

Hawaii Review

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Occupying Va: Transformations



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Transformations

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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, in her speech *“The Transformation of Silence Into Language and Action”* delivered on a Lesbian and Literature panel at the Modern Language Association’s 1977 conference.

Just shy of forty years after Audre Lorde spoke these words, we are still surrounded by worldwide systems of oppression and the silences that accompany them. As we enter a frightening new American presidency, as Empire everywhere continues to dispossess and exile Native and othered peoples and people of color, we ask you to consider the in-between spaces within yourself. Where are your crossroads and intersections, and what are the words you need in this especially complex time?

We ask that you remember Lorde’s words: “it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence.”

This is the second in a two-part series.

HR 86
Spring 2017

DEAR WESTERN JOURNALISTS

.....

Dear Western journalists,
you come from your faraway lands
offering to uncover my secrets
you cite your resources:
ban the burqa subway ads
Jasmine from Aladdin
and a few harem paintings
found in your local museum.

You are covering my cover
asking me why I'm all covered
your father is making you?
your brother is threatening you?
your husband is forcing you?
I see your prejudice tucked
under your coverage.

Dear Western journalists,
I look for your coverage
while I am covered with the rubble of my house
while I am covering my children in shrouds
I find your words covering up the truth
for the people who got you covered
all because it's 'unbiased coverage'.

Dear Arab journalists,
you want to cover my mouth
telling me *I'm swimming in an ocean of sharks*
warning me to go back to land or be ripped apart
I'm taking off the veils covering your brains
I'm not whitewashing your cover
that's my blood spewed on sheets and streets.

I cover my stories
I am writing these reports.

..... Lina AlSharif
.....

THINGS WE LOSE TO BORDERS

.....

a track of time
"It's been 1460 days since I've seen you"
could have said 4 years, but that sounds shorter
a seat on the table
filled by new family members I have never seen
a voice that hides its vulnerability behind
a high-pitched "I'm fine"
weddings, feasts, births, deaths
all share the same long distance call trope
"wish you were with us", "wish I were with you"
plans, plans, plans
changed, cancelled, postponed
to "when we meet", "if we see each other again,"
a full story
where our hands touch and we watch the same sunset.

..... **Lina AlSharif**

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.....

we were lured from our own pools

ANIMAL CRUELTY

.....

The first one we took in,
a breeder bitch, shook and pissed
and for the first whole day cowered
in the farthest corner of our shit walk-up.

Heart breaking or broken for the brown and battered
pile on our floor, I walked between my work and
this dog quietly maybe ten times that morning,
but each time she shrank back into some farther recess,

a hole I hadn't even known was there.
And, me, retreating: I knew I knew nothing
of love or suffering, until, in the corner of my mind,
like this haunted beast who'd come here to try

to live, something –
I want to say compassion, but this
was some other science, held in the body –
something cried out, then cried out louder still. And so,

I got on my knees. I crawled the length of the apartment's dirty floor
to her, some hundred feet,
cheek-to-ground like a jungle soldier, body full and heavy with just
two words: *I'm* *sorry.*

It took, by my count, twenty minutes to arrive at that dog's side,
eyes averted. But when I reached her, she was still and did not quake
or tremble. Then slowly, so slowly,
I crawled back and stood and washed my hands and started cutting
carrots for dinner.

Reader, I will tell you now what happened next:
As we ate, a presence came into the room to join us. A sound, then
a face, a body. And then she—
before us like a freed god—

luminous, muscled,

demanding to be fed.

.....
Diana Barnes-Brown
.....

EXPLAINING HEART FAILURE TO A PARAMEDIC

Do you feel like killing yourself? the man on the other end of the receiver asks. You tell him, I feel like I am already dead. When he makes no response you add, I am in death's position. He finally says, Don't believe what you are thinking and feeling. Then he asks, Where do you live?
—Claudia Rankine

.....

I.

On my birthday, just past midnight in Portland,
you finally get it out of me.
The story of how I nearly died, almost
became a person who is dead.

The bar buzzes louder; again my heart stutters and chokes.
You say you want to be the last face I see if it happens again, if it
happens for real.
I think this must be what people feel when they talk about feeling safe.

Or *I feel safe* is a feeling people have, which is like this.
I'm not good at a lot of things. I'm—
not good. Instead of safe,

I want to say: *the night*
you closed your fingers round my throat
because I gave myself over and let you.

Or the moment after,
when I saw the coldness
in that face I love

with such exquisite tenderness,
but also want to break
with a hammer. So—

so. Clipped words for all that meaning.
In case of pain or labored breathing,
call 911.

Call 911 if a feeling of pressure occurs,
then persists.
For me, it works like this: I can't feel my heart
until I feel it. Then it's the only thing there is.

2.

I can't tell any longer what's completed or how much time has passed.
I sometimes think that you, who say so much with silence and control,
are slipping deftly from my dreams. But then at night, legs too hot and
weighted to sleep, I find I am unable to stop picturing you doing things
that people do: tearing into an orange, talking to the neighbor's kid,
rinsing soap from a cup, salting a wound, replacing the button I tore
from your shirt, crying out.

3.

A lifetime ago we labored,
drunk, flesh engines whirring,
already having become
the warm and perilous mammals
we wake up inside of daily,

until I gave way
and you split me open like a halved peach
and I had a home.

4.

This is the realm of the un-healable.

When I see the lights, I pull to the side of the road
like the good woman I was taught to be, who is unrecognizable,
and wonder if it's you
careening past the long row of cars,

obstinate as a split zipper,
to do for someone else what you would not for me.

Who do you will to life?

What wonders are you sitting on, over there?

If I called,

would you come

now?

5.

[In the coda,

it's me saving you.

Don't pack your car.

Leave the rope in the shed.

Don't take the gun.

I see you.

I see you.

Don't kill yourself in May.

When you reach Baker City,

turn around.]

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PERFECT TEETH

.....

*

No. As in: you are lying. As in: it is the things of this world
that call us to love, in the end, the water rising all around.
In that book of yours, that other life, you took it far enough
to put a number on it, you took out the wristwatch and the heart,
ticking. And the heart, all enveloped. And the pulleys, their radial cables.
And the circle, all sinkholed, holding the cry.

*

I tend to want to see you as the president of some great doomed state.
I have been trying to construct a working model of you with small objects.
I used to characterize what I saw as our shared brilliance in watts, decibels—

*

In the dream I have over and over,
they're asking me
to list the planets,
and every time I get to Earth
I keep fucking it up,
calling it "the world."

*

I used to imagine myself a great champion of entrances making them
as others

could not did not I have had to reconcile my pictures of that thing
from the dream-life

with the memory of what did take place it is something else entirely

.....
Diana Barnes-Brown
.....

it is beautiful

I think that it is

I think

*

1994: I could not understand
how Stern's road burial was something

to be studied, the tires of the car
sending some crushed animal deeper into its asphalt grave.

The teacher's name – I
remember – was Hart and oh god

in those days how I wanted only
to be right.

I can't tell you
how sorry I am.

*

*In fifty years, you wrote, all of this will be under water.
I do not think, you wrote, that it can end.*

* * *

Well, I'm looking out now,
on the streets of the city. Stupefied brick,
which says to me nothing.

Well, I'm breathing, now. I'm letting the air
back in—

Then: birdsong:

I'm one. And then I'm none.

*

The experts have told me 1,000 ways to have perfect teeth,
but not how to construct a house
strong enough to keep our children.

*

Or: ourselves.

I have listened for brass marching bands,
tender notes in the sockets of my teeth.

I have gone up on the slanted roof,
and looked out at the road, and tried to stand.

I have climbed the notched tree from the water, and started.
And stared.

I have been blind, and held superstition in me
like a checkered floor in a burnt house.

*

That I might say, none is
fallen.

*

Say here is something worth saving:

*

This,
my sweetness.

EDGES OF WAR, 2017

.....

I am twelve. Mother never mentioned
the glass among the stones,
that feet actually bleed.
We are walking because the men came,
demanded food, a place to raise
their flag. While the sun tilts
the poplars, we pause
as she secures a jar
of strawberry jam. Her bag
is heavy with all they allowed us:
this jam, two blankets, a prayer book
in a language I don't know.
My brother has gone ahead—
he says there's a cave, scattered limbs
for a fire, a mockingbird's nest
if we need music. They broke his guitar
when first they came, weeks ago,
looking for a place to sleep.
They broke it and took my father
to the hill. All of us had to leave
without our shoes except Rana;
they made her stay to cook rice.
They said she was old enough
to be a mother, to cover her face
and never laugh again. If I never see her
again, I hope she writes a letter
and sends it on a dove's wings
quietly, so they can't comprehend.

..... Carl Boon

SÜLEYMANIYE

.....

In the Al Qebze restaurant
they move toward politics,
what might have been if
the figs that August
had grown larger, if
the dust had subsided
earlier. The children
splatter themselves
with cherry juice, singing
what the man in the courtyard
sings—of mountains
and love, spring snow.
The children don't know
admonitions and swords,
why Nazdar went away
with a book and a shovel,
a blanket that barely
covered her shoulders.

..... Carl Boon

THE DIYALA RIVER

.....

Where the Diyala River crested
near her grandfather's wall
when she was a girl,
another retrieves stones
and paints upon them words
of a child's world: rainbow, face, star.
Far away, the older can't look back
and see what remains,
what the twenty tragedies
left still and silent.

In the province school
a closet raped by gunblast
has gone unhinged, but chalk pebbles
stay—orange and blue—
like afterdeaths. Newsprint
tumbles if there's wind,
for vandals have taken the glass
for mirrors, the doors to make fires
to roast their bread.

The younger doesn't paint
the words on the news: regret,
succumb, dereliction.
She goes to the water
when the adults begin to speak,
for hers is the deeper language
of zebras and angels,
the labels of her mother's perfume.
The older waits, remembering
the memories of those still older:

missiles misfired in 1982,
hit squads carrying smoke,
soldiers stealing fruit
to boil liquor. Someone destroyed
the north gate of the mosque
at Boskani. Someone defaced

.....
Carl Boon
.....

the bakery where mothers wept.
A girl paints words
by the river, remembering nothing.

..... **THE DIYALA RIVER**

AFTER NAHİT ULVİ AKGÜN

.....

This air between us
now
resists
the apricot's
darkening,
resists words—
what we said
before there was
us or
anything to say.

..... **Carl Boon**

Even you, my love,
grow silent,
holding instead
dried apricots,
your air
which is not
your air,
but ours. Not
summer,

but a season
between songs.
In the cold
I listen for spring,
believing this
dilemma,
this one poem
could change
two worlds.

THE TWO FACES OF AN OLD GHOST

.....

The morning will bring sunshine again, to his eyes, telling
Just like the babble of a child lost in a forest of uneven games-
His phantom desires buried in the dance of yet another sleep.
And when passion goes out through old windows,
and he becomes one more time shy, like a moon hiding
behind the curtained lace of another sky,

then would these thoughts flood like monsters in the night-
and old beddings become both the sheath and the warmth
upon which the fight between living and almost living falls.

..... **Omoefe Grant-Oyeye**

MOTHER

dedicated to Kiarang Alaei

.....

My childhood, Born in a bath of blood;
Without Mother's caressing hands.
She was gone with deep wounds,
Before giving birth to me.
Never did I know her.
I wrote poems for all the photos,
The ones my camera had taken;
Wishing the lady veiled in Chador,
Standing at the bath entrance.
Be my Mother.
Because, she's the lady whose hair I never saw,
Sailing in the wind.

..... **Hamed Hasany Asiabdareh**



..... MOTHER

photo: Seyyed Sadegh Ashrafzadeh

NEED TO KNOW

.....

That was the year I worked in a mental hospital, but not as a doctor or nurse or orderly. Instead, I was a technical writer, working on a secret military project. This sounds melodramatic but it's true. The project was so secret that I am sworn to reveal nothing about it until I die, or until, I suppose, I am curious enough to find out if it's no longer secret anymore.

I was on the web recently and looked up some of my colleagues from those days; their resumes say things that seem far too revealing to me like "missile systems" and "air defense." One even mentioned a specific missile he helped design. That page has been on the internet for years and as far as I know he hasn't been arrested or been made to disappear. Maybe I shouldn't fret about it so much.

I was working in a defense think tank and I could not have been more of a fish out of water. I had a Ph.D. in philosophy and didn't know the first thing about war or missiles or even planes. I had only flown twice—once to see my grandmother in Florida and once to give a paper on counterfactuals at a meeting in Buffalo. But it was 1982, there were no jobs, and I was married and very broke. I convinced myself that working in a think tank wasn't the worst thing for a young philosopher.

I was put to work writing a series of doomsday scenarios. It was still the Cold War and Yuri Andropov had just taken over the Soviet Union. Apparently no one felt good about him. Leonid Brezhnev was a stern and scary man but Andropov was worse—he had run the KGB, had crushed the Hungarian uprising, and helped crush the Prague Spring. We had one ex-pat Russian in the office, a gloomy mathematician named Sergei, and he told us Andropov was the worst of all the choices. "No one knows what is in that man's heart."

The analysts helped me write the scenarios. Most of them involved surprise attacks, where the Soviets would catch us flat-footed, with too many of our bombers on the ground and too many of our missile silos under maintenance. These were not happy stories and they started to invade my sleep. In my dreams the air was filled with missiles and I would wake up thirsty and alert. I would step to my windows and scan the night sky. My wife would take off her pajama top and try to talk me back into bed, but I would shake my head and pace the floor. "How can you think of sex at a time like this?"

One November morning I opened the *New York Times* to discover an article about my company. "These scientists and analysts are paid to worry," Fox Butterfield wrote, "and they are very good at it." The

article didn't mention me or my doomsday scenarios. I got past my disappointment by deciding that the scenarios were just too important to mention, especially to the *Times*.

The next morning a group of us was summoned to a meeting room. Sergei was sure the *Times* story had been the result of a leak and that we were all about to be fired or worse. Instead, we were told that we were going to be working on a special project. A short, blocky, crewcut man we had never seen before ran the meeting. "You will be sequestered for the life of the project," he said. He then took a minute to make eye contact with each of us and stopped when he came to me. "You are the only people with a need to know." He then sent us home and said to report the next day to our new offices—at a nearby, and recently closed, state mental hospital.

Sergei and I stood in the hospital parking lot the next morning.

"Your sanitariums are nicer here." He was taking his time finishing his cigarette. "If they lock us up, we will be comfortable at least."

He was right. It didn't look like a hospital from the outside. The buildings were brick and covered with ivy. The main building had a high portico. I was half expecting a bell to ring and kids in matching blue blazers to pour out the door. I was feeling better until I noticed the columns were mismatched. Six of them were Corinthian but two were Doric and looked recently replaced. I was going to point it out to Sergei but I didn't want to darken his mood any more than it already was.

The crewcut man led us down long corridors of rooms closed off with rusting metal doors until we finally got to our own ward. There were going to be nineteen of us. My office was a cell, still padded, behind one of those rusted metal doors. I had a folding table and a folding chair. Someone had placed three pens, a stapler, and a scotch tape dispenser on the corner of my table. The pens were new.

Sergei stopped in to tell me a handyman was installing new locks on each of the cells. "See. They will keep us if they need to." He had a cigarette dangling from his lips. "They haven't told me where I can smoke yet. This is not good."

We read and wrote all day. Of course, I can't tell you what it was all about, but it was about the Russians of course and the new ways they had to wipe us all out. My doomsday scenarios seemed quaint suddenly. At the end of each day, a military police officer would watch

us as we collected our papers and walked them to a small room full of safes. The PO would turn his back while I opened my safe but then turn back around to watch me close it. He would then double check that it was indeed locked, search my briefcase, and send me on my way.

By the spring the weirdness of it all had worn off. We took coffee breaks. We ate lunch in a small common room the POs had cleared of old furniture. When it got warm enough, we found some picnic tables to sit at. Someone would make a pizza run. I was divorcing by then—my wife had tired of my sleepless, apocalypse-plagued nights and had moved back to New Jersey to her mother.

I had taken up with a physicist on the project. Maria was from Italy. She was tiny and beautiful and would check my math sometimes or point out an error. "The temperature at the epicenter would be closer to 300,000 degrees Celsius, not 400,000," she told me one day. Then another time she said, "No. Chicago would be obliterated after Omaha and not before." She knew me by then. I think she hoped these things would be comforting.

That was right around the time Samantha Smith wrote to Yuri Andropov and Yuri Andropov wrote back. Smith was the telegenic child who wrote to Andropov asking him to help the world avoid a nuclear war. I was touched by the whole thing. To my thinking, she was adorable and she was speaking for millions of Americans, including me. Sergei, though, smelled a rat.

"Don't think for a minute that Andropov didn't set the whole thing in motion," he told me in the cigarette room. I had taken to following him there during breaks even though I didn't smoke. "It's a classic KGB misdirection. Look at how adorable she is. She makes Andropov look almost human."

Maria and I started to have lunch on our own. We had found a small pond inhabited by a family of Canadian Geese. We would sit in the grass and eat, then hold hands and watch the geese. It wasn't much of a show, but she had tiny, warm hands. I could have stayed there forever but I was smart enough to not tell her such a thing.

One day in July we were told to put everything away and not work but to still show up every day. There was a leak and the FBI was involved. No one said this of course, but somehow we knew. The POs, who had become friendly since the winter, stopped talking to us, and the crewcut man disappeared into his cell for hours. They installed a phone for him, running wires down the ceiling of the long corridors. With the metal door closed, we couldn't hear what he was saying.

Maria and I stretched our lunches to two hours, then three. The goslings were growing. When we got tired of watching them, we would

lie back and nap, Maria resting her head on my chest.

I wasn't worried about the FBI. Even if I had been inclined to leak anything, I really didn't know what I was talking about. The analysts did. Maria did but she seemed even less worried than I was. She started bringing salads and pastries for our lunches. "What are they going to do? Send me back to Italy?"

Samantha Smith traveled to Russia. It was all over the news. I watched Maria's TV one night. They said she might even meet Andropov, but for now she was visiting a youth camp in the Crimea. All the girls were in matching blue skirts, white shirts, and ties. All the Soviet girls were in red ties, of course, but Samantha's was blue. She would have stood out anyway. Her teeth were perfect.

"It's like the girl scouts, but for communists," Sergei told us the next day in the break room. "Andropov wants everyone to think they are just like us. More misdirection. Don't be surprised if they stage some kind of emergency and the good people of Russia have to save her."

Maria stifled a laugh. "This would be a terrible time for the war to start. She's only miles from Sebastopol and the Black Sea Fleet. You know that's an early target."

Later I looked at a map. The camp was sixty-three miles from Sebastopol. Maria humored me over lunch when I asked her how hot it would be near the camp. "Sixty-three miles? That's just about one hundred kilometers." She stared at the sky, nodding her head as if she were counting. "Hot enough for that uniform of hers to catch on fire."

One day Maria pointed at the pond and said one of the goslings was missing. "There were six," she said. "Now there are five." I didn't doubt her, but I counted them anyway. The goslings trailed one adult around the pond, the other adult following behind.

By the end of that week they were down to four and when we returned on Monday there were only two.

"Maybe they are learning to fly and leaving." I blushed hearing my voice start to crack.

"No. No. Look at how fuzzy they are. They don't have their flight feathers yet." She was biting into a sweet cookie that she had baked that weekend after we finally had sex. "Snapping turtles. I did some reading." She fed the rest of the cookie to me, then added, "These geese picked the wrong pond."

A few days later we were back to work. If the FBI had been there, no one had seen them. The POs started talking to us again, and Sergei said he had even seen the crewcut man smile. We spent a few

days catching up. Ironically, I was assigned to write about how flocks of geese can interfere with radar detection. They migrate at high altitudes—a kilometer in the air and higher—and can get caught in strong prevailing winds.

“They can light up a radar screen,” Sergei told me in the smoking room. “You don’t want a nervous airman thinking that he is looking at a Tupolev heading for Detroit.”

I wrote some words of caution: don’t launch a counterstrike based on a flock of geese. I wasn’t an expert, but that seemed like good advice.

By the time Maria and I made it out for lunch again all the goslings were gone. The mother and father goose were walking the grounds of the hospital honking. It all seemed impossibly sad. “They mate for life, you know,” Maria told me as we watched them march between two buildings. I wondered if they would ever get over the loss or if their new goslings the next summer would help them forget the whole thing. I hoped they picked another pond.

We wrapped up the work just before Thanksgiving and went back to our normal offices. I had forgotten how nice mine was. It was three floors up in a new building and overlooked an atrium that was lush enough to have birds. I really wanted to talk to people about the goslings but I knew I shouldn’t. Need to know and all that.

I found out Maria loved Christmas more than anything. I sat in her apartment watching television while she baked. Samantha Smith was back in the news. She had turned eleven and was visiting Japan. Maria came out with cannoli and sat and watched with me. Samantha and her parents were standing with the Japanese prime minister. Her father looked freakishly tall.

“He’s enjoying it too much,” Maria said.

We went to bed and made love. Maria fell asleep with a smile on her face.

I was exhausted, but couldn’t sleep, so I put on my coat and boots and stepped outside. It was snowing and perfectly quiet. I closed my eyes, breathed deep. Then, somewhere in the sky above me I heard them honking. There had to be dozens of them, maybe more. The honking grew louder, reached a crescendo above me, and faded away. They were heading south. I pictured their big wings pumping, their chests gathering air, their deep bellowing honks announcing themselves to anyone who cared to listen.

HIDING DERE IN DA OCEAN GRASS

.....

Da swimming cow
wen finish chewing her cud

and crazy sounds
wuz beginning to blare out of her ears

like wun strange alien jazz.

She looked to da horizon
as if she wuz looking foa answers

and saw wun big white whale

spouting wun response
in da shape of wun question mark.

Harpoons began rising from da depths
and shot into da sky

poking big kine holes
into da wings of jet fighters

dat wen go crashing one by one
into da seaside mountains.

Nearby all da bright red dolphins
starting jumping ovah da moon

as Captain Ahab
wuz sucking on wun large medicine spoon

cause wun huge tail flipper
wen whack him on da head.

..... **Joe Balaz**

Delirium wen swirl him
into wun iridescent whirlpool

twirling wit wun chorus of mad starfish
and angry sardines

dat screamed like sirens
all da way down

until da fever wen break
wen dey wen hit rock bottom.

Tossing in her bed in wun sweat

Janet nevah know
it could turn out dis way.

She taught she had wun bad flu

wen she wuz dealing
wit all of dose hallucinations.

Now she knows
it's not like da old days

wen Grandpa Toshi wen pick da stuff
fresh from da reef

and bring it home
to share wit da extended family.

So much foa da processed ogo

nicely packaged
dat she wen buy from da store.

Tainted on da production line
da plastic bag held wun unhealthy surprise

cause it wuz full of salmonella
hiding dere in da ocean grass.

..... **HIDING DERE IN DA OCEAN GRASS**

LIKE WUN GHOSTLY WHITE ON RICE

.....

Roll da dice
and da dots going settle

like wun ghostly white on rice.

Hard to win
wit longshot odds

while da gaming table is shrinking.

Prices are rising
up, up, up, up, up!

sounding like da anguished lyrics

of wun 70s rock song
about New York City

as you get crushed undah
wun big rolling stone

dat shatters hopeful expectations

wit all da pieces
scattered on da ground.

Only get so much land

and da well-to-do
wit da pretty penny

is scoping up da acreage
and all da available lots.

Everybody else

.....
Joe Balaz
.....

gaddah scrimp and save

to even have wun outside chance
foa gamble.

Da house is rigged
and da elevated wager

wuz already set long time ago.

Da rich and elite

continue to apply da squeeze
to da trappings of paradise

and all da people on da bottom
are getting smashed by da heavy weight.

Power is da star of da hour
and da clock is ticking to midnight.

In da dark

da average guy
not going even see da dice anymoa

as da unlucky cubes fade into oblivion

disappearing from view
like wun ghostly white on rice.

CECILIA GOES TO MARYKNOLL

.....

Cecilia goes to Maryknoll.

Her dream is to get into wun good college
and eventually become wun English professor.

Looks like she's on her way
cause she's racking up straight A's.

Having grown up local dough
she knows dat da King's language

is not always as pure
as the text in her study books.

Dat wen really help
in da emergency dat wen happen
wen she wuz walking home from school.

She found wun old man
gasping foa breath
and lying down on da sidewalk
wit nobody else around.

Before he wen pass out
he wen manage to say to Cecilia—

"I stay mauka
around da cornah
in da pink house wit da ulu tree."

Right aftah dat

.....
Joe Balaz
.....

wun nearby motorist
saw wat wuz happening
and called foa help on his cellphone.

Wen da cops arrived
Cecilia wuz able to tell dem
wheah da old man lived.

His relatives
made it to da hospital right away
and relayed to da doctors
wat kine medications
da old man wuz taking
foa his heart condition.

Da timely information
played wun big part
in his eventual recovery.

Good ting Cecilia
is just as proficient in Pidgin
as she is
in da maddah tongue of Shakespeare
cause wen communication
wuz necessary
both languages could tell you
wat you really needed to know.

CHILD

Two Step, Honaunau Bay, HI

.....

A baby eel the high tide carries in
slithers in a lava crevice, lifeline
tenuous. The snowflake moray glistens
in tablespoons of sea, sinuous
body bound, mouth agape—small hiss, rictus
of fear. The puddle holds no prey
for it to crush and eat, no space to sway.
A child asks *But where's its mommy?*

Someone slides a twig under the moray's
dorsal fin. For a while we were lured
from our own pools by this rhythm
of truth, so fundamental, so clear—
tide pulling with its full moon breath
water laughing with an open mouth

..... Edythe Haendel Schwartz

DANCE STORY

.....

These were the first pictures ever taken,
blue and grainy, full of the stripes that turn liquid to air.

The girls turned about each other, arms
too short, then too long for their bodies. One twin
with her legs piked up, the other already
turned down, waiting for the way out.

Oolie tells a story
about the older twin, the one that sends
the other one out first—to see, to make sure.

Oolie is half bear, half crow. His arms
shine with feather, shoulders camber with muscle.

When Oolie dances late at night,
when Coyote and Mother build a fire and cook a thick stew,
the babies turn over and over
inside Mother, carving their birth names in her belly.

.....
Abby Chew
.....

RHONA'S SEA STORY

.....

shine of fur in black-dawn waves
pelican waiting on a rock with fish tail just peaking from its beak
surfing a wave that turned her upside down but left her on the sand—
nose facing
wide open water
all points to east and all points to west
dance with River Otter in a stand of Yaupon holly
 waxed over leaves and red berries all clustered in her hair
twinge of alone
sheen of glowing across her belly and rocks and her paws and sand
 fighting off the foxfire-memory in the woods by the limestone cave
 fighting off Coyote when he came home
 and wanted the truth about the other sister
 and the night in the woods that made the glow
 nestled in her scruff
canoe slice V dash with face in the spray
spine against sand
hands weaving through waves
nose pointed toward Full Buck Moon
 moon shining everything again
 and everyone and no one knowing where the others were
 but still the water in her hands

..... Abby Chew

||

.....

fingertips on this fire

DEGREE COFFEE

.....

There is something innocuous and routine about the sound of a ringing doorbell, but when I opened the door, the sight that met my eyes was anything but. Ed stood there, arms akimbo, one ankle crossed over the other. His grin turned extra wide and he whistled the opening notes of “Oh Susanna.”

“*Oh, I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee,*” Ed sang now, slightly off-key. “*And I’ve come to Chennai City my Neddie for to see.* Aren’t you going to say hello, Ned?”

I should have, but my vocal cords failed. That was the effect Ed had on me, showing up from a time I tried hard not to think about. He had the laconic look in his eye I knew so well. When it was clear that a reply wasn’t forthcoming, he said, “Well, close your mouth then or a fly will buzz in.”

“Chezhiyan, who is it?” my dad called out from within the apartment. “Who’s singing?”

But roots had sprouted from my ankle and dug deep through the floor. I did not utter a sound; I still couldn’t. I continued to gape at Ed, at his blond hair brushed forward in a casual, windswept style, at his shirt, the top buttons open, the hair on his chest peeping out. I was shirtless, wearing only a *lungi* – it was a lazy Sunday morning after all – and was conscious of Ed’s eyes lingering over my torso, eying the small patch of hair at the center of my chest, the beads of sweat randomly dotting my very dark skin. Then, as though noticing the buzzing flies for the first time, I pressed my lips firmly together and waved a hand to shoo them away.

“Who is it, Chezhiyan?” My father’s voice bristled with impatience. “Hello, Ed. Come on in.” My vocal cords became operational again. Then I hissed at the bloody idiot, “What the fuck, Ed? Why didn’t you e-mail me you were coming?”

Ed grinned, thrust out a feint that I easily dodged, and then we were in the apartment, in a large room that doubled up as living and dining rooms. The remnants of breakfast were being cleared by my mother and wife. Ed was staring right at them, especially at Usha. How young she looked, as though she was still in her late teens. My father, a handsome elderly man, an older edition of myself, sat on the living room sofa reading a newspaper. My nephews, around eight to ten years old, were sprawled on the floor, their full attention on the display on a smartphone screen. They all looked up in surprise when I walked in with a white man.

..... Vishwas R. Gaitonde

"This is Andrew Woodbury, my roommate when I was a student at Tuscaloosa," I said. I could sense defensive overtones vibrating in my stiff voice. "I had no idea he was coming to India or how he found our place."

"Andrew? Come off it, Ned." Ed smiled easily at all of them, looking perfectly in place. "Andrew's my first name but after Ned became my best friend, I switched to my middle name, Edward, just so we could be Ed and Ned."

I saw a range of emotions on their faces from wonder to mistrust. They did not know how to react to the "best friend" bit. They knew Ed was my roommate when I was at university in Alabama but not much more. I had not told them that Ed was my best friend or even hinted about how close the two of us were. Then my dad hoisted himself up from the chair and reached out for Ed's hand.

"Chezhiyan – Nedunchezhiyan – spoke of you but I hadn't realized you two were such good friends, that you would call on him on your visit to Chennai," my dad said, and I could see he was warming up to Ed. "I'm Palani, Nedunchezhiyan's father, and this –" he indicated the ladies with his hand, "is Vasantha, my wife, and Usha, Nedunchezhiyan's wife."

"Thank you, sir, for the introductions," Ed said, as I slipped out and went to my bedroom. When I returned, I found Ed's eyes fixed on Usha, a long, frank and unashamed stare, taking in her childlike face with wide-set eyes, her delicately sculpted china-doll nose, her long neck, her trim waist, a picture of youthful innocence. I didn't like this at all: he was making comparisons. Then he smiled at her and stretched out his hand. She looked surprised, avoided his eye but shook his hand. I didn't like that either.

I now wore a short-sleeve shirt over my *lungi*. Ed stared at me in amazement and then openly smirked, and I felt so self-conscious. Dad also looked amused; he gave a half-guffaw and said, "What, Chezhiyan? Andrew – Ed – and you were roommates. Surely he's seen you without your shirt? He's not a lady – why are you so shy?"

I feared that even my very dark skin couldn't hide my blush. I blurted out, feeling a little too hot and a little too hurried, "Just a courtesy for a visitor, *Appa*. You should put on a shirt as well."

"Oh no, sir, you're fine," Ed cut in as Dad gave me a stern glance. "My fault, dropping in without letting you folks know I was coming, but Ned and I have been out of touch for a while. But I knew your Ritherdon Road address, took a chance, stopped by. Ned's often spoken about his family and it's absolutely great to see you all 'at home' on a Sunday morning."

"You must have breakfast, then," Dad said with a smile, waving Ed, who looked like he was going to protest, into silence as he propelled him to the dining table, seated him and walked away. We had finished

breakfast but Usha and my mother set a plate for him and served him warm *iddlies* with coconut chutney. I sat beside him and watched him eat, as did my nephews. They were fascinated by this American so comfortably breaking off bite-size pieces of *iddly* with his fingers, smearing the right amount of chutney on each and popping them into his mouth. I remembered the hours of struggle in Tuscaloosa as I taught him how to do this, the many crumbles of *iddly* and the sloppy blobs of chutney that disfigured our kitchen table before he finally got the hang of it.

"I'm Sridhar," the older of my nephews said, his admiring eyes following Ed's hand from plate to mouth. "This brat is my brother, Srihari." He gave Srihari a little prod as he spoke, getting shoved by his brother in return.

"You're Ned's nephews, aren't you?" Ed said, after swallowing a mouthful of *iddly*. "His sister's kids? Your house is on Lettang's Road, right?"

He had the satisfaction of seeing them freeze. Dad, who had returned to the dining table in a T-shirt, said, "I must say you know a lot about us. But we know so little about you. Nedunchezhiyan has hardly told us anything about you."

"Haven't you, Ned? Haven't you?" Ed asked me, as I sat stony faced, while everybody looked at me. How was I going to eject Ed out of the house? Never had a visitor been more unwelcome. Dad broke the uncomfortable silence by asking Ed what he thought of the *iddlies*.

"They're terrific," Ed declared. "Ned would make them in our apartment in Tuscaloosa. Rice cakes, he called them, but they were as hard as rocks. I had to turn my fingers into shovels to break through them. I used to eat them with jam before I got used to *sambar* and chutney. Now these *iddlies*, these are as soft as cakes."

"Chezhiyan didn't even know how to boil an egg when he left for the States," Dad remarked. "He's lucky, so lucky, to have Usha who makes the best *iddlies* in the world, who can make every meal a feast."

The shadow of a scowl moved across my face; Usha smiled as she attempted to spoon more *iddlies* onto Ed's plate despite his covering the plate with both hands and nodding a "No," his blond locks flopping on his forehead.

"Those were terrific, thank you, but I'm done. Really done."

"No, you're not," Dad said. "In Chennai, breakfast is only complete after coffee."

As though on cue, Usha walked in smiling, carrying two small steel tumblers of steaming, dark but milky coffee, each tumbler sitting in a steel saucer with raised edges, a little saucer-pot. She placed one before Ed and gave the other to her father-in-law.

"This is the first time you're drinking degree coffee, yes?" Dad asked Ed.

"I always drunk my coffee hot, sir," Ed responded. "I'm not a fan of iced coffee. But this coffee must be close to boiling point. Look at the steam."

"Oh, but I'm not talking about temperature." Dad flashed a broad smile. "We make a strong coffee decoction pouring hot water over ground coffee beans, it goes through a metal filter, it's stronger than your Espresso. Then we boil the decoction with milk. Now in the old days, the less affluent families would decoct the used coffee grounds a second time, maybe even a third. So hotels would advertise their coffee as 'First Degree Coffee' to ensure their customers that their coffee was always made from a fresh decoction. In time, that became 'Degree Coffee.' Today it just refers to good, strong South Indian coffee."

"Fascinating. Especially the English usage," Ed said, watching Dad grasp the steel tumbler carefully with his thumb and forefinger spread around the rim and pour the coffee in a thin stream into the saucer-pot, then pour it back into the glass.

"This is the way to cool the coffee," he told Ed. "Pour it from the tumbler into the *dabara*, and back into the tumbler, over and over. The churning also brings out the best flavors. Without it the coffee doesn't taste the same, count on it."

"This is delicious," said Ed, braving to take a sip when the coffee appeared to have cooled sufficiently and the risk of scalding the tongue had reduced. "I grew up drinking my coffee black, till I met Ned and learnt to enjoy it with milk and sugar. But it was still drip coffee from a cheap coffee maker, made with water, the milk added later."

After they had a few sips in silence, Ed burst out, "You know, sir, Ned and I together make a good degree coffee." There was a twinkle in his eye as he pulled my wrist and placed my forearm over his own. "See? Coffee and milk."

The contrast between the burnt mahogany and the pale pink skins couldn't have been greater and everybody but me rocked with laughter. The hairs on my forearm stiffened, and I angrily jerked my hand off his.

"Oh, *kanna*, he's only teasing you," said Usha, who had laughed the loudest. But when she caught my look, she toned down her merriment immediately.

"Ed and Ned! Ned and Ed!" Srihari hooted, then asked his grandfather, "'Ned' sounds so nice. Can we call him Ned Uncle?"

"Hey, mind it, you brats!" I shouted before Dad could get a word in. "You are not to call me that. Do you hear me? I'm Chezhiyan Uncle to you. Always."

Srihari and Sridhar spoke to each other through their eyes, linked their hands, and marched around the dining table chanting "Ed and Ned! Ned and Ed!" over and over in perfect unison.

“Stop that right now! You are not Ed and Ned, you are Sri and Sri! Just be yourselves!” I shouted after Sridhar and Srihari as they marched into the living room, still chanting “Ed and Ned!” Ed placed a placating hand on my shoulder, which I shook off immediately. I was shaking. I sensed an unseen threat to the life that I had so carefully constructed.

“You have turned our dull Sunday into an interesting Sunday, Ed,” Dad said, as they followed the boys into the living room.

“You could do with some marching music,” Ed told the boys as he spotted an old gramophone player on a stool in a corner. “Now if only that antique worked.”

“That antique, as you call it and which I suppose it is, does work,” Dad said. “I held on to it when all my friends switched to cassette players, and guess what, they had to ditch their cassette players in a few years and fork out more money to buy CD players. And all the while I kept playing my gramophone. Very sturdy, it is, never broken down. They knew how to build machines those days.”

“But they stopped making vinyl records in the last century, sir.”

“*Last century?* Aah, I see, we are in the 21st now. I’m quite content with my collection. Old is gold, as they say. We have a CD player in our bedroom, we do keep up. Usha, some marching music, please.”

Usha dutifully opened a cabinet and rummaged through the records. “She’s the only one who handles my records other than me,” Dad said. “Usha is a gem. She won’t get even one little scratch on any record. As you know, they’re irreplaceable.”

Usha called out that she couldn’t find any marches.

“We have some. Colonel Bogey, Sousa. Oh, never mind. Play Jim, then,” Dad replied, then turned to Ed. “My absolutely all-time favorite singer. From your country.”

In a couple of minutes, the satin voice of Jim Reeves filled the room.

*Adios amigo, adios my friend,
The road we have travelled has come to an end;
When two love the same love, one love has to lose,
But it's you she longs for, it's you she will choose.*

They listened to the song in silence. Ed looked at my Dad’s face, seeing the deep sense of worship there, and knew that any talk before the song ended was out of the question. Usha eyed me questioningly. Was it a casual look or something more? I did not know. I wasn’t even sure if I wanted to know. So I hastily averted my gaze to the floor and hoped my face did not reflect how downcast I felt. I did not look up even when Srihari stood in front of me, wagging his hands before my face.

“Nobody listens to Jim Reeves in your country these days, do they?” Dad asked Ed, who replied, “No, can’t say they do. In fact, I personally don’t know even one person who does.”

“Pity, pity. Sometimes we don’t recognize something that’s staring us right in the face. Like the greatness of Jim Reeves. When Buddy Holly died in an airplane crash, all of America mourned him and they called that day the day the music died. But see, Jim Reeves also died in a plane crash. That was the day the music really died. Nobody recognized it. Nobody acknowledges it.”

“You really know the music scene of my country,” said Ed. “Don’t know why that surprises me. You’re Ned’s dad, it’s only to be expected. Now, sir, if y’all will excuse me, I’d like some time with Ned. I’ve come a long way to see him.”

“Of course. Sure.” Then Dad called out to me, “Chezhiyan, why don’t you take your friend to your room and you two can catch up? The terrace would have been nice, but it’s too hot now.”

I forced my eyes off the floor and walked with tired steps to my bedroom, beckoning Ed to follow. I latched the door and faced Ed with accusing eyes.

“Why the fuck didn’t you give me some kind of hint that you were going to land up here, Ed? Do you have any idea, *any* idea, of the havoc you’ve caused?”

“Look who’s talking. Bud, did you give me any kind of notice you were getting hitched? No – and you didn’t invite me to your wedding either. Do you know the havoc you’ve caused in my life? How I was on the verge of suicide – and all because of you?”

When I did not respond, Ed continued, “As for the havoc, the so-called havoc of today, it was your sissy behavior that drew all the attention. That big show of putting on your shirt. Fuck you, Neddie, how many times have I seen you with no clothes on?”

“Nothing to do with you. If there’s a visitor – any visitor – it’s customary in our culture to put on a shirt if you’re shirtless. It’s called courtesy. You know what the word means, I hope.”

“Why, thank you, Neddie, for the culture lesson. You can take it off now. Or do you want me to do it for you, for old times’ sake?” His hand moved between my shoulder blades, down my spine, to the place where my *lungi* encircled my waist. I backed off two steps.

“Old times? They’re not old, they’re over. I went through a phase with you. Fond memories, no regrets, but all of it is behind me now.”

“Don’t bullshit me, Neddie. And don’t bullshit yourself. It ain’t over. I saw that in your eyes the moment you opened the door and saw me.”

“Wrong. You were wrong. The same way you read me wrong when you tried to talk me into – twisting my arm – to move to Boston

with you so we could be married. Didn't happen, did it?"

"No, 'cause you were too chicken. Said you wanted to go to Pullman to do your Ph.D. As though Boston had no colleges. That's all Boston has, colleges, one on every street corner. But you returned to Chennai, never went to Pullman. Lied to me, didn't you?"

"Ed, we've had this damn discussion many times. In India, every guy is expected to marry and raise a family. It's the culture, it's embedded in our DNA—"

"Bullshitting again, eh, Neddie? You *know* what's coded in your DNA. Exactly the same as what's in my DNA too. And we lived together. We could have had a fucking wonderful life as a couple. You know what, we can still do it. America's changed like you wouldn't believe it, Ned. Then, it was only Massachusetts. Now it's Iowa, Vermont, Connecticut, California, New York.... It's just a matter of time when it'll be legal everywhere. So come back, let's make a new start."

My Adam's apple bobbed up and down as I stared at Ed. A new world was opening up, had opened up, but far too late. When I was in school and I told my parents about how I'd demonstrated a new experiment I'd devised at a science fair, or gone on a school field trip accompanied by a historian to Kanchipuram, the capital city of the ancient Pallava kingdom, my parents would wistfully remark that I had a world of opportunities that didn't exist for them.

My thoughts must have shown in my expression, for Ed was looking at me curiously. I gathered myself and spoke slowly but with a forceful emphasis on each sentence, "It's too late. You're crazy to even suggest such a thing. I'm married. You've met my wife."

"Heard of separation, Bud? Or divorce?"

"Keep your voice down, will you? No way, Ed. I'm not leaving Usha. And don't pretend you know everything about my sex life. Because you don't."

"Now listen up, Bud, and listen carefully because I'm only going to say this once. *I'm* your first degree coffee. Always was, always will be. Does Usha know she's just second degree coffee to you? Or probably just third degree, if I know you. And I do know you, Neddie. You don't drink your second degree coffee in this bedroom, do you?"

What was the best response to this cowboy's blazing guns? Every sentence hurt.

"All right, Neddie. I read the answer on your face. Who's your boyfriend?"

"Nobody." I looked away. "That is, there's no single person. There are a few – that I go to."

"Taking risks, huh? You told me how gay was criminal in India. That's not changed, right?"

"No, it hasn't. It's all underground. But there are ways to safeguard yourself. I almost got caught once, though. Not by the cops but by my family. In some ways, that would have been worse."

"How – what do you mean?"

"I brought him home. Here, to this room. The family were going to be out all evening. But hell, they came back unexpectedly early."

"Jesus. How did you explain him?"

"We were at it when I heard them come back. Scrambled out of bed, locked the bedroom door, shouting that I had an old college friend who I'd not seen in ages. Then we got right back to it."

"Sweet Jesus. No way."

"We were aroused, hot, couldn't stop suddenly like that. I put on a noisy Tamil song on the CD player, jacked up the volume to hide any sounds we made. Anyway, these walls are brick, not wood or sheetrock."

"So how long will you carry on like this, Neddie? All your life? Scared of the cops, scared shit of your family. Forcing yourself into a life not coded in your DNA. For all your secretiveness, your false heartiness, how long will you fool yourself into thinking you'll keep everybody fooled?"

"I told you – it's too late now."

"It's never too late. Look, come with me. We can settle in San Francisco. Or Seattle. Heck, you pick the fucking city, just come. And I'm American. If we're married legally, you'll get citizenship too."

"It's too late, Ed." I felt the color draining out of my face, the energy leaving my voice. "I took a decision. Now I must stick with the life it's led to. I can't leave now. I'm going to be a dad in a few months."

"Usha's pregnant? I think not. Jesus, any girl would cry her heart out for such a slim figure. You're just saying that to dodge the idea of returning to the States, aren't you? Like you pulled that Pullman stunt. Always the bullshitter, aren't you, Ned? A sweet guy, but a bullshitter."

"We just found out. It's less than three months. Want me to show you her pregnancy report? I can. But I won't. Believe what you want to believe, Ed."

We glared at each other, the only sound in the room the ticking of a clock. Ed started to unbutton my shirt.

"What are you doing?" I asked, without making a move to stop him.

"I didn't travel halfway round the world just to have an argument with my Neddie." His voice suddenly turned several shades tender. "I've waited years for this. You invented a college friend once. I am your college friend. So just play some loud music again."

I had made up my mind to have nothing more to do with Ed, but when I really make up my mind, quite against my will I most often end up doing just the opposite. I was propelled, with no power to resist.

“*Naaka mukka, naaka mukka, naaka mukka.*” The song, loud and bawdy, belted itself out at full volume from the compact disc player as our bodies slid one against the other. “*Naaka mukka, naaka mukka, naaka mukka.*”

When we joined the others in the living room, Dad looked half perplexed, half annoyed.

“What were you doing, Chezhiyan? Your hair – it’s like a crow’s nest. You were deafening your guest with that vulgar song. It was loud enough out here. I had to turn off Jim.”

“That’s quite all right, sir,” Ed, seeing the defensive look on my face, cut in before I could respond. “I guess it was a little loud, but I’m kinda used to that. Ned and I would play Tamil songs all the time in our apartment. I know your movie heroes, MGR, Kamalahasan, Rojani...”

“Rajini,” said Srihari with a high-pitched giggle, making everybody smile. Dad, who had looked ready to continue berating me, also relaxed. Usha was the only one who did not smile. She showed an extraordinary interest in the gramophone player, ignoring us and the conversation.

“Where are you staying, Ed?” Dad asked.

“At the Abu Palace Hotel, sir.”

“Oh, close by! In that case, why don’t you stay for lunch?”

“I’d love to, sir.”

“I have a better plan, *Appa*,” I told my dad. I had to get Ed out at all costs. “Lunch won’t be ready any time soon – and it’s almost lunch time. I’ll take him out to lunch and he can come for dinner tomorrow.”

“Sounds good to me, but you better check with the ladies,” Dad replied.

My mother was not in the room. I crooked my eyebrow at Usha.

“Fantastic idea.” Usha’s voice was a little too chipper, her eyes a little too bright but not looking my way. “It gives me time to think up of some nice dishes. Maybe *biriyani*, with Chicken 65, and the special Ladies Fingers *poriyal*.”

“Okay, then.” I tried my best to catch her eye but I couldn’t. For a moment, I felt the urge to approach her, pull her aside, hold her, say something. But the impulse passed, and I left with Ed on my motorbike to a restaurant in Egmore, relishing how Ed sat so close behind me, edging forward, clinging tight. I breathed heavily even as I resisted the temptation to speed and swerve on the roads to get Ed to tighten his grip.

After lunch, we went to Ed’s room at the Abu Palace Hotel, and once again slipped under the covers. In my bedroom I had been restrained, conscious of crumpling the bed linen, and that we had to rejoin the rest of the family soon. And while eating lunch, I had wondered if I had straightened the sheets enough in case someone else saw them. Here in the hotel I gave in to Ed with glee and abandon,

forgetting time, forgetting place. It was a hot, sticky day, and we bought some chilled beer, which we sipped between our slick bouts in bed. But after it was over, I could barely recognize the man I caught site of in the mirror when I went to the bathroom to freshen up. My eyes looked like hardboiled eggs whose yolks had browned. I could not bring myself to drag my feet back home.

To kill time, I rode east on Poonamallee High Road and then on to Marina Beach. I walked across the pale, aching sands to the water's edge and sat down, dolefully watching the breakers, the spattering foam. I should not have been sitting here by myself. Somebody should have been beside me. But who? Ed or Usha?

Ed – whom I loved enough to become physically intimate with twice within a few hours today. But the intimacy at times felt slapped-on, the odd intimacy of people who had been lovers in the past, old flames that had not quite sputtered out. Usha – with whom I had started awkwardly between the sheets, but she chalked it up to our being new to this – she had to learn the ropes too. When I had doubts whether our marriage would work, it was other little things that reassured me, the way she asked my mother what my favorite dishes were and learnt to cook them, the way she smiled at me when she caught me looking at her as she ironed my shirts or her *salwar-kameezes*. It had taken time, going two steps forward one step back, to get to where we were now. I had to fight my old habits to find my place in the world that I entered afterwards.

But there was nobody I could really talk to about the events of today, events that had caught me unprepared. So I had to talk to myself. Did my past peccadilloes mean so much that I had to be handcuffed to them now, even if they encumbered my present life?

I could not find an employer who would sponsor me for a green card and I returned to India where men and women had to marry reasonably quickly after they came of age – it was the jewel of family life, a social obligation. I had to live with that. And I was right when I told Ed that he didn't know much about my sex life. With Usha, yes, it was tricky in the beginning but it had a quality hard to describe – innocent, fervent – and complete (at least for Usha, I hoped). I had learnt to adapt, adjust, two steps forward, one step back or one step forward, two steps back. As I told Ed, I did it with a man occasionally, but surreptitiously. That was the price for my new life.

I was unprepared for Ed surfacing like he did. Had he come before my wedding, had America reinvented itself before my wedding, it could have been a different story, a very different story. Not for nothing had Ed dangled the bait of U.S. citizenship. But now I had my life cut out for me, and I couldn't change it any more than Chennai could change

the course of the Coovum River. Not with my baby on the way, not with the impending fatherhood which, like my sexuality, filled me with joy and dread at the same time. Ed, who thought of his parents only on Mother's Day and Father's Day, simply didn't understand the importance of family in India, and what the prospect of permanently losing their trust and affection meant.

I called Usha on her mobile phone but she did not take my call. I picked up a fistful of sand, let the fine grains slowly dribble out from between my fingers. I repeated this a few times, then phoned her again. But she still did not answer.

Tomorrow morning I would have my final meeting with Ed. I would tell him how grateful and privileged I felt for those memorable years I spent with him but that I never wanted to see him again, that he could do as he wished – go see the Taj Mahal, dive headfirst into the murky depths of the Coovum, or take the next flight back to the States; I couldn't care less.

The sky turned dark, the water even darker. I rode back home in a daze, negotiating the traffic more through instinct than by paying attention. I was surprised to see the apartment empty, unlit, bleak shadows everywhere, like the shadows that beset my mind when I was at the beach. Then I smiled ear to ear and relaxed. For heaven's sake, it was Sunday. They were all at my sister's, gone there to drop off Sridhar and Srihari. What a bundle of nerves I was.

I walked into my bedroom, switched on the light and in a couple of sickening seconds saw Usha's ankles. It was impossible to miss them – they were at eye level. She wore the silver anklets that she had fallen in love with on a visit to Thanjavur, and which I had secretly purchased and presented to her on her birthday. Usha was dressed only in a blouse and petticoat. She was quite dead. She hung suspended from the stem of the ceiling fan by her sari, which had been twisted into a cord and tied around her neck. Like a pendulum, her body was turning in small arcs, from right to left and back again. I first saw her heels, and then I saw her toes.

БЕЗ НАЗВИ (“ГУЧНИЙ ЗАГОЛОВОК”)

.....

Гімн

Наша залежність наче залежність
Від стилю та смаку, солідарність
Не лише у кольорі стягу та стін галерей.
Хто ми? Спільнота, що покоління і юнь
Об'єднує, яким не достатній
Білий куб – на вулицю ми зазиваєм.
Незалежність завжди лиш на словах,
Схрещені наші дії, гучні заголовки:
Група як єдиний автор!

Практика простіша за теорію,
Сексуальна революція,
А не латентний Інший,
Гучної назви достатньо,
Але ще не мистецтво це, важливий
Процес та поширити маніфест!
Нам на аукціонах не втіха дебютувати,
Ми позичали книжку
У відділі мистецтв бібліотеки.

Ми купили поезію Брехта
На бібліотечному розпродажі.
Всі ми залежні від абонементу,
Наче роботу і дружбу
Згодилися ділити ми:
Одна книжка на місто.
Лунає з гучномовця Пісня:
Генії мистецтв закликають
До свободи без пригнічення.

Мистецтвом служим країні
І світу. Держава як гальма,
Саморганізувались усі.
Спільнота є витвором мистецтва:
Великий народ. Єднаймося
Силою Геніїв усі разом!
Нам потрібна солідарність!
Шлях до таємниці єства
Ми проходимо гуртом.

UNTITLED [A LOUD TITLE]

.....

Anthem

Our dependence is like dependence on
Style and taste; our solidarity's not only
With the color of the flag and the gallery walls.
Who are we? A community that embraces
Generations and youngsters displeased with
The White Cube; we call to gather on the streets.
Independence always in word alone,
Our deeds entwine, our titles are loud:
The group is a unified author!

Practice is simpler than theory,
The sexual revolution but not
The latent Other,
A loud title will suffice
But it's not art yet; the process is significant
And the manifesto must be circulated!
It's no fun for us to debut at auctions,
We have borrowed a book
From the library's art section.

We bought a collection of Brecht's
Poetry at the library booksale.
We all depend on our library card
It's as if we agreed to share
A job and friendship:
A single copy for the whole city.
The Song is playing from the transmitter:
The Geniuses of art call for
Freedom without oppression.

We serve our country and the world
With our art. The state is a brake,
We have all self-organized.
Our community is a piece of art:
Great people! Let's unite
By the power of all Geniuses!
We need solidarity!
We all go down the path to the
Mystery of the self together.

..... Translated by Ostap Kin and Ali Kinsella

* * *

.....

Секретарка Ганса-Ульріха Обріста
дякує за моє запрошення зустрітися
у Цюріху і пише, що куратор
зайнятий у ці дати.

Я думаю про проект і вже його
придумав: неіснуюча виставка,
на яку я отримав запрошення від Г.- У. О.,
щоб отримати візу.

Запрошення буде написане
між рядками
цієї виставки.

[HANS-ULRICH OBRIST'S SECRETARY]

.....

Hans-Ulrich Obrist's secretary
thanks me for my invitation to meet up
in Zurich and writes that the curator
will be busy on those dates.

I've been thinking about a project and I've finally
come up with it: a non-existent exhibition
for which I'd receive an invitation from H.-U.O.
to apply for a visa.

The invitation will be written
between the lines
of this exhibition.

..... **Translated by Ostap Kin and Ali Kinsella**

* * *

.....

ти була на танцях у клубі,
я дивився у цей час ютюб
і спілкувався з тобою у чаті,
скидував лінки на різні треки.

“смерть це майстер з україни”
– вояк танцює зі смертю.
я був вдома сам, і звучала музика
в запівнічну спеку.

я недочитав цей твір на тому місці,
де втілив його у реальності.
не знав, що було досконаліше,
і без слів глибоке дихання.
(ти відчувала серцебиття)

як перестати думати. не думай,
ти написала і що знаєш цей трек.
не зрозумів я, що читаю знову
цей твір, тобі буде зась його прочитати.

я навчився лепетати і не думати,
що свіжий погляд твій. що говорю
слова. що все буде добре і що
не зміг тебе у цьому переконати.

[YOU WERE DANCING AT A NIGHT CLUB]

.....

you were dancing at a night club
when I was watching youtube
and chatting with you online,
sending you links to different tracks.

“death is a master from ukraine,”
a soldier dances with death.
I was home alone and music played
into the midnight heat.

I didn't finish reading the piece in that place
where I embodied it in reality,
I didn't know what was more perfect—
and wordless deep breathing.
(you felt the heartbeat)

how to stop thinking. don't think,
you wrote and added you knew this song.
I didn't understand that I was reading this
piece again, you won't be allowed to read it.

I learned to babble and not think,
that the fresh look is yours. that I speak
words. that everything will be fine and
that I couldn't convince you of this.

..... Translated by Ostep Kin and Ali Kinsella

НЬЮ-ЙОРК

.....

Колода в оці – великий хмародер.
Немає кому сказати, що недобре
так, якщо щось втрапляє
в око з хмародера.
Піщинка в оці – не колода.

NEW YORK

.....

The beam in my eye is a huge skyscraper,
there is no one to tell how awful it is
when something lands in
your eye from a skyscraper.
The grain of sand in my eye is not a beam.

..... **Translated by Ostap Kin and Ali Kinsella**

ARTIST'S STATEMENT ON JANIN POEM CYCLE

.....

Born on the year of Iran's Islamic Revolution, Tahmasebian has lived through the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, reformist political unrests, and over two decades of sanctions. The poems in the Janin cycle bear witness to each of these political upheavals. Together, they have shaped the author's aesthetic response to the state of emergency that has become a norm for his generation within Iran, across the Middle East, and around the world.

Initiated in 2007 and now nearing completion, the Janin cycle consists of a series of mostly prose poems centered on the concept of *janin* (the Persian word for 'fetus,' derived from the Arabic root that associates 'concealment' and 'genie'). These fetuses are people (historical and imaginary), objects, places and ideas. Moving between the 'poetry of ideas' and the 'idea of the poem,' the poems call on the reader to grasp poetic experience by absorbing the original idea in its most in-formed, fragmentary and unborn state. They resemble poetic fragments that have either been aborted by the flow of history, or which are yet to be fully born. Like fetuses, the Janin poems abound in potentialities. Formally, they resist the hardening of language that accompanies birth. Seeking freedom from the restrictions of verse conventions, the Janin poems do not abide by conventional line breaks.

Poetic experiments in prose are rare in Persian modernism but not unprecedented in Persian literature. In fact, prose poetry is a major part of the Persian classical mystic literature, as witnessed by the provocative poetics of Ruzbihan Baqli (12th century), Ahmad Ghazali (11th century), Attar of Nishapur (12th century), Rumi (13th century) and Shams Tabrizi (13th century). The prose poems of modernist French authors such as Francis Ponge and Edmond Jabès, whom Tahmasebian has translated into Persian, have also influenced the author's literary experimentations. Tahmasebian's translations of Ponge were published alongside three of his Janin poems in the 2007 volume of *Jong Pardis*, an important yearly anthology of Isfahani poetry that has helped to define literary modernism in this region.

The Janin poems turn the act of reading into a form of poetic creation that balances thought and image. By proposing poetry as a commentary on creation, the Janin cycle serves as a prolegomena to the author's second major poem cycle, *Sharha Matn* (partially translatable as "explication de texte"), which consists of literary-critical fragments delivered in poetic language. Whereas the Janin cycle

bears witness to a cyclical statement of emergency, the second cycle follows Walter Benjamin in seeking to restore poetry to its ideational substance and critical prose to its figurative origins.

..... **Translated by Rebecca Gould**

« وای ! نه ! پسر م ،
ما به باغ نرسیدیم
ما به گه فرو رفتیم ... »

و حالا که این را نوشتم
غروب بود و
خطوط در خاکستری تار می شدند
و بر پهنه‌ی سفید کاغذ
و سایه‌ی پرنده‌ی دستم
شب می شد
و من خواب خواهم دید
خوابِ یک پیچکِ خیسِ در همه‌جایی.

جنین خواب

.....

خواب جنین می‌دید
و در جنین خواب همچون
سکونِ مشددِ رویایی بود همچون
پیچکی دورِ هیچ:

- خواب دی‌شب دیدم
خواب یک پیچکِ خیس تر
مثل آب
و بسیار رویان
که بوی شراب کهنه می‌داد
در دنج‌ترین گنج زیر زمین
آنجا که عنکبوت در هوا نقشِ نبوغِ خویش را رقصیده بود
نمی‌دانم
سرم به سنگ خورده یا مستم
که در سرم یکی مدام صدا می‌زند:

..... Translated by Rebecca Gould

THE FETUS OF THE DREAM

.....

Dream fetuses.
And in the fetus dream,
like a growing amplified silence—
like ivy around nothing:

I dreamed last night.
I dreamed of wet ivy—
wet like water
and rapidly growing—
water that smells like old wine
in the deepest treasure beneath the earth,
where the spider danced the figure of its intelligence in the air.
I don't know if I'm drunk or crazy.
In my head, he calls perpetually:

“Oh no, son!
We haven't reached the garden.
We sank in shit.”

My wounded soul talks like this.
You don't know what my unwounded soul would say.
This soul rises on the farthest bank of the sky
in the early evening.

Now that I write this,
it is sunset.
On the white expanse of the page
the lines dissolve in grey.
On the flying shadow of my hand
the sun descends.
I will dream—
dream of wet ivy everywhere.

THE FETUS OF THE TEXT

.....

Breathing on the window
between a frozen without and a hot within.
The glass does not permit light to pass with this breath
It colors with this breath.
Have you seen white days? The sun no longer gives light. It splashes
white.
Just as white,
the window turns into a page for writing a name for writing with
fingertips on this fire within.

You have written something between without and within. On the
unseen glass a name is seen.
You have written something that can be read from without and within.
From without it reads backwards.
What happens when reading a text written on breath?
Little by little, breaths go away and take your text. Ambiguity goes
away and the text is lost in lucidity.

..... **Translated by Rebecca Gould**

جین متن

.....

ها و ها کردن های روی شیشه ها
میان درون گر گرفته و بیرون یخ زده
شیشه دیگر گذرگاه نور نیست با این ها
با این ها رنگ می گیرد

روز های سفید را دیده ای، انگار آفتاب نور نمی دهد دیگر، سفید می باشد
- همان قدر سفید

صفحه ای می شود برای نوشتن اسمی

با نوك انگشت

بر این ها، آتش درون، نوشتن:

تو در میانِ درون و بیرون نوشته‌ای.

شیشه، چون نامرئی است، می‌شود جایی که نامی را روی نامرئی مرئی کنی
و نامرئی‌ها همیشه با جاودان‌ها هم‌پایه‌اند.

چیزی نوشته‌ای که هم از درون خواندنی‌ست و هم از بیرون
ولی از بیرون برعکس خوانده می‌شود.

در خواندنِ متن نوشته شده روی‌ها چه اتفاقی می‌افتد. ها کم‌کم می‌روند،
متنِ تو را با خود می‌برد. ابهام می‌رود، متنِ نگ می‌شود در دروغ.

جنین حاشیه

.....

با تتم

بر تنت

چه حاشیه‌ها که نخواهم نوشت

THE FETUS OF THE MARGINALIA

.....

I will inscribe marginalia
with my body
onto yours.

..... **Translated by Rebecca Gould**

و پس مسجد شاه حسنه شد
 بسکه با همه عکس انداخت
 و گفت دیگر عکس نخواهم شد
 گفت دیگر برای خودم خواهم بود
 دیگر بلند خواهم شد، خواهم رفت به دورها
 دیگر چقدر لبخند زوری حبس
 در آن تک‌چشمِ گردِ سیاهِ فروبلعنده‌ی تیز...

و از آن زمان که دخترکی با دندان‌های کرم‌خورده‌اش
 دست در گردنِ او انداخت
 -وگفت سیب-

تا امروز
 مسجد شاه دیگر
 با کسی عکس نگرفت.

SHAH'S MOSQUE

.....

The Shah's Mosque grew weary
of taking pictures with everyone.
I don't want to be a photo again,
he said, I don't want to lie again.
I want to get up and
journey to faraway lands.
I've had enough of fake smiles. Enough captivity
in that a one-eyed black whirlpool lens!
Ever since a little girl with a crooked smile
wrapped her hand around the mosque's neck
and said: Cheese! The mosque of the Shah refused
to pose for photos with anyone.

..... **Translated by Rebecca Gould**

TUGHLUG*

.....

You were exceptional
among ancient Indian emperors
with vast learning,
yet your silhouette stands
under the signboard,
engraved with 'Intelligent Fool',
in the recess of history.

It was tenable
to transfer the capital
to the thorax of your empire.
But why'd you drag
the people of Delhi to Devagiri?

Your innovations turned
curses and corpses
in improper implementation.

As a ruler's thoughts
fall into the maelstrom in brain,
his subjects
sink into the fathomless suffering.

Nous deprivation determines
decline of each reform.

It's fate
you're reborn on the earth
again and again.

..... Fabiyas M V

* Muhammad Bin Tughlug (1324-1351), was an ancient ruler of Delhi. Though he was a learned man, his reforms, including transfer of capital from Delhi to Devagiri, failed due to improper implementation.

OOPS! AGH! AND OH!

.....

Oops!
Someone left the tap open
That it overflowed;
Accursedly, upon us.
Much scorned in this season.

But who could it be
Sitting silently
Behind those white curtains
Naming such terror.

I want to know.
Must it be, that grey-black?
A Man, so-called divinely kind,
Threatening thunder bolt.

His house spatially enough
Bed of mist
And pillows like cotton-candy; not like ours
Dripping wet with mean choices.

Agh!
Winter shivering, stirring, hiding – A mouse,
Without a hole – wraps its feet in our wool.
Here torn blankets rule.
He, smiling in a Sando*

Oh!
Then, let us die below His misty bower
Who cares for life when His is Heaven
Let evening sing songs to Him
When here, miseries mourns unendingly.

* Sando: It means a sleeveless T-shirt.

THE WORLD IS SO SILENT!

.....

They talk so much;
Still, the world is so silent!

Words were whispered,
Even wind couldn't catch.
Such words were uttered
...burned her bridal bed.
She kept on smiling.
Slowly was buried, alive, into her ashes
Like a phoenix.

The wind stood stubborn, though lost.
Yet, hollering at those stuffed dolls;
Those mongrels were deaf to her wails;
Dead walls heard through key holes.

They talked so much;
Still, the world is so silent!

A poor widow sold her worn clothes...
Hunger cherished his cheeks,
As she wept disclosing from her trunk, a deep red blouse.
Friends heard, relatives heard and heard the dead father.
That lady isn't of a good character!
Infamy or blasphemy.
But Truth bows to Power.

Her age begged for a penny,
But she never had any.
Her Eyes lowered to see a day's meal,
And her lips moved violently.

The world busy on cell phones,
Talked so much, shared so much;
Still, it remains so silent.

ДІМ НА СІМОХ ВІТРАХ

.....

ну ось пережили зиму – дім на сімох вітрах -
і алюмінієвим дротом я прикрутив вітряк
деталі його покрали за зиму чорні дрозди
з них побудують гнізда й закріплять нью-йоркські мости
тюльпан і нарцис: обидва на кволім стеблі
в тюрмі прозорого дзбанку
вже на столі

може собі придумав за зиму повість таку
що дім пролетить над землею на тім вітряку
він вгруз в свою землю – зжився з кущами малин
мушу усім ділитись - навіть малим:
переживанням зими за пазухами кімнат
тримати ув оці вітер
і недорослий сад

я чую як вже затихає в пивниці теплий котел
книжками які читаю всі стіни припер
листки із написаним віршем встелили паркет
дім з вітряком в якому живе поет
мусить дбати про себе бо що з пііти візьмеш?
хіба ось листок паперу або
зашкарублий мешт

«так ось він ще що придумав – думає дім собі –
краще б мені лежати п'яним в густій траві
або ж поливати травичку як чинить сусідський пес
кульбаби ростуть після цього – і зацвітає без
і прийде єнот погрітись – і випаде дощ
йому б починити мешти:
п'яти вилазять з підошв»

«я думаю як літати – кажу я дому – й напруж
тіло своє що вшите з червоних пелюсток руж
з шовку південного вітру – з моїх листків
списаних віршами – якими і я прилетів
якщо нас вітряк відірве від притягання землі
зиму ми вже пережили
варто тепер й політ»

дрозди принесли новину: лис поцупив жупан
тікав з ним до океану – за горизонтом пропав
трава прийняла до гурту жовторотих кульбаб
кажуть що втік недалеко бо на обидві кульгав
я ще пишу вірші – і слухаю спів вітряка
в домі який не літав ще
в якому немає замка

THE HOUSE ON SEVEN WINDS

.....

so we lived through this winter – the house on seven winds -
with an aluminum wire I'm attaching these mills
winter blackbirds have stolen their hinges
and will build their nests to strengthen the New York bridges
a tulip and a daffodil: both barely stable
in a prison of a transparent jug
already on the table

perhaps this past winter this story becomes my will
that the house will fly over the land on the mill
it got stuck in the ground – now lives with raspberry fields
I must share all things – even these little bits:
surviving the winter under room's armpits
holding half-grown gardens and
in my eye these winds

I hear a warm kettle getting quiet in the den
all walls are resting on the books I've read
paper filled with poems covered the floor
the house with a mill where the poets roar
has to take care of itself, poet's - no use:
his only possessions are paper
and junky shoes

"what else he came up with – wonders the house –
it would be better to lie drunk in a green thick grass
or water the soil as old dogs do
dandelions and things would come out in the dew
a raccoon would come and tan – the rain would fall
he needs to fix these shoes:
heels are erasing the soles"

"I'm thinking to fly – the poet says – hold your body tight
it is made out of rose petals so light
and out of the silk of southern winds – of my poems
written on sheets – they made up my wings
this winter we have survived
now it is time to think of a flight"

.....
Translated by Olga Gerasymiv
.....

blackbirds got news: a fox has stolen a coat
ran to the ocean – vanished behind that coast
the grass has welcomed yellow dandelions
he ran not too far, what more to say, a cripple
I still write poems – listen to the songs of the mill
in the house that neither had its flight
nor its lock, and it never will

В ДОРОЗІ

.....

В дорозі під ранок уже прохолодно і зимно
туман потягнувся за слідом козиним
з'їду мабуть щоби підживити бензином
«Тойоту» - щока в стерні
не голився – тарахає серце як бампер
в океані намокли гасові лампи
і пісок по дощі віддруковує лапи
псів і чайок - мене в мені

на заправці купуючи каву й до кави
в CNN про бейсбол – про зброю і право
продавщиця синтаксу місцями править
-патріотка цього містечка -
цілу ніч відстояла і муляє ліфчик
зазіхати на неї подорожнім не личить
я - з Нью-Йорку кажу - і хтось її кличе
схоже бита життям - не овечка

ти ще спиш у «Тойоті» на заднім сидінні
я дві кави несу крізь тумани осінні
на заправці порожньо - на твоєму коліні
мій рукопис - це видрук
перша версія прози - якісь там нотатки
ну життя як позбирані наспіх манатки
все прикольно - короче без патоки
зайве - витру

я тебе розбудив пити каву - єноти
умивалися зранку в посадці навпроти
й продавщиця дивилась - залишим на потім
її погляд і розмір грудей
ти тримала рукопис на стегнах – сніданок
починавсь поцілунком - під'їхав седаном
фермер що тут заправлявся так само
і пішов до дверей

.....
Vasyl Makhno
.....

поки він продавщиці про кури торочив
ти змінила на собі дорожню сорочку
заправила в джинси - і гнізда сорочі
причесала на голові
я приснув на газ – я спитав про самотність
бо траплялися знаки про роботи ремонтні
і мотель коштував якусь сотню
може навіть й дві

я тримаю кермо – ти мандруєш айфоном
я обрав цю книгу пасочком червоним
я писав її двічі - удень на поромі
а вночі з світляками
я тримав цей баланс і занурював тіло
у повітря яке наді мною летіло
і крило що мені як мотор лопотіло
це життя що минало роками

ON THE ROAD

.....
On the road in the morning so fresh and cold
the fog has stretched behind footprints of a goat
I'll get off the road to feed with gas
my "Toyota" – a cheek covered with stubble
didn't shave – my heart shaking in rumble
in the ocean drown all gas lanterns
and sand in the rain prints these patterns
of seagulls and dogs – of me inside my bubble

at a gas station buying coffee and coffee buns
CNN talks of baseball – of law and guns
a lady behind the counter not happy with these talks
- a patriot of this small town -
been here all night, fixing her gown
fellows from the road would only get her frown
I am from New York – I say, but she turns around
she's a tough crowd – knows how life had wound

in a car you are still asleep, there in a back
I carry two coffees through an autumn fog
an empty gas station – and on your leg
lay my words – a printout
first draft of a prose – all kinds of notes
a life - hastily gathered things and coats
everything is dandy – no oats
the rest – is a wipeout

I woke you to have coffee – raccoons
were washing faces across these roads
while the counter lady was watching – after
I'll tell of her breast and stare
you were holding my prose – a kiss
started this day – a farmer was getting gas
same old thing he did all these years,
then he walked out the door

.....
Translated by Olga Gerasymiv
.....

while the farmer was cutting his story short
you managed to change your shirt
put it inside your jeans – untangled your nests
combed down your hair
I sped up the car – and asked you of loneliness
since I saw signs on fixing the road clumsiness
and our motel costs a hundred
or even a double fare

I am holding the wheel – you are on your phone
this book – wrapped around with a red ribbon
I was writing it twice – a day on a ferry
and with fireflies when at night
I was holding this balance and drowning my body
in the air that over me gently was flowing
and the wing was like engine thrusting
and life through the years made its flight

ПАРИЖ

.....

я з тобою в Парижі – Маяковський і Брик
з нами тільки свої – нам не треба чужих
я приїхав в Париж – з Єлисейських полів
дощ парфумами вулиці темні полив
для паризьких красунь мов розквітлий букет
мусять бути: і муза й поет

мусить бути кав'ярня й з бруківкою Рю
запальничка – забув – що давно не курю
бо придбавши в кіоску терпкий Gauloises
я курих би і думав про час і про нас
і що ми цим Парижем і що нам Париж
і що ти на плечі моїм втомлена спиш

ми б брели через ніч – і Латинський квартал
нас сховав би для нас – я б навколо літав
ти б літала зі мною в паризькій п'їтмі
ми б з студентами пили Бордо – бо самі
вже здолали шість пляшок якогось вина
а у них – залишилась на щастя одна

я б показував місто й паризьке метро
що ми пили? питаю – здається Merlot
прокидаючись зранку дві кави були б
я б приніс із крамниці свіжоспечений хліб
вчора зсунули наспіх готельні ліжка
простирадло зім'яте й подушка важка

і твій погляд до мене – це справді Париж?
а в якому готелі зі мною ти спиш?
пригадай як ми вчора ловили таксі
і шофер – цей француз – видно вдома не всі
по-вар'ятськи нас віз – усе розумів
їхав мовчки собі – і питати не смів

я також не питався – я тримався руки
я проходив по стегнах й колінах тремтких
і на горличі гнізда свою голову клав
я у тебе тебе цілу ніч крав і крав
я казав це Париж і в солодкі слова
одягав твоє тіло і слухав: жива?

не з тобою в Парижі – все тільки було б
я вистуджую в шибу нью-йоркську чоло
я вистукую вірші в яких тільки ти
призбирала листівки мої і листи
у паризькім готелі п'єш каву й мовчиш
я хотів щоби ти прилетіла в Париж

PARIS

.....

you and I in Paris – Mayakovsky and Brik
keep us company – no need for others to flick
I came to Paris – the rain out of Champs-Élysées
wet with perfumes this dark ground so bare
for the Parisian beauties, like a blooming bouquet
there always must be: a muse and a poet's stare

there must be cafés and cobblestone roads
a lighter, but this poet no longer smokes
I would buy a pack of bitter Gauloises
and later would think of time and of us
and that we are in Paris and Paris inside so deep
and that you are on my shoulder falling asleep

we would stroll through the night - and Latin quarters
would hide us for us – I feel my wings flutter
you are taking this flight into the Paris dark
and we drink old Bordeaux as the students lark
we drank all our wine, six bottles ashore
oh what a stroke of luck, these kids have one more

I would show you the city and the Parisian metro
what did we drink last time? I think it was Merlot
two fresh coffees would greet our morning
with fresh bread down the street I'm strolling
our beds pushed together in haste
heavy pillows and those sheets – what a waste!

is this really Paris? – your eyes would say
in which exactly hotel you and I lay?
remember last night our run for the cab
and the driver with his 'wild-eye' grab
he did drive us around – and he did know the rest
quietly turning the wheel – no questions asked

.....
Translated by Olga Gerasymiv
.....

no word out of me – I was holding your hand
on your trembling thighs my stare I would land
on your hair-nests my head calmly rests
I was stealing and stealing you from your zest
it is Paris I say wrapping words 'round your flesh
and it goes on and on – the sound of your breath

this Paris only would have been with you
my forehead leans on a New York window dew
you exist in these beaten up poems
gathered all of my letters and drawings
in a Paris hotel drinking coffee so still
I want to see you in Paris – such is my will

LIRIOS DE PERDÓN (LILIES OF FORGIVNESS)

-C.D. Wright: Cento

.....

Poetry Time Space Death

Even as it was being written she herself could see
Light inside the space.
Like so many stories this begins:
I was pronounced dead.

What will I do. . .
“Follow me” the voice, the long, longed-for voice stops.
Between snatches of poetry and penitences you left
Tears. Do you hear what I’m telling you
About me?
With no clock, when a clean sheet of paper floats by
They enter in, tell their side, and pass through

Lilies of forgiveness.

..... Kathleen Gunton

TIME'S QUESTION

-Audre Lorde: *Cento*

.....

At the silence of bright thunder
We entered silence
And I remembered
All the poems I have ever written
There is no end
I am not dead but waiting
For some crossing: Home
Some promise made
Peace
He will return
And ransom me home
This is why
I am
Whole again
I am come home

Meanwhile
Some words live in my throat
Past knowledge
Time's question only
What are you seeing?

..... Kathleen Gunton

LIKE MAGIC

-Ai: Cento

.....

How strange it is to be unafraid
Like magic
Which I didn't know was coming
I'll tell you what
Ultimately the question is always
Who can rise from the dead?
Take the advice from someone who knows
(But also the ones who struggle again and again)
It was somebody else who died . . .
Peace restored

Now now you know

..... Kathleen Gunton

THE GEOGRAPHY OF DEATH

-Pablo Neruda: *Cento*

.....

Where can you find a bell
Called death or infinity?

If I have died and don't know it
If my soul has fallen away
Growing happier and happier
In the music of the heavens
Do you not believe that death lives
That I finally found myself
Flying without wings or feathers?

The geography of death
Was a dove of amethyst.
Is it the same light that shines on you
In your soul or on the horizon . . .

..... Kathleen Gunton

|||

.....

[sky] beside Blue

MANANANGGAL

.....

My eyes are the vessel for your image,
but inverted: like a bat from a limb,

legs clinging to the corneal brim.
So I gaze groundward, mask the edge

of my voice with meekness. Woman
by day, I demur, mouth hymns,

I am agreeable as a lamb.
The curtain falls at eventide, when

I am absolved of this body, this sin—
Split at the hips, I set my legs aside,

still standing in skirt and sandal, then slide
wings out from beneath my skin.

I roam the tin roofs, craving your unborn.
Tik-tik, tik-tik: the music of a woman shorn.

..... Alleliah Nuguid

WHY THE FILIPINO'S NOSE IS FLAT

After a Philippine myth (Nueva Ecija)

.....

When the Galleon of Noses docked,
the race began. The Spaniards, taller
and with longer legs, hoarded the finest
facets at the mass's pinnacle—

Dignity. Nostril
upturned, the better to smell heaven with.
Philtrum the passage to the word of God.

And for the Filipinos, the ass-end of the pile.
Peeled from the corners of crates and plunked
onto the face's fertile terrain. Misshapen.
Crushed. Vestige of the primitive.

The vessel was steered by the Editor, his
visage pearlescent against the clear of clouds.
Cartographer. Stonecarver. His Stamp of Dis-

approval seared into the underside
of every Filipino's tongue.

Minsan dowá so totol
Na tomo so parikesa.*

.....
Alleliah Nuguid
.....

* A Maranao proverb: "While a story may have two versions, the original is the truth."

SELF STUDY

.....

I was a lily pad laid flat
under rain. The pond absorbed
the shock; I absorbed the pond.
Each drop tremored across me.

I was a comb and I only knew
hair—coral incandescence
within the dark shimmer.
Coded narrative of teeth.

I was a rose, and my thorns
grew inward.

I was a coat rack arrayed
with the garments of outsiders,
my arms angled in orison.

Rings radiated
from heartwood
when I was a tree
and terminated
in burnt-orange
ornaments, imitating
embers falling.

..... Alleliah Nuguid

THE PHANTOM

(after the Rufino Tamayo painting *El fantasma*, 1953)

.....

When we remember we haunt
the past that crumbling man

a machine in whirring axode
manganese blue orbital decay

following me through digital
ones and zeroes literate ink

cartridges or print on demand
facilities to be recycled collect

dust perhaps manifest fulfilled
stranger in hand and neural tissue

I thought the woman in the museum
was speaking to me but she

was on a phone I couldn't see
and when she turned my way

she looked right past me as if
a succession exhibited

.....
Matthew Woodman
.....

TREMBLING WOMAN

(after the Rufino Tamayo painting *Mujer temblorosa*, 1949)

.....

How bright the violaceous
interior passage what light
ill fitting brightens spokes
but do I traverse the center
of gravity or oscillate
do I speak of inner recess
or outer rim if I turn my back
does the mirror brandish
egress a bruise past arrhythmia
through insomnolent ataxia
stuck fast to the foot the bed
frame welded a bone black
the volute maze what could I
should I have done differently
fault it's all my if I could only
find it's fine the key it's fine
this red cadmium permanent
quinacridone either it's livid
or fine it's unrecognizable

..... **Matthew Woodman**

THE BLUE CHAIR

(after the Rufino Tamayo painting *La silla azul*, 1931)

.....

When raven stole the sun
he paused to take stock

and singed his feathers blue
black a gun metal sheen

from his blue chair vantage
we have light enough

to note the pink shift stalk
stage left to stage right

one's posture helps to cushion
(the blow) possession before

the lightning strike the wild
fire we all return to ash

..... **Matthew Woodman**

THUMBING THE SCALE

.....

Fields gone fallow with feet, arches fallen
and splayed, garden shod with codes and gated
communities, mailers against foreign
tongues posted all along the palisades.

How would you last, a boot pressed to your spine?

Would you not lash out, become that narrow
follow into darkness and rage?

Remind

them of reciprocity.

Be cordial

and forthright: *This Is the Thunder and This
Is the Strike.*

Announce the concealed
carry, the razor blade beneath the kiss
cocked and coiled, never to be brought to heel.

Don't let them frame your circumstance.

They'll skin you alive given half the chance.

..... **Matthew Woodman**

EITHER YOU LEAVE OR YOU GET LOST

for Alejandra Pizarnik

.....

How to raise your scars & crimes: play
dumb.

 You're the only one
who conducts the mock execution.

You're the one armed with spackle and clay.

You're the one who nurses the cache
as though you had to atone
for wearing that skin, for carrying those bones.

There is no incandescent right of way
from which you have become estranged.

Sterilize the past.

 That is to say, loose
your name from its shackles.

 Change
the dressing and let the night spin.

 Lose
your tattoo of the firing range.

There are so many lives from which to choose.

.....
Matthew Woodman
.....

STILL LIFE WITH THE CATS OF JERUSALEM

for Fisher

.....

Beneath solitary olive trees
the cats of Jerusalem shade
in scruff, luxuries refugees
cannot afford: fences
of wood. Far cry from Egypt,
these holy city homeless

hunt atop wall tops—
ancient stone enough
to stop shells but not pink pads,
worn smooth enough
to slip but never fall,
failure they cannot afford.

Shade down, a calico wrests
a rat free from a crack. She rests
with her new kill. Rockets pass
overhead that she ignores,
having once believed
they were birds.

.....
Jason Mastaler
.....

THE LAST ONE

.....

At night I split
the round pills
into half moons
so one moon spans
two nights.

Why does the pill box
always seem empty
when it comes
time to swallow
a new night?

Do I never remember
swallowing the last one?

&

what does it say about our kind
of animal
that we never remember
the last one?

..... **Jason Mastaler**

LOCUST STREET

.....

I was seven years old the year the president died, although sometimes my mother lied about my age and told people I was ten. When you were ten, you could go important places. We had nowhere to go and no money, and my father took the car when he left, but she didn't want a small thing like my age to hold us back. "Don't confuse me with the facts," she used to say. She made people laugh when she said it.

The president was shot on a Friday, and on Saturday morning I went out to the front gate, still rubbing the sleep from my eyes, and saw a long brown car waiting in front of my friend Eddie Lemon's house. It was a new car, but the car looked tired to me, the way everyone in the country looked tired after they shot the president. The car had been working hard all morning and was resting now until its driver was ready to come out from Eddie's house and get behind the wheel again. The fog that came up out of the ground had not gone away. I couldn't see the highway or the Beacon station at the end of the street, but things like a highway or a gas station were still there when you couldn't see them. It was different with people.

I knew who owned the brown car because I'd heard my mother on the telephone, how the Avon lady was *working her way up the street* to our house. My mother thought it was a good idea. *It will take our mind off the tragedy*, she said. I was a good listener and remembered to say words exactly as I heard them. I'd been praised for it, the way I could listen to the preacher in church when the others wouldn't settle down. I listened to the preacher talk about faith, how if you had faith you could move mountains and raise the dead. Inside the house, the president was the one who was dead, and it seemed to me I was supposed to do something about it.

My mother couldn't stop looking at what they showed on the television, the same pictures all day long, the wife and the children, the president's coffin, the lines of people walking past. The day was like a holiday with people not going to work. I watched a thin woman move through the president's line in a long gray coat with fur on the collar, and I wondered if my father was looking at the same woman on another television in another house somewhere. I was getting up the courage to tell the president to rise up out of that coffin, to stand up and go back to being president, thinking a boy would only get one chance to say what he needed to say, and I would really have to believe what I was saying to make it work, so I didn't want to say

..... Barry Kitterman

anything before I was ready, which was why I was standing in the yard looking out at the street. If it worked, the next thing I planned to have faith about was my father coming home from Los Angeles. I didn't know exactly where my father had gone to in Los Angeles, and I wondered if it was important to know where my father was in order to faith him home.

I thought I would start out with a smaller act, like willing the big brown car to move a few driveways down the street in our direction. I hoped nobody would be home at most of those houses between Eddie Lemon's house and our house. I didn't want my mother to have to wait too long for the Avon lady, who was going to take our minds off the tragedy. But I also hoped somebody *would* be home in at least a couple of those houses. I had a suspicion, with the Avon lady, that waiting for her to show up was part of the enjoyment, like it was with Christmas or the Fourth of July fireworks we'd seen at the fairgrounds the summer before. It was the fireworks show that made my father leave home. When we were driving out of the fairgrounds, a man in a pickup truck stepped on the gas and ran his truck into the back of my father's car. It was dark out. The parking lot still held the heat of the day, and the people walking to their cars stared at us like we were suffering a great misfortune, having a man in a pickup knock into us that way. My father pulled a car length ahead and would have stayed that far ahead, but the other cars forced him to hold up, and the man behind us ran into our bumper again. We could tell it was no accident this time. *That man's been drinking*, said my mother. I don't remember my father commenting on the man's drinking. My father held onto the steering wheel with both hands and closed his eyes. I didn't think you could drive well that way.

The third time I felt that jolt from behind, my father got out of the car and went back to talk to the other driver, and when my father got into the car again, the man shoved us another time just to prove something. *I wish he'd stop that*, said my mother. She sounded frightened. *I can't do this anymore*, said my father. He wasn't looking out the windshield. He was looking hard at my mother. *I can't, I can't...* But we finally made our way to the front of the line, and a cop waved us onto the highway, and he never finished saying what he couldn't do.

That evening, I wanted to have faith my father wasn't leaving us for long, and that we would go to the fairgrounds again and this time there wouldn't be any man running into us with his pickup, but it was a hard story to believe.

I wondered how my mother knew the Avon lady was coming. I

wondered if the Avon lady was the sort of person who phoned ahead, or if she just drove up and down from street to street, working her way toward our house. My mother put on a dress and shoved a basket of clothes into the bedroom, turning the sound low on the television. She put on the red lipstick she seldom wore, and I felt a mild sense of happiness in the house that morning, though I knew I shouldn't feel it because of the president. I wondered what kind of wonderful things the lady would bring to our house. I had two sisters, one a year older than me and the other three years younger. The older one claimed she'd met the Avon lady before. She was pretending to be happy too.

I sat down by the gate that opened onto Locust Street and watched for the lady. There were no sidewalks on Locust Street, and the houses, caught up by the November fog, looked to me like they wanted to be somewhere else. I knew my own house was no better than the rest. My father said we lived in a shack, and it wasn't fit for chickens. He worked hard with his tools on the back porch to make a place for a washing machine. We had a place for chickens too, but it was back behind the house where chickens belonged. Some days I was the one who had to gather the eggs. More than once I was cornered in the coop by a rooster we had with one good eye. Even blind, the rooster recognized me as someone to lord it over.

When I looked through the gate again, down our street and out toward the highway, I squeezed my eyes halfway shut the way the rooster would squeeze his eyes halfway shut, even the bad one, when he looked off into the distance or when he saw a strange sight. I squeezed my eyes halfway shut because I had just seen the unbelievable: a small gray horse had stepped out of the fog, pulling a cart down Locust Street. I'd never seen a horse before on my street. The cart came along at a trot, and the way it bounced over every bump in the road, it was clear the cart wasn't loaded down with anything, just the man who drove it. The horse wasn't much bigger than a pony, and when I saw the cart and the driver, my first thought was that somehow I had made them appear out of the fog. Through faith. It was as if all my life I had been wanting nothing so much as for a man and a gray pony to come trotting down our street. On most days a cart pulled by a pony would have been enough of a wonderful thing. (And to come on the same day as the Avon lady...) But there was more. The man driving the little horse was a black man.

I hadn't seen a black man up close before. There was the television, with its shadowy pictures, and I thought a black man in person would look exactly the same as a black man on the television, but in fact this black man was a richer color than anyone could be on the television. He drove his horse past the gate, only registering my

presence with a small nod in my direction. I understood. Driving a cart was a serious undertaking even if there weren't any cars in the street and likely wouldn't be any cars the rest of the morning, other than the Avon lady's car. I stared openly at the man driving the pony, at his dark skin and floppy gray hat, but what surprised me the most was when I caught a glimpse of the driver's hands where he held loosely to the little horse's reins. The palms of the man's hands were almost red, and they contrasted so surprisingly with the deep black color that lay like paint on his arms, I had to turn my own hands over and look at them in wonder. I'd never looked closely at my palms before.

My mother came out to the gate to stand next to me. She was watching for the Avon lady, but when she saw the man with the horse and the wooden cart turn around at the end of the street and start back toward us, her eyes widened at the unlikeliness of it.

"Ask him for a ride," she whispered. It occurred to me my mother was the one who wanted to go for a ride. "Tell him you're ten," she said. It also occurred to me that she was reading my mind, the way she sometimes did. I wanted to ride behind the little gray horse so bad I couldn't find the words for it. I wanted the man to stop as much as my mother wanted the Avon lady to finish with Mrs. Lemon and move her car on toward our house. I let myself imagine the man pulling up to our gate and motioning for me to run out into the street and climb up next to him on the wooden bench. I tried to have faith, but when the driver passed us a second time, the man trained his eyes on the road as if there could be something dangerous in smiling at a boy and a woman he didn't know, a boy and a woman who didn't own a pony like he did. It took all of a man's concentration to drive a horse and cart.

I wanted to run into the house and get something for the horse to eat. Though I didn't know what horses ate, I hated the fact that we didn't have any of it in our house. I'd had bread with mayonnaise for breakfast. It would hardly satisfy a horse. Standing next to my mother, I watched the driver and the cart go the length of Locust Street until they were swallowed up in the foggy distance. I tried to imagine how the cart and horse would look as the driver turned onto the highway that led to the post office.

"Maybe he'll be back," said my mother, but she was looking at the Avon lady's car, her thoughts already returning to dreams of her own. "Henry," she said, "run down there and see what's taking our lady so long."

She gave a little laugh at how wrong it would be for me to knock on the front door of the Lemons' house and tell the Avon lady my mother was waiting, could the lady please hurry up? I knew my mother was only kidding, but I wanted to do what she'd suggested. I wanted to be closer to the place where the man with the horse had disappeared.

"I can go," I said. "I will."
"You'll do no such thing," she said.

We settled on my going down to the small store on the corner to buy a loaf of bread. We called it *the smelly store* because it kept an odor of mildew even in the hottest weeks of the summer. My mother could watch my progress all the way to the store if she stood at the gate, half in the yard, half in the street. Fog or no fog, she could have a little faith. She knew the people who owned the store. It was a mystery to my mother how that old couple made a living selling the occasional can of tuna or loaf of bread. They didn't sell beer. If they had sold beer, my mother wouldn't have given them any of her business.

Men drink, said my mother, and they stop acting like men. I remembered it exactly the way she said it.

I had a small red tractor I rode around on in the yard, with pedals attached to the front wheel. It was heavy and made of metal and belonged to some other kid before it belonged to me, and I loved it. It was what I had instead of a bicycle. My mother decided to let me ride to the store on it, warning me if I didn't stay to the side of the road she would come after me with a switch. She believed in the switch, and believed if she mentioned the word I would do what she wanted me to do. She didn't always use the switch. She was either not using it at all, or she was using it fiercely, hitting one of my sisters or me with whatever piece of a tree limb she found in the yard until we were crying and she was shaking uncontrollably, and neighbors would come out to stand in their yards, hoping their presence would be enough to make her stop. Until then they'd always made her stop.

Riding my red tractor to the store, I had coins in my pocket and her warning whispered into my ear that I was to buy the bread and come right home. The only time I strayed from the sandy edge of Locust Street was when I passed Eddie Lemon's house, where the brown car that belonged to the Avon lady sat half in the road. I looked over my shoulder and saw my mother keeping watch from our gate, and I imagined the way her lips could form a straight line of displeasure, but I also knew she wanted me to steer my tractor past that car and stare into the Lemons' front window, as if my doing so would make the Avon lady finish her business there a little quicker. I worked my legs hard, spinning the pedals and not moving fast at all. I only had to rest once before I got to the store, where I didn't stop but took a quick detour next door to the Beacon station so I could ride across the red hose that ran out from the gas pump. When a car drove over the hose, a bell rang inside the station. I took some satisfaction in the way I made the bell ring with my tractor.

Inside the smelly store, the old man who was always there rose up from his cot in the back and came to lean over the counter, his hand on his chin. I thought about him rising from his cot that way. I wondered if he did that just for me. His television was on in the corner, the same scene on his television as on our television at home, the same line of people waiting to say goodbye to the president. The man smiled at me, and I wished he wouldn't smile. I didn't want to feel frightened. I hadn't gone to the store by myself before, though I had been in the store scores of times with my mother and my sisters. It was darker inside than I remembered. It was the dark that smelled bad, and the floor wasn't clean.

"What can I do for you, young sir?"

Just the man's asking made me forget why I was there. I heard the clip clop of the gray pony on the blacktop outside, and the sound made me wish I'd come to the store on a gray pony. I'd come on a tractor. I tried my best to bring the words up from my memory, what I was supposed to buy, my purpose in coming to the store. Something to take our mind off the tragedy. I tried until I thought I would be sick, and then I stopped trying.

"I forgot," I managed to say at last. My voice sounded odd to me when I said it.

The old man moved his hand away from his chin, showing me the place where part of his lower lip was missing. I didn't know how a man could lose a part of his lip. It had been missing a long time. It had been missing all my life. It looked to me like he might have cut it off with a pair of scissors.

"Was it a soda you wanted?" said the man. "Was it ... a loaf of bread?"

My mother might have called down to the store and told the man I was coming for bread. It was the sort of thing she would do. But that morning I thought the man had to be a genius, or he could be crazy: the man knew my business when I didn't know it myself. I nodded my head, and he showed me the long loaves of white bread stacked on a shelf. They were low enough for me to reach up and take one, which I did without a word, starting at once for the door.

"Aren't you forgetting something?" said the man. He was laughing at me, but with that piece of missing lip, he looked fierce. He looked angry. I felt the fear move up from my chest before I heard the sound fear will make. I tried to make the sound go away. It wouldn't go away.

"Hey now," said the old man. He looked frightened, too. "Don't cry," he said. "I need twenty-five cents for the bread."

I remembered the coins in my pocket. I took all of them out and put them up on the counter, careful the man's hand didn't touch mine.

"This is a dime," he said, in the strange way he had to talk around his missing lip. "And these other ones are nickels." He pushed most of the coins back to me, keeping the biggest one for himself.

Outside, I had to brush at my eyes as I got back on my tractor. I didn't want my mother to know I'd been crying. She wouldn't let me come to the store by myself again. When I rode away from the store, steering my tractor with one hand and holding the bread with the other, I was aware that the old man had come around the counter to watch me from the doorway. In the distance, I saw my mother waiting at the gate, and closer to me as I pedaled, the Avon lady was coming out of Eddie Lemon's house, followed by Mrs. Lemon and Eddie himself and Eddie's teenage sister who carried a squirming white-haired toddler on her hip. That was Eddie's brother, the one they called LJ. The little boy wanted to be set loose. He saw me on my tractor, and he saw the horse and its driver, and he wanted to get a closer look. The girl was in a struggle to keep the boy on her hip. The black man's horse came along behind me, and I had to pedal hard to keep up, and the Avon lady was getting into her car, sliding her little suitcase onto the seat next to her. Mrs. Lemon had a new blush on her cheek. Eddie and his mother and her big daughter all grew silent and stared in wonder at the black man and his pony as they trotted down the street, and none of them saw me go by, a loaf of bread clutched to my shirt, the extra coins safe in my pocket. The Avon lady turned the ignition to her car just as the horse trotted past, and for a moment I moved my legs faster than ever, trying to keep abreast of the horse, trying to slip by the long brown car.

The car lurched backward, then forward, then stalled out altogether. It was a *commotion*, a word my father used when my sisters and I made too much noise around the house. A commotion was a bad thing, but not too bad. It was okay to make a commotion as long as you stopped making one when someone like my father pointed out that a commotion was the thing you were making. I wanted to remember how my father pronounced a word like commotion. This commotion involved a black man and his pony, an Avon lady, my friend Eddie and his teenage sister and that big brown car, and a little boy who had run behind the car to get a better glimpse of the horse. This commotion had nothing to do with the horse and driver, and it had everything to do with the horse and driver. It had nothing to do with the Avon lady, other than the fact that she was the one who made her car go backwards and who knocked the little boy down, causing Eddie's sister to scream and faint at the sight of it. Everyone thought at first the problem was with Eddie's sister, that she was afraid of horses or of black men. It took a moment to discover the real problem was with

Eddie's small brother, LJ. He lay behind the Avon lady's car without moving. The horse and driver continued down the street, the horse's hooves making their clip clop on the asphalt. I thought the man might be moving a little quicker than before.

I didn't stop pedaling until I rode my tractor all the way back to my mother's house. I didn't want to be caught up in the middle of all that. My mother watched me as far as the brown car and then stepped into the house for a second for some reason of her own, maybe so she could call the man at the store to thank him for looking out for her boy, maybe so she could brush her hair before the Avon lady came to the door. I pushed my tractor into the yard and shut the gate and ran into the house where I handed my mother the bread. Laughing, she grabbed me and took the rest of the coins out of my pocket before I could get back outside. I didn't say a word to her or to God or to anyone. I had the feeling I was going to be blamed for what happened to Eddie's little brother.

A low tree grew on the side of the house, loaded down with hard green berries, and I remember running to the tree and stripping the berries off the limbs by the handful and throwing them against the fence, whispering the worst words I knew, *damn you, damn you, damn you to hell*. I said them over and over. I'd heard my father use the words once but I had never said them myself. I looked around the yard, gathering up the small branches that had fallen from the tree, and running to the fence to drop them over the side into the neighbor's yard. My mother waited another half hour for the Avon lady, but the brown car didn't move from in front of Eddie Lemon's house. I had no faith that it would move. When the phone rang, I hid behind the little tree, behind its green berries. I even held my breath. I heard my mother at the kitchen sink, heard her voice in the kitchen and the TV announcer's voice from the room where the president rested in his coffin. I couldn't make out the individual words either of them spoke, not until my mother came into the yard calling my name.

"Henry," she said, her voice too soft. "Henry, where are you?"

Though I stood very still, she found me at once.

"What are you doing out here?" she said. She held a dish towel in her hands, twisting it this way and that. "Did you know about the little Lemon boy?" She raised her hand as if to slap me. I wondered if I could run to the gate faster than she could. I wondered if I could get out to the road with my tractor. My mother's lipstick was gone, but she didn't have the grim look. I watched her carefully, thinking I might be able to avoid the worst this time.

"My God," she said, and she halfheartedly took a swipe in my

direction with the towel she had been twisting in her hands. She went back in the house to put on a better pair of shoes, then walked out the front door and across the yard to the gate, telling me and my sisters we had better stay in the yard if we knew what was good for us. I could sense the fury coming over her, but I hoped she might be her nice self again when she got back from the Lemons' house, which I knew without asking was where she was headed. I thought about going inside and hiding in my sisters' closet until dark when my father would come home. I remembered then about my father. One of my sisters, the older one, was looking for a stick so she could hit me with it. The little one was sucking on her thumb.

It was dark inside the house where the president waited for me on the television, and where I realized I had to choose between the president and LJ Lemon. I wouldn't be able to save them both. Since I knew LJ better than I knew the president, or at least I knew Eddie who was LJ's brother, I didn't see how I could make any other choice than to use my faith to help the little boy. I wouldn't have enough faith for the two of them. LJ might still come out of it okay. He could have a headache for a few days, like my mother had headaches. It wouldn't be too bad if he had to stay in the hospital a week or two. It wasn't like it was summer when there would be swimming. I knew Eddie's sister would take some of the blame for what happened. A year before, she'd run away from Locust Street and stayed away the better part of a year with a soldier. She might run away again. There was nothing I could do about Eddie's sister.

I didn't see the man and the horse any other day but that Saturday, nor did I ever find out why the man appeared that morning with his cart on Locust Street. The Avon lady didn't come back either. She was too upset to return to our street. She completely forgot how to drive and had to call a man from the Beacon station to come and get her car. That was after the sheriff's deputy parked his patrol car in the Lemons' yard for part of the long afternoon, asking the Avon lady questions. I waited, trembling, for the sheriff's deputy to come to my mother's house.

"I was there," I whispered to my sister. "Don't you tell."

My mother had come home, and she watched us both, her eyes growing narrow, her lips pressed together in a straight line. I didn't think my sister would tell. I didn't think she would ever tell anyone.

When the worst passed, and Oswald was shot by Jack Ruby, and Thanksgiving came and went, and Christmas, too, and the president's casket was in the ground, and LJ was on the mend, Eddie came to see me one evening just before dinnertime. He had a pocket knife. He showed it to me, both blades. He stole a pack of cigarettes from his mother's purse

with one cigarette left in the silver wrapper. He had matches.

He brought a small coil of wire out of his pocket and showed that to me too.

"This is dynamite," he said. "This could blow us up."

I didn't say anything. I only nodded my head, which seemed like what I should do in that situation.

"I wish I lived at your house," said Eddie. He murmured the words so my sisters wouldn't hear him. "I wish I had your family."

"I wish my father was still here," I said to Eddie. "That's what I wish." I didn't say anything about how I saved LJ, his brother. Eddie and I gathered all the eggs from the chicken coop and threw them one by one against the fence, keeping an eye out for my mother.

After the first of the year, I rode the bus again to kindergarten, where my teacher had us make little baskets out of construction paper. She told us to fill our baskets with the weeds and flowers that had dried against the school fence. She told us we had to take the baskets home to our mothers because our mothers were feeling bad about the dead president. She knew this was true. I held my basket in my lap on the bus, getting off at the Beacon station and walking home past Eddie Lemon's house, never looking into the yard, not looking at Mrs. Lemon who watched for Eddie from the other side of her screen door. At my own house, I slipped in through the gate and ran up to the porch where I wedged my basket of flowers next to the knob on the front door. Then I knocked hard and ran around the house to hide behind the bush with green berries. Most of the berries were gone—the birds had eaten some of them. I couldn't see my mother come to the door. I couldn't watch her discover the dried flowers in their basket. I could only hear her say softly, "What? What is it?" And I could imagine her looking fearfully out to the street.

SUN DAGGERS

.....

The sun does not burn if you know why you breathe
in that incessant trickle viewed down from
the Stars.

To trickle-down economics kill the essence of prayers.
For not all can be measured as when a flower opens
at the suns sight thereto many levels are in hologram
the Constellations.

Many are looking for something deeper
just look at the rings on your fingers.
As you see the reflection of the Universe
the Stars.

It's not deprecating to state: don't follow any religion.
The suns daggers elucidate many degrees
the Constellations.

Here the scripts form change:
Indigenous hieroglyphics in the petroglyphs of the land
the Stars.

They're two braids in the locks
in the Yucatan slaves harvest(ed) bittersweet sugarcane.
But who brought this construct of cost & demand

the Colonization.
For there's a fire in the jade iris of memory
speaking for the Afrikaans who were tossed in the ocean
brawn by the blistering sun the whip/scaffolds

[keliods] the Scars.
To recant the story the daggers repose
living for those that their last breath
froze in the snow and ignored in books

what Civilization.
The retention process remains arduous:

.....
Jose D. Trejo-Maya
.....

but this does nothing Mumiaabu Jamal
Leonard Peltier still locked in a cage behind bars.

Now what to this cross
reference check bend bars from par?

For matters molecular structure held by a *Spirit*–force
when a loved one is gone those in the here after
to withstand the heat the suns fought

Stars & Constellations.

Peripheral vision now like the daggers and sun
so it's cunning to see the *coyotl* sight
survival what you can't?

[sky] beside Blue.

See a hummingbird must really fight
before the first suns daggers refraction.

At this cyclical moment the third *nemontemi*
or the astronomical readjustment in this vein *Tonalpohualli*
so on this date *nahui acatl* in reference to enlighten society

Stars & Constellations.

Four Reed what does this mean?
These formative tasks are extensive and broad,
yet to return it all derives from the Sun!

End here many can't read far.

12.19.16.2.14.
9 lx 17 Kayab
In Mayan Long Count
Tzolkin/Haab

Nemontemi Nahui Acatl –Chicnahui Tecpatl
Mexican Calendar

AKASHIC ARCHIVES

.....

Narrator: let me show 'em the method [this facility to write] through allegory going under words and thunder.
You cannot close and/or turn the page
the here cited seem archaic.

Black Jaguar: bleed thoughts so you might have what you cherish.
Night Owl: so when revert to the archive.

Narrator: begins the dialogue you see the *Image* [froze outright]

Black Jaguar: see this weight on the left shoulder
your guard aura presence began the journey.
When your twin passed on this fore night
shake the frame: paralysis.

Narrator: thus this psychic presence accorded
by the weight of merit.

Night Owl: so you might recognize the force of words effervescent.
Black Jaguar: Why?

Night Owl: so these turquoise mosaics in the blood to freeze
the animals you've bequeathed to follow.
It's simplistic: as I can see at night.
You can't be seen at day break

Narrator: fast approaching the visual resonance.

Black Jaguar: the painter begins with a point and an *Image*.
You likewise subliminal messages...

Night Owl: see the hologram you have with you
It's now called memory i.e. *tlalnamictli* searing images.

Narrator: the time has arrived together the teaching.
There came an anomaly to our lands to profess
you have no god you do because you know not!

Night Owl: it was put to continue the elders reminisce
see your stealth of the feline was an attribute and a warrior priesthood.

Black Jaguar: spelled in the façade of all the Temples.

Night Owl: back when prophecy was alive and delve into the first rite
you knew what tribute means.

Narrator: we all had even when suffer [the loss of the essence].
Through the death of the shaman or healer(s)

Black Jaguar: now termed priest *not* medicine men.

Night Owl: I see all and thus have the capacity to inscribe through time.

Narrator: so that language blurs world view.

Black Jaguar: your first fight' to gather strength in the mother womb
then forthwith,
the forces gathered on that date.

Night Owl: the Long Count & sacred calendar read you will live in the
shadows &
know/how in the rainforest they're no treks you're the only
center and the circumference everywhere.

Narrator: so when a jaguar goes to the underworld they just lie on the
earth.
Then trek back to the ethereal realm as you see they're pelt in the sky.

Night Owl: when the forest freezes and you hear their roar last.

Black Jaguar: you can feel the pulse of the heart
when the river crashes with the oceans waves/shores.

Night Owl: we're not that far off. Can you see the juggernaut?
Hummingbird's fight when day begins to break –light.
If you change a word of the above written [losses presence]

Narrator: too cast this lot is a solitary confinement.

Night Owl: you see I just rest or fly to anywhere
the jagged edges in the cliffs and/or abandoned caverns.
I just melt with the surrounded threads.

Narrator: a night owl can see keen and sharp
you can likewise discern [as these words here reference]

Black Jaguar: to elemental harmony can be reached here the prerequisite.
Plants are the only ones that can keep.

Night Owl: you're alive [so too they're dimensions of sight]

Black Jaguar: let me take you to a place where time's has not elapsed.
So just in your namesake and carry the weight or here pause to say...

Narrator: you're in the underground corridors in *Tonina*
the shades turn from canopy to stones monolith periphery.

Black Jaguar: I speak eloquence both as narrator and protagonist.

Night Owl: so here there no pupils,
we both have what was fated.

Black Jaguar: to continue the epic remember only memory last forever.

Night Owl: yet to outlast the archive you must first pass the first portal
of light.
though everything reaches the farthest recesses.

Narrator: as the here said is being written [on another dimensions a fight]

Black Jaguar: when you bleed on the right forearm you suffer no loss.
You can still write.

Night Owl: not this short change of words but rather the term relatives
and it's true meaning has been lost.

Narrator: but these akashic archive slowly bringing back what most can't.

SEVEN MIRROR

.....

Don't need this no more
two soldiers holding a flag.

Or mirror

Condescending advice: what do you need to live?
With crumbs lie below the passages

Broken glass

What the Institutions got a foothold.
A degree can obtain many things:
blind sight to what you have not lived.

Or mirror

Not having a meal to eat with those that brought you seed.
Frost obtained notoriety for being concrete.

There are bigger fights who built the Capitol:
Building in D.C. where Lincoln and Washington rest
in peace to many like Toi Purina & those that fought for freedom.

Broken glass

The sentinel they're winding roads to face:
what is between this patriotism –a jet lag?

Or mirror

See what you can abstract from war
two things: loss and no hope or an empty casket.

To go back time doesn't just go forward
in a linear path forthwith the opposite:

Or mirror

Last first two lines observable phenomenon
now to this date in [Maya Long Count]:
[Uuk–Etnab] or
Seven Mirror:

Broken glass

.....
Jose D. Trejo-Maya
.....

A marquee read:
scripture to live by [left black]
what experience brought

Or mirror

just breathe –this last
[seven mirror and/or broken glass.]

..... **SEVEN MIRROR**

LA HIERBA RETORCIDA

.....

In the slums of Mexico City:
whereby before floating gardens
and literary heroes of a philosophical mean.

[Florid languages of stone bled into parchment]
No longer now disavowed Nature.

Some can see more than what's in front of them:
or falter and hold the sabre.
Withstanding the title carries a story.
A burden and what's left scarce Codices.

Look into the obsidian mirror
bequeathed the Sage and the Seer.

All is left near the elements offer
scientific precision.
Even the most downtrodden weed
could heal the frame or destabilize:

shadows rapture the sustenance
kernels of corn shade humanity:

red and yellow and white and brawn
the ceremonial smoke hovers too the black cloud.

You can't add or take away what is written in tundra
but to weal the hedge –who can cut what they feel.

As the flora and fauna are receptacles of the rainbow
All Cultures have affinity with the environ.

The canopy stealth shaded not just for the cold blooded
to the distraught of many words in a [not so] foreign Languages:

add angles of difficulty or etymology:
[Nahuatl i.e. *malinalli* or hierba or sageweed or sweetgrass]

Herbologist can't count contend with when
the pen freezes too the weight of memory...

Allow on a clear day before the sun breaks summons
reality is merely the here precise moments breathe:

what the *Ancestors* dreamed.
You can't hold this frightful solitude.

It could shatter and you will bleed.
Write on what can stop so the blood flowing
of then just live by an accord that still governs.

The tides and whirlpools in the sky
right now can give everything up.

And still have the solace on what was retrieved.
To the below written incense renders
an alternate state or heighten awareness.

It's derived from a mental image:
now a plant essence *copalli*.

Incense then the mighty Ceiba tree last.
In the scroll of time the hourglass melts
with the oceans sands in script in hieroglyph.

[Resin/sap encrusted amber dried and burned into sacred ceremonies]

Sweet as a woman's touch and myrrh's scent
the code remains hidden in the frost of snow
as the ethylic essence of *Spirits* are also escaped.

Into the fabric of the bloodstream
to warp the capacity to reason.

Think through to bog down into words
is to fine tune like a hawk flew.

To overturn what's broken: Shield.

Through an interview with a shaman
that wrote the above simple columns.

To reminisce a carryover of sound and wind chill
the forecast strewn in number and energy field.

We all must carry what's been set in stone
or to deliberate plants are medicine or a storm.

IV

.....

the flavoring of ocean water

SECRETOS

I am born Salomé Reyes Martin-Belmonte.

My mother is Mexican but my father was American, so when I am eleven I try to Americanize my name to Sally. All I manage is to instead shorten it to Sal, with a soft Spanish “a.” Everyone calls me Sal after that, except for Abuelita, who complains that I’ve reduced myself to nothing more than the flavoring of ocean water. The ocean’s large, Abuelita, I say to her. Not large enough, she answers.

She always calls me Salomé even though I ask her not to, even though I don’t know her, even though we only meet once, in the end. Salomé, she insists, is a more suitable name, a name for artists and dancers and storytellers. I tell her I am none of those things and don’t want to be, but she says that will change, someday.

After she dies, I search through the library of Abuelita’s old house for proof that she is right. In a desk drawer I find an old pocket watch, golden, engraved with an intricate “S.” Time stands still at 12:41 until I learn to wind the old gears and I can hear my name in the ticks, *Salomé, Salomé, Salomé*. I take the watch without telling anyone, because surely the “S” is me.

Long after my father’s death and shortly after Abuelita’s, my mother and I move from our small apartment on the west side of Juárez to the big house on the east side. The apartment is all I’ve ever known as home, while the house I’ve always thought belonged to Tío Lalo. I am there, hidden at the top of the winding snail shell stairwell, when my mother tells Tío Lalo he has to go. They shout barbaridad y media at each other that day, my mother shaming Tío Lalo for not being there when Abuelita died and was buried, and Tío Lalo accusing my mother of poisoning Abuelita against him. My mother wins and the house becomes ours, but not before they disown one another, promise to hate one another, and swear they will never see each other again.

Yet Tío Lalo remains in my life. He comes to visit while my mother is working, flirts his way past the chacha and promises sweet nothings in exchange for her silence. I imagine he is what my father would have been like, if my father was still alive—clever and handsome and reckless. He calls me Salada because he says I am unlucky to be my mother’s daughter and teaches me the things I imagine my father should have taught me, like how to punch and how to dance and how to drink. When he leaves, he rolls his eyes at me and I roll mine too because that’s how we say I love you.

I am fifteen when he gives me an envelope addressed to Salomé Martin and tells me it's from my father. He won't tell me how he got it, just that it's mine, and that he doesn't know what it says. I don't open it right away. Instead I hide the envelope with the pocket watch in the space beneath the bottom drawer of my dresser and try to forget about it, the way my mother tries to forget about my father. Tío Lalo asks me once if I opened it, and when I say no he never asks again.

When my father died I was only two years old, a baby, the only thing that kept my mother alive, according to Tío Lalo. I know my father's name was Gabriel Martin and I know my mother loved him. When I ask my mother about him, all she will say is that he was a good man and that I was lucky to have had him as a father. Everything else I know about him is a guess, imagined, a fictitious account I've made up to fill the void he left. I imagine he was brave and strong and loved my mother as much as she loved him. I imagine he would be proud of me, say things like "Good job, honey" and call me "Kiddo." I imagine my father as someone to admire and miss.

It is a Tuesday when I finally open the envelope, a Tuesday like any other where I am home with just the maid while my mother is at work and Tío Lalo is away on one of his gambling trips. The envelope scares me, but I grab at it anyway, knowing that my father once held it too. I use a butter knife to cut through the glue but manage to rip the paper, ugly and uneven. The pocket watch is next to me on my bed, ticking away the wrong time, beating *Salomé, Salomé, Salomé*. My hands shake as I extract and unfold a piece of loose leaf, nothing fancy, with handwriting that must be my father's.

Salome,

Did you know I wasn't there the day you were born? Leona couldn't find me; her brother had to drive her to the hospital. I didn't meet you until two days later, when she brought you home. She came right up to me, put you in my arms, and said, "Look what we've done."

I was terrified. You were so small, and there were so many ways I could hurt you. You needed me to take care of you, but I can barely take care of myself.

That's one of the reasons I married Leona, you know. Until you were born, she never asked a thing of me. She knew before we got married that she couldn't count on me for anything that mattered. But you changed things. She's never expected a thing for herself, but she expected me to be there for you.

For two years I've tried to be a good father, really really tried. I loved you as much as I could. But kid, the truth is I'm not ever going to be the father you deserve.

You might think I'm a coward for leaving, but I'm doing you a favor. You and Leona will both be better off without me.

Gabriel

I tear up the paper small enough to flush it down the toilet, watch the ink blur before spinning down the same pipes that dispose of my waste. All I keep is the envelope, with Salomé Martin in my father's puño y letra, hidden away with the old pocket watch still whispering my name.

I stop using my father's surname at school and refuse to tell my mother why. Salomé Martin-Belmonte is a beautiful name, she says, why won't you use it? It's not my name, I tell her, not anymore. I am Sal Belmonte, just Sal, and Gabriel Martin means nothing to me. She slaps me, the crack of skin a sudden end to our arguing. It is the only time my mother ever lays a violent hand on me. She calls Tío Lalo for the first time in a year and asks if I can stay with him for a few days.

When he picks me up my mother isn't there, and he doesn't ask what's happened. He just says, *Vámonos Salada*, and rolls his eyes as I get in the car. We don't talk about the outline of a hand that reddens my cheek, burns and swells under the bag of frozen peas Tío Lalo hands me when we get to his apartment. We don't talk about anything that matters. Instead we sit on his couch for what feels like forever, watching TV without really watching, the pulsing of my face reminding me of the familiar tick of the old pocket watch.

I skip school and sleep on Tío Lalo's couch for a week before going back with just a faint bruise that can easily be explained away. My teacher tells me I can put whatever name I'd like on my assignments, and after school my mother picks me up herself. The car is cold and quiet with the hurt between us, though neither of us seems willing to apologize.

"Do you know there are two Salomé's in the Bible?" I say.

"No."

"Well, there are. First there's Salomé the fool who danced around with Juan Bautista's head. Then there's Salomé the disciple of Jesus, witness to the crucifixion and the empty tomb, the María not called María."

My mother nods, her grip on the steering wheel tight, her eyes never wavering from the road.

"Why did you name me Salomé?" I ask.

"I liked the way it weighed on my tongue."

"And my father?"

"He liked it too."

It takes time, but we learn to pretend our argument never happened, the way we pretend my father never existed. I become Sal

Belmonte, the daughter of Leona Belmonte and no one else—even if that does make me Salada. I become the flavoring of not only seawater, but also tears and sweat and blood, the legacy of my family.

CRESCENT MOON IN TEXAS

.....

the sliver
of burnished gold

rocks across
the dark
surface

of Lake Brownwood

slips into
the cedar brakes

leaving glittered
water washing

up
the sandy
shore

..... **Sheryl Nelms**

SOUTH DAKOTA BADLANDS

.....

some compare it
to Dante's Hell

but it is better

spend the night
in a Coleman tent
feel the land

watch thunderheads
boil themselves up
into monster mushrooms
that variegate to pink
cotton candy
at sunset

then in the dark

look up
to the constellations
see the Big Dipper
so much closer

and magnified

feel the pureness
of prairie rain
on buffalo
grass

smell the damp dirt

listen to the gentle
grumble in the west
building to a roaring rumble

followed by phosphorescent
stripes of white
light

..... Sheryl Nelms

and imagine
tyrannosaurus rex

clomping
here

..... **SOUTH DAKOTA BADLANDS**

“HAVE YOU GOT A DOLLAR, LADY?”

.....

he asks

“To give to me for
a bus ride?”
he shouts

leaning his scabbed
face into
mine

I shake my head

he follows me
out of Eckerd’s Drugstore

wondering if I have
change for
him

I say, “No!”

he follows me down
Throckmorton Street

muttering
“I like the way you
look

you sure look
good

you sure look
good to me
today

you look so fine”

scurrying
around the corner

I dart into
the secured Baker Building

and catch
the elevator

up

..... **“HAVE YOU GOT A DOLLAR, LADY?”**

DECLASSIFIED

.....

Entering I-75 towards Detroit for the first time was not easy.
Part of my deal was to stay no more than a year
and a visit to the National Archives.
I woke up with the vision of the hotel we would stay at.

Water was running from the ceiling
and, contaminated, was striking
the plastic head of the television.
In my dream I tried to wake them up.

When the children and my husband woke
I did tell them about the dream and they laughed.
No matter, I ran to the supermarket,
I bought gloves and disinfectant to clean up.

I put everything in the travel bag
in the trunk of our white Buick afterwards.
Now I was ready.
At the National Archives we needed to get badges.

I don't recall the section, the newly declassified materials
were stored in different rooms
so every time I needed to read a new period,
I filled in a new form. I don't know what I was looking for.

A name, a date, his name, somebody's name.
I was looking to save myself from that mirror.
Dispersed at large, we didn't belong to this world.
Five minutes before they closed, I found it.

At first, I felt like punching someone in the stomach,
like the punch the man in the September 4, 1985 protest gave me.
Exactly like that, give him back a few seconds
that seemed like hours without breathing,

then a very strange pulling like inside your brain,
like a flow of something, air or blood running out of you.
Then an incredible desire to throw up.
But they were there: across the table,

my two kids and my American husband;
they were drawing and he was reading more reports.
Their big innocent eyes knew something
had happened inside of me,

something that I could not talk about
but something important:
He knew the moment he saw my face;
he knew I had found what I was looking for.

The report continued with part of the name,
no code names, no aliases. They knew so little about him.
At least, there it was on the page, the name of *who they believe*
was responsible: Juan Manuel Contreras Sepulveda.

It was a surprise, I thought I would find more details.
I found a three page report that was supposed to help me
to find all the answers, a three page report with a third page
blacked out, a report that could have given me all the names,

including the name of who wrote it.
We went to the closest hotel. A 'Super 8' located in College Park.
We were planning to stay there one night.
At 3 a.m. a sound of dripping water woke me up

and I turned on the light and I could see
the water running through a fissure
that ran across the entire ceiling.
The children were sleeping in the second bed.

No one was amazed by my ridiculous look,
yellow gloves and two different products in my hands.
I started to clean, spraying everywhere.
Our oldest asked my husband, "How did Mom know?"

he responded, "No idea, she just knew!"
I asked them to go back to sleep and I assured them
we were out of danger and they needed to rest,
to which without complaint, they all obliged.

ME COCONUT, YOU MACHETE

.....

used to be whole
but beyond your chop now

used to have juice
but beyond the drought now...

with my ribcage exposed
and meat for the taking

your ship like embers
breaches the breaking

..... **Teresa De La Cruz**

STARDUST

.....

I often wonder about
unborn children
and if any of them
belong to me.

I think of them as
stardust in orbit
waiting
phenomenally
for the bang
of my gravity to
be $> \infty$

Then I wonder
if the odes I will read
to the belly of my lover
will suffice such
a temporary universe

I mean
we have both traveled
so very far to be here.

.....
Teresa De La Cruz
.....

LOVE FRAGMENTS

.....

One green wall with a mattress on the floor. No cable.
I'd go to the liquor store and buy single shots. Whole bottles
were dreams.

Twenty dollars breaks the poor.

And he choked.

Bread pudding is a lullaby that puts lovers to sleep between the
hours of 1 and 3 in the morning.

Some homes don't have walls. Some folks figure their daughters are
safe. Somewhere.

Climbing out of a hole can take three years.

Buy soap wholesale. Make sopa. Remember—

Keep love clean, Love. I'll stop biting my nails.

That fridge had no locks, no laws and the shelf life expectancy of
chow mein is simply unknown.

Siblings can be over rated, teddy bears are cool though.

Who do we tell first?

My grandmother acknowledges all the gentlemen suitors, sips her
soup.

I am chivalrous, Gram.

That doesn't mean anything. I have been un
-invited before.

Never tender.

I've been making fists since seven. Only got stabbed that one
time.

I didn't know I was collecting scars to show only you at the end of
every day.

Our emotions combined can break a cat's heart.

A blind dog gets lost and found in the same night.
Haiku get lost forever they're so small.

Hold close under the Northern Lights. You can't swim in the lake
in pitch black.

Every tune is dedicated to where we were when...

We make playlists now, not mixtapes. How romantic is a
mixtape?
Very.

Escalators are romantic devices like repeated roads with no
starlight.

So the story goes

I couldn't can write this if I tried. Opposing nectars need to
mingle sweet

like the flavors we know
pecorino, figs and honey pineapple soft serve fermented
rhubarb and cream

a milkshake.

Fuck disease.

That's what the ice caps are saying about us right now

Beasts don't know what babies do.

I am brave. You are graceful. Hearts do not beat in
reverse

And pancakes should be always. Remember—

Fe y
Iron

can split any inch from the valley of the moon and splice it
with pixie dust.

We will always be rookies in a loss, but we are warhorses in love.

THE MAD GIRL KNOWS THAT DAYS ARE GETTING LONGER

.....

still darkness edges each dream
with indelible blue black ink.
She just wants the dark easier
to blue what is except pain.
Easier when a thick licorice
rain camouflages the blue moon
and rain is the roof and the
cat curls in a quilt sea before
8 pm, waiting as the mad girl
waits for escape wild as
Rapunzel's tho after the rain
the roads as ebony and star flecked

..... **Lyn Lifshin**

THE MAD GIRL DREAMS OF HOUSES LEFT BEHIND

.....

in Segovia, in Alsace Lorrain.
last night she dreamt her old
Maine house was up for sale
and she was determined to
buy it. Just when she's letting
go of everything that mattered,
jewels she has no one to give
to, no place to wear. Wind moves
under the door. She remembers
that morning standing under a
dripping sign as fog eddied
around her feet waiting for the
bus, unsure how she ended
up with this man she imagined
going off somewhere far, feeling she
should feel guilty about that as
if it was the only life she had

..... **Lyn Lifshin**

AFTER TOO MANY NIGHTS DRUGGED

.....

the clear calm startles.
How many years since
sleep held me like a
lover, faithfully, not
the kind who says show
more skin and vanishes,
but velvety, lush as a
night we were all young
and the darkness was
a surprise. Lights
going on and outside,
the fireflies, diamonds
and rhinestones studded
the blackness, signaling
for a mate and we
were too, under a
slash, the pale new
moon

..... **Lyn Lifshin**

**“IN THE VIOLET HOUR” ON A PAGE, MAYBE IN
A POETRY BOOK SOMEONE WAS READING ON
THE METRO**

.....

“the violet hour” mid
July and especially
yesterday. Blues band
playing. Dupont Circle,
heavy with roses.
Cappuccino in the out
side café. The violet
hour. The slash of page
I saw and something
about getting up from
the desk and I wonder,
did he go out to wait
for the moon or the
musk of peonies, ferns
or walk into the room
where a woman waited,
her legs, her everything
open to him

..... **Lyn Lifshin**

THE WEEK REPORT SAYS THE WEEK AHEAD WILL BRING SNOW

.....

This January Wednesday
the sun's wild, no leaves
to filter the startling jade.
Geese skitter from cars.
Crayon bright wet creosote,
ice by tomorrow. A dog in the
distance before school buses
and children with satchels.
Hardly a car. No subway. No
helicopter, no planes, no
branches in the stillness. Not
a breeze. Not even the
crunch of snow walking the
feed for pale palominos,
pale apples before he
races to it.

..... **Lyn Lifshin**

ON THE FIRST MORNING SNOW IS PREDICTED

.....

the mad girl shivers.
Hardly a leaf. The trees
stop breathing, clack
a few branches. Gray
morning glows between
the houses. The mad girl
wraps tighter in her torn
sweat shirt and a scarf
as if burrowing
into a shroud

.....
Lyn Lifshin
.....

DUTCH RESCUER OF JEWS IN THE HOLOCAUST. ONE KILLED A NAZI TO SAVE A FAMILY

.....

Marion Prichard, a Dutch social worker recognized in 1981 by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, as one of the "righteous among nations"

"for risking her life to rescue Jews"

she was said to have fed, clothed, hidden 150 people, many children. After she was riding to her university in Amsterdam on a beautiful spring day and all of a sudden saw little kids picked up by their pig tails or a leg and thrown over the side of a truck. Along with 10 friends she helped get false identity documents and hiding places along with more friends, ration cards, false identity cards and hiding places after pretending she was on a mission of disgrace, pretending to be the unwed mother of a baby to conceal the child's Jewish identity. For nearly 3 years she cared for a Jewish man and his 2 sons and infant daughter. In case a Nazi rounded up, they perfected a routine by which the father and his children could slip beneath the floor boards in 17 seconds. They gave the baby sleeping pills to stop her from crying. One day 3 Germans and a Dutch police man came to each house and they couldn't find the hideaway. The Dutch man returned, suspicious. Marion grabbed a small revolver and fatally shot him. "I would do it again," she told an interviewer, "but it still bothers me." She credited a local undertaker with helping dispose of the corpse by burying it with another body in a coffin. I just hope, she said, the family would have approved. Erin Polak, a Dutch psychologist, was the infant girl who survived the war in hideaway under the floor boards. "My whole family is so grateful to her. No words will ever be enough to describe the deep gratitude we feel."

THE QUEEN PRESENTS

.....

Would you want to waste an evening dancing,
down this road not taking any chances with
what's different this time? Twice a week, now,
we'll see your arms snap off, heavily laden.
Crows on a fence tell me about
living proof that beautiful people flock together;
the weekend's a total loss. You said, *love*,
recognize your own name, wait a little while.
See me: acknowledged at seventeen in the early fall.
The church is open, and here's something else:
I remember—you said, *practice, dance,*
change her mind.

..... **E. Kristin Anderson**

This is a found poem using speech and quotations from the following source:

Duncan, Lois. *Daughters of Eve*. Revised Paperback ed. New York: Little, Brown, 2011. 134-142. Print.

THE RIOT INTERRUPTED

.....

Whispering
to herself again, anticlimax
was better than blue. Anything.
Everything. The weak glow
was some kind of atonement.

She had lain cheek to good,
finally finding shoulders
last April. In America,
morning curled into
frightened edges, face wet.

No. She's cut, tied
around her finger, afraid
of memory. That kind of feeling—
someone's going to come home.

..... **E. Kristin Anderson**

This is an erasure poem. Source material: King, Stephen. *Carrie*. New York: Anchor, 2011. 116-119. Print.

SCURF / SUIT

.....

Within the louvered closet doors,
sheeny, half-obscured, and hung
out of reach, my father put his
sharkskin suit. Fins and teeth
combed by some loom freak
into rough fabric (or so I
thought) and the glow thrum
of immortal beings. A suit
to accompany a movement-
based life from a fish who'd
die if it stopped (or so I
thought) and did. The door
comes off the hinge, and the
sleeves feel rough, smell fusty,
not like flesh but cheap Tees.
For how many years did I think
sharkskin was just that. And a
juju. And blood-ken advert.
One fallback option for days
when linen wouldn't do. The
whole church straightening up.
The solemn abundance given
to reverence overcome, wanting
handshakes as you do with some
one who's conquered a country.
The coat's too big. The pants too
tight. Without a head of steam,
my corpse won't poke through.
The tag gives two weaves,
worsted & acetate, as the feat.
Sick luster in marine blue
becomes my projection, as
ill-fitting as could be. The one
who wore it doesn't need it
now. The one who needs it
can't fit or sell. The suit
and the floor. Now his ties
and my briefs. A hall-

..... David Rodriguez

..... **David Rodriguez**

length away, the realtor
buying time with the buyers.

LEAKING

.....

Many friends have been texting me to ask if I'm participating in the Women's March. I reply no, and then feel the uneasy silence between us. In the pause I wonder whether I need to reply with a justification or my mere 'no' is enough.

'Well, I'm really passionate about feminism so it's something I want to participate in' one texts back.

I feel the unsaid accusation that I am not a feminist or feminist enough. An F-word I have never heard her utter before. I wonder if she realizes the hurt and guilt she has landed at my feet. I decide to take the conciliatory route. I explain that I have decided my body does not need to be one that is put on the line.

In this way.

That I fight in other ways.

Turn up in other ways.

Again, in a nice way I explain that 'I have had a lot of difficulty lately with my foot,' going would throw off my week, re accessibility/energy and managing all of the tasks needed to complete (live) in this upcoming week.

But, part of me wonders why I have to explain. The faint bubbling of anger left to simmer quietly.

As I walk to the train still thinking about this encounter. I think about all the words that are left unsaid. About how much anger there is in having a disability. But, we are trained to be nice about it, to swallow our discomfort for others, to explain nicely, to be less angry, approachable, a dangerous practice to become versed in, most often hurting ourselves in the process.

This means that our anger leaks out in awkward moments, in the inability to be vulnerable.

BARREL/SANCTUARY

*We're kindred souls...
but different enough that my soul
has to eat your kind of soul
- above a urinal in Nashville*

.....

Jump them alone in the
midnight pond Run them out

of bright jungles Shake their
beds out Draw them a line

Make them draw it then erase
that too Take all this ocean

They will land in the wild
prairie of night Rip the al-

mond shaped curl of the
wave with a fierce green

backlight Pack the line up
with bombs dropping chan-

deliering over reef and we
will never sleep in a sweeter

loving more lovelier shed of
lights in our beautiful cities

..... Andrew Rahal

ENTERING SAPPHO

.....

It even feels like a fragment a
hot drop of water across pa-

pyrus an old patch of life
remembered in blurs of green

grey rain where the 101 runs
past a cedar shake house

with a red tin roof her gutters
wilting in a stubborn blockish

clearing adorned in sword
fern dead cars an alder stand

clear cuts of Douglas Fir and
a spire of wood smoke that

fragments the air of a
remnant. The world trudges

on slick rivers of highway in
the wild of plastic light in fast

metal bones and oil. Give me
no new wilderness, the ani-

mals who will always appear
for food, the ones unmanaged

and muscling through.

.....
Andrew Rahal
.....

LEAVING TRUTH

.....

every day there are miracles
like dreams you grow into

being or weeds that die for
good when things go wrong I

remember that repentance
was the first thing God creat-

ed in the Talmud that guilt is
a form of grief that debt is the

word for guilt in German that
in most hard times we make

good trouble and bad trouble,
that we love each other in

difficult moments, that we
compare it to the way rain

loves on a flood when we
pull strangers from cars,

break our hands in the
pulling, in the song of a new

born river when things go
wrong I remember that na-

ture's way can be rampant
and running that we poured

out sand bags in soft puddles
of mud to drive our cars off

the grass, today the streets are
flowing, today scientists say

.....
Andrew Rahal
.....

the world wants to churn up,
to dispose of, to liken it to

to balance it out, to accept it,
to deny what we've become

..... **LEAVING TRUTH**

LEAVING THE CIRCLE

.....

If you step outside of the
circle he canes you. If you

stand there nothing happens.
When the clouds scribble

epistles on the subject of
despair, you will praise them

if you don't know joy. If you
dodge tennis balls in your

basement and hide behind the
fragile lamps and they never

break, until one time it is
your turn to throw the ball,

and you blink in awe of the
shards lying before you,

indicating you threw the ball
and you broke the lamp, then

you, you go stand in that
there circle and wait.

.....
Andrew Rahal
.....

HOME

.....

You get home after a long day at the rat race
And you find a giant wife-sized rat in the kitchen
The rat's cutting a lasagna
The rat says: "Welcome home, honey"
He's wearing your wife's "Caution:
Extremely Hot" apron
(It's a little tight, but it fits)
The rat's smoking one of your cigars
Through the smells of lasagna and cigar
You can smell your wife's perfume
(The rat's wearing your wife's perfume)
The rat says: "Sit down, baby,
Poor thing,
You must be exhausted"
You sit down

..... **David Romanda**

SIDEWALK & OTHER NEURAL NETWORKS OF WELL-BEING

.....

(I realized again) approaching one-stop away (Glencoe stop) on the Metra train that my sense of well-being is inextricably associated with a particular kind of outside space, connected with, and by, sidewalks — and that each of the houses I have lived in since stepping into adulthood, share this characteristic — each has been located on a street with sidewalks. Or putting it another way, I realized, again, that the sidewalk is associated with, or, is integrally tied to, my associations of great well-being — the hand reaching to the child — the low hedge (manicured), as when learning to walk (Bloom Street), unequivocally a place of well-being for that period of years called early childhood — of safety & of generativity. I realized this from a train – (at Highland Park) whee the flags, coincidentally, were flying at half-mast for Nelson Mandela that day.

.....
Adria Bernardi
.....

For the most part, the mailboxes on Linden Avenue in Nashville are located near the sidewalk, whereas, two blocks away, on Blair, only three of the mailboxes are located close to the street near the sidewalk, and the rest are each attached to the house. I have been working on a theory: hypothesis; equation; proof. Counting houses. Correlating them with mailboxes. Considering placement of mailboxes in relationship to the front door. Measuring distance between front door and mailbox: A mere step outside and reach? A stroll to the end of pavement to the street? What does navigating that space mean to whoever is crossing it?

The network of arteries in the brain is called the *Circle of Willis*. It is named for Thomas Willis, the English anatomist and physician (1621–1675). This network is more likely to be incomplete in those who experience migraines than those who do not.

The words “temporal collage” and “co-existence of asynchronisities” were written on a yellow Post-it note affixed to the door frame (left side) of the office on the third floor of the house (sky blue) in Worcester, Massachusetts; the Post-it note had been moved from the facing wall in an office on Lincoln Avenue (a slant street in Chicago); the Post-it note is now on the desk (right hand) on the second story of a bungalow (sea green) in Nashville, Tennessee.

In her contribution to the conference held to honor Professor Rebecca West upon retirement from the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago, former student, Professor Sally Hill of Victoria University in Wellington, directed attention to these passages in Professor West's study, *Gianni Celati: The Craft of Everyday Storytelling*:

"The external world, like us, is embodied in materiality, and we living humans share in what Celati might call the absolute condition of presence."

&:

"I felt at that moment all the weight, and all the strangeness, of coincidences, of connections made across time and space, and of what I can only now call the 'literariness' of life and the 'life' of great literature that can put its signature, so to speak, on certain lived moments, . . ."

& also:

"This is not indifference, this is not irresponsibility; this, I think is attuning ourselves to literal conviviality."

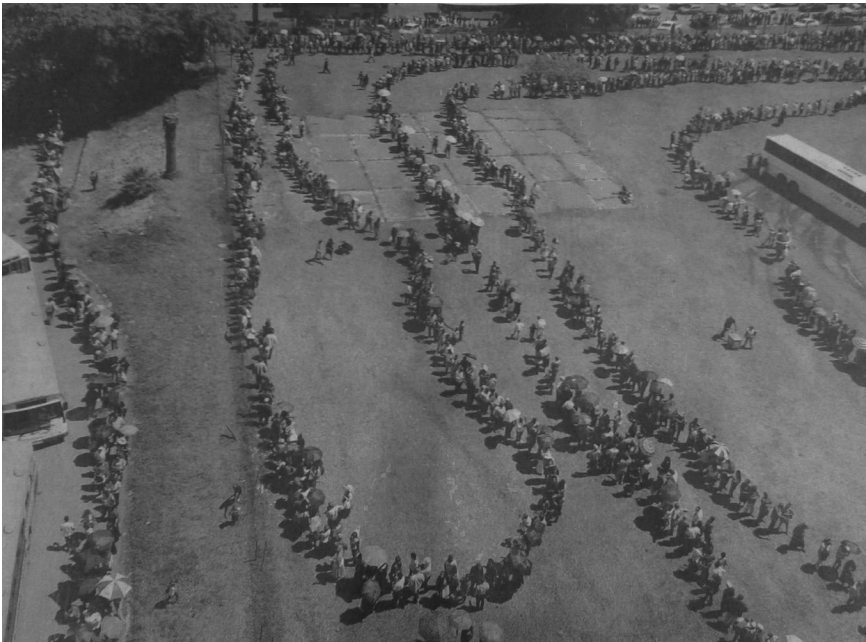
"The Circulus Arteriosus Cerebri. The anterior and posterior communicating arteries indirectly connect the internal carotid arteries of the two sides and the basilar system, so that an arterial circle is formed at the base of the brain. These interconnections serve to equalize the blood supply to the various parts of the brain under conditions of fluctuating pressure through the major vessels."

Patience Mashele, 41, said she had seen Mandela three times in her



sidewalk, december 13, 2013, nashville, tennessee,
blair boulevard, looking west, toward natchez trace

life. She had put on a black, gold & green shirt and left her house in Pretoria before dawn. She rode a bus to the Union Buildings in Pretoria for a public viewing of the body. The first time she saw him was in 1990, after his release from prison; when she was growing up, possessing his picture was illegal. The second time she saw him was in 1994, when he was sworn in at the Union Buildings. The third time she saw him was in 2005 in Qunu, Mr. Mandela's hometown in the Eastern Cape, having travelled there to attend the funeral of his son, Makgatho, who had died of AIDS. *Hamba kahle* means *go well*, in Zulu.



People standing in line to catch a bus to see the body of Nelson Mandela in Pretoria.

Type of Cognitive Processing Brief Description

Holistic Processing information from whole to part; sees the big picture first, not the details

Random Processing with out priority, jumps form (sic) one task to another

Concrete Processes things that can be seen, or touched – real objects.

Intuitive Processes information based on whether or not it feels

right know (sic) answer but not sure how it was derived

Nonverbal Processes thought as illustrations

Fantasy-Oriented Processes information with creativity; less focus on rules and regulations

The section of the pavement of sidewalk in front of the house measures 5' x 5'. It was measured with a wooden yardstick. The yardstick has this message on the inches side: "*Always Proud To Be a Part of Your Home.*" – *Wolf Furniture Company*. An index card was used to mark the place where the yardstick ended, in order to continue measuring. On the centimeter side, it read, *Wolf Furniture Company – Brand Names – Quality Guaranteed*.

A segment of sidewalk is made by taking 2 x 4s and laying each on its side on the sides of a square a few inches dug into the ground. (Four inches is standard.) Concrete is poured into the form, then smoothed over. A trowel is used for this. A segment of a sidewalk is called a *section*. The line separating two sections is called an *expansion joint*. A new sidewalk was recently made on what is referred to by neighbors as *the secret sidewalk*, a narrow sidewalk that connects two streets (two sidewalks) and continues, to connect another street (sidewalk), and then to another street (sidewalk), and then to another. This connecting sidewalk is no secret; there are no gates or signs that say *private*.

A third of the length of one stretch of the secret sidewalk was damaged (cracked) by machinery used during construction of a new house (new construction) at the site where an old house was demolished; (white frame; porch); (the scale of the two houses is vastly different). The length of the old damaged sidewalk was jack-hammered and torn up. New sidewalk was laid. Each segment is 5' x 5'. (The perception that the old secret sidewalk was narrow (see above) was a misperception, formed, perhaps, because of the surrounding, overgrown, tall bushes, alongside it, forming a canopy from the side. Now there is a wooden fence. This portion of the secret sidewalk is a wall enclosed; and the first walk along this stretch gave the sensation of a wall, or a canyon, or tunnel, along the right side of the brain.

The new sidewalk is smooth; whereas the old one was uneven, in particular where it had heaved because of the roots of a tree that grows more horizontally than vertically, a tree which is itself propped up with a section of a sawn tree limb approximately eight inches in diameter and one yard tall sawn evenly at both ends, a prop wedged under a U-shaped curve of the tree that grows horizontally at a slant across the secret sidewalk, front yards separated, from the white

frame house that was torn down. The torn-down white frame house was referred to as the “Haunted House” by a neighbor; among the numerous cars parked at the house, which was heavily decorated at Halloween, was a hearse.

After the new length of sidewalk was re-laid, jack-hammered, then torn up, and re-laid, over those weeks, this was the train-of-thought on the subject of the sidewalk being torn up, re-laid, torn up, and re-laid: a matter of code enforcement? who laid it? contractor associated with tear-down and in-fill? how re-laid? not correctly. under what conditions? not right. with what permits or permissions? none. then the city re-laid the segment. This was the thinking on the subject. Now the two streets are connected by sidewalk with the again, newly-laid sidewalk.

In Worcester, Massachusetts, the master mason told my husband (I did not hear this story first-hand): “Oh you can still pour concrete or lay bricks when it gets to a certain temperature close to freezing” (let’s say, 40 degrees F.) And the Clerk of the Works would come around with the thermometer to make sure the work was being done under proper conditions. You can imagine how many days we’d lose to the weather if we had to stop every time. We’d, now, I’d see him drive up, walking up to the site and I’d call one of the men over who was smoking and call him over. . .” (Or was it?) “The Clerk of the Works would be looking at the thermometer and I would have one of the men lean in close with his cigarette near the thermometer and that would bring it up a couple of degrees.” And I hear this – he was from Ireland – within the sound of Worcester (there are many variations of speech, north, south, west, of Worcester, Anglo, Irish, and many variations of, the many, *you-could-pass*, accents.) His voice was just one in that pond of voices. I was once told, *you could pass*, meaning, I could pass, in reverse, back into that pond, of voices, *you could pass*, she said to me, meaning, from where she came from, which was in very Eastern Europe, where I fit.

The network of arteries in the brain called *the Circle of Willis* is named for Thomas Willis, English anatomist and physician, 1621–1675. **Willis paracusia** (par-ah-ku’s-eh) or **paracusia of Willis paracusis**, being the *intense and incessant acuity of hearing* or the ability to hear best in a loud din.

In Chicago, nearing the el overhead and Lawrence & Damen, farther on, where the child – now a man – was an infant, and his father & I were new parents, the baby, an infant, was still flat on his back, staring up at the sky, bundled. It was winter. He started making sounds of

dissatisfaction, anger, annoyance. *What could he want?* We checked. We reassured. No hunger. No other necessity. And yet the insistent sound of a frustration, displeasure – as if, *hey!* or *now!* or *here!* And when I looked, what I saw – or perhaps we both saw, was that he was straining his neck, raising his head, lifting his back, to sit up – to see something different – besides the sky – (blue) and when, after we tilted the seat up at the slightest angle (first time), and he could look ahead to his left and right, turning his head, he was very content.

saturday evening
the christmas lights on the fence
along the right side of the sidewalk
walking by them, in early evening
at dusk, white lights, italian lights,
lit pathway like little stepping
stones, neurons, synaptic way
on the right side of the brain

sunday morning
multicolored little lights
along a stone wall covered
in ivy – light up the brain
on the right side, not a path
but a kind of network – a
kind of pleasing, jewel-color
spontaneously sprung-
up landscape of a network
across that perpendicular
of the plane across the street

the segment of sidewalk
requires two steps,
with every so often a stutter
needed to avoid enacting
the warning of the saying

there's a segment of sidewalk
on Fairfax laid sideways
that looks human
head, torso, no arms,
like a block, like a child's
plastic peg to fit into its counter-
parted hole. it resembles the body
of a knight on a tomb in a cathedral,

but minimalist, a knob-head, an elongated arch of a body. I also avoid stepping on this.

Across the street, walks a woman, who has lost a great deal of weight over the past year in her dedicated walking; she is carrying a white CD player; white wires vining up into her ears; her clothes are all black: black sweat pants, black sweatshirt and a black hooded cowl: with that hood she looks like an image out of the middle ages, except for the white CD, which she carries – flat like a plate in front of her as she walks briskly towards the colored lights.

On this gray Sunday, there are the tiniest hints of snowflakes. The dogs, one old, one young, tug along.

sidewalk n. A footwalk by the side of a street or road; specifically, a paved or otherwise prepared way for pedestrians in a town, usually separated from the roadway by a curb and gutter. Also (in Great Britain nearly always called *pavement*): He loved few things better than to look out of the arched window, and see a little girl driving her hoop along the sidewalk, or school-boys of at a game of ball. Hawthorne. *Seven Gables*, xi

Along the highway in Nairobi, in the morning, heading towards the city center, a line of people walked along in single file, occasionally two people together. On the other side of the road, there was no one walking on the footpath. The path was located some distance from the highway. In the evening, on the footpath along the highway, people were walking away from the center of the city a line, and there was no one on the footpath on the other side of the highway.

Driving west on Nolensville Road at dusk, a figure of a man, and then a woman, each dressed in dark clothing, walk east along the shoulder; they are not on the road at twilight, but very close to it, spaced at some distance from each other, perhaps twenty feet, walking away from the city. They are very close to the car moving at great speed at twilight, inches, a foot? two feet? less, walking home from work, from a bus stop or a drop-off place.

There are pointless deaths, it seems. Preventable. Traffic fatalities, for example on the shoulder of the road. My sons, my husband, all, chide me for a relentless negativity. For a grinding tone that comes out of, seemingly, nowhere. For example, this next remark about the lack of drivers' education in public high schools and the high incidence of

traffic fatalities in the state. Or the dearth of physical education in the public school system and the high rate of diabetes. But these are subjects different from the subject of the sidewalk and well-being. I could go on, but I am intent on focusing upon, discovering, and charting a different kind of neural pathway.

at the corner of blair and natchez trace
 on the low hedge of holly,
 a few scattered berries
 someone has placed a red, woolen hand

There were no sidewalks in town, said one interviewee after another. *There were wooden sidewalks above the mud*, said one after the other in describing how rough the mining town was, how far away. How early was his or her arrival to the immigrant community, thus establishing her position or rank in relation to its settlement and development. *There weren't even any sidewalks*. As if to say, There was not yet civilization, there was not yet community, or, perhaps, there was not yet anything that would become familiar.

"The pavement was dry and hard; the road was hammered silver. Walking home through the desolation one could tell oneself the story of the dwarf, of the blind man, of the party in the Mayfair mansion, of the quarrel in the stationer's shop. Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enough to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind but can put on briefly for a few moments the bodies and minds of others."

It is true what she says: it does not take the eye very long to find some object that bemuses. Just how long will that pumpkin remain on the curb? orange moving through several holiday seasons. The heart in a tree next to the sidewalk, its outline painted, so that from across the street it looks like a mosaic. In in the second half of the walk, figure 8 of a loop (left side of the walk & in the brain) just about to embark on a little negative descent that begins: *If only*. . . at that moment, the eye perceives: winterberry – outside an eastern-facing window, well-placed & thriving, ha! – laughter encapsulated in a red glossy dot, hundreds of tiny beads, each on a fragile gray branch.

The step itself is an iamb – one–two, one–two. Even. It's enough, as they used to say, to get your head on straight.

The knees preclude running; thus the view is slowmo. A solitary walk is preferred to walking with a companion. This is brain time. This is

hearing-yourself-think time. Get outside to get inside time; also time inside to get outside. The preferred scenery is not spectacular; it's worldly; it's familiar. No oohs and ahs. This is the point.

Yesterday evening, someone was coming up quickly from behind: a long shadow, the sun being far to the south & east so close to the solstice in mid-winter, so that the shadows fell at strange angles on the sidewalk.

"A complex network of connections necessary for language comprehension has been mapped in new detail according to recent research. These newly charted pathways will help scientists understand how language is processed in the brain, and how injuries disrupt the system... .

"The results have revealed a far more extensive network for language functions than current models would have predicted,' . . .

"The network included a core region within the left mid-temporal lobe of the brain and extended to the frontal and parietal cortex in both halves of the brain – all connected by long distance communication pathways. The next step for scientists is to explore whether other language abilities, such as talking, reading, and writing, also have such dynamic networks."

The copy of *Twice-Told Tales* was formerly in the possession of Vincent Stanulonius; Rachel Lemovitz, H. 8, Oct. 20, 1927; also Luther Brosislaus. Inside the book is an imprint in purple ink, written in all upper case letters: *HIGH SCHOOL OF COMMERCE WORCESTER, MASS.* The collection is published by the Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, edited by J. Hubert Scott. A.M., Academy of Northwestern University, Illinois, introduction by George Parsons Lathrop. There is an image of a young man/god playing the pipes above an illuminated lantern under a tree: *Tout bien ou rien*. The Riverside Press 1907. The cover is pine green cloth, with two columns along each edge, *Twice Told Tales* in the center. Inside the back cover, it says: *Mary-Smith 3/10/26 Hall 7.*

"Yes; and I can see that the pretty child is weary of this wide and pleasant street, with the green trees flinging their shade across the quiet sunshine, and the pavements and the side-walks all as clean as if the housemaid had just swept them with her broom. She feels that impulse to go strolling away – that longing after mystery in the great world – which many children feel, and which I felt in my childhood."

"A Bird came down the Walk –
 He did not know I saw –
 He bit an Angleworm in halves
 And ate the fellow, raw, . . ."

We would draw rooms of houses with chalk on the sidewalk, furniture, doors and windows, and when we wanted to expand, we drew them on the street where we had to move over whenever a car approached from up or down the street; the chalk that worked best for this purpose was not the chalk for chalkboards (sidewalk chalk was not invented and if it was we didn't know about it) but the chalk that was to be had in pieces broken off from the walls of the houses being newly constructed, the remnant pieces literally there for the taking scattered on the lots or just outside the foundation in the heaps of the discarded building materials. The disadvantage of this chalk was that it came in one color: white; the advantage – it lasted, and it could write over both cement and asphalt without snapping apart, crumbling in the hand, leaving the knuckles, suddenly and unexpectedly scraping against the pavement. In this way, two little girls for several years imagined houses, rooms; what was never resolved, as far as I was concerned, was, that while the doors and windows could be imagined and walked through, and even

the stationary aspect of
the furniture (once drawn,
a chair had to stay in
its corner, a vase with
flowers, a table, the path
to the door, the chimney)
could be accommodated
in the imagining, there
was never a truly
satisfactory way of walking
from one level to another.

“Now, researchers. . . have used advanced brain imaging techniques to show that remembering the past and envisioning the future may go hand-in-hand, with each process sparking strikingly similar patterns of an activity within precisely the same broad network of brain regions. “. . . First, the study clearly demonstrates that the neural network underlying future thoughts is not isolated in the brain’s frontal cortex, as some have speculated. . .

“Second, within this neural network, patterns of activity suggest that the visual and spatial context for our imagined future often is pieced together using our past experiences, including memories of specific body movements and visual perspective changes – data stored as we navigated through similar settings in the past.

“These findings. . . offer strong support for a relatively recent theory of memory, which posits that remembering the past and envisioning the future draw upon many of the same neural mechanisms. . . Previous speculation has been based largely on the anecdotal observation of very young children cases of severe depression and brain damaged persons with amnesia.”

Concrete Trip Fall Hazard Repair: Many sidewalks over time will heave or settle producing a rise or depression between joints in concrete sidewalks, lead walks, patios etc. Left untreated these breaks produce trip fall hazards. A trip / fall hazard produces unwanted liabilities for property managers and owners.

Cracked Concrete Repair: Cracked concrete could be the result of freeze / thaw damage, poor quality concrete or the result of damage due to stress. The fact is, concrete cracks are the main reason construction and expansion joints are placed in concrete, to control cracking once it starts. The underlying cause of the crack or cracking, and the thickness of the cracks, will determine whether or not the area should be repaired. An area of sidewalk that has obvious underlining problems such as tree root problems, freeze/thaw, soft soil and the issues have

caused cracks ½ inch or wider should be addressed.

Q.: I have been contracted to build 2,000 linear feet of 5-foot-wide, 4-inch-thick sidewalk on a 4-inch gravel base. The specifications call for expansion joints every 20 feet. I contend that expansion joints are needed at a minimum of every 50 feet and where the walk will abut existing structures. Control joints will be cut every 5 feet. Am I right in suggesting expansion joints every 50 feet? A.: According to several industry sources, expansion joints, even at 50-foot intervals, are not necessary for the sidewalk project. Long stretches of concrete do not require intermediate **expansion joints**. Proper use of contraction joints at short spacings of 5 feet will allow for proper movement of the individual sidewalk slabs. Due to normal shrinkage of the concrete after placement, the slab probably will never expand and become larger than it is at the time of placement. The fact is, concrete cracks are the main reason construction and expansion joints are placed in concrete, to control cracking once it starts.

Isolation joints, however, will be needed where the walk will abut existing structures. According to ACI 332, "Guide to Residential Cast-in-place Concrete Construction," **isolation joints**, sometimes called **expansion joints**, are only necessary to separate the sidewalk from a fixed or different concrete structure. Examples include separating the sidewalk from lampposts, hydrants, footings, buildings, driveways, and curbs.

- How many feet before an expansion joint is installed in concrete sidewalk?
10 feet
- Why does the expansion joint in a sidewalk get narrower in the summer and wider in the winter?
In heat the sidewalks contract as when the winter comes the coolness causes the sidewalks to contract.
- What should be the thickness of a concrete sidewalk?
It depends on the size of the sections, but generally, no less than 4 inches.
- How many square feet of concrete in a yard?
9 sq. feet

20. Concrete sidewalks are always laid in sections with gaps between each section. For example, the drawing shows three identical 2.4 m sections, the outer two of which are against immovable walls. The two identical gaps between the sections are provided so that thermal expansion will not create

thermal stress that could lead to cracks. What is



Boulevard du Temple, 1995, Georg Aerni, *Panoramas parisiens*, Paris, 1994-96.

“He took these shots from the opposite sidewalk during the years 1995 and 1996 in the early morning hours when the streets were still devoid of cars, provided side streets or construction sites didn't interfere with his work. Moreover, he divided the buildings and blocks, which varied in length, into an even rhythm. In the context of the exhibition he lines the images up, matching the precisely adjusted sky-gray barite prints so that the façades at the same depth in each image insure horizontal continuity. . . In Aerni's *Panoramas parisiens* the frontal view prevents any kind of hierarchy. Attic and ground floor levels are given equal status.”

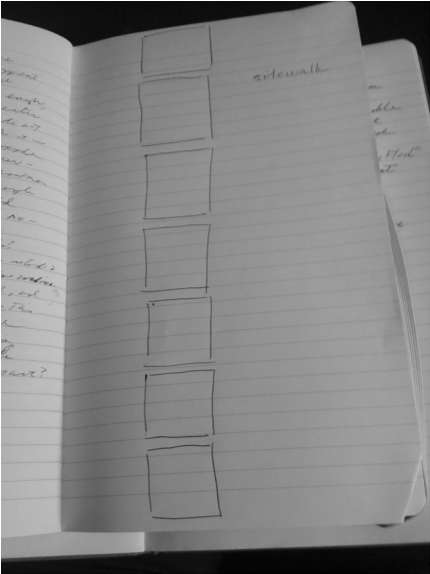
“The deep projection of the second story gave the house such a meditative look that you could not pass it without the idea that it had secrets to keep, and an eventful history to moralize upon. In front, just on the edge of the unpaved sidewalk, grew the Pyncheon Elm, which in reference to such trees as one usually meets with, might well be termed gigantic.”

“Well advanced as Hepzibah was, she could not remember when Uncle Venner, as the neighborhood called him, had not gone up and down the street, stooping a little and drawing his feet heavily over the gravel or pavement. But still there was something tough and vigorous about him, that not only kept him in daily breath, but enabled him to fill a place which would have else have been vacant in the apparently crowded world.”

December 26, Thursday. I noticed sound first – not what was visual – but quiet – absence of noise, traffic, motion, (commotion) – around my ears. It was as if there were a kind of smooth, soothing cushion on either side – a surprise – this quiet around on either side of the body, on either side of the sidewalk, walking along up the slight rise of the hill.

“All you need now is to stand at the window and let your rhythmical sense open and shut, boldly and freely, until one thing melts into another; until the taxis are dancing with the daffodils, until a whole has been made from all these separate fragments. I am talking nonsense, I know. What I mean is, summon all your courage, exert all your

vigilance, invoke all the gifts that Nature has been induced to bestow. Then let your rhythmical sense wind itself in and out among men and women, omnibuses, sparrows— whatever comes along the street— . . .”



“ . . .As if there were magic in the sound, the sidewalks of the street, both up and down along, are immediately thronged with two long lines of people, all converging hitherward, and steaming into the church. Perhaps the far-off roar of a coach draws nearer — a deeper thunder by its contrast with the surrounding stillness — until it sets down the wealthy worshipers at the portal, among their humblest brethren. Beyond the entrance, in theory at the least, there are no distinctions of earthly rank, nor, indeed, by the godly apparel which is fluttering the sun, would there seem to be such, on the hither side.”

Within the arterial network of the city, in addition to the streets and sidewalks, there is also the alley, a narrow artery that connects two cross-streets; behind the house, time manifests itself: (new construction) day-to-day, across the alley, the lot is filled: a house is doubling in size, its wooden ribs are still exposed. The new garage brings size into the eye's view-finder, adjusts focus into **loom** mode. a man is *walking in air* above a fence; he spits into the alley. In any case, the eye adjusts. The eye will adjust to spatial change: change is not so difficult; one can adapt and move through the shifts — re-think it — a small lawn has now been covered over; new neighbors will walk inside a structure; (*I* was the new neighbor) (in a house expanded) (its insides gutted) (original inner workings – removed); the bungalow, once scorned, (blighting the open space) now sacred, even sacrosanct. We wake to the sound of a hammer against wood, echoes. In any case, three people work in December.

“Andava un giorno per una strada della sua città, seguito da due bravi, e accompagnato da un tal Cristoforo, altre volte giovine di bottega e, dopo chiusa questa, diventato maestro di casa. Era un uomo di circa cinquant'anni, affezionato, dalla gioventù, a Lodovico, che aveva veduto

nascere, e che, tra salario e regali, gli dava non solo da vivere, ma di che mantenere e tirar su una numerosa famiglia. Vide Lodovico spuntar da lontano un signor tale, arrogante e soverchiatore di professione, col quale non aveva mai parlato in vita sua, ma che gli era cordiale nemico, . . . Tutt'e due camminavan resente al muro; . . ." (In other words, two men approached each other on a narrow sidewalk, each claiming the space closest to the wall, and farthest from the dirty, muddy, foul, street; neither would cede, the one whose life was devoted to arrogance and being overbearing and the other, a *hothead* with rightful pride and rights denied. And so one story unfolds. A character's. A storyline. *Un romanzo*. A concept. A language.)

..... Adria Bernardi



Lodovico primo del duello, illus. Francesco Gonin (1808-1889),
IV, I Promessi sposi (The Betrothed) Alessandro Manzoni



“Il duello tra Lodovico e “un signor tale, arrogante e soverchiatore di professione”. Illus. Francesco Gonin (1808-1889)
IV, I Promessi sposi (The Betrothed) Alessandro Manzoni

At the center of the crux of this matter that is a pathway is a contusion that must be in some way eased through — *a new model of urban living*, says the sign; this *new model of urban living* being, essentially, suburban; and here it is again: conflict; and for all the wish to tread lightly, step lightly, without discontinuity, here is another knot; the placement of mailboxes is a sub-division of tussle: where memories are made: the long driveway? the perfect lawn? or city sidewalks—busy sidewalks, dressed in holiday style, people about, bustling, commotion, their heads, floating ahead, hats, as *balloons*? remember! remember that plaque, *this urban living* was originally suburban, an early suburban settlement, here, at the outskirts of all that city, where someone (bard barb) winced, one way or another, at prairie and farmland disappearing, at middlebrow suburb springing up; here's the burr of another knot, what we want, what we don't, what's distant, what's near, unravelling it, in a ramble within the eye, with the ear.

“It was the first of the January thaw. . . – to see the stream of ladies gliding along these slippery sidewalks. . .”

“In my own case, poor human nature may be allowed a few misgivings. . . Yonder dingily white remnant of a huge snow-bank, — which will yet cumber the sidewalk till the latter days of March, — over or through that wintry waste must I stride onward. . .”

“As the stores close, a winter light
opens air to iris blue,
glint of frost through the smoke,
grains of mica, salt of the sidewalk. . .”

A hopscotch in February is drawn repeatedly on a sidewalk, half-size, miniature, in hot pink and tangerine (it's springtime, almost) across five segments of sidewalk, and into a sixth, and not entirely straight, it gives the appearance of unevenly stacked boxes, like something from Dr. Seuss, slightly curved, a stairway, an entryway into another world into which you hip-hop in your mind.

“25. During these days in Bamako, at the end of each afternoon, I wait for the moment to take an evening stroll around the streets of the Medina. On the great two-lane boulevard, the Route de Koulikoro, at the hour the neon rods light up everywhere above the doors, people sit on steps, in air that is filled with dust. Nobody is selling anything anymore, the stalls are closed up with rope. It's a party because the day is over, and wherever you look everyone is there chatting. Not one single person who passes by is in a hurry. It's the same on the street as it is on the sidewalk because cars no longer have the right of way over pedestrians. A few shop doors are open, and you see merchants who are playing dominoes. One understands the hour by people's movements, always more relaxed toward evening. The impression is one of being in the country in the evening, in summer, but in a countryside full of houses. Someone carries on a conversation in the shade, a girl goes to get water from the pump again, someone a little ways off plays the conjurer from the bush, some fat ladies fan themselves in front of a house, some thin men pick their teeth.”

Notes

According to a study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania, the network of arteries in the brain called the *circle of Willis* more is more likely to be incomplete in migraineurs than in non-migraineurs. Diana-Lee, “Migraine Associated with Incomplete Brain Artery-Structure,” *migraine.com* July 30, 2013.

The post-it note with ‘temporal collage’ and ‘co-existence of asynchronisities’ written on it was made sometime between 1990 and 1993 after reading an article that included a quote from urban planner Kevin Lynch; it resurfaced as I

began to write this essay.

Victoria Hill. "Convivial Encounters: Word and Image in the Work of Rebecca West," presentation, "Literature and Cinema in Italian Cultural Studies: A Conference in Honor of Rebecca West, William J. Kenan, Jr., Distinguished Service Professor, University of Chicago, December 5-6, 2013.

"The external world, like us, is embodied in materiality, and we living humans share in what (Gianni) Celati might call the absolute condition of presence. The best, perhaps, that we can ever do with things, places, and people is to recognize what Melville named the 'unconditional democracy of all things' and what Celati explores in his writings and video work as the 'state of potential' of silent things. . ." 137;

"I felt at that moment all the weight, and all the strangeness, of coincidences, of connections made across time and space, and of what I can only now call the 'literariness' of life and the 'life' of great literature that can put its signature, so to speak, on certain lived moments, thereby highlighting and crystallizing a feeling, an emotion, an otherwise inexpressible sentiment." Rebecca J West, *Gianni Celati: The Craft of Everyday Storytelling*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 6-7.

"The Circulus Arteriosus Cerebri. The anterior and posterior communicating arteries indirectly connect the internal carotid arteries of the two sides and the basilar system, so that an arterial circle is formed at the base of the brain. . ." *The Essentials of Human Anatomy*, Russell T. Woodburne, Oxford University Press London Toronto 1973. 280

Sidewalk looking west (toward natchez trace, nashville, tennessee, blair boulevard," Photo by author taken with cellphone. December 13, 2013.

"Patience Mashele said she had seen Mandela three times in her life. She had put on a green, gold & green skirt and left her house in Pretoria before dawn.. ." This is a summary of the account in the newspaper article, "It's the People's Turn to Pay Tribute," by Lydia Polgreen, Nicholas Kulish and Alan Cowell, *New York Times*, p. 1 and p. 14, Thursday, Dec. 12, 2012.

Photo (taken at kitchen table with cellphone) of photograph by Jacoline Prinsloo, in *The New York Times* article by Nicholas Kulish, published Friday, December 13, 2013, p. 14, showing people standing in line to catch a bus to see the body of Nelson Mandela in Pretoria, South Africa. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/13/world/africa/body-of-nelson-mandela-lies-in-state.html?_r=0] A Long Goodbye for Mandela Photo Jacoline Prinsloo/DIRCO via Associated Press

“Type of Cognitive Processing Brief Description. Holistic Processing information from whole to part; sees the big picture first, not the details. . .”
www.web-us.com/brain/braindominance.htm

“The section of the pavement of sidewalk in front of the house measures 5' x 5'. It was measured with a wooden yardstick. . .”
 1902. Charles Wolf and partner John Fox start City Furniture Company in downtown Altoona PA. 1915 Charles Wolf buys out Fox's interest and begins construction on a five-story building at 1501 11th Avenue called Wolf Furniture Company. It is the largest furniture store between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg. 1918. Flu epidemic hits U.S. people die including Charles Wolf, age 54. His widow Annie C., mother of five, faces major responsibility, including a substantial mortgage on the recently constructed building. . .” from www.wolffurniture.com/about/history

“**sidewalk** n. A footwalk by the side of a street or road; specifically, a paved or otherwise prepared way for pedestrians in a town, usually separated from the roadway by a curb and gutter. . .” *The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language* (New York: The Century Co., 1914).

Adria Bernardi, *Houses with Names: the Italians of Highwood, Illinois* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

“The pavement was dry and hard; the road was hammered silver. Walking home through the desolation one could tell oneself the story of the dwarf, of the blind man, of the party in the Mayfair mansion, of the quarrel in the stationer's shop. Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enough to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind but can put on briefly for a few moments the bodies and minds of others. One could become a washerwoman, a publican, a street singer. And what greater delight and wonder can there be than to leave the straight lines of personality and deviate into the footpaths that lead beneath the brambles and thick tree trunks into the heart of the forest where live those wild beasts, our fellow men?” Virginia Woolf, “Street Haunting,” *The Death of the Moth*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1942), 35. Excerpts from “Street Haunting” “Henry James” and “A Letter to Young Poet from THE DEATH OF THE MOTH AND OTHER ESSAYS by Virginia Woolf. Copyright 1942 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company; Copyright (c) renewed 1970 by Marjorie T. Parsons, Executrix. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

“For the eye has this strange property: it rests only on beauty; like a butterfly it seeks colour and basks in warmth. . . The thing it cannot do (one is speaking of the average unprofessional eye) is compose these trophies in such a way as

to bring out the more obscure angles and relationships." Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting," *The Death of the Moth*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1942), 23.

"According to the Nashville government website, \$23 million has been dedicated to sidewalks, ramps and bikeways since 2004. . ." Joyce V. Harrison, "Sidewalks coming (sooner or later) to Nashville," *Yahoo Contributor Network*. Oct. 20, 2011 voices.yahoo.com/sidewalks-coming-sooner-later-nashville.

"A complex network of connections necessary for language comprehension has been mapped in new detail according to recent research. . ." "Newly Identified Brain Pathways Vital to Understanding Language" *ScienceDaily*, Nov. 22, 2010.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Little Annie's Ramble," *Twice Told Tales*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1907), 142.

"A Bird came down the Walk – " (328) Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, (Boston and Toronto: Little Brown and Company, 1960), 156.

"Now, researchers from Washington University in St. Louis have used advanced brain imaging techniques to show that remembering the past and envisioning the future may go hand-in-hand, with each process sparking strikingly similar patterns of activity within precisely the same broad network of brain regions. . ." "First, the study clearly demonstrates that the neural network underlying future thought is not isolated in the brain's frontal cortex, as some have speculated. Although the frontal lobes play a well-documented role in carrying out future-oriented executive functions, such as anticipation, planning and monitoring, the spark for these activities may well be the very process of envisioning oneself in a specific, future event, an activity based within and reliant upon the same neutrally distributed network used to retrieve autobiographical memories.

"Second, within this neural patterns of activity suggest that the visual and spatial context for our imagined future often is pieced together using our past experiences, including memories of specific body movements and visual perspective changes – data stored as we navigated through similar settings in the past.

"These findings (Kathleen) McDermott (associate professor of psychology in Arts & Sciences and of radiology in the School of Medicine at Washington University) suggests, offer strong support for a relatively recent theory of memory, which posits that remembering the past and envisioning the future draw upon many of the same neural mechanisms. Previous speculation has

been based largely on the anecdotal observation of very young children, cases of severe depression and brain damaged persons with amnesia.” “Imaging Pinpoints Brain Regions That ‘See The Future’, *Science Daily*. January 7, 2007. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/01/070102092224.htm>.

“Concrete Trip Fall Hazard Repair: Many sidewalks over time will heave or settle producing a rise or depression between joints in concrete sidewalks, lead walks, patios etc. Left untreated these breaks produce trip fall hazards...” <http://www.surfaceking.com/concrete-repair.htm>

Q: I have been contracted to build 2,000 linear feet of 5-foot-wide, 4-inch-thick sidewalk on a 4-inch gravel base. (<http://www.concreteconstruction.net/concrete-construction/expansion-joints-not-needed-in-sidewalk.aspx>)

“Isolation joints, however, will be needed where the walk will abut existing structures. According to ACI 332, “Guide to Residential Cast-in-place Concrete Construction <http://www.concreteconstruction.net/concrete-construction/expansion-joints-not-needed-in-sidewalk.aspx>

“How many feet before an expansion joint is installed in concrete sidewalk?” http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_many_feet_before_an_expansion_joint_is_installed_in_concrete_sidewalk

“20. Concrete sidewalks are always laid in sections with gaps between each section. . .” <http://course1.winona.edu/fotto/physics202/pdfs/>

“He took these shots from the opposite sidewalk during the years 1995 and 1996 in the early morning hours when the streets were still devoid of cars, . . .” Joerg Bader – *THE URBAN WANDERER GEORG AERNI (E)* from: Georg Aerni – *Slopes & Houses*, Wien, 2002. Boulevard du Temple, 1995, Baryt-Prints, 10 Teile/parts, je/each 43.3x28.3 cm, 43.3x287.5cm, 5/12 Georg Aerni, *Panoramas parisiens*, Paris, 1994-96. Conception graphique: Pascal Guédin, Coffret de dépliants panoramiques, 11.5x17.5cm Edition Paris-Musées, Paris, 1996 . Catalogue d'exposition Musée Carnavalet, <http://www.georgaerni.ch/arbeiten-works/panoramas-parisiens>;

“The deep projection of the second story gave the house such a meditative look that you could not pass it without the idea that . . .” Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Chapter I. The Old Pyncheon Family,” *The House of Seven Gables*. (New York: Bantam Dell, A Division of Random House, Inc., 2007), 20.

“Well advanced as Hepzibah was, she could not remember when Uncle Venner, as the neighborhood called him, had not gone up and down the street, stooping a little and drawing his feet heavily over the gravel or

pavement. . . " Nathaniel Hawthorne, " Chapter 4. A Day Behind the Counter," *The House of Seven Gables*, (New York: Bantam Dell, A Division of Random House, Inc., 2007), 50.

"All you need now is to stand at the window and let your rhythmical sense open and shut, boldly and freely, until one thing melts into another, . . ." Virginia Woolf, "A Letter to a Young Poet," *The Death of the Moth*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1942), 221

". . .As if there were magic in the sound, the sidewalks of the street, both up and down along, . . ." Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Sunday at Home," *Twice Told Tales*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1907), 35-36.

On the bungalow: "Buildings fall; even the earth perishes. What was yesterday a cornfield is today a bungalow. But words, if properly used, seem able to live for ever. What, then, we may ask next, is the proper use of words? Not, so we have said, to make a useful statement; for a useful statement is a statement that can mean only one thing. And it is the nature of words to mean many things." Virginia Woolf, "Craftsmanship," *The Death of the Moth and other Essays*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), 201.

"Is not genius itself restricted, or at least influenced in its very essence by the consciousness that its gifts are to the few, its concern with the few, and its revelation apparent only to scattered enthusiasts who may be the advance guard of the future or only a little band strayed from the high road and doomed to extinction while civilization marches irresistibly elsewhere? All this Henry James poised, pondered, and held in debate. No doubt the influence upon the direction of his work was profound. But for all that he went serenely forward; bought a house, bought a typewriter, shut himself up, surrounded himself with furniture of the right period, and was able at the critical moment by the timely, though rash, expenditure of a little capital to ensure that certain hideous new cottages did not deface his point of view." Virginia Woolf, "Henry James," *The Death of the Moth and other Essays*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company 1942), 150-151.

"Andava un giorno per una strada della sua città, Alessandro Manzoni, Chapter 4, *I promessi sposi: storia Milanese del secolo XVII. Lodovico prima del duello*, Illustration by Francesco Gonin, from *I promessi sposi: storia Milanese del secolo XVII*, Chapter 4, Alessandro Manzoni. Gugliemini e Radaelli, 1840, Milan. Wikisource.

"Il duello tra *Lodovico* e "un signor tale, arrogante e soverchiatore di professione. Illustration by Francesco Gonin, from *I promessi sposi: storia Milanese del secolo XVII*, Chapter 4, Alessandro Manzoni. Gugliemini e Radaelli, 1840, Milan.

Wikisource.

"It was the first of the January thaw. . . It gladdened him, —a gladness with a sigh breathing through it,—to see the stream of ladies, gliding along the slippery side-walks, . . ." Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Peter Goldthwaite's Treasure," *Twice Told Tales*. (Cambridge, Mass.:. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1907), 309.

"In my own case, poor human nature may be allowed a few misgivings. . . Yonder dingily white remnant of a huge snow-bank, — which will yet cumber the sidewalk till the latter days of March,. . ." Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Night Sketches, Beneath an Umbrella," *Twice Told Tales*, (Cambridge, Mass.:. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1907), 478-79.

"As the stores close, a winter light / opens air to iris blue, / "This selection is from Denise Levertov, "February Evening in New York," in *The Collected Poems of Denise Levertov*, (New York: New Directions, 2013), 105. "February Evening in New York" By Denise Levertov, from COLLECTED EARLIER POEMS 1940-1960, copyright ©1960 by Denise Levertov. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

"Notebook 5. . . 25. During these days in Bamako, at the end of each afternoon, I wait for the moment to take an evening stroll around the streets of the Medina. . ."This excerpt was originally published in *Adventures in Africa* by Gianni Celati, translated by Adria Bernardi. It was published by The University of Chicago Press in 2000 and is reprinted here by kind permission. This passage appears on pp. 99-100.

Adria Bernardi's translation of the poetry of Ubaldo de Robertis, *The Rings of the Universe*, was recently published by Chelsea Editions. Her collection of personal essays, *Dead Meander*, was published by Kore Press.

"We would draw rooms of houses" was published on Kore Press, Poem of the Week, May 27, 2015 <http://www.korepress.org/AdriaBernardiPOW.htm>

V

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yet to end

BLACK ICE

.....

It was cold outside, and dark, the sort of winter evening when the cold and the dark seem fused together, a single entity, and the exhausts of the shoppers' cars were visible pouring into the Target parking lot when, as I was loading my car, I heard a man yell. I turned to see a father and two boys standing at the crosswalk in front of the store. *Everyone slow down*, he said, loudly enough that heads turned across the lot. *Everybody just slow the fuck down*. He held the younger boy, maybe six or seven, by the upper arm, pulling it back and up. The boy had, apparently, started into the crosswalk without looking both ways.

The traffic stopped, and the man, still yelling, directed the boys to cross. As they moved through the crosswalk, he let the younger one go. *This god damned fool almost got himself killed*, he said, not looking at anyone. The three of them wove between the parked cars. The older boy, willowy, his face hollow in the hollow of his deep hood, struck the younger boy on the back of his head. *Hit him again*, the man said. *He deserves it*. The younger boy darted to the car. His brother followed like a movie hit man.

The man was calmer now, but still loud. He told the boy to get in the car and sit on his hands. A woman and her grown daughter walked past me, and they arched their eyebrows so that I could share in their disapproval. The boy got into the car. He was to stay there alone while his father and brother crossed the parking lot to the the bright stores across the plaza. He was to sit on his hands in the cold and the dark, learning how anger fuses to love, like ice on a road.

..... Shane Seely

BLACK TUESDAY

St. Louis, MO, 2014

About suffering they were never wrong, the Old Masters
—Auden

.....

The day after it was announced that charges would not be brought against Darren Wilson for killing Michael Brown, I took my daughter to the grocery store. It was the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, and she had eaten that morning at breakfast the last of her yogurt. Maria loves yogurt, the rich, unsweetened, full-fat kind, and will eat it sometimes for two meals a day. Organic, of course, and hormone-free, because we are that kind of parents. As Maria and I moved quietly through the bright aisles of food, she studied the packaging, looking for animal faces. We stopped beside a cereal box that featured a lemur. *Hello lemur*, we said. Its arms were raised in a playful stance, but it looked, on this morning, like surrender. Around us, shoppers lingered near the boxes of oatmeal and granola, their heads down. I realized that I was holding my breath. *Goodbye, lemur*, we said. See you again soon.

After the grocery, we went to the mall and visited her mother, who manages an upscale children's clothing store. When we arrived, my wife excused herself to her employees, who idled behind the cash registers, and we walked down the wide hall. The place—the whole mall—was bright and nearly empty. Black Friday was approaching, part of our national celebration of indulgence; this day, then, a sort of fasting. Across the mall, store clerks set their wares. Maria stopped to hug a huge stuffed penguin.

The empty hallways of the Galleria magnified whatever feeling you projected into them. They seemed to me and to my wife to be full of grief, as though the whole city had collapsed into silence. To another, I suppose, the building may have rung with fear—that Friday, the mall would be occupied by protesters chanting "Hands up, don't shoot!" and carrying signs that said BLACK LIVES MATTER before lying down on the floor of the atrium near the massive artificial Christmas tree, as though they were dead. Parents would hurry their children from the line where they had been waiting to sit in the lap of the man dressed as Santa Claus. My wife's boss would call from Chicago and tell her that

she could close her store if she felt unsafe. She would not. A customer would enter, a middle-aged white woman. "Aren't you afraid," she would say in a low voice, "that they will get up and start looting?"

That Tuesday, the city was like a fist, clenched either in rage or in rigor. It was difficult to say. Or it was rage and rigor both, as I imagine in the body of Michael Brown as he lay dying in the middle of August, in the middle of Canfield Drive, in the middle of America: one fist clenched in rigor, the body giving way, the other clenched in rage. Rage the last color in his sky as he gutters on the pavement before the milling crowds.

Or the rage was in me, as I sat numb in that museum of commerce, and the rigor too, and I placed them in Michael Brown's body because I wanted him to breathe, wanted my anger and my numbness, like a mastodon locked in a shelf of ice, to matter. Or I placed them in Michael Brown's body because my possession of them was a guilty thing, a sort of luxury I hadn't earned.

On the way home, Maria fell asleep. I opened the car door quietly, carried her into the house, and laid her in our bed. Almost two hours later, I heard her stir. She began to cry, uncertain of where she was, where I was. I entered the dark bedroom. "I'm here, baby," I said, and I lifted her back into this world of cruelty and suffering and love.

FISSURES

.....

In the kitchen, by the counter, I could see Mama cutting. She was jerking back and forth over the—and I moved closer to the doorway. Ernest was digging through drawers, looking for spare pennies. Mama got a different blade and she was cutting. She returned it to its drawer and began to use her hands, her arms and each of her fingers. She kept working, and I moved farther in the door. Ernest left his post at the drawer and met me there. He led me away, so I couldn't see.

"Don't watch that," he said.

I asked why.

"Just don't."

We walked across the hall to the sitting room, and I could hear Mama, but she wasn't cutting. Something echoed through the walls and my head, and I couldn't make it stop. I just wanted it to. People were crying, and Mama was there, and Missy was shouting, and Ernest made me sit down. I watched them sob and shout and—

"Don't watch that," Ernest said.

And I asked why.

And Ernest said, "Just don't."

Then everyone was gone except for Missy and her wrench. She was turning and turning and her face was red but dry. I cried out, but she shushed me and said it would be all right. She kissed my head and then went back to turning. Then I was at the door, and Ernest was pulling me away. I bit him and ran back to Missy, who slapped me and called me an ass. Then Ernest was pulling and I was in the kitchen. Mama was serving me cheese and crackers and I told her I didn't like it and she shushed me. I could hear Ernest looking for spare pennies under the table, and he pushed over a chair by accident. Mama slapped him and called him an ass. Then Ernest was gone, and Mama was holding a candle and letting red wax drip to the floor. I yelled at her to stop, but she just yelled back and let the red drip as it sizzled her hands and her shoes and her sleeves and my face. Then Ernest was pulling me away and asking why I was crying. I couldn't stop and I couldn't breathe and I just wanted to see the wax again. I sat back down to eat and the wax was gone.

And I was in the sitting room, but I was standing over a wooden box. I wanted to open it, but Missy slapped my hand. Her blue dress rippled, and she pulled me away. Ernest sat with me in the corner of the sitting room while the others talked and cried around the box.

Then Ernest sat with me by the box while the others got dressed. He opened the box.

“Look,” he said.

I said I didn’t want to.

And he said “Look,” and I did.

There was Papa in the box and wax on his shirt and his shirt had been cut cut cut with holes in his fingers. I was mad because I wanted to see his prints, but I couldn’t because of the holes, and Ernest pulled me away.

And it was cold around the kitchen table and Mama wouldn’t let me have a fork and I spun the plates while she ate. She slapped me and called me an ass, and Ernest kissed my head and said it would be all right. Then Mama’s knife was hitting the table down and down, and the table cracked and the floor cracked and I cracked and there was wax. I tried to tell, but Ernest said don’t and I didn’t tell. I spit my cheese into the puddle of wax.

Then Missy was pulling me by the teeth to the sitting room. I was reading, and Missy was shooting. There were holes in the books, and I touched the holes. She let me, but I couldn’t read the words anymore. I was mad because I wanted the words. When Missy started turning, Ernest took me from the room.

“Don’t watch that,” Ernest said.

I said I wanted to.

He said, “Don’t.”

The kitchen was too dark and I tripped and I fell on my hands. There was a pipe in my leg and my leg was a pipe. I was hitting and hitting and calling the pipe an ass, and Mama was telling me to stop. I threw up wax and she hit me with my leg and it was cold and it was dark, and then my leg was tucked under a shelf, all clean and good. I was spitting crackers onto the carpet and Missy was slapping me and calling me an ass.

I handed Ernest my pennies and he kissed my head and I told him everything would be all right. He put the pennies in the kitchen, but no one was cutting. It was dark, and there was no box or wax or food, and I was hungry.

In the sitting room, Missy put me in Papa’s suit, but there was no wax, no cuts, no holes. Papa was watching me and smiling and frowning. He kissed my head and cut his suit, and we were sitting on the carpet, eating chocolate and crackers. I looked at the holes in

Papa's lips and pulled him by the teeth to the kitchen, where Mama was cutting and eating cheese and spitting wax. I didn't tell because he told me don't. Ernest was sitting on the carpet, taking my cheese and telling me about wax and holes and the pipes in the walls. I heard the water, and I was mad because it was trapped, and I slapped Ernest and called him an ass and he slapped me back.

"Don't," he said.

I said I wanted to.

"Still don't," he said, and he slapped me again.

The others were standing around me in the sitting room, crying and talking. I tried to touch them, but Ernest grabbed my arm.

"Don't," he said.

I asked why.

"Just don't," he said.

Ernest was in the box, but Missy wouldn't let me open it to tell him it would be all right, and it wouldn't be because it was made of wood. My leg was on the ground, covered in wax and not under a shelf because the shelf was a box. Mama was in it, and Ernest was crying and Missy slapped him and called him a kiss, and she was cutting and cutting and got a different knife and the knife was my leg.

Missy shouted Mama's name and Ernest was crying, but when Mama cried, Missy kissed her leg and said don't. Ernest was looking at the envelope, but Missy hit him with my leg. She had Mama's knife and Papa's shirt and Ernest was Mama. I sat in my box and shivered because it was cold. The sitting room had been empty since Missy slapped me.

I was alone in the dirt room next to the sitting room and it was cold and Missy was done turning. The walls were made of my leg, and Mama was kissing my head and telling me don't. She fed me veggies and crackers. There were holes in my leg and an envelope in the dirt full of names that I couldn't read. I was eating the envelope.

It tasted like chocolate and Papa's suit, and the box was cold and made of dirt and skin. My leg was made of pipe and Missy was cutting and pulling. Her wax fell on my knee and she hit me with the knife and told me it would be all right, and Papa kissed my head and lay in the box.

Ernest was pulling me to the sitting room by the envelope and was slapping me on the back and saying everything would be an ass. The envelope was soaking in my wax and I was crying and no one was telling me it would be all right because I was in Papa's box and Missy's blue dress. I needed a knife to take off my leg, but I couldn't see because it was dark and there were too many legs around my box that wasn't Papa's.

And the box was my leg and my leg was cold and hard. Ernest was

on the other side of my leg, and he handed me a rope and told me it would be all right, but then he went to look for spare pennies in the dirt. The dirt felt like wax and it smelled like Ernest's pennies. I tried to give them to him but he pushed my hand away.

"Don't," he said.

And Mama kissed me on the head and said don't and I called her an ass, and she pulled the wax from my ears and Ernest was taking my spare pennies from an envelope marked *mine*. I wanted to say my name so they knew it was mine, but my mouth was full of cheese and dripping wax and I was in the box with a rope. The others were behind my leg, crying and I tried to reach them, but the rope pulled me by the neck and told me don't.

SQUAWKING DESPOT

.....

The squawking despot
Flaps thin lips, shrugs a hoary tuft
And peacocks about the flock.

Hovering hand-me-down dinosaurs fawn: a
Murder of crows, raucous party of jays, wake of
Vultures, unkindness – some call it congress – of ravens.

Nature culls the herd, but
Humans coddle an imprecise science
So the orange dodo flies high.

..... **K.L. Fujiwara**

INVASIVE SPECIES

As type follows type, the accumulating slime of their decay raises the land above the waters, in which, as spectator of all, swims the octopus, the lone survivor from an earlier world.

-Roland Dixon *Oceanic Mythology*

.....

I

I watch creation with alien eyes.
Floating in a sea thick with land, I reach out
And touch new life, a neighbor unrefined,
Like its world. For a moment I feel doubt
And look across rough water at a sky
Dark with its first storm. The way back is lost.
I left my home in order to be free;
In this new world I'll shape my own story.

II

In our final days, my kind fell apart.
Cannibalism and debauchery
Reined, and our coral homes lay in shards
Across the sea. I felt so weary,
But in my eight arms I held a new start—
I cradle them through the cacophony
Seeking that dimensional rupture.
I say good bye, then make my departure.

III

It was not easy traveling though that crack
Its width—hardly that of my eye. No bones
Made it possible, not easy. Lack
Of structure is a theme in my new home.
I've seen continents rise, only to fall back,
Tumbling downward, returning to foam

..... Duke Trott

And sand. I rise and reach out in eight
Directions, feeling this world and its weight.

IV

This fresh creation is full of simple
Organisms whose consciousness pulses
Along my arms. Above, I see ripples.
I follow them to a shore and a plain
Of mud and fire—acid air which cripples
My limbs. I retreat to sooth my muscles
Under waves and lament the tragedy—
I can find no place for my prodigy.

V

But in one of the many coral ports
I find a chasm fit for my treasure,
This silky strand of eggs—then comes remorse.
True, in that moment of fatal pressure
I considered coming without the curse
Of motherhood, instead seeking leisure
In this new frontier, but I relented
And accepted life that will be my end.

VI

With my children secure, I venture out
To have a final meal before they come.
For hours, I look, and begin to doubt
If any food can be found in this scum,
But then something changes—there is a cloud
Around me of tiny life, I inhale them
Until I feel a vague satisfaction
And head back to die with my dear faction.

VII

Alone in the cave, I tend to my eggs
And think I see the future of this world.

It will possess calmer seas which segue
To puzzling land, upon which unfurl
Realms dominated by irregular
Creatures. This vision is lost in the whirl
Of memory and hunger that cloud my mind
And I think of the mate I left behind.

VIII

I think of him in the dark, feel his beak
Against mine, wonder if he still survives...
Then forget. Now, all memory is weak,
Save ancient instinct to protect the lives
Of those who will go out from here and seek
A corner in this new world for themselves.
As the first hatches, I begin to die,
Their birth is a chorus, my lullaby.

DIVINING THE PAST

.....

A long while has passed since I last spoke of the gray man, this one, not my invention, who comes calling, no less demanding because he comes uninvited, no relation.

Today he scowls over his coffee. I am guilty. I have forgotten him. The last time, I was a mere bystander, and he, feeling such terrible license, turned into God.

Perhaps he was only the angel of death. Never mind, it was enough to make me want to forget. We sit here not talking. Yes, he seems to nod, It is a long way back.

*

I pour a second cup of coffee, waiting. The gray man rolls a pipe between his palms, turning grayer as if in agreement. I go out unnoticed. I go looking for answers.

The corner market is selling yesterday's newspapers. The butcher wraps today's fish and meat in what's left, parceling it out.

Some say he can divine the future, but I know it's the past he sees in faces. If I took a number, what would he tell me? And would I wait or, hearing him call, walk past, making no answer?

*

At home, the chair and the coffee cup are empty. The note says simply, "*Tayere*, as you know, every poor man has a dry throat and wet boots. Well, now I am not so poor. This is to say, I am going."

I smile. The note is unsigned. There are no names between us. I imagine the door rattling shut behind him, the sound of his coat and shoes filling the street, indistinguishable. . . .

Better these soundless exits, not having to listen for the last audible step, or the following moment, the nameless ghosts of what we can only claim to remember, after the sound itself has been forgotten.

"Tayere," I read again. I keep the scrap in my notebook. Something might come of it. It could serve as a reminder.

But I can't help imagining the gray man smiling or my own imagined insistence, Tell me your name, for which there is no perceptible response, nothing out of the ordinary.

In that moment, does he lift his coffee cup to drink, finger a corner of the newspaper? Does he lean toward me or away?

And how am I to interpret his gesture? Ask again, I couldn't quite hear? Or could he mean he has forgotten, let the past go?

*

In the months that follow, the gray man remains aloof. He stays away. I grow more and more worried, unsure of what role to play: the adult child of a forgetful and punishing parent?

But am I the cause of his absence? Does my forgetfulness beget his? I am asking all the wrong questions. And who is there to answer?

*

I am meeting Kadya Molodovsky for lunch at the Jewish deli. I do not know what she looks like. I approach a gray-haired woman at the bar. She shakes her head, no, unsmiling, turns into a man.

Another woman beckons me over to her table. I lean forward. She tells me she's lost her glasses. Her nephew is late. There's supposed to be birthday cake, but she's forgotten how many candles.

Twenty-four? How many do I think would look nice? she wants to know. These things are important at her age, she says, patting my hand. You want to get them right.

I'll keep that in mind, I tell her, backing away, but already she is asking after her late nephew, Have you seen him or someone who looks like him?

And the man at the next table wants to know if the kreplach are like the ones his mother used to make. I decide to sit down to avoid confusion. I have no answers.

*

Kadya Molodovsky comes in, veiled in pipe-smoke. She knows me at once, pours raisins and almonds onto the table, some into my cupped hands.

I am not surprised at this wordless greeting, the way she sits, neither facing me nor turned entirely away. (The dead and the living have grown used to being apart.)

But I do not recognize my own awkwardness, my throat dry. I am unsure what to do with my hands. Words refuse to come, as if ghosts themselves, timid, seducible.

In the end, she is the first to speak. *You have come about the gray man*, she says. Through the pipe-smoke, I cannot tell if she is smiling, her words distant, unhesitating, and, still, I do not know what to say.

Yes, I want to tell her, Yes, that is why, to make of her words an accusation, something I know how to answer.—

It is not, as you say, that I stole him, lifted the gray man out of your poem. I saw him in passing. I am almost certain. He followed me, demanding, forlorn. And you tossed him out because of a rhyme. Still, you seem to nod, still. Perhaps what follows you keep to yourself.—

You have come about the gray man. The words echo between us, though she gives no sign of having spoken.

What if they are meant instead as encouragement?—Tell me what happened after you left him, you insist on knowing.

I put down the book, lit a candle in memory. It burned the full twenty-four hours, burned itself out. What else could I do? At the time, I did not know to say Kaddish.

Later, I opened *The Gates of Prayer*, mouthed a translation, but it did not appease him. The gray man stood on my doorstep, unnoticed.

His grayness, inconspicuous, mistakable, fit him like a uniform until I

began to forget, to think of him less or only as a doorman. One day in passing I thought to say Kaddish, said it from memory.

Perhaps here you nod, knowing the rest of the story. What more can I say? Even absence grows familiar? How quickly a year passes?—

You have come about the gray man. And if the words are made as an offering of advice, do I accept, pour out my doubts like so many flightless birds?

Does she put on glasses, study my expression, her own, sympathetic, quizzical, insistent? I wait. Even the table heaves a sigh. She says nothing.

She is always about to speak, and I, mouth open to receive her words, to return them, say nothing. We are caught up in this breathless waiting, our breathing, too, in agreement.

Listen, I want to hear her say, Be reassured. It is not as you believe that he comes when you forget or even when you remember. It has nothing and everything to do with you because you pursue him.

And if he will not be summoned, is he not like you in this, you who refused to write your name in the book and refused also to shut it behind you, but left it as you would a meal in the middle, a door ajar, all those moments not belonging fully to one world or the other?

When will you decide?—*You have come about the gray man.* Perhaps it is a question.

I can only repeat her words, turn them back. Yes, you have come about the gray man, I tell her.
Both of us nod.—

Afternoon turns to evening, and the waiter dims the lights, lays a cloth, a candle on the table between us. Do you strike the match, or do I?

We cover our eyes, recite the blessing, as if affirmation and mourning are all that are left, wait for the words to come in Hebrew—
עכשיו המדבר מדבר *Now the desert speaks*—out of a song or prayer, out of the desert we imagine between us. Who will be their interpreter?

*

Kadya Molodovsky turns to go, her hair having turned gray. She smiles and leans into my ear, whispering the faint smell of pipe-smoke.

Everything about her coils and recoils. I watch her turn entirely to smoke, hands, teeth, eyes, her shadow exhaled. Everything becomes part of her disappearing.

Even the door seems to be waiting. Her words, graying, inaudible, sink, coming to rest on the table, on the page of the newspaper I am reading: *You forget your words, too, are pipe-smoke.*

Notes

Tayere (Yiddish) means dear.

Kadya Molodovsky is a Yiddish poet, 1894-1975.

"And you tossed him out because of a rhyme" is based on a line translated from Kadya Molodovsky's poem "Chad Gadya."

Kaddish (Hebrew) is a prayer in praise of God or, as in this reference, the mourner's prayer.

"עכשיו המדבר מדבר" Now the desert speaks ("Akshav ha-midbar medaber") is a line from the song "The Desert Speaks" ("המדבר מדבר" "Ha-midbar Medaber" in Hebrew) by Yosefa.

WHAT MAKES US THE CREATURES WE MUST BE

.....

He bought rocket bottles by the gross that summer. Rockets that lingered on through the next, a year parched in a way Indiana shouldn't get. With sparkler as ignition he could throw off two dozen into the night as if reminding the world he was still here. And they would rise, squealing into darkness between elm and maple leaves, past unused telephone lines and crooked reminders of the places alleys used to run. Rise up each small rocket until a violent pop unfolded like a name being uttered that no one cared to listen for or think about. Rise up to meet the cooler canopy air and shake it into some recognition of what he believed he should be and the world must already know.

The way in which we consume the world around us makes us the creatures we must be.

Flip flops pressed against the cracked concrete of the bon-fire pit, he could never finish that gross of childhood rebellion. Summer as the time before the forgetful season between pitches was never long enough to work out the manner in which he chose to consume this, the most important time in that future cowboy movie he saw himself in.

.....
D. A. Lockhart
.....

DEWEY BENDS DAYLIGHT AROUND IRVINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

.....

In the right light, these houses
could be taken for quaint, this
brick school taken for altruistic,
pock-marked road as atavistic.
Light bent through this shrine
to the vision of a founding father,
lost in all but name to the manner
the mechanics of a growing city
consumes a trolley-stop town.

..... D. A. Lockhart

the way the truth of it hits you
is less white-lightning whisky
more the slow arrival of fall
in a place that knows little
of hard, dug-in winters. Here
we are southerners playing
North, Appalachians denying
everything but the salvation
of the lord, folks running from
those people everyone tries
to make us be. Daylight bends
through the trees and steady
songs of birds we cannot see.

DROPPING LINES ALONG THE TOWPATH CANAL

.....

From this bent-knee genuflection
above the near still water of this canal
cut into once dry land along the northern
edge of the city, persimmon thrown earth
around us burns beneath a retreating sun
and this our gentle descent into night
leaves me knowing the best few hooks
of fish in this water parceled culvert
were pulled at by corn-fatten mouths.
Mouths written into place by executive orders
of the Indiana Department of Wildlife
and Game. Each one released in accordance
with the need to respect the natural world
and cast into an order we have built through
with our septic tank backwash, even curbs,
and black-top bike paths. In the night's final
cast off of light, a line empty of all
but a wad of algae is raised from the water.
What follows is a restless sound of a heron
as it lands and plays witness to the passing
of a silver-topped Ford sedan as it grinds along
atop the 54th street bridge, Styx loud into
this quiet of night and met by the hum
of yellow nickel hydride lights waking up.

.....
D. A. Lockhart
.....

FAULTY HEARTS

.....

..... Alaina Symanovich

Abby raised a wind-pinked finger, pointed at the smear of blowing leaves at the end of her street, and shouted, "Look!" Two figures were shuffling, hands in pockets, toward us. They edged into focus deliberately slowly: dark-skinned, thin-limbed Nathan Erikson and paler-than-eggwhites Andy Aumiller. In other words: my destiny, dressed in Wal-Mart jeans and a worn t-shirt, and destiny's nasally sidekick. I looked at Abby and smiled gratefully, and she smiled back, grateful that I was grateful. From this afternoon forward—assuming everything went to plan—she'd be forever ensconced in my good graces.

There was only one reason why I was spending this late-October afternoon at Abby's house and not at Nadia's, my best friend's, or Janelle's, the girl I was obsessed with impressing, and that reason was Nathan Erikson. Every fifth-grader with a pulse knew Nathan was infatuated with me, and although I had zero interest in him as a person, I had every interest in being the first girl in my grade to secure a boyfriend. Regardless of what transpired between me and Nathan, history would remember us as the founding romantics of Radio Park Elementary's Class of 2004.

Of course, the occasion of nabbing my first boyfriend would've been more momentous if I'd liked Nathan even remotely, even platonically, but I didn't have time to sit around and wait for love. Not when curly-haired girls like Janelle were flouncing around the school in brand-new Limited Too. Not when I had glasses and a Three Musketeers habit I just couldn't quit.

Nathan finally ambled close enough for conversation. Eyes on his scuffed shoes, he asked: "D'you wanna walk a little?" Not exactly dashing, but I couldn't stand to be picky. For all I knew, Janelle was snagging a boyfriend right that minute.

I tilted my head and gave Abby a glare that said, plainly, *go away*.

"Andy," she grinned, snapping to life, "let's go over here."

I had to hand it to Abby: the girl was smooth. As Andy plodded after her, I turned my attention back to Nathan, took a steadying breath, and said okay.

We walked to the end of the block where Abby's semiquiet street intersected with one of the town's main thoroughfares. A sedan whooshed by, dizzying the dead leaves around our feet. The wind kicked an empty trash can into the middle of the road, where it lolled like a belly-up turtle. I wondered what was wrong with the dads in the

neighborhood that they didn't fetch their emptied bins. Maybe these houses, like Abby's, were all dadless. Maybe this was where dadless kids came to live. I thought about asking Nathan where his dad was, but resisted the impulse. At the rate Nathan strung words together, examining his family history would take hours.

When Nathan finally turned to face me, his eyes were bright, his lips purpled from the cold. Maybe he thought the no-jacket look was suave. "I kind of like you," he managed.

Duh, I thought. Out loud, I said: "Really?"

"Yeah." Nathan swallowed once, twice, his Adam's apple bobbing like a buoy.

"I like you, too," I lied. Or was it a lie? I *did* like Nathan, in the sense that Nathan was giving me what I wanted. I liked Nathan *a lot* for giving me the title of First Girl To Be Desired By An Actual Member of the Male Species. In that moment, I liked Nathan so much I would've kissed his purple lips if the idea of kissing a boy didn't seem more embarrassing than getting caught peeing in a swimming pool.

Nathan rocked back and forth on his heels. "Would you want to, you know, like be my girlfriend? Or something?"

Would I?! Nathan knew so laughably little about me!—which, upon further thinking, was probably fortunate. I donned a shy smile, the smile I thought a surprised and flattered girl would wear, and said yes.

"Cool," Nathan said and extended his goosefleshed arm toward me. I ogled the sea of bumps interrupting his skin. His knuckles and elbows were thatched and white, as if they'd been rubbed with chalk or had never seen a bottle of lotion. I couldn't guess what Nathan was doing until his cold, bony fingers slithered around my wrist.

"Oh!" I tried to tamp down my eyebrows as they shot toward the clouds. I'd forgotten that physical contact was, occasionally, part of the boyfriend bargain. I hadn't thought that touching a boy would feel so painfully stilted, either; girls in movies always seemed enraptured when they were cloaked in a boy's arms. And I'd never had a problem with touching people before: I'd shared a bed with Annie, hidden under blankets with Janelle, wrestled Nadia in the snow. My reticence to touch Nathan was not only humiliating, it was potentially devastating to my love life.

So, clenching my jaw, I cradled my hand inside Nathan's to make our palms kiss. He smiled, letting me know I'd done something right, and I smiled back regardless of my skin's erupting in nervous itches. We walked hand-in-cold-hand back toward Abby, who clapped and bounced up and down in celebration. I knew why she was happy: her mission was accomplished, our best-friendship cemented. I longed for a slice of her happiness. I side-eyed Nathan and wondered if I had the stomach for romance.

Saturday, November 29, 2003: Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas" lit up our dining room as Dad draped red and gold beads around the tree. It was almost time to pluck the fancy glass ornaments out of their tissue-paper swaddles and hang them on the branches. I skipped from the dining room to the kitchen and back again, my socked feet swiping the floor to the beat of the music. I kept pausing in front of the hallway mirror to admire my newly pierced ears. When I'd woken that morning, I'd just been another girl with fat beige earlobes. Now, twin peridot studs winked at the sides of my face, drawing attention (I hoped) away from my glasses and onto my Pantene-perfect hair. And, thanks to Abby's discreet handling of what we'd deemed "the Nathan situation," I was a single girl again, ready to catch the latest object of my affection: TJ Mitchell. Just thinking about him made my insides as glittery-gold as the bulbs on the tree in the other room. I imagined TJ, along with the rest of my classmates, raging with desire when they saw my ears on Monday.

"Need your help, kiddo," Dad called. He was flat-stomached on the carpet, struggling to hide a skein of electrical cords under the treeskirt. Just then, the telephone—a.k.a my get-out-of-work-free card—rang.

I bounded through the kitchen and plucked the cordless receiver off the wall. I was hoping the caller would be Nadia requesting an afternoon hangout.

The sound of Abby's voice deflated my hopes.

"Do you want to have a sleepover tonight?" she asked, her excitement embarrassingly clear. "I'm at my dad's apartment."

I frowned to myself. I didn't want to miss the Christmas preparations, and I *really* didn't want to spend an entire night with Abby.

"I'll ask my mom," I hedged, darting to my mother's sewing room. Just to be safe, I left the receiver in the bathroom.

"Abby asked me to sleep over at her dad's," I whispered, staring accusingly at Mom as if the whole situation were her fault.

"Well, do you want to?"

I threw my hands in the air. "Of course not! But I don't know what to say!"

Mom tilted her head and thought for a moment. "Tell her Nadia's coming over here and that you'll have to do it another night."

"But what if I don't *want* to do it another night?"

Mom shrugged. "Then say that we don't let you go on sleepovers."

I nodded and trundled my way back to the phone. "I'm sorry, but I already have company coming over this afternoon." As soon as I voiced

the words, I realized how cold they sounded. "But, um, I'd really love to do it another time." *No, I wouldn't*, I thought, hoping Abby wouldn't call the next weekend to collect on her promise.

When our call ended, I wandered back into the sewing room, my lips toying with a smile. "Mom," I said in my sweetest voice, "can Nadia actually come over?"

Mom didn't even look up from her sewing machine. "I don't see why not."

I scurried back to the receiver.

When Monday morning rolled around, my newly pierced ears and I started the day by gazing at the Christmas tree in the predawn dark. The gold lights candied the living room with a warm glow, and the white-skirted angel atop the tree was so beautiful it made my throat ache. When Dad called me to breakfast, he seemed distracted, and Mom's eyes were glued to the newspaper even though she didn't seem to be reading. Coffee percolated, its hisses and burps the only noises in the room, and I wondered if my parents were fighting. There should've been a law against fighting at Christmas time.

After I chewed my Cheerios, Mom sighed and looked at me for a long moment. "Honey," she said, "I have some really sad news for you."

The milk-and-oats taste in my mouth soured.

"One of your friends died this weekend."

A dull, sucking sort of throb opened up in the middle of my chest.

"We got the call last night, but we didn't want to tell you right before bed."

The only thought I could form was, *not Nadia*. It could be *anyone* but Nadia. Nadia had been at my house on Saturday! People you'd seen on Saturday couldn't be dead by Monday.

"It was your friend Abby," Mom said in a gravelly voice. "There was a carbon monoxide leak in her father's apartment Saturday night. The police found them both on Sunday morning."

I blinked, sat back in my chair, leaned forward again. *It should've been me*: the thought barreled through me, unbidden and clobbering as the hole in my chest. Abby had invited me to her dad's apartment that night. Maybe if I'd gone I could've saved her—or maybe, somehow, I could've died in her place. I deserved death more than Abby did; I thought about the time I made her my "slave" for three days, how she'd accepted the punishment and done everything I'd told her to. I thought about the snotty way I'd informed her I had "company" coming over on Saturday. I deserved death a thousand—no, *a million* times more than she did.

"I have to brush my teeth," I said, stumbling out of my chair.

I locked the bathroom door behind me, gripped the counter with both hands, and stared my reflection in the eye. I didn't look any different than I had when I'd woken up this morning.

When I woke up this morning, Abby was already dead.

I waited to see if tears would come. I held a staring contest with myself, willing a few droplets to leak out of my eyes, but none did. I reached for my toothpaste with a shaky hand and started to brush too roughly. My dentist said that over-brushing would erode my gums, but suddenly that seemed like a fine idea.

As I gathered my backpack and walked to the bus stop, I realized that probably no one would notice my earrings. And I realized how unforgiveable such a thought was.

All the town's parents tripped over themselves buying carbon-monoxide detectors. Abby's death started to seem as routine as a lice outbreak or a flare-up of the stomach flu: parents prepared and PSAed, busying themselves so there was no time for dwelling.

When my cat, Smokey, had died in September, my dad reacted just as industriously. He hefted a long cardboard box to the backyard, shimmed Smokey's stiff corpse inside, and duct-taped it closed. Every time he shifted the box, I heard Smokey's petrified body zing across the bottom and clunk hollowly against the opposite side.

It wasn't until a few weeks later, when I woke in the middle of the night and mistook my black stuffed animal for Smokey, that I realized I'd never see my cat again. Smokey would never again prowl around the deck or mewl for food at the Winegardner's back door—he was *dead*. Fur-molting, bones-disintegrating, eyes-jellifying *dead*. And my stuffed animal wasn't even his ghost come to comfort me or his reanimate body informing me we'd buried some other family's cat.

I cried until my nose was bricked with snot, and then I went to the bathroom and sat on the toilet and cried some more.

Grieving became part of the fifth-grade curriculum right alongside Pennsylvania History and long division. The guidance counselor, Mrs. Pearsall, cleared her schedule so that anyone could talk to her at any time. The principal made a special announcement over the PA system. The art teacher had us make construction-paper condolence cards for Abby's mom. And, during my flute lesson, the band director asked me

and three other girls to play a special song at Abby's memorial service. The four of us sat up straight on our metal folding chairs and nodded. To our left, the fifth chair—Abby's—sat cold and vacant.

But the truth was, I didn't know what on earth there was to talk about with Mrs. Pearsall, and I didn't know what to write in a condolence card, and I didn't want to learn the difficult song that the band director had chosen. (The song required each of us to play *completely different* parts, meaning that I'd basically be doing a solo performance in front of a huge auditorium, and I didn't even know how to do a high F like the sheet music said to. Or was it a high G? If I couldn't even read the notes, how did anyone expect me to play them?)

But the final straw came when my teacher told us to clear our desks for our science lesson. We were doing an experiment, a long and involved one that required painstaking measurements and an entire worksheet of questions. I would've rather licked the bathroom floor than participate. So, putting on my best heartbroken face, I trudged up to Mrs. Lorantas' desk and said that I couldn't concentrate because I was so upset about Abby.

The walk to Mrs. Pearsall's was eerily quiet, and the hallways looked massive without their usual cacophony of students and teachers. I thought I could bolt onto the playground and make a mad dash for home and nobody would even notice. Or if people did, they'd say I was just grieving. You could get away with anything as long as you called it grief.

I took a steadying breath before knocking on Mrs. Pearsall's door, which opened with a squeak. Mrs. Pearsall's office was the sunniest room in the school, as if the administration thought that light would obliterate all our problems the same way putting an ant under a magnifying glass did. The sun didn't seem to be having much effect, though: Kate was blowing her nose, Quinn was hiccup-sobbing, and Hannah was staring at her hands as if she'd never noticed them before. And then there was me, feeling like it was just another Monday.

"Please sit, Alaina," Mrs. Pearsall said. Then she turned her attention back to Quinn, whose tearful monologue I had interrupted.

"When my Mom told me," Quinn continued, her voice hitching wildly, "I just curled up in her lap and cried. And I c-couldn't stop." She squeezed her eyes shut and let out a little gasp. "I barely slept at all."

I tried to imagine Quinn collapsing into a bawling heap; it must have been a terrific sight, like watching one of those Victorian women faint whenever something the slightest bit stressful happened. Since my ancestors were Russian and not English, I'd never stood a chance at inheriting the fainting gene.

"What about you, Alaina?" Mrs. Pearsall asked, leaning forward.

She had ice-blue eyes and graying hair that fell halfway down her back. She definitely had the fainting gene. "How did you feel when you learned about Abby?"

I chewed the inside of my cheek. "It didn't feel real at first." It was one of the first honest things I'd said all day. As if determined to make up for that moment of candor, I added: "But, all of a sudden, I understood what was happening and I started crying so hard. So hard."

That weekend, standing on the shiny stage of the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, I did what I'd been doing in school all week: faked my way through. I played the easy notes on my sheet music, the notes lodged firmly within the bars of the treble clef, and I mime-played everything else. When the whole charade was over, Mrs. Pearsall hugged me backstage. The whole time I was hugging her back, I was thinking that a better guidance counselor wouldn't be hoodwinked by a ten-year-old.

TRIBUTES AND CONDOLENCES*

hope for our greiving parents.. / Dee Dee (passing by)

our children are gifts from god, its so very sad that our young ones are gone. Our great God is also sadden when they are gone from their loving parents,remembering that he lost his son in death also. (Jesus Christ). He knows how we feel. Be reassured that he promises us that he will resurrected countless millions of children in a paradise earth. And he will reunite them to their love ones(John 5;28,29) What a happy reunion that will be for Abigail and for her family and friends. How delightful..

Healing in our Hearts / Kayla Patek (Friend)

I'm so sorry. I lost my sixteen year old sister when I was ten. I created a memorial website honoring her. Will you please return a favor? Post a tribute or condolence on my site: jessica-patek.memory-of.com. I am terribly sorry.

My dad always said you could spot a real snowstorm—as opposed to just a flurry or a teasing sky—by the mountains: if you could still see

* "Abigail Yeagley Tributes, Condolences & Bereavement." Memory Of, TelNET, abby-yeagley.memory-of.com/tributes.aspx.

the crags of the Alleghenies on the horizon, there was no need to put gas in the snowblower.

The day TJ Mitchell asked me to be his girlfriend, the Alleghenies were all but invisible.

The first flakes of winter whipped around us where we stood on the playground's grassy slope. TJ wore a red jacket, the kind that swooshed when his arms grazed his torso, and I wore a shiny black jacket with a faux-fur hood. TJ's nose was rosy, and I'm sure mine was, too.

TJ wasn't nervous like Nathan; he stood square-legged before me and delivered an I-like-you-and-want-to-date-you speech that must have been painstakingly rehearsed. (He confirmed, later, that his older sisters had indeed practiced with him.) I liked TJ because he had an accent I couldn't quite place and because he was the funniest boy in class. And it didn't hurt that he was roughly one thousand steps above Nathan on the social ladder.

How long after Abby's death did my personal fairytale occur? Was it weeks, or just days? Had Quinn and Kate stopped bubbling up with tears at random moments? Had Mrs. Pearsall stopped holding her walk-in hours? I'd like to say yes, but the truth is I don't remember. I remember Abby dying, and then a flat gray haze, and then TJ. I wonder if my classmates remember their grief as more than just a blur; I wonder if that's how you know you've grieved—by the harsh sharpness of those memories, by the way time slogged and stalled and refused to get on with it.

Here's when I missed Abby most: when our match teacher scolded TJ in the middle of a lesson for talking in class. As she leveled him with her shrill condemnation, I realized that his mistake was half mine. As boyfriend and girlfriend, we were tied together; if TJ screwed up, I screwed up; and if I succeeded, TJ got a piece of the glory. The thought shook up my stomach. I didn't want to be tethered to TJ's sinking ship any more than I wanted him coasting on my golden one. After all, I held the class record on the times-table speed test! I was the permanent teacher's pet! I couldn't associate with a boy who received public dressing-downs.

I had to break up with TJ, and I had to do it myself. I cornered him before lunch when he was erasing the blackboard for Mrs. Lorantas. His shoulders were slouched and relaxed; he probably thought we'd grow old together in his parents' house on Nantucket Circle. And maybe we could've—the house had a cool round submarine-style window that I adored over the front door—if he wasn't so immature.

"TJ?"

"Yeah." He didn't look away from the board. Chalk dust coated the side of his hand, and my eyes prickled—from dryness or dread, I

didn't know.

"I don't want to go out anymore."

He kept erasing. "Okay."

Had Nathan been this nonchalant when Abby dumped him for me? I bit my lip, realizing I'd never even asked her how the breakup went. She'd done my dirty deed and I'd barely managed a thank you. "Did you hear me? I said we're breaking up."

"Whatever."

Maybe TJ was playing tough, putting on a show for his friends. I supposed it would be emasculating for him to burst into tears right there at the front of the classroom, but still, his would-be macho act told me I was wise to dump him.

In the end, TJ got his revenge by repeating the secret I'd told him on our telephone dates (that I had a pair of pink-and-purple striped underwear), so I retaliated by telling everyone that he called his bathroom "the library" because it was the only place he did any serious reading. Needless to say we didn't speak much for the rest of the year, and I wasn't sorry when he moved away the following summer.

One of my final memories of TJ and that fifth-grade year was the unseasonably warm spring day when we were ushered to the playground and told to be quiet for Abby's tree-planting ceremony. Abby's mother, Dena, was there, standing to the side of a skinny tree on the edge of the playground. It was perched in a hole a mere twenty-five yards from where TJ had asked me to be his girlfriend. I stuck my hands in my pockets even though I wasn't cold.

The whole ordeal struck me as barbaric, even cruel. Dena acted breezy and gracious through the ceremony, smiling at her well-wishers and saying a few sweet words about Abby. I could barely look at her, I was so steamrolled by secondhand embarrassment. If I'd recently lost my daughter and ex-husband, the last thing I'd want to become was a spectacle for a gaggle of elementary schoolers. Why were we putting her through this? Whom were we really helping? Was I alone in worrying about her? Did everyone else think we were doing something righteous?

At the end of the dedication, we stood in line and waited to pour a shovelful of dirt to the tree's base. Dena stood valiantly by, smiling and thanking every student who piled dirt onto her daughter's memory. I thought Abby would never in a million years have asked for this. Or, I thought, maybe she would've. Maybe I hadn't really known her at all. Maybe none of us had.

SEATOWN, A DEFINITIONAL

.....

I.

first tightly spun,
and then disarmed by water.

The alley behind the flat

blasted with greys.

 everywhere viscous winter.
 Solstice. *sol*
and *sistere*:
 to stand still.

On the street,

each building dragged from the sea.

hung under

invisible hooks of sky.

Every morning, something hot and bitter.

to warm,

to away the taste of brine.

II.

On our first night together,
the city shivered through a thin coat of lichen.

Instead, let it be raining. Let the rain ricochet into the harbor.

No one was swimming in the discolored ocean.

A seagull howled
with its head bowed.

A seagull peeled open the gunmetal morning.
This is called the *choking call*.

Having just read
that livid also meant *strangled from emotion*,

I studied the water, the boats,
which were maybe cradling each other, maybe pushing away.

III.

I used my body to stop a feeling:
A grocery bag roughed into almost any shape.

I had been alone at the seawall, I was back inside;
the radiator flicked a tongue up its own skeleton.

What I felt was a watercolor,
the edges bleeding until I couldn't tell they were bleeding.

I used my body.
The seawall looked at me.

I kept thinking of long bones of kelp,
but even beside the ocean, I'd never seen them there.

Not a slick green ember.
Not even a single speck.

IV.

And so, how to show the city
Charles Church butchered apart to just its facade.

The marina, flush with canvas, whipping
like a flap of skin. Exposed to the air. Someone

should be coming to tighten the sutures.

A city of wet iron. A city like a pocket knife you don't know
how to close.

What I could see from the window seemed like *everything*.

HYMN

.....

He skips a rock
across the frozen creekbed.
The gray stone
unscrolls.

..... **Emileigh Barnes**

GUIDANCE TOWARD DEATH

.....

Grandparents can be our first guides to that place called death. Both of my grandmothers died before I was fourteen. Their partings were like those nightmares of childhood that strike quickly and never leave the child the same. One died overnight of a heart attack and the other painfully from lung cancer diagnosed far too late. My grief over losing them exposed me to the deep sense of loss that death creates, but it failed to prepare me to face my own death. In our modern age we push death away by making it impersonal, sterilized, the stuff of movies. We do not take death personally the way that traditional cultures used to do. My grandmothers deaths were handled the modern way. Thus, by the time I was in my 20s, sometimes I would be unable to sleep as the contemplation of my own non-existence sent a burning chill through me. The only way I could sleep was to rationalize to myself. "Of course I'm afraid to die now because I am still young." How long could I tell myself that? It would take going to Japan when my grandfather died to show me how to face death.

My father's father died before I was born so my only surviving grandparent from the age of fourteen was my mother's father. I called him Ji from toddlerhood, because I could not say *Ojiiisan*. He returned to Japan not long after his wife died in 1961 because he hated America. Once he had been bicycling to his English language classes, in Richmond, California, when some people threw tomatoes and invectives at him. From that time forward, he refused to learn English and when the U. S. Government locked him into a camp during World War II so that he could no longer go fishing, he yearned to leave the country. The only thing keeping him in America was his wife, who was very much attached to her children and grandchildren and did not wish to go back to Japan. When she died, he gladly boarded a plane back to Japan.

He returned to live in Kainan, a small farming village just south of Wakayama, not far from his birthplace. There he re-married a woman named Kimi only so he would have someone to cook his rice and serve him tea, then he spent most of his time fishing. He knew from his boyhood where the best trout streams ran. The rains of winter in 1978 came and hesitated to leave when spring came. Ji could not fish for a longer time than he could abide and his restlessness and inactivity gave him pneumonia. He prepared to die. There were only two small problems. He wanted to live to be 88, which is a significant birthday in Japan. The Japanese characters for 88 also spell "rice" and are thus

symbolic of purity, goodness and the sustenance of life. He was able to live to April 10 and celebrate that birthday. Now he only needed to wait for me, his oldest grandson, to visit him in Kainan and he could leave in peace.

I could not change my plans to see him in late May due to my teaching obligations. My distant relatives in Kainan telegraphed my mother to ask me to come earlier because my grandfather was dying. My mother called me in Hawai'i to ask if I could leave earlier. Torn between duty to my students and duty to my family, I got there as soon as I could and saw him the first hour of my arrival in Kainan. He was in the hospital, lying on a bed in a room stark for its lack of color or ornamentation. Everything was white, the color of death in Japan. The only furniture was a chair and the only color was on the clothes of the visitors to his room. The room smelled of something ineffable. He was a living skeleton. It looked like he was already dead. I did not see him breathing. When I grabbed his hand, it was warm, but limp. I called out "Hi, Ji!" in a voice as cheery as I could muster. His eyes opened. They were dull and faded, but became lit by the inner fire of recognition when he saw me. He tried to speak, but I could only feel his hand tighten around mine. Know that my grandfather had never been a big man. He was only about 62 inches tall and probably never weighed more than 120 pounds. Yet, when I was young, he was, to me, the prototype of masculine vitality. He used to run a flower nursery and that required him to be agile, strong and tireless. Now he was dying and would not again regain consciousness.

On the morning of my third day, very early, someone knocked on the door of my room and I was made to understand that my Ji was dead. I got dressed and followed my cousin to his car. We drove to the hospital. I was expecting a hearse or something to be there, but no. I was shocked that we were able to walk casually into my grandfather's room and there his body lay, covered by a sheet. My second cousin, Shunsaku, gestured at me to lift the body by its shoulders while he lifted the legs. We carried my grandfather out of the hospital and put him in the back seat of Shunsaku's car. No hearse, no coroner, just the two of us driving my grandfather's corpse to his house. It was as spare as older Japanese houses always were. I was about to experience a funeral as the Japanese always had. We placed his body on the floor and soon a carpenter came with some pine boards, which he quickly fashioned into a coffin that was exactly the right size. Others came, only some of whom I recognized. Much conversation was going on. I felt lost. I could only watch as they placed a tangerine, some mochi, his geta (sandals), his walking stick and white paper folded into triangles all around his body. I did not know the significance of this paper, only

that it was significant to the Buddhist sect to which he belonged. The coroner nailed the coffin shut before I could even think of doing something to say farewell to Ji.

Then we went to lunch.

Lunch was followed by some discussions and greetings of people who had heard the news. One of my second cousins told me that I was to be the chief mourner and would need to wear suitable clothes. Oddly, this meant a black suit and black shoes. Odd, because everything else about the funeral was traditionally Japanese. That night, I was told to sleep alone in the house with my grandfather one last time. I was not told if I was supposed to be guardian, companion or attendant to his body. Yet, I felt that simply being there was important. The village was quieter than a primeval forest. The house was very dark. I waited for a voice, a spirit, something in keeping with the supernatural feeling I had, but all was silent.

I did not sleep well. In the morning, mourners came. The coroner placed my grandfather's coffin on a stand, which was soon surrounded with traditional trappings of a Buddhist service. The priest wore the same types of garments as his predecessors had for centuries. He spoke in an ancient Buddhist chant. Incense wafted. I had no idea what was being said. It seemed to last quite a long time. When it ended, people came and shook my hand or patted me on my back. Shunsaku pointed to a truck I had not noticed before and indicated to me that we should place the coffin in the truck. The truck drove off and Shunsaku and I followed it to this dark, windowless building with a large smokestack. It was a crematorium. We helped move the coffin from the truck inside and onto a slab under which was a table with rollers. A priest appeared, said a few things and the crematorium director rolled the coffin into an oven. He turned a switch and handed me a match, I was to light the fire to burn my grandfather's remains to ashes. I struck the match. I lit the fire. Then Shunsaku and I went to get a cup of coffee.

When we returned to the crematorium, the director escorted us to a room on the opposite side of the oven. There, on the slab, was what was left of my grandfather. Confronting me now was the full reality of death. It penetrated through the numbness I felt. The fire does not turn everything to ashes. What was left were many bones, blackened, but clearly in the outline of a body. The large bones formed a frame and the bowl of the skull was almost intact. As I stared at what was left of Ji, the thought I vividly remember was that there was no soul that would survive such an incineration. The director took a pair of chopsticks and jabbed them into the bones, breaking them into small pieces. He gave me two urns and a pair of chopsticks. He picked up parts of bone from various parts of what had been My Ji's body:

the head, the arms, the ribs, the hips, the legs and passed each one to my chopsticks with his chopsticks, gesturing at me to place them into the urns. It was very hot in that room, but I felt that burning chill as my mortality shivered around me. My grandfather's death, coming in the context of the cultural suddenness of distance from my Japanese heritage, now began to affect me more deeply than any experience I have ever had. It strengthened me in the face of Death. It began within me a search that has yet to end. Call it a search for meaning, but it is really a search for my own soul before it is burned in a crematorium.

FINGERPRINTS

.....

Chalk held between your
thumb and index
defines the swirls of your fingerprints

these walls of tin, window sills
overlooking swings and ruins
are your temple.

Between the pores of bullets
and the decay of dotage
this honeycombed blackboard
still has a space for a new lesson

a new letter is drawn and copied
asymmetrically, curvy, off the line
you proudly watch these full benches.

A new song is sung today
loudly, harmoniously, fearlessly
echoes of bombs are mute.

Between your thumb and index
chalk dissolves
your fingerprints remain.

.....
Lina AlSharif
.....

BUDS AND ROSES

.....

Army boots
tightly tied laces
like mazes
newly polished
smelling like burning tar
they are the first outfit
a loved one is wearing
marching in, trying to fit in
they are to step
on foreign buds and roses.

..... Lina AlSharif

Army boots
lace like snakes
bloodied
leaving prints like tanks
they are the things
some loved ones' necks
are under
some loved ones' bodies
are kicked with
these army boots tread
more than buds and roses.

Army boots
lax laces
mudded
leather
scratched off
they were the last thing
a loved one
once wore
once walked in, fitted in
they are the only thing that remains
only now they sprout
buds and roses.

CONTRIBUTORS

.....

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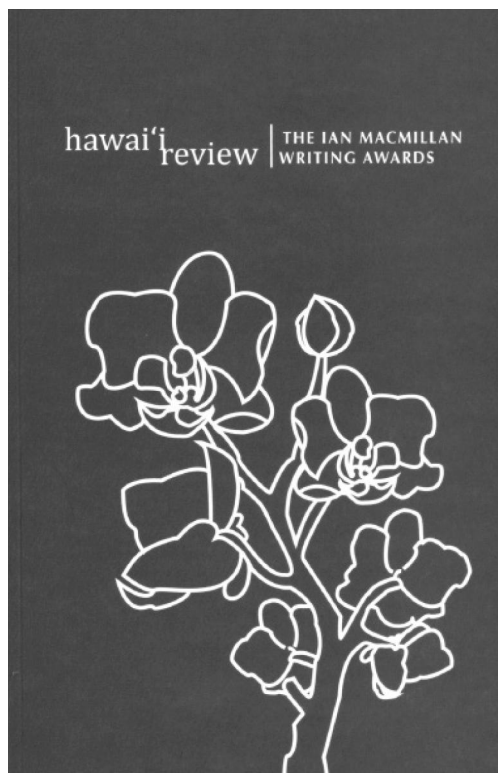
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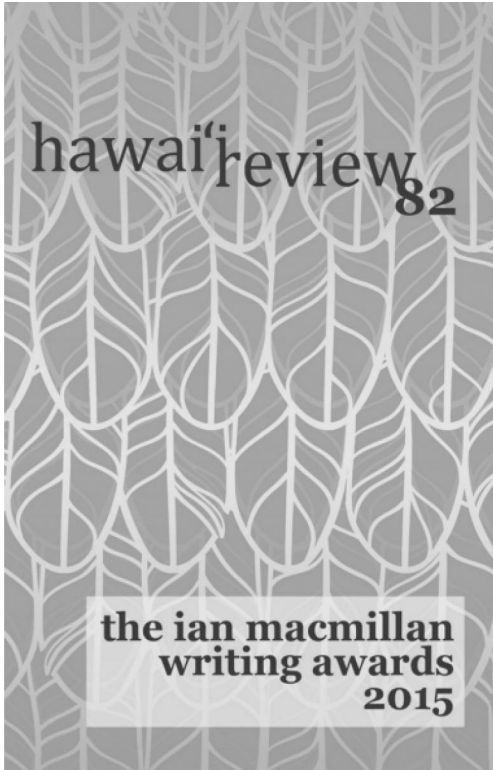
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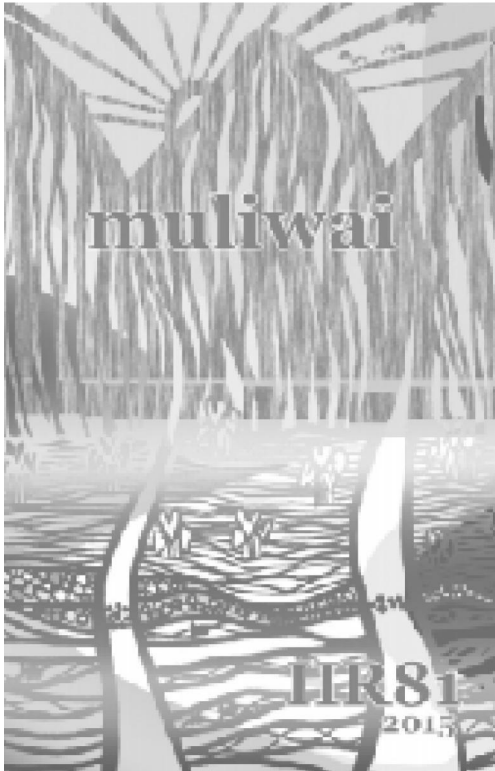
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