatic slipknot of sun,
your hand on my hair, mine on your knee,

let erasure be a consequence of too much light.
Let the hours turn their sour faces into a star.

Together with the fervent emptiness
and the small nouns dressing everything else,

let us be a thousand things.

What Passed as Refuge (Amissio)

I used to think about the cops
as sharks when we'd park behind

some supermarket or strip
mall. I'd picture our hands,
our bodies, as schools of curious
fish darting in and out

of mysterious crevices, hoping
not to see the shadow overhead,

the flick of its notched tail, the light
its lust cast on pulsing prey, the knock
on the window that meant backward curving
teeth had sunk too deep to wriggle free.

John A. Nieves

Shivaree (Puella)

A hail of just burst pipes, maybe
that is what we'll pound on
and clang into the night just below
your window. Some are stags. Some

are dogs. And you the guest
of honor. Teeth catching lips, lips all
curving down on this your wedding
night, or this the one we hope
for. We'll scare the ghosts out of the old
walls singing *why oh why* and we'll curse
your knees to knocking. *Why oh why*
and you'll spill your toast on white

clothes and wear the stain in public. *Why*
oh why and maybe we all love you, but
the bugs are biting so we shriek
at the horizon so loud we set the moon

a-crying and may you find spiders in her
arms. *Why oh why* and may your sink
brim with old dishes. *Why oh why* and the weeds
take every flower that you grow.

John A. Nieves

Entropy

Dawn's thin
magnetism, colors ripped from flowers
onto the wavering horizon. The lash-slim
layer of sky between us
and nothing reminds us
that it is the reason tints and hues can angle

across the surface, across us. The wind licks
our faces, gently
assures us that breathing is both
voluntary and involuntary. In a short while,
too much light will meet too much light

and bleach the sky blue.
Is this tragedy? Where will this
morning's fingerprint fade to? Does it
go where ours will go—some cosmic scrapbook

of used patterns, the potential
that chaos may choose to repeat
us, to speak us again?

I try to ask, but my voice, like the dawn, like the swirls
and loops, becomes part of some

unseen smoke, dissipates.

John A. Nieves

What Do You Think of When You Think of Home?

Strangely enough, learning, on an orange
and father flanking me, the typewriter
velvet sectional, how to type. My mother
lounging on a glossy black cube that could
only have been a table in the eighties.
I'm maybe eight, maybe nine. My father
explains the non-letter keys. My mother
suggests things for me to type. She shows
me how to load the paper. My father positions
my hands. This is the only time I remember
them teaching me something together. I don't
know what I pressed into the keys, onto the page,
but I know none of that exists anymore. It is
all buried in time who never gives anything
back. As I report this, I notice how many times
my fingers tap enter. I think how well this matches
what I'm doing, but can't help being
glad I'm old enough to remember its previous promise,
the key used to be *return*.

Blue-Eyed

what do you do
think, feel
when you look in the mirror
to find the colonizer
in your eyes?

Laura Rena Murray

Syrian Girl

dear baby with your hands in the air
tears in your eyes and explosions in your ears
what did you think
at the moment of your surrender
when, instead of putting the camera down
the photographer went
click.

Laura Rena Murray

To Make a Dish Hawaiian Just Add Pineapple



Maybe it's the dim lighting
or the aroma of spices
but a funny thing happens
when I wait tables

*Excuse me miss
but what is your ethnicity
because you're too beautiful
to be Native American
and you're too beautiful to be Mexican.*

A pluot
is a hybrid plum apricot

Here are your wasabi mashed potatoes

I knew it!

and Sambal hot wings.
You know what, sir?

*That you're smart!
You're smart because you're Jewish!*

What are you saying about Filipinos?

You're just enough Asian to be pretty.

Teriyaki Beurre Blanc?
Kaya Crème Brulee?
California Roll?

How can you say you are "half" Jewish?

How can you order your pizza half mushroom half pepperoni?

I won third place in the county fair once
for my cookies I call
Aloha Oy Vey:
Mandelbrot made with coconut and macadamia nuts.

Would you like a refill of your Diet Coke?

Yeah, and no hielo this time.

Excuse me, sir?

Are you even Hispanic?

A neighbor had three pet Corgis named:
Enchilada, Eggroll, and Éclair

Often thought of as “young broccoli”
Broccolini is a hybrid of broccoli and kai-lan
(Chinese Broccoli) created in 1993 by Sakata
Seed Company in Yokohama, Japan.

Also known as:

aspabroc, aspiration,
bimi, broccoletti, and
tenderstem.

*In my professional opinion as an artist,
even though you are not Native American,
you should pose as one for western paintings.*

Polenta is not grits is not Cream of Wheat.

Mexicali, Mexico has over 200 Chinese restaurants
known to serve cilantro in the eggrolls
and avocado in the fried rice.

Do you have any questions about the menu?

No, but where are your grandparents from?

Here.

Kou Sugita

All the ghosts in me feel small

In Tokyo, Chiyoda, Akihabara Electric Town speaking my country talk
maybe Janglish I can be like a whole different person *culturally?*
like the French way oil pooled in a wooden spoon crisps the fish top and bottom, depth in the
whole of body
even though the fish is from the sea of Japan *it's fusion* if I may add
in the states everyone in a friendship wants to know
how soon they can be racist to you

(Dear Bear,

If you uproot Camellia while she is whirling, she will not stop unless you scissor her red dress and root-feet. If you uproot Camellia from the Forest and plant her into a garden, she will be called domestic. The house will read her whirling dress less as a dance and more as a statement, and her ever-red will no longer be her own but owned by the red cracking teeth of coals in the furnace, the red of the ever-flowing wound next door. If you uproot Camellia and throw her onto city gravel, her tiny leg hairs will feebly but surely ooze and embrace the concrete chest. Her existence a gentle erratic organism— no human feet will ever-stop moving to breathe her in. If one does, one won't be human any more, it will be

Camellia's,)



Mohammad Ali Mirzaei
Two Girls



Mohammad Ali Mirzaei

Sequences



Mohammad Ali Mirzaei
Mobility in Border



Mohammad Ali Mirzaei

Haji Qorban



Rita Mendes-Flohr
from *Gorges*; *Entering the In-between*



Rita Mendes-Flohr
from *Gorges: Entering the In-between*



Rita Mendes-Flohr
from *Gorges: Entering the In-between*

Rita Mendes-Flohr
from Gorges: Entering the In-between



Hypomania

doesn't everyone

want to feel

this

delicious?

Barbara Ruth

this happened, once

His hands are the shape of my legs. When he slides the bones out of my body, he forgets the ones in my throat. I can still blame myself. This is not a very good poem. His mouth is a searchlight. His mouth wants only small talk. I stayed still for as long as I could. His mouth fits around my mouth. I don't think I'm a very good poet. When he spreads apart his hands, I spread apart my fat. He says that I am reliable, but really, what he means is: I am big. His stomach is ice that I thrash under, because this is not poetry. He will never think of himself as a metaphor.

Noah Jung

no water, no light

No water in the river, no
boy to finger

the hushing skin. They held
their breath and sank,

light-like, dazed and chest-
bound, long

hair floating
above the pillow fabric.

The bed is submerged, slow
and surreal, with the weight

of a brown body tugged by lunar:
sink, rise, sink, girl,

sink, boy, sink, scatter - the
skin only silent;

only thrashing, no mouth. Years
later, the river runs vivid

from the pale, stifling
fear of a boy

beneath the water,
begging,

*don't make me into water;
don't make me into light.*

“Would You Like to Be on the Moon With Me, Darling, or Would You Be Afraid?”

—Simone de Beauvoir in a letter to Nelson Algren

Or Mars. The group
plotting to send colonists
for the rest of their lives,
which might be brief,
has noted its one hundred finalists.
Not us. It could be us:
the aliens on an alien world
staring up at a sky passion pink,
our hands toiling in the forge of jags
on that strange earth
that isn't Earth & isn't
where our hearts grow stagnant,
fat: we the meaningless,
we the rut-stuck, we the longing
for a place where love
might be the only thing that blossoms.
At least we would have
our nights together,
nights that half the Martian year
are twice as long.

Ace Boggess

Dune Shack, Cape Cod, 1973

When Roger appeared at the slanted door of my beach shack on Cape Cod in June of 1973, he looked exactly as I had left him five years earlier. The last time I saw him he was fading into the distance as a helicopter lifted me and my bullet-ravaged leg out of Vietnam. That was 1968. On that day, the chopper blades lifted Roger's floppy hair from his skull as he shrank smaller and smaller than I thought possible.

"Are you going to let me in, or what?"

I hesitated. Was I letting in an apparition, or was Roger really there? The shack stood a few miles outside Provincetown, or P-Town, at the terminus of Cape Cod. Even back then the town was emerging as a haven for the queer. The shack wasn't far from town as the crow flies, but the Martian terrain of the sand dunes made my shack, and the others like it in the area, almost unreachable.

"Of course." I gestured for him to enter.

Roger flicked off his sunglasses. "Your parents said I would find you in P-Town."

He had been searching for me. "Yeah, well, I guess I overshot the town by a bit."

Roger grasped my hand in a preliminary shake before pulling me in for an embrace. I tensed and wondered if he noticed.

"Took me forever to track you down here. Asked everyone in P-Town if they had seen a pale-ass motherfucker with glasses and no sense of style. Finally found a man in the bookstore who said you might be out here. Should have known to look at the bookstore first. I thought he must be crazy. I thought, no way Terry's gonna make it out there in one of those shit-holes."

I shrugged. "Here I am. The noise in town was getting to me. Thought I'd give this a try."

"Thought you'd give it a try," Roger repeated, plopping down into the sole armchair in the tiny space.

I gathered the notebooks and papers scattered across the shack from my morning's work on the novel and stacked them on the table, a spent wooden rope spool. "What are you doing here?"

"Well, I'm on a bit of a vacation and thought I'd check in on my buddy the author. Looks like I came just in time too, loneliness could kill a man out here."

I didn't have the heart to tell him that solitude was my favorite thing about the dunes. I also decided not to press him on his disingenuous answer. He had already admitted to tracking me down. Plus, the location of the shack at the end of the world made a drop-in highly improbable.

The trill of sandpipers filled the conspicuous silence between us. From where Roger sat he could kick out a foot and hit the wooden spool table. The cot where I slept, a pair of pallets laid side-by-side with layers of wool blankets furled over the slats, touched the arm of the chair. On the opposite wall from the cot stood the "kitchen," a plank nailed to the wall holding a propane hot plate, a pail for water, and a mountain of cans of tuna and beans. My old army pack, stuffed with my few worldly possessions (a few T-shirts, some socks, a first-aid kit, and a copy of Thoreau's *Cape Cod*) was heaped beneath the shelf. Roger's eyes lingered

on my one attempt at decor: a rough sketch tacked to the naked wood wall with a safety pin of a man scratching the ears of a contented labrador. Neither Roger nor I acknowledged that he was the artist.

“Can I offer you some water? I can pump some fresh out back.”

“I can do one better. Follow me.”

I had a history of following Roger anywhere. We first met in the barracks for basic training, after we were both drafted for the war. One night I was reading *On the Road*, trying not to crumple my crisply drawn sheets. Roger bounced down on the foot of the bed.

“Whatcha doing, Private?” he asked.

“Just reading.”

“Why? You can’t be a college boy, otherwise you wouldn’t be here.”

He was right. I had been working in my father’s greenhouse and garden supply shop trying to save for school. College would help me fulfill my dreams of avoiding the draft and studying poetry. No one in my family had ever gone to college. Instead, they worked jobs that leathered their skin, broke their backs, and turned them bitter. I didn’t really understand what a literature professor did, but I fantasized about making a living by reading and writing and talking about books.

I was shy though, so when I met Roger, I just said, “I like to read.”

Roger slapped me on the thigh. “Come on, we’re playing poker. We’ve got those cards with titties on them and everything.”

After that, Roger and I stuck together, even when we were deployed. We fought side-by-side, which mostly meant that we marched and waited side-by-side, the boredom punctuated by moments of violence. I hoped to exorcise my memories of that violence out of my mind and into my novel.

After the war, Roger moved to New York City. From the few letters he had sent me over the years, I knew he had acquired a job in a shiny skyscraper and a collection of seal-slick suits. I, on the other hand, traveled around a bit before landing on the Cape. Everywhere I roamed, mostly hopping buses from one dusty Midwest city to another, I carried my memories and my questions about Roger with me. Every man I brought back to a cheap hotel wore Roger’s face, bathed in the scent of his sweat, and transported me back to the fear and longing of those jungle nights. When those men shimmied back into their tight jeans and escaped into the night, I felt something wrench in my chest, like the lurch of a helicopter heaving into the air.

Roger had interrupted my morning ritual of rereading the words I wrote the night before. I hoped to craft that maze of words into a novel. The story was a semi-autobiographical tale about a lover forced to go to war, a man with desires he didn’t understand, a man who chose to live in isolation mere miles from one of the only places on earth where he might act on those desires. I had been trying to tell the story for years and believed the dune shacks would be the answer to my writer’s block. Not long after arriving in Provincetown, I struck up a conversation with an older man while browsing in the town’s bookstore. He suggested I seek out a dune shack to work in.

“Artists have been living in them for years, since as far back as the ’20s I think. Painters go there for the light, writers for the quiet. They don’t really belong

to anyone, just go find one no one else is using and make it your own.”

The old man was right. The shacks dotted the Atlantic beaches around P-Town and Truro. I found mention of them in a few old newspapers in the guesthouse where I had stayed my first month in town. Most were constructed from the remains of shipwrecks. Indeed, the one I had claimed resembled a wooden patchwork quilt. The back wall tilted disturbingly westward. The roof shingles, more scraps of wood and even plastic, sat askew.

I worried that with all the wind the roof would form a leak, but I only planned to stay until the end of the summer. After that, who knew?

Outside, the ocean swirled with color like spilled gasoline in the fading light. I waded through the drifting sand and fought the wind that thrashed my half-buttoned shirt. I might have read the wind as an omen, but I didn't know to search for the signs.

Roger strolled to the side of the dune buggy he had driven out to the shack. In the daylight, Roger didn't look as well as he had first appeared. His skin had the orange tinges of a tanning bed rather than the bronze he'd developed in the hot days of the war. In our embrace I had thought he felt muscular, but it wasn't because he was fit, but rather because he was emaciated. Before he dropped the aviator sunglasses back over his eyes, I could see they were sunken and ringed in darkness.

Roger pulled a couple of beers out of a cooler on the passenger seat and handed me a sweating glass bottle. Cool beers in one hand and the other propped on a hip, we surveyed the rolling of the ocean and listened to the music of the crashing waves. I didn't know how to talk to Roger in such peace. Our friendship had always relied on the chaos of battle.

“Look, I came out here to tell you something, and it isn't going to be easy,” Roger said. “I trust that you will keep it to yourself though. It can be our secret.”

A little crab hustled across the sand. I didn't want to hear whatever Roger had to say. If we never spoke about what happened in our foxhole, then I would never have to face Roger's scorn.

“I found out a while ago, I'm sick. The doctors aren't sure what it is...”

I lifted my face. Down the shore, a man approached, dragging a net of flotsam.

“What the hell?” I said aloud. Two visitors to the dunes in one day were unbelievable. If I wrote such a thing in my novel, I would cross it out later. My note would say, “Doesn't ring true.” In any case, I welcomed the interruption, which saved me from any uncomfortable conversations with Roger.

Roger's face crumpled for a moment before rebounding to his usual smirk. His moment of vulnerability vanished like the golden hour of dusk.

Roger cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, “Did you catch anything good?”

The man ignored Roger. When he got close enough, he reached out a hand and said, “The name's Kip.”

“You guys taking good care of Carrie here?” Kip asked.

“Carrie?”

“Yeah, Carrie.” Kip gestured toward the shack. “She's half ship you know,

so I figured she deserves a name like one.”

“Is she yours?” I asked.

“Oh no, Carrie can’t be owned. I was her custodian for a time. Had to leave for a bit, take care of some things. You guys taking care of her now?”

“He is,” Roger said, jabbing his thumb in my direction.

“Yeah, I’m doing some writing out here.”

“Cool. I came out here to paint.”

“Well, Carrie’s occupied now, as you can see,” Roger said.

“It’s all good man, we can share. I won’t be in your way. I’ll be out all day to paint.”

Kip pulled a length of canvas, some plywood, and a large tortoise shell out of the net. “Thought we might patch up that roof a bit. Last time I was out here I noticed a leak.”

“You plan on fixing the roof with *that*?” Roger asked.

“Sure. Should hold up until the next big storm.”

“Why don’t we call a contractor, someone with some real experience?”

Roger pressed. “We should at least call the landlord or something. Let them take care of it.”

“Like I said, man. Carrie can’t be owned.”

“It doesn’t really work like that. No one really owns the shacks. They’re, um, improvised shelters,” I said, trying to use some of the language I had heard old-timers use to talk about the shacks.

“This would never fly in the City. Well, I guess if we’re going to do this, we’re going to need more of these.” Roger held out a beer for Kip.

Kip walked right past him toward the shack, net in tow. “That’s all right, man. I don’t drink.”

When Roger and I shipped out to Vietnam, I stuck close to him. I mistook the way he walked around the barracks with his chest puffed out and bantering with men of all ranks for courage. As far as I could tell, training had failed to transform me into a warrior. I still felt like the same daydreaming loser I had been before. The war itself didn’t make much sense to me. I was too naive back then to be anti-war, but no matter how many times our COs explained the mission, I kept feeling like I was missing something. I hoped I would contract some non-lethal jungle illness or be injured just enough, and soon, to be sent home.

Our lieutenant marched us from one place to the next. The men in my platoon grew ripe and anxious. I was sure the enemy would smell us before sighting us. As the monotony of the march advanced, so did Roger’s bravado. “I’m going to kill every last one of those Charlie fuckers when I see them,” he’d boast. His ranting bolstered the other men while I grew wearier.

One day, a heavy rain beat down on us as we trekked through a clearing of tall grass. The rain pounded so hard at first I didn’t hear the gunshots. Instead, I noticed the way the fifteen men around me sank beneath the grass in unison. Roger grabbed my belt to pull me down just as the second wave of shots rang out.

Once my initial shock passed, my tactical training kicked in, shocking me yet again. The dense stand of trees ahead rendered the enemy invisible. After long periods of silence, one of our men would rise to press forward, only to be met with another round of fire. After an entire morning and afternoon lying on our bellies

in the mud, Lieutenant ordered us to dig in.

By then, Roger was coming undone. A noise kept me looking over my shoulder for some wounded animal until I realized the whimper emanated from Roger. He tugged at the rim of his helmet each time a bullet whizzed by. I asked him to cover while I dug our fighting hole with my field shovel. I worried that his shaking would give away our location by causing the grass to vibrate, but when I asked him to dig, he fumbled with the shovel. I dug and watched the tree line at the same time.

That night, safe enough in our hole, I was too exhausted to take first watch. As I closed my eyes, I heard Roger weeping.

Later that night, or early that morning, I woke to the feeling of butterflies fluttering across my brow. I peeked through my lashes just enough to see Roger leaning over my face, tracing the outline of my brows with the tips of his fingers. His touch was the most gentleness I had felt since joining the army. It was the first time a man had caressed me at all. Even if it was chaste, it was a touch I had long waited for, but had been too afraid to seek. I never wanted it to end; I lay still until he pulled away.

Part of Roger's braggadocio extended to his talk of his girl back home, Jane. Jane tasted so sweet, he'd brag. God endowed Jane with an impressive rack, Roger said. According to Roger, Jane had written to him every day. We'd see the stack of letters the next time mail came through. He'd add them to the collection in the bottom of his rucksack. Sometimes, he'd pull the letters out to sketch rough nudes of Jane in the blank spaces at the end of the paper.

I, a virgin, had nothing to brag about. Instead, I rattled on about Champ, the Labrador retriever I'd left behind at my parents' place. Champ was the only one who could compare in terms of loyalty and love. I regaled Roger with tales of Champ's graces: the time he ran straight off the second floor deck and kept running when he hit the ground, the way he hunted bees instead of rabbits, the way he pawed the air in his sleep, surely dreaming of those buzzing bees.

Nights were cold in the monsoon season. Out of necessity, Roger and I huddled close in our foxhole. At first, I thought I'd imagined the way he brushed my thigh. I'd excuse the way our fingers tumbled together. Overwhelming proximity will do that, I'd reason. The boldness of his advances rose in direct proportion to the height of his fear.

For me, his affections were surprising, but not unwanted. As much as I tried to tamp it down, I had felt desire for other men before. As much as I tried to will something to stir when I stared at my older brother's nudie magazines, I just didn't feel that way about women. The first time I read *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, late at night under the sheets with a flashlight, it was a revelation. My brother's constant curse that certain guys at high school were faggots taught me to hide my feelings. I cowered inside myself, afraid and ashamed.

But in the foxhole, fear was already everywhere and the shame of desire paled in comparison to the shame of killing. So when Roger's wandering hand finally lingered long enough on my pants for there to be no mistaking his intention, I was ready. When Roger reached in and felt that readiness, Charlie could have snuck up and shot me straight in the back and I'd die, at last, a satisfied man.

Even still, there was one moment, when Roger pushed his forehead

against mine, breath ragged, that I hesitated. Part of me wondered if it was all a ruse, a way for Roger to out me so that the rest of the platoon could finally kill the faggot, or whatever else they planned. But when Roger pressed on, I didn't care. I only made the mistake of reaching out for him too tenderly, of cupping the base of his skull in my hand. He pushed me away and huddled in his side of the hole. Neither of us spoke until the first "Yes sir!" in response to the lieutenant's order the next day.

That day, in a routine firefight, a bullet grazed my leg. As they wrapped the bandages and lifted me into the helicopter, I begged to stay. My tour was almost up, and my wish for a quick, non-fatal war had been granted, yet all I wanted was to find out what one more night in the foxhole would bring.

When I recovered and fully unpacked my rucksack, I found a sketch tucked in a side pocket of a man and a dog, a Labrador. I recognized Roger's stuttering style. I flipped the page over and read the short letter from Jane. It was addressed, "My dearest son." I wondered how many secrets Roger kept.

After patching the roof, Roger, Kip, and I built a fire in the sand while the sun set behind the shack. We cooked Roger's bounty of hot dogs from town over the flames. Roger and I drank his endless supply of beer. We ate in silence, but afterwards, when the sky lit up with stars and the joint we passed around lit up our minds, the conversation began to flow.

"So, you don't drink, but you smoke?" Roger asked Kip as he passed the joint.

Kip inhaled. "It's more natural."

"Huh. Natural..."

"Where are you from, Kip?" I intervened.

"Born in Ohio, but now I just ramble about. I don't claim home anymore."

"Is that natural too?" Roger jabbed.

"Come on, Roger. Give it a rest," I said.

"It's okay," Kip shrugged him off. "Carrie here though," he continued, nodding toward the shack, "she's almost enough to convince a man to settle down."

"This hunk of junk? Give me a break," Roger scoffed.

"Park Service wants to demolish any 'unimproved' properties," Kip explained. He looked pointedly at Roger. "They want to return the Cape to its *natural* state. You ask me, I'd say places like this are an improvement over the monstrosities being built further down."

"You guys don't know what you're missing. You should come up to New York sometime. You can find anything in the clubs. *Anything*. Girls, drugs. Hell, hardly a day goes by without a quick bump after work."

I traced a stick through the sand. "I don't know. I like the quiet."

Kip jumped in, "How'd you come across the old place anyway?"

"Just heard some people in P-Town talking, thought I could come out here and get some writing done. I didn't even know these places existed. I needed somewhere to escape."

We let that comment sit in silence.

Roger sat up straight and peered over my shoulder. "Looks like we might have company," he said.

A flashlight bobbed over the dunes like a head nodding, "Yes, yes." The wind had picked up and the beach grass cut silhouettes into the light. A man attempted to swagger across the sand. When he entered the light of the campfire we could make out the brown of the National Park Service uniform.

"You boys better head back into town and find some better shelter. There's a storm coming in," he yelled over the wind and waves.

"Doesn't feel like a storm," Kip said, looking around as though he might see a storm form right before his eyes.

I snubbed out the joint in the sand. "Well, sir, this shack has seen plenty of storms, I'm sure. We'll just head in when it starts to rain. We'll have a harder time making it back to town in the dark." And in our condition, I thought.

"These places aren't fit for this weather. Someone is liable to get hurt," the ranger said. "But, I can't force you. We won't evacuate unless it's an honest-to-god hurricane."

"We repaired the roof just today. It will be all right," Kip said.

"Yeah, I'm sure that turtle shell we wedged between scraps of driftwood will hold just fine," Roger spat. He swirled the final drops in his can of beer and added, "Fuck it though, I'm in no condition to go anywhere."

"We'll batten down the hatches," I said.

The ranger's gaze lingered on Roger. "I suspect you boys are doing drugs out here, but I'm going to let that slide. I'm just doing my job and notifying you all that this storm is threatening to blow you and your doghouse away. I'll be back in the morning, but I don't expect to find any of you here."

As the ranger disappeared down the beach, Roger grabbed the bag of buds and the cooler. "If it's gonna rain, I'm going to stash some of our supplies inside."

With Roger gone, I began to notice the volatile weather. Wind-whipped sand stung my bare arms. My hair, shaggy after months in the shack, slapped my neck. Despite the violent conditions, I felt my body relax. Across the fire, Kip closed his eyes. I realized I'd been tense since Roger arrived. I wondered what was the bad news he'd come all the way out there to tell me. I wondered what secret he wanted me to keep.

Roger burst out of the shack, waking Kip and me from our doped-up doze. An explosion of papers, lifted by the wind, followed Roger out the shack door. It looked like a flock of white doves had taken wing.

Roger stormed toward me with a stack of pages in his hand. I wondered how long he had been in the shack, how much he had read.

"What the fuck is this?" Roger asked, waving the papers in my face.

"It's, uh, my novel."

Roger took a step toward me. "It's fucking bullshit!"

He threw the papers at my face. The wind intercepted them and whisked them down the beach.

Roger turned to Kip. "Did you read this? None of it's true. I'm not some kind of faggot."

Kip raised his palms in surrender. "Take it easy, man. I don't know what you're talking about."

I plucked a page from the damp sand. There, in my neat hand, was a description of our night in the foxhole. I felt shame coil in my belly. What was I

thinking, daring to commit such sins to paper?

Roger spun on me again. "It wasn't like that and you know it. How dare you, you fucking asshole. I'll sue you! This is libel! Lies!"

"It's a novel, Rog. It's not supposed to be true."

Then, just like in a novel, we heard the first blast of thunder. The rain shot from the sky. The drops masked tears on Roger's cheeks. The ink on the page in my hand bled out, erasing the evidence of our affair.

Kip rested a hand on Roger's shaking shoulders. "Come on, let's just go inside."

In the confines of the shack, I felt even more high and drunk. The wind tore at the latched door like a monster in pursuit. The air stank of sweat. Kip fumbled with the lantern. When the flame caught, shadows lurched across the walls as if the monsters had followed us indoors.

Kip fell comfortably into the armchair. I perched on the cot. Roger attempted to pace the length of the shack until he must have realized that pacing and spinning were one in the same in such a tight space. He tore the sketch of me and Champ from the wall before he collapsed hard onto the wooden spool.

The skeletal walls rattled with the wind. The lamp sputtered, creating a strobe effect that played poorly with our addled minds. As the rain pulverized the shabby roof, I could feel the damp setting in my clothes. All around was the sound of water: roiling in the ocean, pouring from the sky, and rushing under the door.

Roger dropped his head in his hands and moaned, as though in chorus with the raging storm. "Why didn't we listen to that fucking ranger?" he slurred. He shot up. "It's like a fucking prison in here. A coffin."

"Well, I could try to make us some coffee. There's a few Twinkies here," I offered. I hoped to make peace. Maybe if I ignored the confrontation that had just occurred, it would go away. Avoidance had always been my strategy of choice for dealing with the conflicts within myself. I couldn't see yet that it was a failed strategy.

Roger's legs bounced. He breathed thick and irregular. I tried not to think about the foxhole. I tried not to think about the way the monsoon rains soaked our bones.

"I'll take one of those," Kip said.

I tossed the Twinkie package toward his lap. As the cake flew through the air, Roger scoffed. "Come on, that shit can't be natural."

Kip sighed and hung his head. His stringy hair barely hid the way he tried to keep his composure. "You have a lot of rules, don't you?"

Roger stood unsteadily. "I'm not a hypocrite, if that's what you mean."

"You sure about that?"

Roger turned to me. "Who is he to you anyway? Is he your *boyfriend*?"

"You know him as well as I do."

At that moment, there was an explosion of thunder and a sickening creak as one of the boards of the roof lifted up and hung from the shack like a child's loose tooth. Rain sloshed in and soaked everything.

As more of the roof tore away from the building, Roger started coughing. He raised the sketch to his face to cover his mouth. I saw blood splatter across the image. Roger collapsed onto the cot. He lay down on his side, impervious to the rain pouring down on him.

Kip shook his head. "You all have some shit to work out."

I rounded on Kip. "What are you even doing here?"

"What do you mean?"

"None of this," I said, waving my arms wildly, "has anything to do with you!"

"Dude, like I said, I just come out here to paint."

"Then where are your paints and brushes and whatever? I don't want you here. I want to be alone!"

Kip pointed to Roger. "Do you want him to go too?"

I rubbed my face with my palms.

Kip stood. "Look, I just met you two, but from what I can tell, you all think you're hiding, but yet, here you are, together, in P-Town, in plain sight. But, whatever, it's none of my business. You don't want me here, fine."

"Wait," I said as Kip reached for the latch on the door. "You can't go out there."

Kip laughed and glanced up at the sky. "We *are* out there, man."

He walked out into the storm as if he were about to take a swim on a warm sunny day. As the door slammed behind him, I paused, leaned my head back and felt the rain wash over me. Kip was right. I wasn't fooling anyone. I wasn't hiding in musty motels or poorly lit parks or backseats of cars. The walls I put up might provide some little comfort, but whether I liked it or not, I was out there.

Without the roof, the shack was a hole. The storm a monsoon. The clatter of rain might be gunfire, the crash of waves artillery. Another foolish wish granted: here was my one more night in the hole with Roger.

On the cot, Roger's quaking body faced the wall. I slid in next to him. My knees to the back of his knees, my chest to his back, my face tucked in to the nape of his neck. As the storm moved away and downgraded from a shriek to a sigh, I waited.

Finally, Roger spoke. "Why didn't you ever come find me?"

"I didn't think you wanted to be found."

Roger raised the sketch, still clutched in his hand. "I left you this. I thought you would know."

"I thought you were ashamed. In your letters you never mentioned..."

"It's hard for me. I'm not brave like you."

"Brave?"

"You always have been. You saved me in the war. Now, you're out here doing your thing. Your novel. This life. I feel like I'm living split in two. At night I'm free, but during the day I'm trapped in the office. Man, if those guys knew. If anyone knew..."

Maybe I had been brave. I thought about how freeing it had felt, to write about those nights with Roger. I also thought about how selfish I had been. It wasn't only my story to tell. I might be clawing my way out of the holes I dug myself, but Roger still very much needed the safety it provided.

"I'm sorry I wrote about us."

Roger sighed. "It's okay. It's just more of my punishment."

"Punishment?"

"Look, it's still a sin, okay? You might be okay with it, but I'm not. I wasn't raised that way. That's why I'm being punished with this illness. I've done

wrong. There's the war. This. That's what I came here to tell you. I don't know why. I guess I was afraid maybe I'd given it to you. They say that's not how it works, since we never, you know, but I wanted you to know."

I tugged on Roger's shoulder, forcing him to face me. "What's going on?"

"My body can't fight anymore. Like any little cold hangs around forever.

Little cuts won't heal. The doctors say it's been happening more and more to men, well, men like us. They say it's going to kill men. You're the only person I've told."

I held Roger the rest of the night. In the morning, when he stirred, I did him the courtesy of pretending to sleep, knowing he still needed the night to hide in. When I heard the dune buggy motor fade into the distance, I rose and tried to collect the sopping pages of my novel. Among the wreckage, there was no sign of the bloody sketch of Champ and me.

With the roof gone, I decided it was time to leave the shack. I stood in the threshold and felt the wind whipping across my face. Just as the storm had lifted, revealing a bright, beautiful morning, some burden had lifted from me, too. I was done hiding or pretending to hide. I was ready to live out there.

Aside from the roof, the shack had stood strong through the night, even though others in the area either completely blew away or were stolen by the sea. Over time, the story, well, not the complete story, of what we endured during the storm spread, becoming part of the collective P-Town lore. Time after time, in bars and parties, I heard the story of how a mysterious carpenter of the dunes came and patched the roof before the storm of '73, saving the life of a local writer. Any time a storm rocked the Cape, new stories emerged of the guardian of the shacks. I figured Kip must be out there somewhere still, the progenitor of such stories. Every time I thought I saw him on the beach or cruising by on a bicycle, I couldn't be sure it was the same man.

I never heard from Roger again, though I thought of him often.

I thought of him after the wild years I spent in P-Town and after there was a movement and, later, a community. I thought of him when I buried other friends with HIV and later, when it was no longer a death sentence. I thought of him after the joyful weddings on the steps of Cambridge city hall. When I overheard my students brag or tease in the halls outside my office, I thought of Roger. Sometimes, even after my husband fell asleep in our bed, Roger would sneak into my thoughts.

Over the years, I created a narrative of answers for Roger. I couldn't bear to think of him as the closeted, conflicted man he was that night on the Cape, that we both were, really. Instead, I imagined him living out and free in New York in the heyday. I imagined a world where we marched the New York streets together, demanding our rights. I pictured him still alive, still young, cradled in a lover's arms.

I wrote the story of those imaginings and they rang more true than the stories that had filled those pages I'd frantically filled out at the dune shack. Only when I reached the final page of my imagined life for Roger and typed, "The End," did I feel my wish fulfilled. In the final scene, the narrator reaches down into a foxhole, grabs the other character by the arm, and pulls him up into the sun. Around them, the war has ended, rather than dragging on and on.

Neutral Buoyancy

we weight ourselves with canvas belts and iron
packets in pockets of external lungs
that lift instead of breathing

we carry breath down so we can dwell
in medium where ankle flick
turns us and we see
our motions wave anemones
and we feel currents from hands and stones and coral
polyps brush our skin or neoprene

and when we surface
snorkels & signals bright—we don't have to hide from skin
never touching skin—enough to feel force
connection is out there
, always, already there
in too thin to notice air

Elizabeth Kate Switaj

from **Luxury, Blue Lace**

The child asks for a toy
and I do not want to presume.
We go an adventure.
Some dolls we find near my own childhood
but those she might have best liked
I avoid. I am afraid
to tell her father what a doll becomes
while a brother plays with cars
despite his longest eyelashes.
There was a sliding door of wood
and behind it none of us could move on our own.
The past takes shape as a seven-year-old
girl and traces the path to the present
as a present. Your mother gives her the silks
she once gave you, and dresses you instead in neutral tones.

*

Wolf in wolf's clothing,

but the pelt, pink and trimmed with busy-patterned fabric, it twirls
with the boy—ask him—what is a red fox, years later, on the head—
someone says this is a problem—the color of liquor through
the day—wolf's clothing will not warm like natural
hide—

but the pelt a pretty he will shiver off, for a hide to stretch
and pain a side under ribs, that will not let him give
way—will keep memory of a twirl long
after it has shredded—

one woman wore bubbles—another, androgyny
and you touched each of their arms—even that spirit—

*

Child, less a companion, why
do you wear this dress. Keep acting
this way and you will weight
your DNA, stones to shift
and crystallize your expressions.

I have only eroded
the hand I strike with. A whale skeleton, a string
of lights hung for a party. You twice had to carve
out an inside. Feel the weather in each cave. Outside
rain mixes with your tensioned surface.

Your twin taught himself to move everything
within, to cope in a fold. If he wanted to trade
his senses for networks and wires, you wanted
silk veils, contorted to seam
whole. A geode underwater, inscribed with waves.
Time will take away your excuses;
the tide will return in return.

*

S. Brook Corfman

I promise you
won't get through me to my brother
and know him.

No one told you yet we're not even looking,
just bored? No one ever wrote you a letter, careworn?

"If one twin is diagnosed with [...] there is a fifty per cent chance the identical twin will also develop symptoms."

So you keep reminding me, but I promise
I'm well aware of what gets thrown between us.

How arbitrary fifty per cent is.

I'm an unwilling participant in this study.

I can't talk about when I wanted
a certain silhouette but I can threaten you, dear scientists,
can wake up every day saying this is the day
to ruin an experiment. This is the day

to break a careful control.

We are being observed
and yet only I am bothered.

What I told you:
some hypotheses are proven
false; the rest are simply waiting.

*

There was a bowl of clear water swum in like a lake.

There was hide, there was no.

My strangled form in the purple room and paint all over in cream and red.

The carpet will still show through.

We all go through phases. This phase is rigid.

Phase of mind-over-woken.

Friction, cold. Not-lost puzzle piece, we put together the picture without you.

A little valueless showing through.

This octagon, a form known well, shattered along stress lines.

A form that falls perfectly apart.

A set of glassworker's tools.

A daily practice.

Even when you open up one box from the attic.

Finger the fine threads of cloth frayed by the hinge.

You suspected there was another, richer wood and older.

Wilted and dried inside, preserved.

*

Netherworld

The Dead Sea brine seeps
 into sinkholes, where the earth
 fell open
 without warning. Blackened salt formations
 conjure a giant clam; an octopus, half buried,
 with tentacles that can grab
 still;
 a dirty, fallen stalactite,
 more like an amputated leg

I wander on damp, soiled sand,
 seafloor mud laid bare
 by the receding waterline
 with deep, erratic cracks
 like an icepack starting to thaw.
 I fear myself adrift,
 alone,
 on a floe of earth
 though I know one does not sink
 in this sea of salt

Into the night I walk
 as the blackening cliffs transform into bodies
 torn
 from their sisters across the Great Rift.
 A solitary boatman
 on the jigsaw-block of earth I pictured
 drifting in the bottomless brine
 makes me wonder how much further down
 the Kingdom of Hades would be

In time, I cease to dread the swallowing
 pits, the earth
 that caves in beneath my feet,
 burying me in an avalanche of dirt.

And now I laze
 on the shores of a black and stilled
 under-earth sea, not caring to join
 Persephone
 in her spring awakening

Eurydice in the Galilee

We dive into the foliage
on Mt. Peki'in,
at times coming up for air to find
our bearings
and search for boulders piled
by giants,
that mark the presence
of a karstic pit.

Between the rocks
the entrance to our pit is moist
and green with moss,
a tender mouth,
a den of elves, until you peer
down, where it delves
vertically
into the underground

It is here that Orpheus
looked back
to be sure his beloved climbed
behind him, when his broken
promise
plunged her back
into the realm of Hades

Of course Eurydice is there
still,
you can see her
looking up from the depths,
growing old

heavy
with wisdom
she cannot share.

Fishing Stones

I did not find the lost oasis
of Zarzura, nor spears and swords
of Persian armies drowned
in sand, not even the wreck
of Count Almasy's plane,
though there were many stranded
lorries and more recent tracks
of smugglers from Libya and Sudan

but I resurfaced
from Egypt's Western Desert
with my pockets weighted down
by stones.

In that boundlessness
of space and skies, I anchored
my eyes on the more palpable ground,
fishing
for petrified memories
of meteor rains, bones
of whales and sharks from primordial
seas, sand transfigured
into glass

and stone by stone,
I drew in my catch

with an umbilical cord.

Cardinal in February: O‘ahu

When I see a cardinal in February, I think of snow
even as I stand on a green lawn beneath palms
and plumeria, watering the grass. I think the bird

must wonder where the long drifts of winter are,
for once, days grew shorter, and snow was inescapable.
When the others fled south, flying in martial V’s

and raucous flocks to follow summer, the cardinals
remained, linked to the land in a way that denied seasons
and weather and want. Cardinals were as rooted to place

as any maple, oak, or elm I remember in all
the places I’ve forgotten. Some human caged and carried
enough cardinals to the tropics that here is one, bold

and red, his striking song ringing from a telephone wire.
And now, he lights on the ground in a silvered circle
of morning grass, and because I cannot

not think his thoughts, I think he thinks, “Yes, this is it.
Here I am.” The rainbow in the spray can’t touch
the crimson of his wings. Even marooned on O‘ahu,

the cardinal cannot care, yet I am as transfixed by his red
on this green as I once was by his scarlet in the snow.
Pulling a hardy weed, I’m the one who wonders

about the fading drifts of yesteryear, the one who walked
away from place after place to find another place.
I turn the pigot, coil the hose, and wipe away my sweat.

Now, his mate flits to the fence, bronze and watchful,
silent as he skips through a slanting ray of winter sun
over ground he claims with only a shadow.

When I Ask My Son to Speak

1.

He refuses, but my father begins,
my grandfather grumbling in the beyond.

2.

He opens his mouth and my grandmother
listens to a story about the ocean
battering itself against the stones
beneath my father's house.

3.

He says nothing. I have not been
to Minidoka, never slept in a hungry yard,
never stood behind barbed wire
and watched the Idaho sky
darken like a wish fulfilled.

4.

He says nothing—pine trees fill
with sparrows, then sag under
several months worth of snow.

5.

Men sliced into angry fish, women
withered to lacquered bones—
he says nothing about any of this.

6.

One day, all our mouths will be open,
all our voices pouring into voices,
cresting together at night.

7.

He hasn't yet learned to speak.
No one has taught us what words mean.

All Of This Will Be Yours One Day

My son: I wonder what you will think about
where we come from—that barbed wire

stretching over your head for decades,
those guard towers standing between us

and the prairie yawning all the way to dusk.
The earth desires everything from us, to wrest

ourselves from ourselves, our soft bodies
from our calloused knuckles when all we want

is to stop dreaming that we are animals.
I wonder what you will dream at night

when you learn about Minidoka, about
building a prison with your own hands

then locking yourself away. Years of wartime
hysteria disguised as years of deathly kisses

because somewhere out there on the Idaho
plains lies the foundation of the barracks

my grandfather built to shelter his family
from the summer dust, from the winter's teeth,

from America. It's easy to build a prison,
easier than to break out of one, at least

when all the locks are fashioned of spirits
and hidden in a man's bones. We still live

in Minidoka's shadows, we who are shadows
of shadows because a desolate landscape

can be sacred without being hallowed and
I wonder what you will build for us.

W. Todd Kaneko

Little Minidoka

After Li-Young Lee

I wrote a poem about my grandmother
deep in the forest. Since then, the wolves
have something to fear as she flexes
her arms and sharpens her teeth
on skins of trees. The birds gather her
hair for nesting, the mice her bones
to build new houses.

I wrote a poem about my grandmother
in her house, and now she drifts
slow through oxygen and snow
because there are no houses anymore—
just the evening parting its lips
to reveal its secret about funerals.
Sometimes there is no body, it says.
Sometimes there is only a body.

I wrote a poem about my grandmother
imprisoned in that obscene compound
in Idaho, about the prairie populated
by witches and ogres weeping for their old
human bodies. Now she lives behind
my ribcage, lodged between my lungs
and my heart and I don't know how
to set anyone free. Sometimes, I look
into steep shadow for a glimpse of her.
Sometimes, I walk through cemeteries
and listen to the crows sing.

W. Todd Kaneko

Sasha and Hermann

Leningrad

9 September 1958

Hermann finally returned on Sunday from the camp. 17 years. Dear god! 17 godforsaken years. Nadenka and Vova were here to receive him and Elizabeta Antonovna and Elena Matveva – we had a nice little spread with his favorite cucumber and tomato salad and borscht and that wonderful rye bread he loves so much and a little vodka and Anna Petrovna brought some cognac. He didn't want any fish at all – he said nothing with a mother or a face. I said of course my *zaichik*, my little rabbit, whatever you want. I wanted to cry the whole time but I just smiled and my heart felt like it was going to jump out of my chest. I don't think I've ever been so happy and heartbroken before. At the same time. Dear god.

My heart is aching and we are so connected it hurts. It's moments like this I wish I were like Angelina and really believed in god – that's the problem with being atheist – who do you turn to when your heart feels like it's been attacked by a million mosquitoes?

He doesn't want to talk about it and I don't blame him. If you spent 17 years in hell would you really want to talk about it? All he does all day is cut pictures out of *Ogonyok* – paintings – animals journeying across the savanna in Africa, elephants loping with their babies through Asia – faces of men, women, children and *babushki*, sunsets, flights of heron and ibises, crows and cranes, butterflies, hummingbirds, something Egyptian and just color all around – he cuts it all out and pastes it into his big gigantic scrapbooks. Lina was there reading a verse from Psalms. God is my refuge and so on. I really envy her sometimes. I wonder at moments if the light isn't burning from inside of her – not god above – and once when I asked her about that she nodded and said I was right because god is everywhere and that I mustn't ever forget it and I mustn't ever think I am alone.

Who knew it would be a crime to be German? Like Lina says, We're all god's children whether we believe in him or not. It's nonsense he can't just get a job. He tries so hard and every day I say, it's okay, my love, everything's going to be fine. Every day he goes to different factories asking about jobs and I know they need people at the one he went to today – our neighbor works there – at the bread factory near Apraksin Dvor, but when they see him, hear him – when they find out he's German – it's all over. Like a steel door closes on their hearts – as if he's worse than garbage on the street. The worst of it for him is to feel invisible. They don't see me, he says.

He doesn't tell me but I can feel what he won't or can't say. It's cold – like clay – gathered clumps in your throat – stopping it up. That's what it's like – like your heart is cold because the people around you don't give you the attention you need and deserve. They don't see you, they reject you. I can't think of anything worse than being rejected. It's like being trapped in a spider web and having the memory that things used to be different, you used to be respected and appreciated and liked and recognized. The memory that you weren't always considered a mosquito. A scourge that god mistakenly made. That's what saddens me really – that people used to treat him so well because he was so *vospitanii*,

well-bred, so brilliant, *intelligyentnii*, so exceptional. It never mattered that he was German. Not before. People just knew him as an engineer and a respectable man. A kind man. He used to be better than just good enough. Now things are different.

The first page he created – he pasted the picture of a crow down on the page – then a panther then a raccoon then an eagle and a wolf. He wakes up nights sweating and kicking his feet like he's running, then he shouts NO. HELP ME! HELP ME! I pat his back, ask him if he'd like some tea and he always says the same thing, Go back to sleep, love, everything's fine.

I wonder sometimes if he's relieved to be home but I think it's a different word – it's recovery – it's like when you're so tired you can't cry, you're beyond sorrow and your grief thaws drop by drop like an ice cube and all you can do is lie there – sit there – stare into space. Thank God he has his books.

It's like during the Siege when Aunt Vera and Mama died. There was no food at all. I couldn't cry at first – I was numb for a long time. It seemed like forever. But not a day goes by when I don't think of them and wish their spirits peace – sometimes I even light candles for them. Or the time I walked 50 kilometers barefoot to see Papa in jail when the Bolsheviks locked him up just because he was a believer and I brought him a cake and a letter. Mama had made that cake. Who knows if he got the letter? I'm sure the guards ate the cake. Those Bolsheviks weren't known for their manners. I couldn't cry either. Sometimes you're afraid that if you start crying you will start crying and then the tears will just take you with them and you'll drown in all your tears, die in all of your grief. Not able to breathe. Suffocated.

I tell Hermann it's all going to be fine. He just listens. He listens a lot. I know he feels bad that no one will give him a job. He's gone everywhere, even outside of his specialty. He's gone to stores, factories – but it's always the same story. People look at him, sometimes they are frightened. Sometimes they turn away. Or they hear his voice and become harsh with him. Severe. Sometimes children are scared of him. This man who loves animals so much he doesn't eat them, this man who cried for days when our dog Dasha went missing but thank God was found, this man who will not even kill an ant or a spider because he says we're all equal and deserve to live on god's earth.

It hurts my heart – I hurt for him. I cannot understand these people who ignore him or look through him or treat him badly, I can hardly tolerate how men glare at him at the store when they hear his accent, of how children point. He just looks down gently but I know there's pain there. And you just think, what can be done?

Angelina says they're still god's children, that we must forgive them and they don't know any better. I tell him it's okay, he'll be like the Golden Fish – I will earn the money for all of us and he won't have to concern himself. I'm selling more and more hats – people have a little more money now so it's okay.

17 September 1958

I'll never forget the day they took him to *Bolshoi Dom*. They told him to get dressed in his military attire and that he had an important assignment. The men in the baggy gray uniforms. He ended up leading all of the foreigners to the camp – behind the barbed wire. He had no idea what would really happen. That was the last time I saw him – the last time for four years.

You learn to use your imagination and you live in your dreams a lot. My dreams became more real than my waking life. Sometimes I saw him in my dreams and sometimes I was in a train station and the train was going by without me or I'd get on the wrong train and couldn't get off. The train was always in black and white. Sometimes I'd talk to God, begging to see Hermann but I'd end up in a desert and wake up feeling like I was choking with thirst. The hardest thing for me was talking to the children about their father without breaking down. I thought when Stalin died he'd come back for good but it took five more years.

I just said Papochka's gone away for an important trip and he'll be back soon. They never stopped asking and it became like a game. Vova would look at a map and say, Oh so Papa went to California? And I'd smile and say oh yes, California! He sees the ocean and the movie stars and the palm trees. And the sun and a blue-eyed sky. And my little girl would ask if he went to the North Pole to see the polar bears and ice caps. I said oh of course, your papa is an important adventurer.

At first they didn't tell me where he'd gone – of course it was during the Siege – no food, no light, nothing. Freezing cold those winters. You couldn't believe it could be so cold, 41 below zero. Only darkness. Total hunger. Hunger you can't imagine, hunger you don't want to imagine. That was no kind of life. But after the war I wrote the government – I'd go down and one little ill-bred man, a real idiot, told me I shouldn't have married a German if I didn't want trouble. Stay with pure Russians, he said. Then everything would be okay. I told him to go to hell. A short little man with crooked yellow teeth and a dirty white shirt. A disgusting man with the red face of a drunkard.

Finally after some years I found out about the camp he'd been sent to. Behind the barbed wire fence. My granddaughter asked me how it felt and I said I had no idea. Feeling? Sometimes your sorrow and grief eat all the feelings up. Maybe if you knew how you feel you'd died – it would just be too much – it might take over. I'm careful about looking at my feelings. Where does that get you? My Uncle Vasya looked at his feelings and kept looking at them and then one fine day he took the lift to the eight floor of his building and jumped. Thanks to feelings. Feelings are dangerous.

I understand why Hermann only cuts out pictures and images and pastes them into this big books – pasting pictures of all of the years he lost with us maybe – of all those events – sledding and skiing in the park with the children, riding horses near Pulkovo, those glorious horses he always told me spoke to him with strong, silent wisdom – riding out there in the snow and it feels like you're the only one on earth, swimming in the lakes in summer and napping and reading in Repino, going to the Marinki and Mussorgsky, the ballet and opera, or to the Philharmonic to hear the symphony of angels. How can you get back those 17 years? Will you ever?

4 March 1961

Thank god! Hermann finally found work as an *ubornik* for The Hermitage. Sweeping the floors after everyone has left. He says he loves it there because the paintings speak to him – Pissaro and Michelangelo and Titian, El Greco and Gauguin, Matisse and Chagall, and of course Rodin. They tell him stories. They are alive, he tells me, and I see them from their creators' point of view. When Angelina heard him say that she raised her eyes to heaven and said, he has the gift

of prophecy, god wills it.

I still don't know about god – god has never been in my vocabulary but Hermann is a believer – he said it was god who rescued him from behind the barbed wire. He said he prayed and prayed and one night he saw a light so bright shining above him right before he fell asleep. I was surprised, he said, because it seemed like a sprite, an angel who wanted to play. That is an archangel, Angelina said. One of god's favorites.

At first he said he was able to transfer to a labor camp because he was a mechanical engineer but then he said the real truth is that God saved him. He dreamt of an angel who warned him. He was walking and the angel told him which way to return from the outhouse. Every night he'd go back to the barracks the same way, but this night he took a different way. The next morning a man was found dead – he'd been stabbed. That day he was transferred to the factory.

30 March 1961

We talk about moving away a lot – Hermann would like to travel – go to an island or Hawaii. He tells me he dreams of a kind of paradise where it is always sunny and everyone's smiling. I told him that sounds like heaven. He gave me a strange look and smiled. Like he knew something I didn't. He's been filling more books lately – with photographs of small children and oceans and skies and sunlight and flowers and all kinds of animals. He tells me life is loud in Leningrad – it is sad and gray and people are heavy. He said he longs for peace, to be somewhere where people would not think of him as German but just as he is – a human being – a man – nothing more and nothing less. He tells me that living in hell makes you see the truth about life. That most of the time we create and accept our own hell, that we take our freedom for granted – the simple freedom of sitting on your balcony for a cup of tea.

1 April 1961

Hermann died yesterday. The love of my life has gone and I am on my knees for the first time in my life asking God for help. For protection from myself, my grief, my sadness. I know he died of a broken heart. All those years away from us, his family, shut up like a defective tool that had no specific use for anyone. He never talked about the violence, never talked about his sadness – it's because of him that I understand that violence runs deep and has many faces. To ignore someone and pretend they do not exist or are not worthy is also a form of violence. It is a violence of denial, it is a violence of withdrawal.

He came to me in a dream last night – dressed in that military uniform of his – the one he wore when the *Blokada* began and in the dream he told me he was going home. I will always be with you and the children, he said. But I have work to do somewhere else now. Sashenka, he said, don't you ever forget that you will always be the love of my life. You are my all, my everything, my sun, my moon, my stars, and my beloved. My angel. I love you, Sashenka.

11 November 2001

It's been 40 years since I last wrote in this it seems like a long time when you say it out loud but when you live it, it seems like yesterday when I saw him

sitting out on the balcony drinking his tea silently, peacefully. An American girl called me yesterday and she wants to interview me – she's working on a project – we're going to meet this Saturday – it should be a pleasure to meet her, I'll make her a pie. My Maya is excited to meet her – she loves anything American and adores English.

12 November 2001

The American girl came yesterday to talk to us – a good girl – intelligent, cultured, well-bred. I remember when I was her age – we had the whole world ahead of us our bright future ahead of us. She couldn't believe I'm 95 years old – I told her I felt 15 inside. It was strange as I was talking to her with Angelina everything came back everything was right there in my mind – dear, dear papa, Hermann, the Blockade and while I was talking time stood still and I was no longer talking to her, no, I was living it and all that pain and all that sadness and all that sorrow came washing over me. I never thought you could hurt so badly – all those memories and little tiny regrets like I wish I would've told Hermann I loved him more or I should have done something more to help him, to get him to talk. 40 years without him and I'm reminded of so much – not a day has gone by when I haven't talked to him in my mind – when I haven't thought of him.

First thing I could think of was myself as a young girl walking miles and miles over that dry land outside of Leningrad in the summer heat. 15, 20 degrees. Sweating, walking with the cake mama had baked for papa and my letter and Angelina's, seemed like I'd never stop walking and when I finally reached the jail hours and hours later, the Bolsheviks wouldn't let me see him. Those Bolsheviks who kept him – what for – because he was a believer, because he loved God. He was a good man, a sweet man, a kind and generous man – he was kind to everyone – Jewish, Christian, atheist, anyone who came from abroad. He always told us we must love everyone like Jesus did even when those dirty Bolsheviks descended upon us.

They said they were bringing a revolution for who? They brought murder, slaughter, starvation, chaos, and control. What kind of life is that? We took that, we took their madness – how they stole our property and made us children work, they took our house and land and wouldn't let me see my papa. God only knows if they gave the cake and letters to him at the jail. They were not honorable men, they were vultures, ill-bred, with no conscience. Dirty.

They took over our house in the countryside they made us all sleep in the same room with the neighbors who had moved in. Mama was so upset about that and that they wouldn't let us go to school. Once she told them we'd end up like them if we didn't to go to school. They just looked at her and said, Oh! Your children are little countesses then?

Nothing good came of those little devils coming in. Putin, Rasputin, Stalin – they're all scary characters. The American girl asked me what it was like living under Stalin – you could tell she was even afraid of him. Life is life, I said.

I know I have to forgive them, there is a black spot in my heart against them. I didn't even know about it until I started talking to the American girl. Angelina helped with the details, she knows the order of things. It gets so confusing to remember it all as it happened, so many layers and lines of time passing in your mind and you get confused. It's all inside of me, the age doesn't matter it's the feeling that matters like I told the American girl. Dalia. She told

me she admired me and there was a light in her eyes as she looked at me. Why I've just lived my life, I said. She said, Because you have this radiance shining out of you and you've been through so much.

It's been 40 years since I last wrote in this diary – 40 years of life on earth – 40 years day after day going to the store, taking care of my children, and my cats Lusya and Misha, 40 years of life. It seems like it's been so long but I still feel 15 inside. In my heart. I can still remember when I met him. Hermann. He took my breath away looked like Sir Laurence Olivier, like a movie star. It's true he was beautiful, this tall, strong German, but most importantly, he was the sweetest, the most tender man I had ever met.

Angelina says that sometimes God waits and waits and makes you wait, but that God always has a plan. She says that's why the American girl has found us. She happened to meet Lunya at a cafe. She said she was interviewing *Blokadnitzi* and he told her about us. She's a sweet girl, a sensitive girl – she wept silently when we told her about the Blockade. The hunger, the cold, the desolation, the terror, the constant cries of the bomb alarms, how we'd run down into the shelters, and have to drag corpses from city streets to the markets and churches and theaters. How teenage girls and young women had to do that hard work and then guard the apartment buildings with metal shields, like sleds. All that hard work, so difficult, among so much death. All that horror.

You never realize what a gift your life is until you talk about it to a stranger – make it come alive in detail – so you live it once again almost and you taste your sorrow once again. Comes to the surface, your joy, your gratitude.

I told her we never spoke about it growing up – those days of horror. Why talk about hell? What's the use? What good does it do you? Still, talking to her freed me in a way. She's a stranger, from some other place entirely and yet, talking to her was like releasing a million tons of gray dust that had gathered in my lungs. Like cotton balls stuffed down inside them so I couldn't breathe but didn't know it. I felt differently after I'd spoken to her – lighter. Angelina liked meeting her too but it was different for her. She talks to God about everything and during the Blockade she'd talk to Papa. She hasn't had the same pain I have, the same grief. She has always only loved God.

The American girl told me she has interviewed other women who were just waiting for death. Why? Life is a gift, that I have always known. I know life is a miracle. Otherwise, why would we be here? And why would we keep going after losing everything, feeling so much sadness and grief and disappointment, after doing the right thing but knowing it doesn't matter because people see what they want to see and will sometimes choose to hate because they are not ready to see a different way? You just keep going. You know one day things will get better. We were all brought up with the promise of a bright future – that's why we were all poor – all standing in line waiting for bread and apples and soap and clothes. That was why it was harder, because the best was to come – for our children and our grandchildren. But talking to the American girl I see that there is no bright future. There is only now.

Safe House

When scouting a place to sit, note the last light on,
an open door. Be wary of hideouts from where
predators may strike—the van with blacked out
windows, the crawl space under steps, the curiously
shaded area in which who knows who may lurk.

I once found that spot, that shaded sitting place—
an exit facing south, an exit facing east. I stomped
torn shoes on cool cement, ran calloused fingers
down rough edges to wrought iron bars, then smelled
the stale musk of a story that had nothing to do

with me. And I introduced myself to it, laid
my body bare across its floor. And then

it remembered how it had come to me.
And then it experienced its own silence.

The final line of this poem is from Wendy Burk's Lines for Echolocation project.

Welcome

There is a bee who wants the green signage pole
to become so much more, head pointing
at two o'clock, antenna and tarsal tips searching.

He will visit a long stem, white flower, and white flower,
hover, pitter-patter onto petals thick as tongues,
fold black cellophane wings, one over the other,
then bury his head fully into cool luscious lips.

How I enjoy this, watching a bee visit and leave
the flower fully intact, so that when he tiptoes
to my ear, his buzz, abrupt, does not frighten.

Heather Nagami

Forward Pass

So he couldn't stand the anthem

Sat down for Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Samuel Dubose, Jonny Gammage, Walter Scott,
John Crawford III, Dontre Hamilton, and all the others

Gunned down

Terrified to suicide

Because no matter how much money he makes

He'll still have to tell his kids

To keep their hands up

Keep them visible

Say Yes sir No sir to the white man

With the badge

With the gun

Because selling cigarettes
Changing lanes without signaling
Driving a Jaguar while black
Walking home to grandpa are

Capital offenses these days

Days where dignity sits on the sidelines

Colin Kaepernick completed a forward pass

Refused to stand on freedom's gallows

thirteen lines from the beloved daughter

we meet again in this brilliance where the iridescence undulates the body
of vasa pasafika where spaciousness is allowed mystery
no need for papers the gate is open whale echoes whale ethos
cultivating the waterscape of vā a pristine betweenness this endless weave
from land to sky to the compassion of vasa where time is
and cannot be lost we reconvene in silence at Her highest calling I hear
your last four words, “Good Morning Beloved Daughter.”
and all the mornings since your legacy for me to live to birth the deep
where the hummingbird hovers over the page just above your whale song
here for you, father, this book of poems my first child—your grandchild
in the prism of your cosmic laughter
we feast
on Earth . . .

Penina Ava Taesali

Prayers from the Mouth of the River

Goat Rock Beach, North of Bodega

I knew it years before the native woman opened
her car door that one of the holiest places
of worship is found here

for her song couldn't wait for her feet
to reach sand or anonymity she sang
to the sea from the parking lot

I carry her prayer and mine
to the mouth of the river
where wildlife abounds

at the mouth harbor seals feast
on the salmon surge
and I see the osprey's shrill

Overhead seven brown pelicans
closely lift off I count each one.
every number sacred

I follow the pelicans to the ocean side
where the roar of waves sound
the boom, boom, boom

where two cormorants and
the lone black duck serenely
ride on the ocean thunder

I return to the other side
where the Russian River is quiet
and calm as an ashram

on the sun soaked sand the herd
of seals full round bellies
gloriously napping

the outdoor cathedral is far from church
the harbor seals teach newborn pups
how to swim how to fish
how to eat how to be

Great Waters on your wedding night:
how does one become an osprey?
a salmon? the full moon? a human being?

How does that green bottle broken

become a smooth mountain of jewels?

I collapse on the sand and pray for the land,
rain, pelican, whale, tree

I pray that someday we become possessed
with leaving things alone.

In my kitchen when I am chopping celery
onions, carrots I send emerald prayers
on the wings of hummingbird

I pray for my family, friends, strangers
and my enemies

I could be praying for you

May my prayers be answered here
at the mouth of the river, just north
of Bodega, Goat Rock Beach

Charlene

Charlene
wun wahine wit wun glass eye

studied da bottom
of wun wooden poi bowl

placed in wun bathtub
to float just like wun boat.

Wun mysterious periscope
rising from wun giant menacing fish

appeared upon da scene.

Undahneath da surface
deeper den wun sigh

its huge body
lingered dangerously near da drain.

Wun torpedo laden scream
exploded in da depths

induced by Charlene

who wuz chanting
to da electric moon

stuck up on da ceiling.

Silver scales
wobbled like drunken sailors

and fell into da blue.

No can allow
to move da trip lever on da plunger

no can empty da ocean

no can reveal da dry porcelain ring
to someday be scrubbed clean.

Charlene
looked at all da ancestral lines

ingrained on da bottom of da round canoe
floating on da watah

and she saw her past and future.

Wun curious ear wuz listening

through wun empty glass
placed against da wall

and discovered
dat old songs wuz still being sung

echoing like sonar
off of da telling tiles.

Charlene

Lark Omura

Braddahs

Once a year, inmates at Halawa Correctional Facility on Oahu participate in the traditional Hawaiian ceremony of Makahiki. In 2015, photographer Kai Markell captured this event in an album of over 60 photos, posted to Facebook by the Hawaii Department of Public Safety. This is a found poem taken from Facebook users' comments on the photos in this album.
Names have been changed to protect privacy.

the time of the coming of ke akua Lono (Rono),

called "Makahiki" (season).

Time of the harvest, feasting, rejuvenation of the land and people,
peace and no war (and offerings,

small-kine taxation by the Ali'i and Kahuna Ali'i class)

Thank you for that explanation

Wow... these are amazing pictures

Braddah Sean!! (2 Likes)

'Tokepa Kamaka leading. (3 Likes)

feels like I was in the moment

Hopoe lehua makekau

heal that spirit

Who organizes this amazing event!? Bless them
whoever they are

my cuz... (2 Likes)
Ikaika Ho'opi'i (2 Likes)

mahalo to da Authorities whom allowed
these moments to be shared

@Jaime Feiteira Brown 3rd person in he kind of small
> Cuz you get good eyes!
> Lol it's the tattoo. I seen Nalani

Powerful.... deep mana

It's Pili! 😊
Love you cuzin Pili. Happy holidays

OMG chicken skin just looking at the pictures

thank you
for sharing

Das my cousin
> Proud He'eia Boy!

“ ...Ku me ka HA!”

@Maile Suzuki look its Kaponoo
> Oh he's small now!? What's with his hair. I need to write him soon.

Braddahs

Lark Omura

...eia kupu, kinolau o Lono...

Eho mai I ka mana, eho mai I ka akamai

I'm Maori I don't know what this is all about
but I see the passion and pride in these men's eyes

Ohhhh shiiiiit there's Koa! Destiny Keawe had to share with you lol
>holly crapppppp. thanks rachel
You go Koa...
Braddah Ramsey

We do it for our boys

who need this type cultural
reconnection

Malama pono

Looks like braddah Ramsey Po'okela
>He is. Representing Wainiha, Kauai with pride
Cuz holding it down (4 Likes)
Braddah romo (3 Likes)
Unko ramz yeee!
Yeah that's ROMO
Love you pops
LOVIN IT
Haven't seen in decades CUZN

...e Ala e Ala ea aela... (2 Likes)
EA! (2 Likes)

Awesome, I got to see my brother. Thanks guyz!

Aloha Uncle Bobby Fisher. He's to the far left

Gosh I haven't seen him in years... use to play with my brothers in the group Ho'Aikanes
he wrote a song

called "where did all da Hawaiians go"

Braddahs

Scotty O Visits Oakland

In the car he is cigarette smoke &
perspires island water, we smile
while we talk, he tells me waiting
on the taxiing plane he saw a guy
unload baggage on the runway
that looked Hawaiian, was wearing
one orange safety vest & shorts
real thick braddah wit big ehu hair
was da hair dat made me notice him, ah?
I stay watching him unload an tinkin'
eh, braddah look local. den he look up
at da plane, straight at me, tru da window
an he nod an flash me one shaka!
ha! so I wen flash one right back.
funny, ah?

Lark Omura

Elegy for Kepo'okelaokekai

"A word is elegy to what it signifies."

- Robert Hass

You are the perpetual present tense
of the Hawaiian language, a verb
in a definite state of now.

I say *make* and mean dead,
as if you were always dead
and will remain dead past the point
of remembering. In this you are

the boy whose name materializes
the brilliance of the sea, then drowns
in its own enlightenment. You are *Kamapua'a*,
the trickster, who breaks the sternum of the *hapu'u* trunk
to eat the unfurling frond hearts inside.

Because there is no easy way to translate
history into word, I am mother tongue
who only licks the edges of comprehension.

I think about this late at night, dear friend,
when I need you for Hawaiian translations,
to affirm my understanding. I call you

and leave a message. I say *makemake oe*
and mean I miss you because the dead
are resurrected in longing.
But there is
only labor left in understanding.

You told me that Hawaiian verbs
do not conjugate. Tethered to signifiers
of past or future, a few letters
translating into nothing
but a compass arrow for time
or relativity. You left me broken

words, signifiers of your absence,
shouting *make, make, make*
into the cavernous phone.

Tia North

To Call “Pueo”

Blow the dust of old worlds
across cold stone and watch it flutter.
Gather your indefinable faith
in feathers, open wings
spanning time. You already know
its shape. A speckled egg
and the arc of a sharp beak
will hatch in your throat
as word preceding voice.

Understand the years
that braided the old gods
into tight knots
around Hawaiian tongues
and the silent prayers that eroded
mountain sides. You'll need this
knowledge for execution.

Linguists will tell you
the diphthong is two sounds at once,
that you'll have to hold them both
in the cage of your mouth.
Yet here, in exhalation,
stretched out in never ending awe,
a singularity: word constructed
just far enough to bridge talons
of the owl and pen of the poet
into an expansive lexicon taking flight.

Say I

and lay out the dead
 brown bodies of withered quail
 plucked from the sky, leaves
 your mother dries for tea.

Invoke Hawaii, prayers
 your grandmother chanted the morning she knew
 she was pregnant, your grandfather
 picking swollen avocados.

I said: silk thread of DNA weaves
 into a body, a cinched empire
 waist cascading into limbs, hands
 that reach outward into the world.

Pulse in a soft palm, a radar blip
 dissipating the open world to find
 that solid object you, and you
 reverberating I back to I.

when scales fade to foam

*paying subscribers anywhere in the world
can log in to sites operated from Manila
and across the archipelago that stream
the abuse of Filipino children on the Internet.*

Philippine National Police 2014

his scab, reptilian,
 gnawed by finger
dunes and antler.
 unhinged moth wing

leaking kerosene
 sap, this petal trail
purpura on bamboo
 floor. he cried to

his father, whose
 fingers, nestled
in a worn veil
 tried to pry tight-

lipped bivalves
 for spared parts. *father*
it hurts. torn cotton
 balls dyeing his skin

iodine. sheen
 reminding his father
of hooks, pearls,
 weighing scales.

net thrown over-
 board. feral, secondhand
smoke inhaled
 trench deep. abyssal.
deep web held
 by his fist. face lit
from the browser's
 weak moonlight. silence

of an untethered
 pier, urchin spawn
algal bloom. broken
 surface. angler fish

warmed, breathless
 as he feasted on its star.
 supernova in a place
 where light could

never reach awake.
 iris of a webcam, cataract.
 clouds coming to prey
 on leftover gills of moon.

make a wish, hold it
to your wishbone. milk-
 fish undressed, de-
 boned. *yes, just like*

that. he listened
 to the fry, moist
 promising a preheated
 pan. *more, faster.* tired

wrist, hard fin. his
 mother's back, fillet
 canned in tin and oil.
 his father, dove

to spray cyanide
 in reef throats, held
 his breath too long.
 this let go. gravity

spilt in his palm
 holds them all under
 arrest. high tide
 to hide, to rewound

the gauze. *didn't*
that feel good?

The Dragonfruit

Like the back of a spindly serpent,
The cactus shot upwards on the trellis,
Much to my father's delight.
He had hope for the smoke white
Flowers that would bloom into
Fireballs of succulent fruit.

But to no avail.

The creature slithered out and around
Its wooden cage, onto our pit bull's
Doghouse, making its way to
The side of the apartment building,
Not a plume of fire in sight -
A fight of futility, I told my father,

For a dragon does not yield.

Notes on Yucca Valley

valley full of dust, the air blares, bleeds doesn't mind

she wouldn't mind, she wouldn't have minded

in using the two conditional tenses, you

hold open two doors at once

through one the sun passes up

through one the moon passes over

to acknowledge your mother growing old but also

the illusion of these tenses being separate

Cynthia Arrieu-King

in this desert, the sun pierces up on and at night the moon
owns no “rise” about it it outdoes and dots
everything: two objects do
basic sailing around the house
garden of cactus looks short a plant
a concrete donut with a baby cactus planted inside
and an owner’s manual tucked underneath
nearby cousin cholla lets its old parts go black
rust and green spikes build on the burnt slash
worried about the inertia of putting up with

the discarded flattened bits a rat's nest
as if the cactus has been throwing up
in the spot by its foot for months
if you know someone who seeks out bitter tastes, stay away
what trials taught the desert to say, no no
having magical people stay at your house helps everything
or look at eternity out in the yard
by the time you make it to town
it's 107, even the car's a blanket pressing
and you slather limbs with an infernal
mud of white mineral everywhere

night mattes out the high-backed
hills asleep at night on a road
road to the moment, a thing that says to the universe yes
starting with one big taking off of clothes—
mind clothes, cloth clothes, not wanting to
lose track of light, invitations of space all large
you think there's just darkness
named old woman's springs road
old woman's spring happy treasure
old woman's window forest and long dead

old woman's convergence of three mystical rivers
red aventurine and red jasper
these could manage your setbacks
you yourself might understand her age
dog haunch appearing at the fence
hard blue lights pour failed silhouettes
the night admits nothing at all but a line a margin
a headlit thing like desert but beneath curtains
it grants each thing space
a blue-brown lizard beneath shade neutral as stone

this whole place clean, sun
comes through a yellow door again
land spreads—lit clear after a forgetful
season you come up over the crest
of the hill drop down so fast you're scared: this
is not your country or it's their country
i.e. no one's so clear now, this eternity's in progress
a pine throws a cone off to the side
as each grain of sand rests on more underneath
the things in a minute grow into the things in a vision
all the work you were meant to do otherwise

‘Ai Pōhaku

“Plenty people tonight. Everyone like look.”

My father sat behind the wheel of his blue Ford pick-up, his arms tightly crossed. In grease-stained jeans and a sun-bleached *Caterpillar* tee-shirt, he watched the last van of indifferent eyes merge onto route 200 – Saddle Road. Television crews, reporters, tourists and sight-seers left nothing but dust clouds behind them.

At the time of mōlehu, Pōhakuloa showed its vastness by twisting its colors with the sky; a heavy blanket of lava fields bordered by ‘ōhi‘a and hāpu‘u groves, swept by the wind and misty rain. Here and there, māmane trees danced.

Unfolding his arms, dad spun the Ford to life and we continued up the cinder road from where the vans had come. We bounced well into the dying light, the truck bed rattling with empty cans and five-gallon buckets.

“You not scared, eh?” Dad glanced at me, his sunglasses low on his nose.

“Nah.”

“We just going look. Good for see with our own maka.”

Our crooked headlights found a closed metal gate just as the sun disappeared completely. Tied to it with wire, a sign: *NO TRESSPASSING – U.S. GOVERNMENT PROPERTY. NO TRESPASE – U.S. GOBIERNO PROPIEDAD*. Dad got out and reached into the truck bed. He searched under water-logged cardboard boxes and threw aside fraying nylon ropes and an old rubber boot. He soon found his bent bolt-cutters, the handles wrapped in black electrical tape.

At the gate, he laughed and kicked the latch with his heavy work shoes, the laces untied and loose.

The gate swung open.

“Stupid. No more even lock!” he shouted back to me.

After threading our way between collapsed ‘ōhi‘a branches, around lava tube openings, garbage bags of rotting trash, and shattered frames of abandoned cars, the bald tires of the Ford pressed into the softness of crushed stone – fine, like ash. In the sky, where Mauna Loa kisses Kāne, an orange aura betrayed the sleeping sun, long gone.

“See there? As the Saddle.” Dad pointed out his window to where the headlights of a lone car snaked through the darkness on Saddle Road. “But you look, right there.” Dad pointed out the windshield. “That’s where we going.” He reached behind the seat and pulled out an old D-cell flashlight. “Still get juice, I think. We go.” We left the Ford running, lights on to help us on our way.

The smell was like New Year’s fireworks; a thick and choking cloud of sulfur and dirt. In the dark, I discovered the ash felt more like ground cinder than dust; like the lava had been beaten and crushed. A tall berm had been created by the blades of machines, pushed to the edge of a small cliff. We both crawled on our hands and knees to the top. Dad dropped the flashlight half-way up.

“No mind. Almost there.” He didn’t look back. The dust from his shoes leapt at my face, so I turned away, wiping with my sleeves. Looking down, I fluttered my eyelids to clear the grit. Through my swelling tears, bullet casings shimmered beneath the growing aura in the sky. I reached down and took one up

between my fingers. *M196*. I looked up and saw my father had gone, leaving only a trail of footprints to the top where his silhouette stood against churning orange flames.

As I rose beside him, dad pressed his sunglasses tightly to his face. The heat dried our sweat, leaving our skin raw. That night, the stones of Pōhakuloa seared into the land once more.

"And they said was small." Dad shook his head, his jaw clenched slightly.

"Who when?"

"Who you think?" He nodded slowly and motioned with his eyebrows at the ground where more bullet casings lay scattered. From his crossed arms, he pointed toward a sign hidden beneath smoldering brush. *50 YARDS*. Beyond it, *100*. Dad kept nodding.

"You know what I talking, boy? This place?"

"I know."

"All kine stuff they use up here."

"They no stop?"

"What for? Think. This no matter to them." Dad unfolded his arms, flipped both his hands toward the fire, and shook his head. "This place...nothing."

We shared the silence driving back to Hilo. And in this silence, I thought of the rising dust in the air, falling upon my head where the memories of the stones and forests may rest. I thought of the unlocked gate, my father's sunglasses, and the pauses between his words. I thought about the 'io and the pueo lost in spirals of thick smoke, and the sound of the 'ōhi'a trees laying on the ground, smoldering. My thoughts ran after the pua'a that had to flee the fires, only to tangle in the barbs of rusting cars and suffocate in plastic bags of fermenting rice and shattered beer bottles.

At home, we found mom hanging clothes in the veranda. Flipping the ignition off, the Ford became quiet and dad looked to me, sliding his sunglasses from his face.

"You know, boy. I show you this so you see for yourself. Now days, you hear anything...any kine. But now you know for sure, cuz your own maka not going lie." He put his sunglasses on the dash and opened the door. "So now, I going ask: what you believe?" I sat for a moment, leaning back against the cracked vinyl seat, holding the sound of his words in my chest, gritting my teeth as I felt my piko burn.

"Eh Mom, what get for dinner? Me and boy like eat." The truck door slammed behind him. We both were hungry, but all I could taste that night was cinder.

Contributors' Notes

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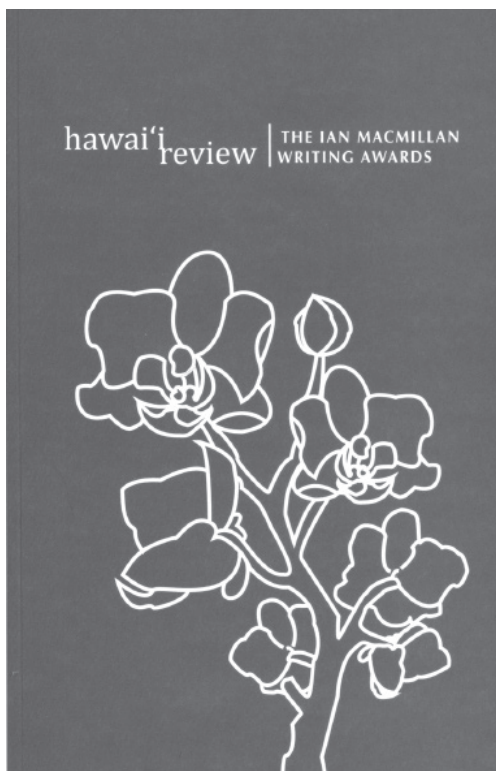
Occupying Va: Transformations

“What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence? Perhaps for some of you here today, I am the face of one of your fears. Because I am a woman, because I am Black, because I am lesbian, because I am myself — a Black woman warrior poet doing my work — come to ask you, are you doing yours?”

- Audre Lorde

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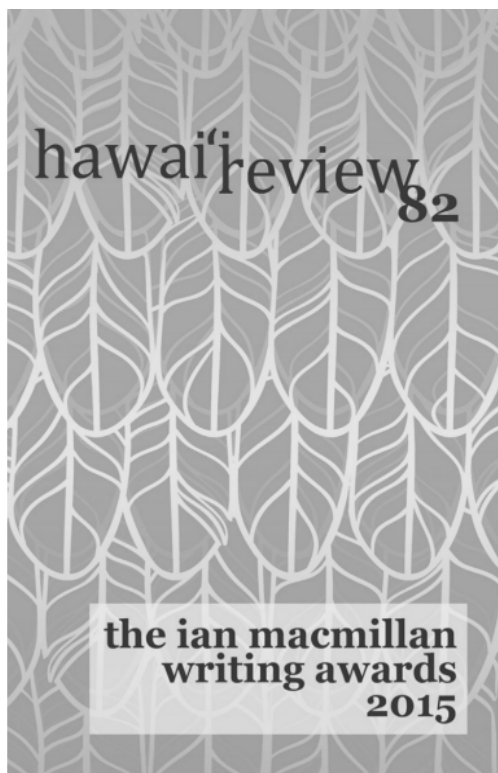
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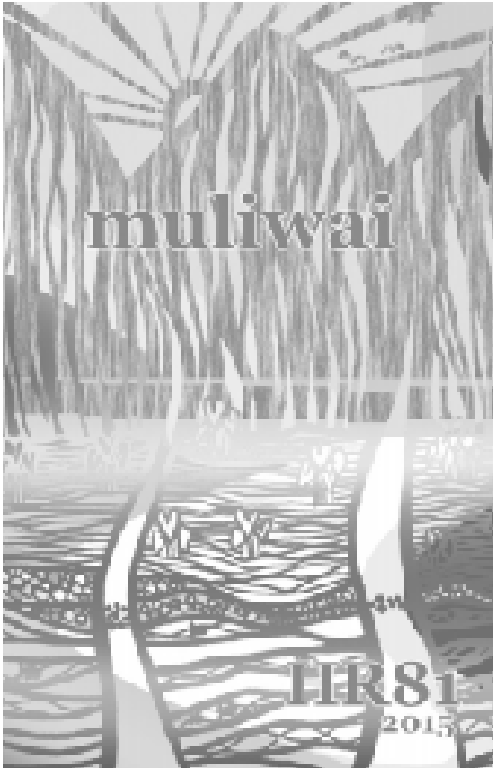
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