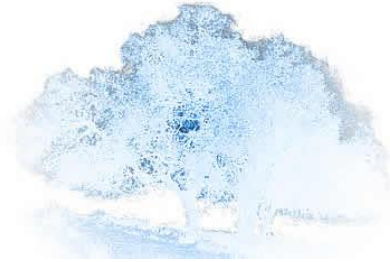




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POMONA VALLEY REVIEW



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especially to the Cal Poly Pomona faculty, staff,
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Dear Readers

With this year's issue of *PVR* comes a birth of new membership we've yet to see the likes of since the journal's resurrection in 2010. We'd thus like to welcome Marta Albalá Pelegrín, Storei Amirzai, and Edwin Teh to our expanding staff. This year's work also marks a shift from the last. With the addition of Spanish to our collection, thanks to Marta's specialization in Spanish literature, a breadth of invaluable voices has joined our pages to make us multilingual.

It seems that with each passing year, we see the introduction of innovative ideas, more powerful voices, and more committed membership. This year, in particular, we have seen voices from within our community representing a deep struggle against systemic injustice, both locally—some work addressing Pomona specifically—and globally. Indeed, this work shows us that Li Bai, the ancient Chinese poet, was right when he wrote, "Thirty thousand feet of white hair, it seems grief began that long ago."

Despite this grief, this work also shows us—as Judith Butler, Emmanuel Levinas, and Diane Davis might say—that amidst tragedy comes the possibility for an ethical relationality, a face to face encounter with the Other, and the opportunity to recognize that, although there may not be an essence to community, there is, as Davis suggests, a

"community of existence," a "being-in-common" that we have, and that "[s]ingularity is by definition shared." And if ignoring the Other, as Davis continues, "is a conscious effort," then we have made every effort at *PVR* to acknowledge our response-ability—our responsibility to respond to the community voices which call for attention and engagement.

This body of work, combined with our own passion (and some may say unhealthy obsession) with artistic expression in its many mediums, does more than encourage us to continue the legacy of *Pomona Valley Review*. It *inspires* us to identify with the creative minds of others. It *motivates* us to produce, generate, and contribute to the global body of the arts that exists on a plane much greater than our tangible reality. It *stimulates* our basic need for human expression and connection. But, most of all, it *invigorates* us to know that the membership of *PVR* readers and contributors continually perseveres.

Thank You,

Ryan & Chris
PVR

POMONA NIGHTS

A hastily scribbled sign says, "Retén Adelante, Please Don't Honk"
Orange cones,
Illuminated by red and blue revolving lights
Mark the Checkpoint.

A few months back, the Police tried to tell us that we'd get arrested if we held up our signs.
We'd watch helplessly as a six-year old girl shivered on a winter night
Trying to understand why her family car was hauled away
on the way back from grocery shopping at Cárdenas.

Now we announce the injustice with
Bullhorns.
And the six-year old holds up a warning sign
As she stands
On a bus-stop bench
Smiling ear-to-ear
With the joy
Of resistance.

Shades of skin tones line the streets
Speaking Spanish, English
And that curious Pomona half-and-half.

The hardship continues
The tow trucks haul away
Mobility.
Employment.
Sustenance.
The fines and fees are two months' pay.
The sense of insecurity, of "what if it happens again"
The cat-and-mouse game that turns getting home from work each night
Into an exercise in logistics
A mini-border crossing on a daily basis
A very real and very constant stress -
is still intact.
But there is poetry in the urban night.
As this isolated town
"Halfway between LA and San Bernardino"
Makes history.

Even the former mayor,
The one who smugly announced that
"Pomona is not and will not be a sanctuary city"
Felt obliged to send a certificate of recognition
To the coalition
That exposed her betrayal.

Tonight, a Salvadoran woman
Whose car was towed away
Jotted down the contact info
To join in the organizing efforts
As the Police surrounded her on all sides.

New faces joined the protest from nearby homes
Store cashiers let customers know
Which way to drive
And everyone thanked one another
Just for being there

The sounds of struggle are generally simple
“*Retén Adelante*, Please Don’t Honk” “Checkpoint Ahead,”
but Hassan says: “Violation of the Fourth Amendment Ahead”
And actually recites the constitution on the street corner.

A starving student holds up a broken cell phone and aims it on a policeman
“*No graba*,” he says (It doesn’t record), “but they don’t know that.”
And so the policeman glances up from his ticket writing every few seconds
And nervously fixes his gaze
Directly at the broken phone.
City Council just voted to double the number of checkpoints.
The vote was six to one.
Six to
Cristina Carrizosa.

But the drama now unfolding
Inspires
Organizes
Moves a people
Moves the soul
Uplifts the heart
Unites.

Victory is Uncertain
Most likely far at hand.
It will take a long trek through Xibalba before we come back up with riches and obsidian.

But nothing is more breathtaking
Than to witness a people
In the depths of
Legalized persecution
On a smog-filled corner of “*¿Dónde está ese pueblo?*”
 (“Where is that town?”)
Precisely at that turning-point moment
When they break through the chains of intimidation,
And start to move against the odds.

~ *Madeline Rios*



"Rio Rita" ~ Jodi Bonassi

BLACK SPRING

springtime tore into me
like a pig's bullet
in the back of a black child

suddenly, it had been here
so willingly, all along
shatter-lodged in the rot
of my body cavity

the winter was hard
and we did not all survive
and I did not all survive
and surviving is not all

that is left here

~ *Brian Alston*

HIGH TIME

it's high time
for more nothing
borrowed time
comes to mind

the clocks say stoned
or so says Dali
will they stay so?
and stay will so they?

a no-time flat
that I could sleep in
step on
worm-hole through

the persistence
of memory
the wrong wording
for the world

the come-down
for clocks
is tricky

we on time
they own time

it's high time
fade and die time
borrowed time
returns

~ *Brian Alston*

UN DOS TRES

Un dos tres
un dos tres
vuelta
vuelta

} (bis)

todo baile al final no es más que un combo

arriba-abajo

derecha-abajo-abajo

giro

izquierda-abajo-izquierda

en los dos actos subyace la intención de derribar obstáculos

distancias troceables o invisibles

y derribar un muro es un modo de abrir

abrirse paso abrir un abanico abrir el corazón

abrir una lavandería o una tienda de empeños

¿existirá un opuesto un antimovimiento como girar un disco de vinilo al revés?

¿un movimiento ejecutado hacia atrás descoordinado arrítmico?

¿una danza truncada que in-acompañe la lírica del caos

que funcione como un abracadabra para esas madrigueras de conejo?

~ *Regina Salcedo*



"Giraffe Barbershop" ~ Jodi Bonassi

FOOTNOTE TO THE LOS ANGELES SUBURBS

I can think of no worse place to raise a child than the American suburbs.

30 mi outside
of L.A. actually.

Lesser minds would have you believe that urban neighborhoods
lovingly referred to as ghettos
are full of crime and depravity. These classist assumptions are the bedrock of the suburb
and they are intrinsically intertwined with
race.

This is how the suburbs came to be -
they've been painted with the blood of American Indians
the bones of Africans
the hands of Asians
the sweat of the Mexican.

And there are more.

All physical color variations, each one a beautiful sign of an impossibly tangible person
A complex web of history and humanity -
culture.

All of it has been fed into the suburban-mill and out came
track houses
shopping centers
food courts
and cleanliness.

This is what the suburbs have come to be-

Ghosts have been paved over with county fairs where things that are worthless get hocked
for low cost

and the Chinese kid who made that shit gets her half-
cent and you get your consumer satisfaction.

"Savvy shoppers use coupons" -

the logical ending of a centuries-old slave trade.

There's crime too

in the suburbs.

Real crime just like in the ghettos

"but it's different."

Very.

White washed by Christ,

theft happens in bank cubicles, politely conducted at desks.

Gimmeallyourmoney! Screams the Wells Fargo signage -

bank robbers work from the inside.

The suburban thief bleeds you dry through ink and signatures, fine print will strangle you
slowly over the years, but you have a house and it's in a nice neighborhood, so...

The suburbs are sick with willing-apathy, mad with self-induced delusion. The circled wagons are the dwindling middle-class, protecting
what?
Exactly!

Their children have left the fold, there's nothing for this new crop!
No rain falls on us. Worst drought in our history.
Some will stay to defend this history out of blind duty, thoughtless stasis,
death.
But the narrative will be even more anachronistic than it is now
and their neighbors will look less and less like them as they age and dry-up.
It'll terrify them -
the differences.

The last defenders of the Suburbs will double-down and look so ugly when they're exposed -
ugly as the Gestapo.

U-G-L-Y youaintgotnoalibi
Say, you, guy-in-line at Starbucks, what is your alibi anyway?
Commoditized-consumer-turned-model-citizen?

Analogs of the familial hicks you left
scratching their heads back in the
Mid-West, or even worse

(gasp!)
THE SOUTH?

This is how the suburbs see the rest of the nation-

Hillbillies out in the sticks.
Animals in the jungle.

"It's true—you entertain us," says the suburbanite on a long distance call w/Lansing,
Adrian, and Flint. Continuing,

"we've molded you into a romanticized and publicized versions of a past we were so eager
to get away from. We had to move on. We wanted to look cosmopolitan, modern, literate.
And you, well..."

DungDynastyGatorBoysSouthernBaptistSouthernJoke -
a national punch line.

It's terrible, but America hates Americans.
America hates blacks and they built the whole fucking country! Anyone who doubts me on
this is simply lying. There is no other explanation for the suburbs and the sloth and wallow
they exhibit. The standard of living in the suburbs are not the ideal, they're the example of
excess gone unchecked. Roman suburbs. 1% twisted to look like 99 suburbs. Coopting
suburbs. Drunk suburbs. No reality principle suburbs. No principle period suburbs. Suburbs
of suburbs as far as the eye can see.

We ought not aspire to the suburbs.
We do not need anything

they embody; large screen televisions, larger than large homes, a car for each would-be driver, swimming pools -

none of it.

But we can't even convince most white suburbanites they're white supremacists.

How can we expect them to part with the luxuries white supremacy has afforded them?

Indeed I see—this is how the suburbs exist.

~ *Matthew Bohlka*

PUDDLES ON A PALATE (COLOR BLIND)

In this color blind society
I go to church on Sunday
And all I see is just one color
 All white (at least almost)
 Or all brown on the other side of the freeway
Where we go out to the restaurant after church
To revel in our diversity
Because the sounds in the air are Japanese at the Sushi bar
 Even though they're really speaking Mandarin.
So many colors on the palette
But the canvas is bare
'Cause they're all in little puddles
Separate and unequal
And my heart and life and body, so intertwined with all of them
Ache with frustration
'Cause I don't know how to paint
So I stare at the one booth in the restaurant
Where the colors are mixed together
Wishing them well in their friendship or their love so rare
Hoping that the colors will come to life
And turn into a summer day full of flowers on the canvas
Where the glimmering leaves are highlighted
The shadows are soft
And a footbridge brings people together
From either side of a flowing stream of the purest waters.
But how can you paint
If you cannot see
In a color-blind society
Where the colors are man-made
But we've been trained to distinguish between
And at the same time deny them
Puddles on a palette
Separate and unequal

~ *Madeline Rios*

Car alarms echoed from the parking garage below. Through the peephole I saw the neighbors run downstairs in hope for an easy payday.

Pete, the apartment owner, knocked on my door as he mined the inside of his ear. He inspected the polished finger and gold-plated his muscle shirt. "It's yours Riley," he said.

The car alarm died halfway down the graffiti'd stairwell. Disappointed neighbors bumped me against the wall, knocking my keys out of grasp. They clanked to the bottom of the oil-stained garage floor. Sunlight caught gleam of the glass that salted the edges of my silver '94 Accord, glorifying the dented black hood and the white scratches that pinstriped the body.

"If they ask for footage," Pete called by the stairwell, "I'll have it ready for ya."

The clouds played peek-a-boo with the sun. The insurance agent arrived and claimed the mess as property damage. I asked Pete for the copy and went back to my apartment.

Truth rested in the DVD player; on play my car appeared at the right hand corner of the screen. Nothing came into scene until a stranger in a gray hoodie crept out the stairwell. They faced the ground, walked out of view, and came back lugging a large rock. The suspect used the rock to scrape the body of my car, then leapt onto the hood, and threw the rock through the front windshield. The car alarm triggered and the suspect fled.

Raindrops tapped the windows. Knocks rattled the door. My off-white slippers padded against the sticky floors to the front door.

"Who's there?" I asked.

"Who else would it be, Riley?"

I opened front door to Quinn wearing a gray hoodie. With smirking freckles and bloodshot eyes, Quinn stumbled in. I closed the door and rested my forehead against the frame.

"What happened to the car?" Quinn asked.

"I just replaced the hood," I said. "And now this happens?"

"I didn't steal anything!" Quinn responded quickly.

"They caught you on tape!" I turned to face Quinn, "Take off the sweater."

Quinn hissed, "Don't touch me."

We struggled against the walls until the sweater slipped off. A small paper bag fell out of the front pocket. Rage trickled up as needles that pricked my cheeks. Each prick threaded disappointment across my face.

"I'm dropping you off at a shelter," I said stomping through the kitchen. My hands clutched an empty black trash bag from the kitchen and dragged it to the bedroom. "Don't call me, don't come back, just stay there."

"But I need you!" Quinn came after me and wrapped shaky arms around my waist, "I'll go to rehab. I promise. Don't leave me at the shelter. We'll get breakfast and then you can check me in."

Quinn's chapped lips scratched my ears and I pushed away, "Okay. Bring me the bag and take a shower." Quinn fetched the bag and shoved it in my hands, "When did you call your dad last?"

The bathtub faucet began to dispense water.

Inside the paper bag was a Ziploc half filled with heroin. I sighed and took a seat on the bed. He never picked up the phone, not even when Quinn was clean. I've been doing my best, but the heroin comes back and Quinn keeps getting worse. I can't keep going through this. One of us has to leave to make this work.

The faucet continued to stream out water. I got up and knocked on the bathroom door.

"You're going to overflow the tub," there was no response. I turned the knob and found Quinn bobbing in yellowed water. My body acted on its own, my slippers sponged as I pulled the body out the tub. The bitterness of the vomit punched my tongue; I fought back gags and pushed air into Quinn's mouth, but there was no movement. "No, come back." I slapped Quinn's cold cheeks. "Come back, we can get you better, please."

The paramedics pronounced Quinn dead by the time they arrived. They took the body and asked if I had the numbers of Quinn's relatives. I gave them the father's number and they left.

After a week of follow-ups, I went to a flower shop to purchase a bouquet of daffodils and a poppy. I rode a bus to the city's cemetery, took a brisk hike up a hill, and found a gray-haired man standing by Quinn's grave. He spotted me, but focused on the flowers. Quinn shared his eyes.

He shook his head, "Why did you bring that flower?"

My jaw tensed up, "I'm just saying goodbye to a friend."

"Some friend," he chuckled. "Where were you when Quinn drowned?"

I placed the flowers at my feet, "Quinn called you constantly, but you never picked up."

"You shouldn't believe an addict!" He defended, "They'll be clean to get their way and then go back to their addiction."

"Where were you when Quinn was in pain? Huh?" I retaliated, "Your rejection brought nothing but relapse and death. You know what the last thing that came out of Quinn's mouth? F you!"

I snatched up the daffodils and walked back to the bus stop. The schedule said that the next bus wouldn't arrive for another half-hour. The day was starting to dim and a breeze picked up.

"Why did you bring daffodils?"

I turned to see him standing behind me, "Like you care."

"Look," he began and rubbed the back of his neck. "I'm not the greatest father, but everyone Quinn met was bad news."

"Well look around," I motioned my hand to circle the air. "I'm the only one who's here, aren't I?"

"I'm Harold," he extended a hand out to me.

"Riley," I responded and kept a grip on the flowers. "I brought the daffodils because I'm going to see my guardian after I was done here. I haven't visited her since Quinn came along, not that I'm using that as an excuse, but... I don't know."

"What happened to your biological parents?" Harold asked.

"They didn't want me, so my Aunt Cilia took me in and became my guardian. My bio-mom died and the sperm-donor is somewhere." I placed the daffodils to the side of the bench, "Cilia committed suicide a year after I left the house. My mothers are buried next to each other."

"Quinn's mother died of cancer," Harold admitted.

"So I've heard. You placed orchids on your wife's grave. Quinn hated them."

"They're hard to manage," Harold took a seat next to me. "It's rare when you find one that wants to be cared for. After my wife's death I shut down. Now that my kid is gone, I think I let that part of my life eat at me. I didn't allow myself to see that I still had someone to take care of. Quinn was an orchid at times."

The bus came into view and slugged its way up the hill.

"I don't think so," I responded.

"Why daffodils?" He asked.

The bus pulled to a stop and its doors sighed open, "Cilia loved them because they symbolize rebirth." I walked up to the bus and climbed aboard.

"Here," Harold gave me a blank white card. I took it, the doors closed, and the bus jerked back into motion. I tucked the card between the rubber band folds that held the daffodils together.

It was dusk when I reached the second cemetery. The daffodils were beginning to wilt from the overheated bus. When I exited the bus, the driver asked if I wanted to be out this late. I gave the driver a firm nod. She provided me with a flashlight and stated that the last bus would arrive at eight.

It didn't take long to reach Cilia's grave, I switched the flashlight on and shined it on her slab. I placed the daffodils against the marker, allowing the yellow petals to underline her name.

"I'm sorry I haven't visited in a while," I began, trying to keep my eyes from glazing over with tears. "I met someone and I tried taking care of them." The cemetery was silent. No chirps from birds or crickets, no flaring up of reviving engines, just silence. "I did what I could to make them feel happy, but I failed, just like I failed to visit you."

The trees rustled against a harsh gust. A petal came loose from one of the flowers and floated away into the darkness.

"I did my best to try," I admitted with gritting teeth. "I chose to try while everyone else around me gave up! You and Quinn died, mom abandoned me, my dad never attempted to claim me back. You all left me here! Why am I still here?"

Another gust of wind rolled through, scratching the tears from my eyes, and knocking over the daffodils. The white card that was tucked in the rubber band came loose and was caught by mom's grave.

It wasn't blank. Gold ink reflected against the flashlight's light. I scooted forward and picked it up:

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to know the difference.”

Underneath the text had a number and Harold’s name.

I faced both of my mothers and promised a future visit. The last bus arrived at eight o’clock, just as the bus driver from earlier promised. I took it home, card in hand, and ready to start anew with someone who learned how to care again.

~ *Linda Toro*



"Zephyr" ~ Eva Lewarne

we waited all day
for the rain
and when it came
it came
soft and cold
just enough to make
the roads slick
just enough to reduce
visibility
just enough to fill the air
with that fresh
but oily scent
like a driveway after
washing your car

it washes us

the rain
it washes us clean
and tomorrow
we can start over
when the sun rises
when the raindrops sparkle
and everything is new
and you can see unhindered
for miles

but i wonder how much
more washing i can take
until there's nothing left
but bleached bones

~ Charles Payne

i want to fold paper-
origami if you will-
but something for you to wear
something that rustles as you move
and fragile
weak against the sweat on your skin
weak against the fire in your blood
weak against the touch of my fingers
something shiny and glittering
with gold filigree
and red chrysanthemums
hard to look at like the sun
impossible to look away from
like the full moon
in the winter sky

~ Charles Payne



"The Dancer." ~ Eghosa Akenbor

TWO BREATHLESS

A marriage of words
What promises—
Steeped in wine,
the slow parade to vinegar
shuffles on.

A fine vintage,
these bottles lining shelves
with dust and pre-packaged hope
incubators and speculators, all
delight in rose-stained economy.

Two breathless
on a cold night,
wind working hollows,
arm grips arm and
leaves rustle light.

~ *Robert Matranga*

TOOTH ACHE

Oh
You're back
I haven't done this for
a while.

A snickering devotion is hard
to shed
quiet, though, it is—sometimes
it will creep on single toe.

Clairvoyant, perhaps
or clear with sharp edges
and ocular faculty
not living—

More like an orb or cut crystalline stone
with philosophic imperfections,
or a tooth ache.

~ Robert Matranga

ANSWERS THEN QUESTIONS

How she arrived there, she did not know, but she knew what she had to do. In a hallway she stood, alone, with the conviction of escaping. She had to get to the other side, to cross the space in between. What was so important in the next building that would require her to travel outside, she could not tell. Only there was this nagging urge to get there. Not that this hallway, this foyer of sorts, was not safe, for by all means it was. It just wasn't where she wanted to be. Or was she wrong? Was this hallway not where she was supposed to be? Was someone expecting her?

This part of the world was actually not that bad: the walls were clean and newly painted an off-white, the tile flooring was clean and shiny and had no chips, there was no trash, no shady characters moseying around. It was a nice environment, a good place to stand and wait.

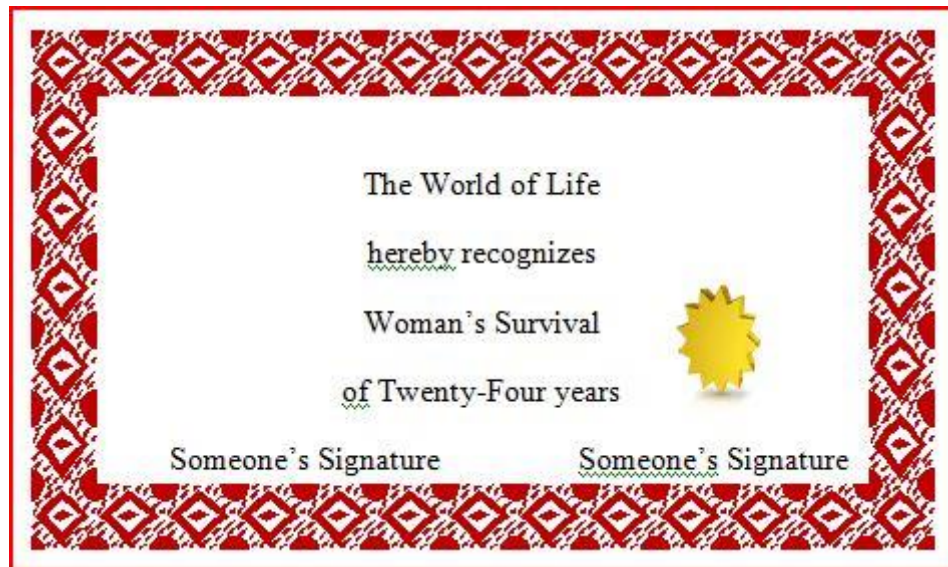
What was she waiting for again? Directions? But she already knew how to get there. Energy to get there? It wouldn't take that long to get there since it wasn't that far away. Was she waiting for someone? Perhaps that was it—she was waiting for someone. But who was she waiting for? Would she recognize him or her or them when he or she or they arrived? Several people passed her in the foyer, but they did just that, passed her. No one looked familiar, but would she recognize anyone when someone came along?

There were so many questions and so many things she did not know that she wanted to care less but she couldn't care less. What would happen if she didn't cross the chasm to this other building? What if she just left? Too many questions—she would drive herself crazy. Was that possible? Could she drive herself crazy? Would she want to? What would happen if she actually succeeded? What would she do then?

Oh! There was no use in predicting the future or discovering what was happening now in this world. Everything was all so vague and uncertain. She widened her eyes in amazement at the fact that she had survived thus far. Surviving in such a question-filled place was truly amazing and commendable. She should receive a certificate.

The World of Life
hereby recognizes
Woman's Survival
of Twenty-Four years

What an achievement! The certificate would be complete: framed edge, fancy letters, fake gold embossed seal of the World of Life, and stamped signatures of those in charge, whoever they were.



That would be quite nice, she ruminated. And she berated herself for carrying herself away. How betraying her widened eyes and large grin must have appeared to those passing her. Did they notice? Point out the she who was letting emotions paint her face? Not that displaying emotions was wrong, it was just obvious. And who wanted to be obvious? Being obvious was so obvious. Whereas when one is subtle, one doesn't know that one is obvious, but one doesn't know that one is subtle either. Even if she wanted to be obvious, she could catch herself up in being obvious that she could miss what's happening around her. Such as, was she supposed to meet someone or not? An assignation. She smiled and slanted her eyes. Oh, no, she shouldn't be obvious. Remember to be subtle. The assignation was a nice thought, but it couldn't be possibly. It was too early in the day. Besides, this wasn't the kind of place where an assignation would occur. This was the kind of place where people learned different languages and learned different cultures.

Maybe she had the time wrong. Maybe the time had her wrong. Maybe the wrong had time and her. What knows?

At first waiting and standing wasn't that bad, but now it was turning evil. Was her imagination working again, or was she actually being stared at? Was there a way she could tell? There really should be a test to determine if it's reality or imagination. Maybe she could work on that after she got to the other side. She couldn't think of it now. Actually, she probably wouldn't be able to think anything since two people were staring at her.

Why were they staring at her? Was she being obvious again? Did she have something on her face besides eyes, nose, mouth, makeup? Maybe the makeup was a bad idea. Every time she wore it she was constantly making up excuses for it. “Why are you wearing it?” Well, wouldn’t she want to wear it? Did she honestly have to decide why she wears makeup? Yes, it was a lot of trouble, but it was worth all the trouble for something. She just hadn’t figured that something out yet. Had others? Maybe she should ask. But not too loudly. There were certain things that people shouldn’t say. This might be one of them. She didn’t know. There was no way to know really. For no one ever spoke of the things that shouldn’t be voiced. She would speak softly about it one time, but she couldn’t have to say what that time was or would be since it was only herself thinking. Perhaps the time had already passed and she wouldn’t need to worry about it. Or it could be coming, but it would be something she wouldn’t wait for.

In the meantime, she could change. Instead of making up her face, she could show her wrinkles. But she couldn’t show her wrinkles, because she didn’t have any. Well then, what would she show? Maybe she could stop dying her hair and show the two strands of white hair. That would be something to show, and she was sure she had at least two strands. After the dye died off she might see that there were now more. Wouldn’t that be a sight? The waiting would be in anticipation—waiting for a surprise that one knows is coming far in advance. But for now the waiting can wait, because the two people were floating toward her. They three glanced at each other, then looked, then gazed, then stared, then glared, then glowered, then examined, then scrutinized.

“We need to get to the other side,” they said. Which one said it? Did it really matter? As long as one said it and it was intelligible and they both meant it then she wouldn’t have to distinguish between them. Would she? Not that they were twins—they looked nothing alike. One man, one woman. Were they married? Brother and sister? She had never seen them before, but that shouldn’t matter. Unless they were convicts...convicted of something preposterous. But how could she discover if they were convicts? She couldn’t just up and ask them. Could she? She always understood that to be improper and rude and obvious. And she couldn’t be obvious. She could afford to be improper and rude, but she couldn’t afford to be obvious. She had already been obvious too often. In fact, she may have already spent all she had and more on being obvious. Being obvious would not do, especially if she were in obvious debt. How would she get out of that? By being even subtler she supposed. She would try extra more to be subtle. And hopefully this trying wouldn’t be obvious.

So even if she could discover if they were convicts, if they were, should she worry? It probably depended upon the conviction. Which made her guilty as well—her conviction to travel to the other side. Funny, that she didn't know she was a convict. How quirksome that one could be a convict and not even know it! A laugh burbled at the back of her throat, her lips pursed, her shoulders shook—a laugh was coming. But she told it to go away. For a laugh would have been too obvious, if nothing else. A laugh was a laugh, something one could sneeze at. But she didn't want to sneeze now either. How bothersome were all these human occurrences. They always wanted to interfere when she least wanted. Therefore, in order to forget about these nonsenses, she peered again at the two before her.

There was nothing distinguishing about these two. Rather bland people from the looks of them. Yes, she judged by appearance. It's so much easier to judge by appearance than to approach a one and ask for: name, likes, dislikes, occupation, relationships statuses, and beliefs. She had tried it once before. She gleaned all the information she needed in order to make an informed decision. But by the time the one finished speaking, she was asleep and had to pee and almost had to be sick from hunger. Was that ever a bind? Because she was asleep, she couldn't decide if she should awake first or pee first or eat first. Making decisions is so much more complicated when one is sleeping. Therefore, she learned that it is much easier and faster to simply observe another and make up whatever she thinks fits that person. In the cases of these two, not very interesting lives. That might be perfect for such as a trip as this. Remembering the trip and the implication that these two did not know their way, she waved her arm awkwardly saying, "Follow me."

To be a leader was a great feeling. She liked leading people. She didn't like following people. Always afraid of getting ahead of herself and them. Then stepping on the backs of their shoes. It tripped her up more than it tripped them. Now even though she liked leading people, she become self-conscious. She was taught to mind her behind, and mind it she did. After spending minutes in front of her nonmagical mirror, checking the shape and size of her rear, she felt safe enough to enter the public. But still, since they were following her, they could be looking at her behind. How discomfoting a thought. Was there something she could do? Probably not now, it was too late. And here came the steps—five steps—leading up from the hallway to the door that led to the outside.

Taking the route outside was the fastest way to get there. Of course, they could follow the hallway around. But why would they want to do that? It was so nice outside. There wasn't anything outside that would harm her. The flowers weren't the snapping kind found elsewhere in the world. The sun could probably harm her. But so far she was protected, having coated her

bare spots in anti-sun material. Besides, they would be outside for only a short period. So she pushed open the fake glass door. She filed out. He filed out. She filed out. And all stopped. Ideally, they would have continued. Don't block the doorway. But they daren't go any further. No one had to voice the question since all of them were thinking it. Why was a leopard walking outside? Here? An actual leopard was walking slowly by them. It turned its great big head to gaze at her. Was her imagination working again, or was this leopard looking into her eyes? What should she do? Should she continue walking? Nonchalantly like? If she acted confident, would it not harm her? Or was the leopard one of those animals that attacked confident beings? Was her acting even that great to pretend to be confident or scared? It's too bad this situation couldn't be solved with a simple case of obvious versus discreet. She could do either. But the other kinds of acting were iffy.

Should she attempt to figure out where this leopard came from? She could call the local zoos, ask if they were missing a leopard. And then tell the owner that she knew where the missing leopard was. But how would she keep it from wandering off? It could leave and then her attempts would have been useless. Maybe she could try talking to it. She could ask it: where it was from, how it got here, did it like its home, would it tell her its future plans. They could have quite a nice conversation. That was, if the leopard would be nice and not eat her or scratch her or chase her. If it tried any of those, well then, it would be a tad difficult to have a nice conversation, would it not? She was noticing a pattern: everything nice always depended on the mood of everything. And how could she possibly predict that? She couldn't even tell if she were nice since no one had described her that way. Since being nice was so difficult to predict, she wondered if something else might not be a better reaction to the leopard.

Should she run back inside? Escape from the leopard? But would she truly escape? She and they had to travel outside sometime. Would the leopard still be outside when she and they really would have no other choice but to cross over the outside? If it were still outside, what would they do then? Wait inside until he went away? Run floppily across the outside, maybe or maybe not outrunning her? Did the leopard's gender matter? Were leopards more friendly in male form or female form? In the human realm, women bonded with women more easily than with men. But the shes also fought more with each other. She wondered what kind of luck she would have with this leopard. But she had never had any luck in the past. When she went to the store, she always forgot to get some. And no one ever gave her luck for special days. Once she had the opportunity to steal some luck. But she didn't, since it would have taken luck to have successfully stolen the luck. Oh, what a vicious never ending cycle. Thinking about it could drive her

crazy. And she didn't want to be crazy right now. Not with all her present convictions: getting to the other side, leading two people, dealing with a leopard.

The male tapped her arm. "What are we going to do?" He looked as if he were leaning over her.

She escaped first from the male. "We'll go back inside. Cut through hallways."

Then she escaped from the leopard as she stepped back inside. She didn't know why she said they could cut through the hallways. Because they couldn't. The hallways already had holes in them that they could walk through. Cutting through hallways would be a waste of time and energy. Unless they wanted to waste time and energy. Maybe what was on the other side wasn't nice. Then they really could cut through hallways. Delay their approach. But really, there were other ways they could delay their approach. Like the leopard. And the weather. The weather was always a reliable excuse. Since it was warm and sunny out, they could use the weather as an excuse. Who wants to walk outside in the warm and the sun? She really should have thought of that before. It's so much better to enter the outside when it's raining or fogging or thundering or lightning.

The lights in the hallways were lightning now in their fluorescence. The hallways appeared dark compared to the outside. Why did the lights have to be like that? She had always heard people complaining of fluorescent lights, but found she couldn't complain. She hadn't decided on the matter. She liked dark rooms. And she didn't mind the dark hallways. For such an empty, large, flat hallway, they moved slowly. Why were they moving so slowly? Was something else at work here—telling her to delay or not come? She didn't know. She had never dealt with anything otherworldly. Would she even recognize extra-worldly if she encountered it? If she didn't know what to see then how could she see it? She wouldn't be able to name it.

But she didn't need to name anything now. She pushed herself harder and faster and ended up moving heavier and slower. What was happening? Was gravity going? She had heard of gravity, but had never given it much thought. What was gravity again? Something about allowing her to move... Her followers didn't seem to have any problems moving. Was it just she? Was she the only one privy to certain feelings? How odd was she? She had always known she was odd, but it had never occurred to her that she was terribly odd. The straining of her going forward took all her force and energy that she couldn't even respond to the answers with the questions she should have. That was disappointing. She was breaking her pattern. And patterns broken were no longer any good.

She strained until finally they and she tumbled standing into a large room where two hallways joined. The other two followed her. All three standing at the end of this large room, looking toward the other end where the other hallway picked up. This part was really dark. Most of the lights must not have been working. It was so dark they couldn't see very much. She and they took a few steps forward when a woman with curly hair—the curly haired ones can never be trusted—jumped from behind a desk hiding in the darkened mist. Brandishing a rifle, she shot once. Why was she holding a rifle? Why did someone here need a gun? No one here ever had a gun. And where did she shoot? Into the air? Was she aiming at the male and female? Did she miss? She didn't hear any screaming. Was she aiming at her? Was she hit? No, she wasn't. Yes, she was. Where? Arm? Leg? Chest? Where was her hurt? But it wasn't a real bullet. It was an air bullet. Her heart beat fast: close one—it was just an air bullet.

Another shot. And another. And so many. The male and the female slopped down to the floor. Bright dark red in an otherwise dark colorless landscape seeped from them. The bullets were real? She slopped down too. Could she play injured? Could she play dead? Like a dog? Did the crazed secretary notice? Would the shooting woman come over to them to make sure they were dead? Why was the woman shooting? Did someone want them dead? Were they mistaken for other people? Why did they have to die now? Weren't they all convicted to go to the other side? But they hadn't even gone outside yet. She couldn't see what else was happening or would happen. How long would she have to lie there? She didn't want the others' blood to touch her. Or maybe she did. She didn't know. Had it touched her already but she just hadn't realized? What would happen if it did? Were the others really dead? Was there a way to tell? She turned her head to look at them. Her neck already hurt from lying awkwardly. Glassy eyes stared back at her. She hated being stared at. She wished the dead would look away. Give the living a sense of calm.

Was she still living now? Was she going to die soon too? What would happen if she did die? What would happen to her body? Would she feel it? Where would her mind go? What would she think? Was that possible? How come she had never thought of this until now? Had she always been so busy?

How long would she lie here? Until she was certain it was safe? Until she died? Was she actually injured and just didn't know it? Why was she so uncertain about everything now? Had she always been but never knew it? When would she finally make a decision to do something? What would she decide?

~ *Katherine Lashley*



“Adesuwa on d Braids” ~ Eghosa Akenbor

IT WON'T HAPPEN TO US

In the words of a wise woman, my sister:
“We're not going to divorce just because
he left his socks on the ground,”
though that is
precisely
the reason our parents did.

~ Natalie Morales

PARA QUE UNA PELUQUERÍA SEA REAL

para que una peluquería sea real es imprescindible conocer la altura de los tacones de la dueña

[sonido de tijeras chas chas chas un secador]

para saber si el movimiento oscuro ante los ojos son gorriones saltando en un bordillo o ideogramas de proteínas muertas

hay que cerrar los párpados y aguzar el oído por si

[bullicio de gorjeos pri pri pri]

para saber si existe una membrana que el cuerno de la muerte no es capaz de rasgar no sé no sé qué huellas es preciso buscar sobre la nieve

sobre el pelaje blanco de una liebre

~ Regina Salcedo

THE APPLE ORCHARD

I walked the rows of apple trees with Dad
just days before I was to leave my home
for good. He called me out in the early
morning into the fields with him, before
the sun had peeked over the mountains. Frost
already formed around the apples. Warm
breath mixed with chilly air formed clouds before
my face. And as I walked beside my dad,
he wiped away the frost an apple held.
He took his knife, then cut a piece and gave
the slice to me. The apple tasted sweet; It
was full of juice. The crisp was like the sound
of dry leaves being trampled underfoot.
Then he removed a glove and put his hand
upon my face. I felt the sandpaper
tips of his fingers scratch against my temple;
his swollen palm caressed my cheek. He said
nothing, but only stared across the orchard.
He took his hand away from my face and
removed his other glove. He turned both hands
to me and said, "You see my hands, the blisters I
have and the calluses; Remember them.
Don't let them be in vain. Let me and Mom
be proud of you. Son, you're our only hope."

~ *David Estrada*

A MANIFESTO FOR A LOST CAUSE

I am not a writer. Nor will I rise to the challenge. I have long submitted to the undeniable fact: you were the one who had mastered the art of penning raw emotion. But I will write you. I will write for you and about you. I will write in more ways than one. I will write in more voices than one. This is a collective struggle. It is no longer mine, yet it is almost only mine. Who can taste you as I had, and who can imagine you as I have? I present you to them, and forgive my blunders, my constant lack, and mostly, forgive my ingenuousness. I write to fight against them. I write to scream back at them. Their voices, always in our heads. Religion. The Tribe. The society of glass doors. The men in our lives. And your mother. Your mother raised you to be the mad mess that you are; ready to be served on a plate to the highest bidder, the man with the darkest mustache, no matter how much facial hair revolted you.

You were the most beautiful thing in my life. Thing, I say, but I mean *everything*. People say “you were the one for me.” How mundane. More importantly, after you, there was no one for me – and I was never the one for those who breathed the same air I did. Everything and everyone became *nothings*. I had resigned. Content and oblivious to what my resignation meant at the time, I never hypothesized that I was to write you, to unravel you, and break you. Do we choose when to resign? Do we do everything in our power to be fired? Let go of? Let go. People insist that we should never let go. You feared it. You feared it so much but you were the creator of it. I have now become fluent at Letting Go. I’ve let go of all of it. There is no room for me anymore, no home, no embrace of a God, no shelter of a man, and there is no you either.

There was always something about you that was not to be understood. Always something missing – yet not mine to question. When we are children, adults shush us when we ask about God. When we dare to question. With you, there was no questioning. You frowned upon me, labeling me as a Questioner. “*Where is your faith?*”

Before we met, I was certain that you were to accept my imperfections. There was no avoiding it. All paths were to lead to me, and I dug holes through the ones that did not. I made them ugly. Unappealing to your artistic sense. You always craved Choice. I planted them in front of you, all the small choices, and the many pathways, synonymous for me. How could I have done otherwise?

People spoke of eyes. Eyes were the windows to the soul, I believe someone had said. Eyes expressed one’s being. What about mine? Your eyes

expressed my being. Your eyes confirmed me. They affirmed my status. As what? I still do not know. But in them I was promoted. Above all the *others*. And we both knew my preoccupation with the *others*. As they haunted me, they slowly caught up with me, howling at my demotion. How could I have been so foolish? Those who rise up illegitimately to heaven are damned. Flung outside to the forsaken streets. Just like the street cats who meow and whine, but nobody stops to hear them. And if they are not careful, if they don't employ the utmost caution, with big block letters, then the tires of some prestigious car... you remember the rest. That night I rushed home, a mess. I had made a mess. You scoffed. You called *me* a mess. I thought you had gone mad –for you had always been that way. If I was a mess, it was only because I had MS: Multiple Sclerosis, MS, which always sounded like a “mess.” But it was my MS that never made me a mess. It kept me intact, fighting for every day, fighting to remain functional, to walk, to make sure all of my senses were still there. Each morning, I would open my eyes, check that my hands could still grasp yours (that they weren't numb), wiggle my toes (that they could still move), and that my smile was still symmetrical. My mirror for that specific part was you. You'd ask me to smile, and we would examine every angle of my lips. No facial paralysis there today.

In retrospect, I realized I was paralyzed, not physically, but in everything else. We would argue, we would make war. Because we couldn't be. And then came the Flowers. Forgiveness. Unnecessary apologies. Welcomed rewards. I realized there was beauty in everything, but it was not the beauty *others* saw. I had found a prophecy. I was seeing beauty in non-beauty. Beauty in grotesqueness and... I loved it. That was when I felt the world needed you to exist. You did not need the world. You injected yourself into the air, and into the molecules I squinted to see. Your breath polluted the air, but I was neither environmentalist nor ecologist. It was not an issue. Joyous that you existed, I urged you to breathe. “And if I die young? If I run out of breath?” you had asked. I had laughed nervously, suggesting the first buffoonish idea that came to my muddled mind: CPR. You called me a teenager, and I was confused as to whether I ought to be flattered or humiliated. Blushing furiously, I was yours to describe.

Conflicting desires as always. Nervousness. Your fingers teased my skin, inquiring about the percentage of nervousness within me. Good nervous? Bad nervous? They played off of each other, yet they were opposites. Yin and Yang. Like us. Two different cultures. Two different religions. A Shiite and a Sunni. My eyes contrasted to yours –both were dark, but yours had the gorgeousness of noble decent, albeit Persian. Mine had the coarseness of tribal descent. You loved my heritage. I embraced yours. We called each other, at times, by our last names. It was as though I

was still in denial. How was I speaking to you, looking at you, deep within you, you who represented that certain family?

You were mine. And theirs. The *others*. I had come after the *others*. All those men. The ones that could marry you. They stood a chance. As for the women, they were older, wiser, and you reminded me of their accomplishments. Some of them even had families. Some were divorced, with children, and they could offer you a real relationship. A home. A bed to sleep in at night. I could hardly offer anything.

But initially, I was, I believed –and confess, made you believe – a savior. I would offer you a world that was non-abusive. Nonviolent. And that was the beginning. When you were violent, I remained passive. When you were verbally abusive, I bit my tongue. When you were torturing me emotionally, I vowed to activate my patience. But what was that thin line between respect and disrespect? When do we lose sight of boundaries? In demolishing all boundaries, do we then truly love? Do we finally meet ourselves and others? I know we confronted each other. But there was no escape. Tribalism entered the picture, threatening to murder. There was, as always, the issue of honor. *My blood, your blood, the pool of us threatened to spill*. The tribe was there, claiming me. And Religion turned its head and scowled. You started fearing us, and you couldn't sleep at night. Demons came for you, and you believed it was all because of me. And you called me evil. You saw us as Sinful. How would I ever convince you otherwise? I began to understand that you were but a miniature being in a place filled with ruthless, gigantic, non-beings. They took you away. You went back to the *others*. With your fervor. With your colorfulness and your unapologetic seductiveness. The *others* and you questioned my worthiness, my efforts. Had I surrendered before even fighting the war? I couldn't have been a fighter, if I only ever fought my own body. What about yours? What about the entire society? The culture, the patriarchs, the god, the prophets, the religious ones, the mothers who wanted to marry their daughters off, the tribes that obsessed over virginity, honor – why couldn't I fight those bodies?

Was there ever really hope? Hope is nothing but an illusion for the depressed. For the *insane*. For the *idealists*. But, you, in my head, are real. As I write you, you are real. And the struggle is still real. And I reinvent you, and us, and our ending again and again.

~ *Shahd Alshammari*



"Abandon me" ~ Rubia van Roodselaar

there's a sparseness of the tongue
a not-quite-what-I-mean
all of the time, I mean.

b/c it's a fact
the word is not the thing-
but why?

i'd ask the sky
but it's only
S-K-Y

letters turned fetters
inside my mind.

how can I really know
if there's a theater
and a stage

between the words
and the page

if the actors
can only speak
linguistically?

symbols stir sounds
and we get around
rather easily.

thus, we take language for granted
 though we can't understand it-
such naivety.

i ask you

how can the universe fit
 between
A and Z?

~ *Matthew Bohlka*

POESÍA

Llámame por mi nombre:
Poesía
Y sigue mis ondulaciones ...
de verso
a verso
inverso
si quieres.

~ Andrea Babsky

LOVE IN THE TRIAL OF BELIEF

Dawn, Day 1

Falling –
Three broad leaves –
Faith, Hope, Love –
But the greatest of these – is –

Immanence and Transcendence

Between immanence and transcendence,
the Seat of Wisdom, sword in hand,
fixes an indefinite gaze.

Her unknowing stone eye is
a rock, kicked,
offering neither refutation nor revelation.

Her head bowed,
she frets one stop on the cosmic monochord,
she and her son sharing their umbilical secret.

*The crack of brittle flesh –
the taste of blood in your mouth –
necrosis –
the opposite of sacrament*

Love in the Trial of Belief

I. Sign in please.

UNNAMED SPECIMENS WILL BE DISPOSED

This sign greets registrants at the doctor's office.
I sign my name and sit amid a timberstand of magazines:
Family Circle, Highlights for Children, Field & Stream.
Bob Dylan stares blankly from the cover of *Time*.

Johannes Kepler and Tycho Brahe figure *Sky & Telescope*.

I don't know her name, or anything about her,
except that she sits across from me in the waiting room,
tall and thin in crisp middle age, in clean workout gear,
holding a plastic bag.

From the bag she takes long slips of identically marked paper, blood
orange,
six by two, dozens of samples,
gridded into eight squares, with a different word branded in each
square.

She stacks several of them and then cuts the words,
creating a pile of severed language in her lap.
Some of the words fall at my feet:

mortar love broken engagement

At intervals she stops her cutting and places a handful of words
into small white envelopes.
She seals each envelope and repeats the process.

love mortar broken engagement

the words flutter bleeding to the floor
in the clinical sterility of the office.

broken engagement love mortar

a signified body without ligature
naming without relation
saying without reference

specimens unnamed disposed willbe

II. *The Night of Brahma*

Brahma stirs and dissolves the world
shadows dissolve through the skin of the Brahma's dream
and the pieces coalesce as he sleeps again
not in the same order, but
like Bob Dylan canting and recanting, slipping through identity
like Pierre Broca and Karl Wernicke, locating verbs and nouns in the
whole brain
like Antoine Doniel, staggered by desire, in François Truffaut's fertile
dreaming

The Universe has three children
unnamed, renamed, slipping through identity

Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva
the Knower, the Doer, the Sayer
priest, prophet, king

unnamed, specimens, disposed

superego, ego, id
Groucho, Chico, Harpo
Lily, Rosemary, the Jack of Hearts

We can no more live without love than we can live without skin.
Love is the skin on the world, the skin through which we move, and
through which we express everything we know, do, and say.

Dylan's masks defy the distinction between nouns and verbs;
Lifting the verbal veil reveals more veils, until
Dylan dissolves behind the infinite veil

Antoine Doinel lurches beyond the skin of desire, feeling without seeing,
looking through the woman he loves to see the women he desires,
always fluxed by the chaos of being beyond his desire's target.

Johannes Kepler spent his life building a dream of perfect Copernican geometry.

He could not accept retrograde motion or irrational elliptical orbits.
He could not liberate God from the unjust prescription of geometry.
Kepler's dream dissolved, the mathematics leaching from the skin of perfection
broken into the universe bound by the irrational geometry of love.

III. Falling

From this cold artifice
she emerges
downcast
headcold
wind whipping her hair into a tendril froth.

Do you, my friend, show to your parents
their love for you?
Do you, my friend, show to your children
your timeless creator love?
Do you show them God in a blade of grass,
or the universe in a cup of coffee?
The oracle said, *Imiti ikula, epanga: the growing
trees are tomorrow's forest.*

She slows by the willow
its tendrils reach to her
wrap around her
saying

*I will care for you
I will bear you up
I will hold you close
no longer weeping.*

*I will swing you low, oh my sister,
close to the ground, but not in it,
and I will swing you high, my sister, to heaven,*

but not of it.

Swing in my arms, my sister.
Swing with me high into lightness and grace,
Swing low, falling, into love

IV. *The Trial of Belief*

Fall in love every day, every hour, every minute.
Be homeless in your love;
Logic has no home here.

Live in the falling, in the vertiginous spin
of the ground disappearing beneath your feet,
of the air becoming thin around your head.
Realize the fear and pleasure of participial love,
falling, ever falling, without end, without bottom.

Live your love in the trial of belief.
Faith is being floated; belief is the work of not-drowning.
If faith is air, belief is breathing underwater.
The oracle said, *The urge to believe is stronger than belief itself.*
But I say *the urge to believe is enough.*

The thymoetean trick of love is to fall and never land.
Therefore *be*, just *be*, be just, and then be happy
Be happy like the light that finds the mold on the underside of a leaf
Be happy like discipient Harpo Marx in a crowded room
Be happy like Antoine Doinel in *Baisers Volés*
Be happy like Emerson, glad to the brink of fear
Be happy like the Godhead, broken up, and we are the pieces
Be happy in your brokenness
Be happy like the Brahma in his four billion year sleep
Be happy like the Rabbi, telling the woman in sin that her faith has
saved her
Be happy like the woman in sin

Be happy like Dylan's simple geometry of flesh on the bone
Be happy like the poet lubricating the muse
(thou foolish poet! to not know that the muse is free to everyone)
Be happy for Broca and for Wernicke
Be happy for nouns and verbs
Be happy you are not God
(for what use are verbs to God?)
Be happy with your bipedal giant's lateralized brain
Be happy with handedness and stereo vision
Be happy in breaking an unjust law
Be happy like Johannes Kepler
Be happy like the sun, tracing its analemma in the sky for another 1.5
billion years
Be happy that you. are not. an infinity.

Three broad leaves
falling at my door
Faith, Hope, Love
But the greatest of these
Is trees

Be happy that love is not a single tree, for
Love is the communion of the forest.

V. The Measure of Her Flight

At the end of the last perfect day,
in the graying light of her own solar eclipse,
she affixed a rope to an arrow
and shot it into the air.

The arrow stuck in the fading blue and
she climbed to the top of the sky.

She tore a hole in the sky to climb through, and
on the other side of the sky she directed herself to a distant moon
within the measure of her flight.

She collapsed toward the dim gray world,
giving herself freely to its gravity, and
soft she landed in the velvet grip of the moon,
forever free of bitter complaint.

She melted into the dense shadow of eternal night and
then, in the superluminous darkness, I knew the dread vision of the
gods
in their aporetic might.

In the fatalism of a solar eclipse,

Some people like to see the hieroglyphic stars in the daytime
as a dragon eats the Sun,
six minutes of night without the long commitment to darkness.

Some look at the corona,
invisibility revealed,
which we cannot see directly lest surely we die. And
Some, vacated,
are left to stare at the blistered hole in the sky.

VI. Memory's Ghost

Now milk-white veils of fog drift in the cold air,
wreathing like ghosts in the trees –

you,
an image, a trace,
a whisper
in my mind
and nowhere
else –

the verb of nature,
a passive voice,
a hole in the sky
from whence comes

cold, rain-stopped lines

and memory's ghost
wreathing the world vacated,
like drifting veils caught in the trees.

VII. Sonnet: to Silence

For you, who fires silently in the magazine of love,
and who forever knows the rested quiet night,
quiescently limned, the believer's vibrant rite,
the sound of a snowflake gracing a velvet glove.

And for your cacophonous soul's silent respite,
midnight solemnity escaping from breathless noon –
do you now hear the tolling of the moon,
and know the language of the dove in flight?

We, left back, only hear the whispered "soon"
and know the ever shifting, verbéd sand.
But you are *be* in the author's verbless land,
and hear *forever* as mesmer's silent June.

Do not despair over the leaving of your breath;
the silence that you know is not the silence unto death.

~ *Bill Scalia*



“Sunset on the Grand Canal” ~ Andrew Woodyard

Walls continue to reload,
many reflections of stories untold.
A decadence of silence fills the air.

Tic--Toc
continues its beloved hour.
I watch my agonizing thoughts slip
away.

Mute verbs held hostage by
Inquietude.
Inspiration fractured by immobility
unable to partake in the remnants
of imagination.

The verse continues to bleed
within the vast space of these
empty lines.

I crawl between the routine
yearnings,
only to find them in deep sleep,
leaving me no grace
to consume my ink.

~ Monica Sosa

Escribo

Porque el viento me ha confesado

Las tristezas

de voces olvidadas,

que vagan

con un silencio extranjero.

Escribo

Porque mis lagrimas se han secado

con la sed de mi nostalgia,

Y el nudo en mi garganta guarda pensamientos

que no lograron su libertad.

Escribo

Porque el oceano tan imenso

no logró abrazarme,

Y me perdí en la espuma

de su tempestad,

Y el dolor, al no saber nadar

floto sin dirección.

Escribo

Porque a veces

Mi cuerpo me queda grande

a causa

de los vacíos de mi interior

que aún no consigo habitar,

Y mi alma tiembla,

al recordar lo que la juventud se llevo.

Escribo

Porque a veces

Las palabras se esconden

En los rincones de las heridas,

Y los sonidos tienen agujeros.

Hay dias largos y tristes

Y otros dias cortos y felices.

Y mi voz se desmaya

al no poder dar

una palabra de aliento.
pero aún así,
ESCRIBO.

~ *Monica Sosa*

A CERTAIN CLARITY OF VISION

"It's like an ocean," I remember her saying. She had never taken notice of the area around the house, but she began to look around her. She wasn't worried about making ends meet or about putting together the next meal. Right then, she was noticing the world.

Later that week, my Betsy died. It's a hard thing to get over losing a wife. It's a hard thing to do. We were married many years before she passed, and in all our time together, from courting to the end, the day she saw the ocean in the hills of our hometown, is the day I remember, especially.

The day she died, a neighbor of mine gave me a puppy, so I wouldn't be lonely. That dog's been with me since my wife has been gone.

It's been almost fifteen years since Betsy passed, but these days I've been thinking back to when she died, more and more. You see, now my dog is dying. I know she is. She's old, and tired, and worn out; just not able to function normal. Knowing that her time is near, that I'm going to lose her soon, is a hard thing to think about. It gets me to thinking about my wife's passing, and all of the things I couldn't do to help her.

I stand in the kitchen sometimes, staring outside of the screen door, out into the open field that stretches for miles and miles, it seems like. Occasionally the wind gusts, and the grain stalks sway back and forth. It looks like an ocean made of liquid gold. The field are a ways off from my home. Between the golden field and my home is Mr. Dickey's property, which is pasture mostly, and feeding ground for his cattle. His property starts at the bottom of the hill on which my home is built, just where the brook divides the land, marking the boundary between us so that a fence need not be erected. My property ends just at the brook and Mr. Dickey's begins right after it.

I pushed the screen door open, and it creaked like an old haunted house on Halloween. The creak was louder than I ever remember it, and I made a mental note to grease up the hinges.

Whenever the old hinges creaked, before I could step out of the house, my dog would run up to me, her front legs always moving forward, straight at me, but her hind legs moving from side to side, following her tail. Her head would jerk up and down like a bucking bronco, and she'd be smiling at me.

When she reached the porch, she would jump up on my leg. She was just a puppy at the time and could only reach up to my knee, but as time passed she caught up to my thigh, then my waist. Eventually she got so that her paws would thump me on the chest when she jumped up, and she was almost kissing my mouth with her tongue, she was so tall. But I didn't mind. She was my dog, and I love her.

When I walk out now, the door creaking as loud as ever before, nothing comes running at me. It has happened like this several times before, but lately it has been happening more than I remember. "Girl. . .come on, now. . ." I call. I keep calling her out, and clapping my hand, but she doesn't come. And so I march off of my

porch, and walk around the perimeter of the house, calling her name, and clapping my hands, but without an answer.

I see her laying by the old tree in the corner of the yard. “Come on, girl,” I call, but she doesn’t stir. I walk over to her, shuffling my feet along the dirt, but slow down when I see she is breathing.

I stop for a while at the large stone I had placed just underneath the tree. Then I get up and move in right behind her, and call her name again, and clap my hands, taking for granted that she will get up, but she doesn’t. I crouch down, and put my hand on her rear, where her tail and back come together. She jumps up, startled, and turns in my general direction. It doesn’t seem right to me that she jumps like she does. It occurs to me some time later that my dog is deaf.

So, we continue like that for some time.

One day we were on the porch, just sitting together. There was some rustling in the field just alongside of my property, so I stood up from the chair, but my old dog didn’t move. I stepped down onto the yard, and looked in the direction of the disturbance. Sure enough I see what it was, a ‘possum.

Slow, and calm, I walked over to my dog. I surprised her awake—she was sleeping. Well, it took some coaxing, but I finally got her to stand up, and pulled her out into the yard, and set her facing in the general direction of the ‘possum. She sat there, her body ready to move in the right direction, but she kept turning her head to me. “Over there, girl,” I said, pointing with my finger, gesturing with my head, but she kept looking back at me. I took both hands and positioned her head so that her eyes were facing at the right place, but she didn’t see it. She couldn’t see nothing. My old dog was blind.

Well, we continued like that for some time.

One day I came to realize that my dog wasn’t any good to this earth no more. It wasn’t right for her to be moving along as she was, deaf, and blind, and hurting, not able to do nothing but sleep, and even that seemed like a chore for her—she struggled so hard to breathe.

We sat outside on the porch, me and my dog. I sat on the steps, she laid beside me, and rested her head on my leg, and slept. I stroked her long ways, from her head to her tail, talking to her all the while: “Girl, it’s not right for you to be going on like this. I’ve known you since you were a puppy, and I can’t stand to see you hurting. I wish there was some way to make the pain stop. It’s not right for you to be like this.”

She didn’t move much, but I know she heard me. She knew I was talking to her.

I decided I needed a walk, so I went about town for some time, telling myself I had no destination, but walking directly to where I wanted to go.

I stepped inside the building and asked my friend, “Is it cruel for a man to end his dog’s suffering?”

“Nah,” said the sheriff. “Ain’t no crime if it’s your property.”

I unlocked the cabinet and pulled out my rifle. Then I took a box from the bottom drawer of the cabinet, and set them both on the couch.

I sat on my chair, took Betsy's picture frame from the table next to me, and looked at her some time, silently. I loved her and it hurt me to see her hurting and knowing there was nothing I could do about it.

"There's nothing you can do to help her," the doctor said. "There's nothing I can do to help her."

"But doctor, she's my wife," I said.

"I know, Efrem," he said. "I know."

He patted me on the shoulder, and put his hand onto the lower part of my back, and I felt him pushing me out of his office. As he was walking me out, the doctor told me she could take some medications, but they were expensive and would only delay the inevitable. I didn't quite understand what he was saying, and he must have noticed that, because he told me that the medicine wasn't going to help her.

I put on my hat and walked out to the truck where Betsy was already waiting. She didn't say a word. I said, "We can't afford it, Betsy," and I didn't know what else I should say, so I said nothing.

The doctor said she would live only a few months, at most, because the cancer had been in her for so long, and had never been noticed by a doctor before. He said the word "diagnosed," and when I got home I went to the dictionary and looked to see what it means, and now I do.

She suffered those next few weeks. She hardly got out of bed, she was so weak, and her bones and body ached. I tried to cook for her, though I hadn't cooked in over thirty-seven years. At times, when the weather was pleasant, and my Betsy felt she had the strength, I'd move her onto the porch so she could sit and look out on the fields.

One time she was out there on the porch, just before the sun went down, and she said, "It's like an ocean."

At the time I didn't know what she was talking about because I was sure that she had never seen an ocean for real, but only in pictures and on television. In all her years she had never been outside the county limits.

I believe now, that maybe it was God talking to her. Maybe she was looking at something that I couldn't see.

"I don't know what I should do, Betsy," I told the picture. "She's suffering so much, now. It doesn't look like she's going to last very long."

I was quiet for a bit, then continued, "I couldn't help you when you were sick, but I can help her."

I held the picture and thought to myself, It's not right. It's just not right.

One day I woke up and found her in the kitchen, with the ironing board set out. She was ironing my suit and shirt, putting creases in the pants and on the sleeves. She had picked out a tie, and when she finished each piece she put it on a hanger, and then covered all of it with plastic.

I had remained silent, standing in the doorway between the kitchen and living room, when she noticed me, and said, "You'll need these."

Five weeks after the doctor pushed me out of his office, my Betsy died. She was buried out back, just under the old tree on the left side of the yard. I had a stone put over her body. It read, "Wife and Friend," and I thought that was just about right. After putting her into the earth, I walked down to the brook at the bottom of the hill.

Mr. Dickey was down there, and when he saw me, he called out, "Looking sharp, Efrem. New suit?"

Before I could answer, he continued speaking. He offered me a puppy to keep me company. "If you don't take it, I'll probably end up drowning the pups. I can't be taking care of so many dogs," he said.

I took the dog.

The pain my Betsy felt those last few weeks hurt me too. And it hurt me to think how long she had been suffering before she found out for sure. The doctor told us the cancer was in most of her body, but my Betsy never made complaints, nor said she was hurting or tired, or gave any sign that she wasn't right. I should have known, she was my wife for so long that I should have known. But, she always knew me more than I knew her, more than I knew myself, I think.

I was putting a fence in the back, because I didn't want my Betsy's place to be disturbed. I know that she is up in Heaven now, and is suffering no more, but I wanted to make her place here on the ground nice too, so that when she looks down on me, she can see that I'm taking care of her, now, when before I couldn't.

My dog was over by the stone above Betsy, lying down in sleep. She was breathing hard, and painful. With each breath, her body shivered in pain, like when you try to swallow cough syrup when your throat is swollen. There was little flesh under her skin. When she breathed, I could see the shape of the bones of her ribs, just underneath her coat.

On the other side of the tree from where Betsy was laying, I dug a large hole about four and a half feet long and two feet wide. It was about three feet deep.

After finishing the hole, I went back and finished digging holes for the fence posts.

She was out near her tree when I found her, sitting, her eyes looking out over the ocean of grain stalks. I walked over to where she was, silent, and cautious. I stood behind her for some time, and looked at her. It seemed to me that she held her head higher than usual, and that her legs seemed stronger, too. But, I know it

wasn't so. I laid my rifle down on the ground, and crouched behind my dog, and started petting her like a snow storm, just covering her with hugs. I wrapped my arms around the old dog's neck, and put my head next to hers. It ain't fair what a man has to do sometimes.

She didn't move much. Her eyes stayed looking in the same direction they had been since I moved up on her. And, she stayed looking in the direction. I stood up and took the rifle in my hand. I aimed the barrel at the back of her head. She turned her head around to me, just a second. Her eyes caught mine, and the tears stormed out of my eyes. I kneeled next to my dog, apologized, and hugged her again, but I know it wasn't any use. It had to be done.

Standing up again, I aimed the rifle, wiping tears away from my eyes, for the spot where the neck meets the head. My dog lowered her head, as if she were marking the spot for me, showing me where I was to aim.

I washed her coat before wrapping her in the best white sheet I had in the house. I brushed her coat, too. Before covering her up, I kissed her muzzle. Then, I carried her out to the hole, on the opposite side from where my Betsy laid, and placed her into her grave. I covered her up, not saying a word during that time, and just stood over my dog. Then I walked over and knelt at my wife's stone. I cried.

Sort of mumbling the words out, I said, "They knew what was the matter, but we couldn't afford it. We just couldn't." I wish I knew you were alright, for sure, I thought. Then I said, "Why were we always struggling, so darn poor? Whyn't we ever able to live comfortable?"

I went into the house and sat in my chair. I didn't turn the television on; I wanted silence. I looked over at Betsy's picture, then reached down to a lower shelf and took her Bible. I opened the Bible to a page Betsy had marked many years before, because I wouldn't have known where to look. Church-going was never something I did, although Betsy was in church every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and twice on Sundays. She would always tell me to read her Bible, and if I didn't know where to look, she'd say, "Just open it up and get to it."

I pointed into the Bible, and read, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain."

I closed my eyes, and said to myself, in my mind, Betsy, you ain't living uncomfortable no more.

Sometime later, when walking through town, Mr. Dickey came up behind me. "How's it going there?" he asked. "I haven't see that dog of yours for a while. How is Old Miss Steady?"

"She's dead," I said, and turned to walk back home.

~ David Estrada



"Faces in The Fronds" ~ Nancy Anderson

LANGUAGE BARRIER

He spoke in riddles
petty boy
tongue snaking
around languages
hitting his front teeth
girl-like, as he talked his
english-spanish-yiddish-gibberish-
one monotone accent for them all
a word from every culture his blood
had ever touched, moving faster
than my pocket translator (on the fritz)
could comprehend.

~ Stephanie Gomez-Hernandez

BEYOND THE MINUTES OF MEN

My dreams are a juggernaut to your wall,
laying it to waste to crumble and to fall.
To be fuel to a fire and finally start anew
Then revel in the reverie
and marvel at it too.

For for us to fair more than fair,
we must work 2 x 2 and be square,
beyond the limiting limits of lines
obtusely aligned.

We'll blaze through them and trail
tunnels and bridges between our stars.
Architects of constellations yet to be drawn,
at heart bring to home
what we once thought so far.

~ Oscar A. Ulloa

LA MARIONETA DE PEDRO ALVARADO

Primera Parte

- ¡Chicos! ¿Qué aventura vamos a viajar ahora? No se olviden que me deben unas cuantas canicas de plomo para darles las respuestas que ustedes quieren saber acerca de nuestras fincas en la isla de California.

-Si Febe, ya nos has dicho otra y otra vez; te los doy mañana, lo prometo.

Dijo Héctor, el más noble y necio de amistades.

-termina el fin de semana otra vez. . . ¡Bah! Quería quedarme toda la semana con mi primo jugando caritos con la nueva autopista de vapor que reciente creo con mi tío. Respondió con angustia y feroz.

-¿Hablas del juguete de autopista que mueve los caritos como si nada? ¡Qué chivo!

-Si Héctor, que solo un padre que es ingeniero puede crear un carrito así.

La Febe saca su reló rustico de bolsito y mira con atención ávida –Chicos, chicos, solo nos queda quince minutos antes de entrar a clase. Recuerden que no hablen durante clase, sino, la maestra nos ha de dar de castigo los rezos del santo niño de Atocha; rezarlos cinco veces enfrente de la clase.

El timbre de la escuela toque *tic to, tic to, tic to*, y se van en zancadas a su clase estimada. Se sentaron al descanso por unos segundos hasta que la maestra Virago les responde:

-ya oyeron el timbre, saquen sus lápices y comencemos al proyecto nuevo. El proyecto será de grupos de tres y vamos promulgar de nuevo la conquista de los bonetes hace los posquos.

-Maestra, ¿Por qué los bonetes exterminaron los posquos? Ellos nos enseñaron donde encontrar los pozos de agua llamados *temakawomal*, cuando nuestros antepasados pensaron que la isla de California, era solamente, lugar espejismo y árido. Nos enseñaron como utilizar las aguas para crear electricidad para nuestra finca de Berlín. Los posquos nos enseñaron el elixir de la naturaleza y como respetar nuestra tierra y la magia. . .

-¡Señorita Febe! Pare con su blasfemia. Esa magia oscura no existe solo son cuentos pasadas por los posquos para divertir los, ustedes chicos, nada más. Estudiantes, adjuntase con dos compañeros, y después, los voy asignar otro tres compañeros para el proyecto.

-Febe y Héctor, ¿Con quienes vamos a trabajar?

-Quien sabe mi amigo Salomón. Quizás los hermanos Reyes que viven cerca allá a las aguas.

-¡Esa maestra Virago es una agenda oculta! ¿Cómo cree que los nosotros somos *duendes* y que hacemos magia negra atreves de conspiración secreta?

Febe tomo el proyecto a ofensa.; ella es criolla y posca *pero entre ellos mismos, dentro su lengua, se refieren como los mitotes*. Febe tiene sangre boneta del

padre y sangre mitota de la madre. La madre le dio el nombre *Man-el*, que simboliza la luna con características de compasión y vivacidad. Sin embargo, el padre no quiso darle ese nombre por la probabilidad que los compañeros de clase le hagan burla y crean que es posca y no criolla. En esta comunidad, la apariencia define todo.

Reemplazo el nombre original a "Febe", solamente "*Febe*".

-Nadie habla de la maestra mugrosa Febe. La magia no existe y no te entendí nada lo que me dices; hablas muy rápido como la maestra.

- ¡bah!

Respondió con brío de tiniebla del comentario.

-¿Pero qué pasa si la magia negra si existe?

<<*No pude quitarme la idea afuera de mi mente. Siento la ansiedad oprimiendo mi cuerpo con manos furibundas e invencibles*>>

-Febe, eso de la magia negra no es verdad, ¿no?

-Si lo crees, entonces será verdad.

Cuando lo respondió la respuesta inmaculada, el sintió que la sanidad se quebró en varios pedazos de vidrio que picaban partes del cerebro a sumergirse abajo. El corazón pega *pun, pun, pun*, confrontándose con preocupación e anticipación.

La maestra los ajunto con los chistosos de la clase. El líder de esos tres llamado Rasputín, atavió con colores grises y puesto la chistera de color carmesí. El atontado y mugroso del grupo, Grendel, siguiendo las órdenes de Rasputín. Por último, el más callado y sabio de los tres, Ricote, quien no es criollo como todos nosotros, sino un mitote, los nativos de la isla de California.

-¿Qué me cuentan? Escuche a mis amigos que ganaron todas las canicas de la escuela; también de los mejores jugadores, los tres hermanos Reyes, ellos nunca han perdido.

Rasputín les contestó a ellos pero no les ponen atención.

-Salomón, ¿Qué te pasa?

-No sé si la magia negra exista o no.

-Por supuesto existe, ¿Verdad Grendel y Ricote?

-¡Si! Si existe la magia Rasputín. La magia mala, sí.

-...

Ricote no respondió, se miró sólido como si no moverse afirmaba la pregunta de Rasputín.

-¿No han visto la marioneta de Pedro Alvarado en la clase número tres? Cada miércoles, a las tres de la tarde, dicen que la marioneta se mueve y ríe en la oscuridad. ¡Comienza mover la boca y reza el padre nuestro al revés unas cincuenta veces! *Verdad Ricote, tú lo has oído.*

- Si

Respondió el dócil, y buen amigo Ricote. Después exclamo Salomon:

-no, yo no tengo miedo.

-pues, ven con nosotros a la tarde para ver lo; será gacho.

Solomon quedo pensativo por un tiempo, caminando vuelta a vuelta, no queriendo ver la magia negra en acción pero no queriendo verse como un fracasado. Ser cobarde en la nueva sociedad ensénela ser un bellaco; tinta el protegió del nombre de familia.

-si no quieres ir no vallas. No es necesario.

-no, yo voy a ir, yo no le tengo miedo a nada. Esa magia negra no existe.

-te veremos más tarde Salomón, Febe y Héctor; prepárense a verlo, los van a dar mucho mucho mucho miedo.

El timbre suena tintintin, tintintin, tintintin ya terminando clase. Irónicamente, el que tuvo más temor de los tres amigos es solamente Salomón; y las amistades daban la impresión valiente como el gran Pedro Alvarado –amigos con la lealtad y la sabiduría. Estaban caminando al regreso de sus casas que no estaban tan lejos de la escuela.

-¿Que vamos a hacer durante las horas libres?

- Quiero recoger mi *toro del aguardiente* de mi casa para alumbrar ese muñeco que no existe.

Exclamo el cachorro de Salomón, con todo el miedo y entusiasmo.

- Ahh, ¡buena idea Salomón! Yo voy a traer los polvochispas para protegernos de la marioneta y los duendes.

-también para tirarlos a esos tres vagos que se creen muy muy.

-Salomón... ¿Por qué el muñeco se llama Pedro Alvarado? Es muy extraño.

-Pedro Alvarado era el bonete primero de nuestra isla. Era fuerte y tenía fuerza peleando para ganar.

-¡Que mentiroso eres Salomón! Mis padres me dicen que era un cobarde de primera. Solo destruyo la población de los mitotes y robo toda la tierra para construir factorías.

- Que, ¡Que! ¡No es cierto! Él es un héroe de caballería.

- No lo es, necio mocoso dundo.

- ¡Que si lo es, sabetodo!

- No me llames así.

- No me llames mocoso dundo.

- ¿No es un juguete de caballos.

Interrumpió Héctor, recordando de los juguetes de caballos populares que todos los niños chismean en la escuela. La pieza de juguete tiene un caballo abajo y un infame Pedro Alvarado encima con el machete colorido amarillo. Los padres no han conocido a su hijo Héctor. No comparta tiempos de goza, no comparta recuerdos y no comparta una buena cena antes de dormir; pero si comparta una familia de amigos.

<<¿Se rían del caballo? No pensé que son los juguetes. No me gusta sentirme como no entiendo. Pero si los voy a proteger, no tengo miedo>>

-hahaha

Se comienza a reír Salomón y Febe. Saben que él no es un rompecabezas pero si es fiel a sus amistades.

- Hasta luego, los veo a las tres de la tarde a la entrada de la escuela.

- Si

- Si

Segunda Parte

Salomón llegó temprano a la reunión de ver la magia negra en su progreso. La cara de carisma profunda pero las manos temblorosas; por supuesto. Él oyó ruidos hace adentro; pensó que sus amigos ya entraron adentro. Viendo hace sus lados, decidió subir el acero, mugre de apariencia y sentido, para entrar adentro de la escuela. Aun su otro lado, notaba una persona de mayor edad; un decrepito tambaleándose con su una pierna de metal. Tiene su bolsa de cuero y gafas. Se bajó del acero y se escondió atrás la basura de madera.

<<¿Él no es humano? Debo de esconderme, que no me vea ¡por favor! que no me vea>>

Escucho los pasos de esa aparición, pateo con la pierna buena *ta, ta, ta*, de su imaginación real o la realidad.

<<. . . Dios. . . te pido que no me vea el fantasma, que no me vea y coma. Te prometo, yo escuchare mi maestra. Me voy a comer toda la comida, lo prometo. Yo pararé de mentir a mis padres. Rezaré el padre nuestro cada noche desde ahorita; padre nuestro, que estas en los cielos. Santificado, sea tu nombre. Véngalos tu reino. . . >>

La aparición se disipó como si nada. Salomón dio gracias a su buen estar. Mira hace el cielo claro y vio las tinieblas de azur. Medite sus recuerdos, reuniéndose con la Febe y el Héctor cada mañana antes de comenzar clase; cada día ve hace arriba y se pregunta

- Que vamos hacer ahora, el viernes. Mañana no hay escuela, voy a ver mis primos y vamos a jugar los caritos otra vez. Me va a enseñar cómo construir un carrito.

La Febe y el Héctor abren la puerta atrás al ladito del acero.

- Salomón, otra vez buscas algo al cielo. Sabes que no lo vas a encontrar.

- ¿Cómo se entraron?

- la puerta se encuentra abierta.

Salomón se preguntó el mismo <<pensé que la puerta estaría cerrado porque la escuela está cerrada en estas horas>>

- Esperemos por los otros tres que vengan. Ya deben estar aquí.

Abriendo la puerta, sin candado, entro el murmura del aire, silencio era su rostro a los otros.

- hola Ricote ¿Cómo te encuentras?

Le pregunto Salomón, queriendo saber si le respondiera al regreso.

-bien.

Entra después Rasputín y seguido por el Grendel, solamente el Grendel.

-¡Que que! pensé que no vendrán. Ten cuidado con el viejito de la bolsa. Lo vi hace un rato, buscando niños para comer.

-yo acabo de ver un abuelito caminando adentro la escuela ¿No sé quién era? Lo vi que tenía gafas, una pierna de metal y su canasta de. . .

- ¡la canasta tenia los huesos de su víctimas! Juan, Alberto, Mariana, y el David.

- ¡a Alberto! . . . ¿El hermanito de Josefina?

- sí sí, su hermanito. Un día decidió quedarse en la escuela porque estaba enojado que no le compraron el juguete que quería. Se quedó después que terminaba la escuela. De repente, vio un viejito acercándose a él. Le pregunto “que pasa mi Nieto ¿Porque estas llorando?” “Porque no me compraron el juguete” le respondió. El viejito de la bolsa camino hace su canasta, lleno de cosas malas, y le dio un cabellito. Ya dándoselo, le apretó los brazos y lo metió en su bolsa de niños para comérselos a su cena.

Todos se quedaron en suspenso. Todos conocían a Alberto de la colonial comunitaria. Siempre andaba con la hermana a todos lugares. Dar sorpresa a todos, un día, simplemente desapareció.

- Qué bueno que traje mis polvochispas, él no los va a comer.

- y no para allí el cuento, el existe por la razón de proteger la marioneta, la marioneta de Pedro Alvarado.

La Febe interrumpió.

- eso no es verdad, él no es la guardia de la marioneta.

El ruido de una carreta sonaba *raa, raa, raa*, acerca alrededor de ellos. De donde viene ese sonido es la pregunta ¿Poda ser el viejo, o quizás alguien más?

- Ricote, por favor, puedes sacar el mapa.

Mirando el mapa en las manos de Ricote, Febe vio algo curioso en ella. La escritura del mapa tiene letras de la lengua de los mitotes. Con toda la inteligencia y su razonamiento lógico, Febe, no pudo leer la ni hablar la escritora en su lengua nativa.

- Ricote, que es lo que dice ese mapa.

Ricote con la humildad atrás sus ojos le respondió:

- Febe, esto es lo que dice “Nuestros antepasados cantan mucho al aire y la luna. No se olviden de mí”.

- “No se olviden de mí” Si, lo escucharon, es la marioneta, la magia negra.

Exclamo Rasputín, ya listo para entrar a lo desconocido con sus compañeros. Todos lentamente caminan hace las escaleras: *ton, ton, ton* con cada paso el ruido de la ansiedad grita

<<¿Que estoy haciendo aquí? Tengo que irme de aquí>>

Esquinándose frente de la puerta, el Grendel desapareció. Rasputín respondió:
- ¡Eres un cobarde Grendel! Te gano el miedo. Estamos listos chicos y chica.

Todos se asomaron frente de la ventana de la puerta número tres.

- *Silencio*

- Silencio

- Silencio

- . . .

- ¡Dios mío! la marioneta se mueve. Como, como, como es posible. Mis padres me dijo que no existe la magia. ¿Qué está pasando? Ayúdame, Ayúdame.

El Rasputín se fue corriendo tras la sombra de Grendel. La Febe y el Héctor se escondieron atrás Salomón. De un valor de coraje, Salomón decidió otra vez mirar la marioneta de pedro Alvarado hacia la ventana.

<<En veras existe, se mueve con todo gusto>>

De un instante, remarco un detalle pequeño abajo las piernas del Pedro Alvarado; una canica de plomo; y a su lado derecho, vio una pequeña sonrisa en la cara de Ricote que más o menos revelo el secreto de la magia.

>>Ya vi el truco de la magia. Son muy picaros esos tres hermanos Reyes. Que asusto me dieron<<

~ *Nelson Masferrer*



"Cerulean and Sand #2" ~ Rubia van Roodselaar

MY POEM IS WEARINESS

my poem is weariness
weariness of being awake even in my deepest sleep
of dragging the days without feeling their weight or their beginning
of satiating hunger without time without amazement
of thinking like someone who trains an infinite sequence of yawns
of giving voice to an ancient silence that only aspires to dilute
of making love feeling that love has come undone
and that you must coat again and again its prodigal membranes

my poem is weariness because my body is a word that no one exhumes
my word a misplaced syllable in the jawbone of a fossil
my syllable a well-spring of letters blind or groping
 resting

scattering itself
on the invisible hearing
of a blank page

Translated from the Spanish by James J. Shay III

~ Lena Retamoso

CHARMED TRAVELER

What wily wolf now harrows
the charmed traveler in my heart?
Who perched amid the blooming shade
the flowering ferns, his lover,
did wander away at dusk.

To drink in the shine
the fresh sin and ascending,
the voodoo harvest of moon
and a queer kissing darkness
turned monstropolous old thing.

“Lonely men love well,”
says the brook to breach the night.
The traveler smiles and knows,
the thicket cackles and hushes
so as not to help the hunted.

Love sleeps unstirring
stalked in the forest lull
by a haunt, a high note, a bow
to the wily wolf that harrows
the charmed traveler in my heart.

~ *Brian Alston*



"Does it make Me a Peeping Tom?" ~ Joanna Madloch

LOST TO THE LIGHT

The reel spun futilely. The end of the film flapped repeatedly against the empty film gate. Below, a steady beam of light shone out onto the screen, featuring nothing more than dust particles flashing by, and through the keyhole from the theater seats in the grand old auditorium, came the grumbling sounds of patrons.

"Roll the film, damn it!" one cried out.

"Come'on for God's sake, start the movie!" yelled another.

But the old man did not awake. He lay still, breathing heavily, his head resting on his arm which lay on the table. In his mind was a vision of Greta Garbo in full *Mata Hari* headdress, dancing seductively before a mesmerized crowd. His ears were full of the sultry sounds of middle-eastern music and he could see the smoke rising from the incense burners in the nightclub's elegant showroom. Dancing like a drunken elation in his head, Garbo approached the multi-armed deity, a statue of Shiva, and her hips began moving feverishly and the coin-laden scarf around her waist chattered with great intensity. The audience, consisting of bartenders, politicians, tourists, and military attachés, went silent with anticipation. Then she came right up against the statue, took her top off, and pressed her body into it. For a moment it was as though she was going to make love to it. Everyone was breathless. Then the room darkened and a cloaked woman dashed by, coving Garbo from view.

"She's not a spy," the old man mumbled. "She is not the great enemy of France like everyone thinks! She is not!"

A loud bang awoke him. And when he lifted his head he saw the projection booth door slammed opened against the front wall. Through it came René, the theater manager, rushing past him like a madman.

"You imbecile!" he yelled.

René bolted for the second projector and clicked the 'switch over' button. Instantly the film began to roll and angled beams of light shone once again through the keyhole, bringing back to life the oscillating images of characters and the sound of their dialogue.

"Bravo!" somebody yelled from theater seats.

René came back to the first machine, turned it off, and pressed his palm against the lamp canister, but it was so hot he had to withdraw his hand quickly.

"Where is your brain?" he cried. He pushed at the old man's chest; his eyes were burning. "What is it with you?"

In truth, the old man knew, he had taken too many naps, too often at the wrong times, and with greater frequency in the past weeks. It was a problem he could not cure.

"If you cannot do the job," René cried. "I will find someone who can."

The old man only looked up at René with sorry, puppy-dog eyes.

René looked around. The projection booth was in a typical state of disarray. There were film canisters lying on the floor, some with their lids off, candy wrappers shattered about, and a half-eaten sandwich dried and crusty from the day before, lying on the table. The trashcan near the door was full and overflowing.

"You can't leave this place like this," he said. "You can't leave these cans lying around." He gathered them up, put their lids back on, and stacked them in a neat pile against the wall. "You have to clean this place up! It's part of your job! It's your last chance. If you want to sleep, go home and sleep!"

The old man wisely remained silent.

After a few more minutes of huffing, René stood silently with his hands on his hips. He glanced up at the big wall clock. "It is the last showing. Can you handle it?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Don't forget to cap the film canisters!"

"I know."

"And the lamps! Remember to shut off the lamps!"

He was referring to the time the old man had forgotten to shut off a projection lamp and burnt out an expensive bulb.

"Yes."

"And lock up properly."

"Of course."

René took another glance around the projection booth. "Only three more months!" he said, shaking his head.

When he turned to exit, the old man mumbled something, inaudible.

"What?" René asked.

"Nothing."

René hesitated at the door, but then left, closing it securely behind him.

Spencer Tracy would have never stood for that, the old man thought. Not for a second. He wouldn't have.

When the film finished, the audience slowly cleared the auditorium and departed out the front lobby doors. The old man watched them through the key hole until the last patron was gone. Then he canned the two film reels and set the canisters on top of the neat pile René had stacked against the wall. He tidied up the projection booth, swept it clean with a broom, hiding the small pile of trash in a corner, and he made sure the lamps were off. Then he exited, locking the projection booth door twice around with the key before descending the narrow staircase to the foyer. He swept up the popcorn and garbage scattered throughout the theater auditorium, dumped a garbage pail into the dumpster out back, and fixed the large theater curtain so no screen was showing. Finally he returned to the lobby, opened a wall panel and pulled down the switch that doused the large marquee light out front.

A lonely walk down a lonely street brought the old man to his dreary, one-room apartment. There were no windows inside; only a bed, a little table, a sink, a small closet, and a separate closet for the toilet. It was a place to lay his head and close his eyes, and he could imagine himself in another world; a cinematic world of swashbuckling swordsmen and adventurous sea captains, but in truth, it offered little in the way of sustenance and comfort.

He lay down on his shaggy old mattress to the sound of squeaky springs, and unable to sleep, he stared up at the dark, opaque ceiling.

"You are the beauty," he said, speaking aloud to Garbo.

Not everyone could communicate with movie stars of the past. It was some kind of cosmic, telepathic thing that only he possessed, and he prided himself on this ability.

"I understand every word you speak," he said. "I understand every move of your dance. It is you, yes? It is you who will save the world from itself? And not for country, but for love itself. Am I correct in my thinking? Of course I am."

He pictured her clearly, as if she was standing there in the room beside him; her image as vivid and beautiful as she had ever been on the silver screen.

"If you want, I'll help you. I'll be your secret accomplice, your *attaché fidèle*. I know where to go, how to end it. I have seen how it ends, and *we* will end it differently. Together we will overcome the French military and German spies. Okay?"

He waited for her reply, but there was none. It didn't always work, he knew. But this night, he was really hoping for some two-way dialogue.

Then he thought of René's words and became depressed. *'Only three more months!'*

As horrific as it sounded, it was true. The era of film projection at the *Arlington* was coming to end. When he first heard the news, he didn't believe it or accept it. It was not possible, he thought. How could an art form requiring such skill and finesse be replaced by a computerized robot? But the change was going to happen. He had even read about it in the papers. A new, digitized projector was to be delivered in the coming months and his skills of threading film and swapping reels was to become obsolete. As the silent era gave way to sound, the film era would go down to light; the light of new technology.

He looked over to his small table. There was the bottle of gin waiting for him. He could see it in the darkness. For over five years now had been there. It had been that long since he'd been away from the stuff. And if he returned to the sharp-tasting liquid now, he knew he would return to it for good – until the end. It was the great morphine, he thought. It was the anesthesia for life's tragedies; the sweetest of all escapes. And it was not unusual. All the stars had one in one form or another. For Ray Milland it was whiskey on his long *Lost Weekend*. For Richard Burton it was vodka and soda water, which he liked as much in life as he did in his on-screen rants with Elizabeth Taylor in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* And as for Sinatra, well, of course, he preferred a well-mixed cocktail with the merest hint of dry vermouth, although heroin was his fix in *The Man with the Golden Arm*.

But it was gin that Spencer Tracy liked best. Gin was his favorite, his one and only; the drink he used to kill the real-life pain of the ordinary man.

The old man closed his eyes and tried to sleep. And though he finally drifted off, his sleep was restless. On through the night he awoke often, and when he did he looked over at the table and saw the bottle of gin still there waiting.

The morning was usual, nothing different; a poached egg at the corner café, some time to browse the newsstands, and a long walk along the river. He kept occupied until it was time for work. That was his routine, anything to keep him from his dreary apartment. When the afternoon came, he made his way to the old downtown district. A long sidewalk led him to the vertical, art deco marquee of the *Arlington Theater*. The overhead billboard displayed the films 'Now Playing;' *Beat the Devil* and *The African Queen*.

"Ah, it will be Bogie night," the old man mumbled.

He unlocked the front door, went into the lobby, and looked around. Everything was as he had left it the night before. He climbed the narrow staircase to the projection booth, slipped the key into the door lock, and opened it.

As always, the projection booth greeted him like the arms of a beautiful woman. Stepping inside always gave him a warm feeling, like a welcoming home. He smiled broadly. That is, until he saw the note René had left on the clipboard along with the daily features. It read: "Don't fall asleep! And don't forget to turn off the lamps!"

The old man tore the note off the clipboard, crumbled it up, and tossed it in the corner.

"He knows nothing of film projection! He is the boss of no one!"

He searched through the pile of film canisters, and when he could not find the scheduled films, he glanced around the room and located them on top of the projection table. Evidently René had placed the films there to make it easier for the old man.

"So now he thinks I'm not capable of finding the proper film cans?"

There were only four reels, which was good, he thought, only requiring two changeovers per film. Not like the old days when you had to do three or four reel changeovers for one movie.

He opened the '*Beat the Devil*' canister; the one marked 'one of two,' and took out the reel. He flipped open the cover on the first projector, placed the reel on the sprocket, pulled out an arm's length of film, and held it to the light. Once he found where the numeric countdown began, he threaded the film through the gate, running the machine just long enough for it to catch, then looped the end of it onto the empty reel and advanced the film to the opening credits. He repeated the process on the second projector, loading the second reel and advancing it to the switch-over cue.

"Life is an illusion," he mumbled. "It is best to live it as such. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose."

He sat at the table and ate a sandwich. After forty minutes, he looked down through the keyhole and saw only one person seated in the theater auditorium. When he looked down a second time, the audience had grown by three. At a quarter to four, he pressed the mechanical button which opened the theater curtains. And when it was exactly four o'clock, he started the film, framing it first, sharpening the focus, and synchronizing the sound. When all was set and done, he sat at the table and listened, to what, for him, was a most beautiful melody – the sound of film

clicking through a gate at twenty-four frames a second. It was a six-thousand foot reel, which meant he'd have an hour before he would need to switch over to the second projector.

Through the keyhole came the sound of Humphrey Bogart's voice. Though he could not see the film from his seated position, he knew every scene, every film angle, and every word of dialogue, verbatim. He had seen the film a hundred times, maybe two hundred.

"What's our wide-eyed Irish leprechaun doing outside my door?" Bogart's voice asked.^[1]

"Just wanted to have a little talk," the voice of Peter Lorre replied.

"Okay, but make it fast," said the old man quickly, stealing the line before Bogart could speak it.

"Okay, but make it fast," Bogart then repeated on the big screen.

The old man chuckled.

After fifty minutes, he turned on the lamp on the second machine, giving it time to warm up. After another five minutes he began watching for the cue mark; a small circular flash in the upper right-hand corner of the screen, and when he saw it, he clicked on the motor of the second projector. And when it flashed a second time, he pressed the *changeover* button. Then he heard the splice go through the machine and the images from the second projector immediately took over, flicking out the black and white celluloid, without interruption, exactly where the first reel had finished off.

"Now that's the way to do it!" he said. "None of this three, two, one," referring to the numerical countdown seen onscreen if the cue mark was missed.

The old man chuckled, thinking back to a time when René had mistimed a changeover. He had been left to manage the projection booth for only a minute and still couldn't get it right! And there was that awful gap of white screen between the reels, and the painful groans of all the theater patrons.

The old man clicked off the motor on the first machine and began watching the film through the keyhole. On screen now were Jennifer Jones and Humphrey Bogart, standing on the *Terrace of Infinity*, high above the Amalfi Coast. The cinemascope image provided a panoramic view of sea and mountains that stretched from one side of the screen to the other. It seemed to be filmed from the height of an airplane, which gave a real appreciation for the beauty of this place. And the dialog was the quick and clever, bringing a smile to the old man's face.

"There are two good reasons for falling in love," Jennifer Jones said. "One is that the object of your affection is unlike anyone else, a rare spirit. The other is that he's like everyone else, only superior, the very best of a type."^[2]

"Well if you must know, I'm a very typical rare spirit," the old man said before Bogart echoed the same line onscreen.

"How long have you lived here?" asked Jennifer Jones.

“The longest I’ve lived anywhere,” the old man recited, again beating Bogart to the punch.

“Didn’t you ever have a mother and a father and a house?”

“No I was an orphan,” the old man said loudly. “Then a rich and beautiful woman adopted me.”

The old man smiled as Bogart repeated the lines onscreen.

Like Sunday mass, the old man thought, easier than reciting lines from the good book. And as the movie progressed, the old man lost himself, as he often did, in the romantic action and intriguing storyline. The images on the screen danced in his head as vividly as if he were acting them out himself.

Now a trio of characters, Robert Morley, Peter Lorre, and Bogart, found themselves shipwrecked and washed ashore on a deserted beach. A hoard of horse-backed nomads stormed down a hillside firing shots at them. Everyone was frightened, except Bogart, and the old man, who stood fearless in the projection booth.

The old man raised his hands and said bravely, “Better get down everyone!”^[3] He made his voice sound tough and cynical.

Seconds later, Bogart raised his hands and repeated the line on the big screen.

“Africa,” the old man then said aloud as if he were speaking directly to the nomad chieftain. “It’s not a bad place to land. No customs forms to fill out.”

When Bogart repeated the lines, the old man chuckled.

The film finished, and during the intermission the old man replaced the reels with the second feature, *The African Queen*. He waited the customary twenty minutes for everyone to return from the concessions and then rolled the film. Once he heard the projector running smoothly, he sat down at the projection table and listened to its melodic sound.

“You are a good machine,” he said, patting it on its side. “You bring life to the ordinary. You create magic from nothing.” Then he sighed. “But like me, you are old and replaceable!”

He stretched his arm out comfortably on the table and laid his head upon it, and in his mind he watched the movie, following along as if it were playing in his head. He knew every scene, every word; all the facial expressions. The smooth clicking sound of film rushing through the gate, coupled with his cerebral reenactment, brought him to the place he loved best, his nirvana.

But he did not watch Bogart and Hepburn. He was with them in the boat, going down the Ubangi River. And he recited Bogart’s lines as if they were his own. And he

watched Katherine Hepburn’s transformation from one who despised an aging old drunk, to one who loved. And now that she’d become smitten with this rugged old man, unkempt and capable as he, he accepted her expressions of adornment as if they were meant for him.

In his head, the reels spun forward at lightning speed. Before he knew it, Bogart stood with a noose tied around his neck being interrogated by a nasty German sea-captain; accused of being a spy for which death was the only penalty.

But it was not Bogart; it was the old man.

"Don't give in!" the old man mumbled. He felt the ship rocking beneath him as if he were really afloat. "Be brave Rosie! Be strong! It is for love and country!"

As the large German vessel, the *Louisa*, drifted closer to the African Queen, the makeshift torpedoes pointing from the *Queen's* bow closed in on its hull.

"Take cover Rosie!" the old man shouted, bracing himself for the explosion. "I'll be with you shortly!"

Though the celluloid images danced vividly in his head, they had barely finished the first reel on the projector beside him. On the screen, the first cue marked flashed by, then the second, then the end of the film looped through the gate, and suddenly, nothing but a white stream of light shone out from the projector. And the groaning and booing from the audience was almost instantaneous.

"Roll the damned film!"

"Hey! Wakeup up there!" another screamed from the front of the house.

But the old man's head remained down on the table, resting on his outstretched arm; his eyes closed and his expression intense. Even if he wanted to, he could not move. He had a noose around his neck, and the rope was pulling tightly.

"Be brave, Rosie!" he mumbled again.

Then the projection room door swung open with a bang, slamming against the forward wall, and in stormed René, as livid as he could possibly be.

"This's it!" he screamed. "You are through!"

The old man lifted his head as René rushed past him and lunged for the changeover button on the second projector. He pressed the button, and instantly the images returned to the screen below.

"Thank you!" someone yelled from the auditorium.

"About time!" another screamed out.

"You are finished!" René shouted to the old man. "Get your things and leave!"

"What?" the old man asked.

"You're fired!"

It took a moment for the old man to gather himself. He had barely stepped off the deck of the *Louisa*.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Get your things and leave! Now! I'll mail you your check."

"But I thought I had three more months?"

"Not no more. You are through, now!"

René grabbed the old man's collar, lifted him from the chair, and using his grip, escorted him to his bag, which was against the wall. The old man picked up the bag and then René pushed him to the door.

There was nothing the old man could do. He was too dazed and confused to resist, and when he was heaved through the door, pushed out like a rag doll, he nearly tumbled down the stairs. He dropped several steps before he could stop his

momentum and regain his balance. Then he straightened himself, turned back, and looked up at René, who stood with both hands on his hips.

“Get out!” René yelled, pointing toward the front door of the lobby.

The old man continued down the steps, made his way through the foyer, and pushed his way out the front doors.

“He is a man without honor,” he mumbled to himself. “He is a man with no loyalty.”

As he walked down the street in darkness to his apartment, he thought of Garbo; her persona as *Mata Hari*, strong and defiance against all odds and in the face of certain death. Her image danced in his head, feverously; the coins of her hip-scarf chattering like wind chimes in a hurricane. Every movement of her body showed him her strength and will to overcome. *She is the bold and daring one*, he thought; the one never to give in to the misalignments and abuses of power.

Then, in his mind, he saw the bottle of gin awaiting him, there on his table in his dreary apartment, and the image of Garbo faded to black.

The End

~ *Frank Scozzari*

NEGATIVE SPACE: A SIX POEM CYCLE

Negative Space

Sometimes I wonder what of the spaces?
The spaces between each Basketball game,
Each run, each book, each loving touch.
Each hike, each climb, each job.
Each year, each month, each minute, each second.
Lao Tzu says that the space in the roomdoorwindow is the most useful
part.

He is right.

Sam Johnson: A Tale

When the young man that would become Dr Johnson entered into the
lecture hall the Oxbridge good ol boys scoffed at him down their noses
Who is this uneducated Lad Why does he think that he can stroll with
the likes of us The Latin of Macrobius fell from his lips like sun rays
upon their Icarusian arrogance and they plunged

The Interiority of Poetry

I write of the exterior:
Of the Sky.
The Moon.
The soft clouds, floating.
Of the Earth.
The Sea.
The calm waves, rolling.
The Earth.
The Hills.
The mountains, climbing.
All of these things I hold within me.

Untitled

There are many specific things
That the generalisation of a Meme cannot contain.
There are many specific things that words cannot relay in print,
Or in speech, for that matter.
I will not try to discuss them here.

(12-7-14 10:15 pm)

The Internet

The orange Dawn of Time. Kubrick-esque.
Vast. Yellow. Stone.
A cloud swirls into being: white, Gray, brown.
A blue fire cracks from within the cloud.
Moses saw it in the Bush. Red. Mohamet saw it in the Cave. Green. Satan
saw it in the slash of
Michael's sword. Ether.

Through the Wall

Through the wall of my bathroom I hear the deep boom of the man
speaking who lives in the apartment next to us. The shower runs in their
apartment. He is talking to his girlfriend/wife. Shouts? Cussing? Fuck.
Go fuck yourself dumbass. The water stops. The handle squeaks into an
Off position. A slam. Flesh on wood? Kicked the door? Punched the
counter? Angry speech. Speech calms. Still a deep boom. Explaining
himself in condescending booms. The water turns back on.

~ *Grant Palmer*

THE GLASS DIVIDING

I've only dipped my toe in the stream
And I must be careful
Not to mistake
The Experience for the Thing

Like the images in my dreams
There's the surface
But it's only a screen
Filtering out Logic, Reason
And everything in between

Will I go deeper?
Can I proceed?
Or will Fear
Keep me in hypocrisy?

Throw a brick
Through the glass dividing
The Real and the Unseen
And you will find out
Just what I mean.

~ *Matthew Bohlka*



"The Encounter" ~ Joanna Madloch

RESTLESS

Daylight comes and goes
The day sets with bottle-rockets
Nightfall and plans for nothing at all
Climbing over-stimulated states
Making dream life affection
That is what it seems
In a late night confession

Flip off the lights above
The mother of dreams
Shines on nocturnally, softly saying
'Always love'
In her garden of dark delight

~ Alex Brondarbit

LA COLA DE UN CASTOR

basta con ver de lejos la cola de un castor golpeando en el agua
para que nunca más dudes de su existencia
ni le hables a tu mente como si fuera un trilero con manos de
relámpago
no habrá tal desconfianza ni siquiera
ese desdoblamiento necesario

pero si una liebre blanca junto a los calcetines
o de pronto en el fondo de una taza una boca de tierra
entonces por supuesto te sientas frente a ti
y enumeráis por turnos:
 embriaguez
 déjà vu
 somnolencia
 tumor
 alucinógenos
lo que sea para evitar costosas y arriesgadas perforaciones

~ *Regina Salcedo*

THE SCRIBE

It was to be the last mark on the last page. It was to be a ritual ending, a funeral for the handwritten word. A horde of news reporters, documentarians and bloggers were on hand to record it. They had been arriving for several days, following the buzz on news talk shows that was following the buzz on social media that was following the buzz from one very busy promoter slash documentarian, a man of utter brilliance indeed.

There had to be an only begetter of all this and it was me, although how I pulled it off I couldn't quite piece together.

The cameras and lighting equipment were set up in a clearing outside the scribe's cave, forming a semi-circle some two hundred feet in diameter. There were so many! Hundreds of cyclopean camera eyes poised stupidly over the cave entrance in readiness for the event, and almost as many boom mics sniffed the air for the scratching sound of pen on paper. A braid of power cables, always underfoot, ran back to the portable generators outside the circle. Impossible machines, day and night rolling their noise and smoke down into the valley like a thunderstorm inside a dance hall. Yet inside the perimeter of cameras the noise contracted to an ill-tempered grumble under the darning sounds of insects and humming birds.

At first light the Scribe set up an old monastery writing desk from somewhere in the cave to just inside the opening. He dragged over a carved log as a seat and dropped a pile of blank pages at on his left hand side. To this point we had only communicated by email, beginning with a query I sent after reading online about the nickname this eccentric billionaire—are all billionaires eccentric? they seem to be—had acquired over years in the towns a few hours north of New York. He wasn't a scribe, of course, and I had the impression that he didn't at all like the name. But writing is what he did in his retirement from the the financial services company he founded; his transcriptions of famous texts hung, beautifully framed, in galleries and libraries around the area.

"You're the 'last of' man," he said when he was through with his preparations. This was the first day, and I had arrived ahead of everyone else. I sat about twenty yards from the entrance to watch. He gave me a look whenever I tried to come closer.

"Or the environmental ambulance chaser, the cynical opportunist, the latter day communist," I said. "I've been called lots of things, but I like that one: the last of man. I may use that."

"You filmed the last elephant kill," he said. When I started to inch closer to the cave entrance he held up his hand for me to stop. I sat down again.

“I did.”

“The last bear hunt.”

“That too.”

“You did that piece on the Inuit leaving their villages up north. No more whales. Even the seals growing scarce. A whole way of life gone. I’d call that a ‘last of piece’ as well, wouldn’t you?”

“It’s a documentary. That’s what I call it. I’ve done other kinds of subjects. But these days you can’t help but notice that a lot things are in their final stages. Someone should be on hand to record when these things disappear. So much is vanishing these days...”

“Of course. The pieces find you, you don’t find them...But your real forte is publicity...” he said, arranging his pens and ink on the desk. He was a small, rail thin man in his seventies with a trace of a beard and startling blue eyes. He wore faded jeans and a Grateful Dead t-shirt that was more hole than shirt. If I didn’t know that he came from money, that he owned the cave—grotto would be more accurate—and two hundred acres around it, I would have taken him for a disturbed homeless man, or hermit if a cave counts as a home. As it was, he looked both disturbed and dauntingly lucid, as if he were tuning in at different frequencies from one moment to the next.

“All that interest in such a short time. What do they call it, a meme? The Scribe meme. Such a genius for manipulation,” he said, looking up from his desk for the first time. “I can just imagine the drive you must have, calling day and night to draw on that network of contacts you’ve been cultivating over the years, the single mindedness with which you’ve pursued this. Look at all these cameras! You can see why I contacted you.”

“You got it backwards. I contacted you, initially,” I said. “There was a piece on the web about your project. That’s how I usually get ideas for films: trolling around the web. You got people around here believing your claim about the last inscription, or however you put it. And, yes, I went with it and people are just loving the whole thing: the cave, the last inscribed word, the druidy stuff you’re into: the spells and strange lettering. You’re going to have a lot of company today. I hope you’re ready for it.”

“Do you see these carvings?” he said, pointing to the granite lintel set above the entrance of the cave. The surface was cluttered with geometric shapes, simple figures of animals and humans, rune-like incisions and abrasions.

“This is how it all began: history, recorded history. A hunter puts his hand in the mud, presses it against the wall of a cave and the Sign appears. In the beginning was the Word and the word was a handprint, or a few scratches in the dirt, maybe a smear of blood on an animal skin, something to indicate this is my kill and I am proud. And from there cuneiform, hieroglyphs, runes, the entire human world evolves from these signs.”

I can read the same faux pagan motifs in any West Village tattoo parlor, I thought. I nodded politely and prayed he didn't start lecturing me about the earth mother and the healing powers of chamomile.

The crowds began arriving at mid-morning. So many people, and more came all the time. Pickup trucks and SUV's cut through the fields and took the dry high ground a quarter mile above the cave; these were the high profile media figures I had personally invited. Motorcycles took over the parking lot of a hamburger joint a distance away; thick chested men and women trudged uphill swigging beers as if they owned the place, which a few of them, or maybe their parents, might have done at one point. Vans skidded through the mud of the farmer's field a half mile away and deposited hipsters and media types into cow pats and clouds of no-seeums. As for my crew, they were lost somewhere, no doubt in a cell phone dead zone, nosing their way through the north Catskills back roads in search of a town that for some reason had dropped out of the gps coordinates, and so in practical terms existed as a rumor rather than fact. I couldn't even say where my own car was. By the time I thought to look for it the car it was lost in a checkerboard of primary colors covering the field to the wind break and beyond almost to the river. There were that many cars, trucks and vans.

My suit was in the backseat and my wallet in the glove compartment but this wasn't an occasion for formal dress, or money for that matter. Some of the early arrivals set up a faux medieval tent village on the idea that the middle ages were a high point of inscription what with all the monks copying manuscripts and the lords and ladies swapping handwritten love poems. Keats and Emily Dickinson were included in their pantheon of medieval poets; they might have liked The village was like that: addled and fun. Pendants luffed in the humid breeze and large, colorful tents, donated courtesy of an online publisher, welcomed people to take a sleeping bag and stay. By evening chickens and suckling pig were roasting on open pit fires, and pretty women in low cut peasant blouses dispensed something they called mead although it tasted of beer and raspberry syrup. A big screen broadcast images of scribes, monks, poets and philosophers against a rock track so loud it made my ears wish they wore shoes.

Meanwhile, a crowd of spectators, locals mostly, gathered on the boulders above the cave. Vendors wandered among them hawking cold drinks and ice cream. Despite

the heat they made few sales. The word had gotten out that this was to be a solemn occasion, something like a funeral, and people figured it wouldn't be right to sit there licking an ice cream cone while an ancient tradition was put to rest.

The locals seemed to feel the same way I did: vaguely anxious, compelled to be there without understanding exactly why. They studied the equipment setup—lights, reflectors, cherry pickers, cameras, catering tables—as if it were an alien dissection theater. Most of the first day into the evening was down time, stretches of hot and humid stillness. The locals applauded when every so often a reporter got too close to the cave entrance and the Scribe threw something at them, or set his goats to attack. Dutifully malicious, with the long heads and affectless blue eyes of creepy bartenders in dystopian sci fi movies, the goats butted and kicked skinny journalist rear ends until a whistle sent them trotting back in docile single file.

I killed time by conducting interviews and got the same answers over and over; don't read much, don't need or want to, don't remember writing anything more than an e-signature, don't know anybody who does. The same was true for the tech crews, journalists and bloggers. Giving form to words was their business, but they would never think to form words with anything as messy and crude as ink. Who had pens and pencils anyway? There was no occasion to use such devices anymore, they said, no incentive to store paper or books when all the texts in the world could be retrieved from a digital storage device no larger than a fleck of dust.

Writing persisted merely as an idea embedded in the language like a tattoo of a glyph that used to make sense way back when. There were lots of ideas like that, anachronisms reduced to decorative abstractions that received scarce attention until they were at risk of being forgotten. The pen was set to join records, carriages, cannon balls and millstones (which only existed, it seems, to hang about one's neck) in a growing list of nonsensical remnants, empty ideas gathering dust on the periphery of the lived world.

The complacency of assertions like that has always made me uneasy. Artists tend to have little talent for extrapolation, and an animal sense for absurd contingency. I could easily imagine a world full of handwritten canon balls and millstones powered by horse drawn carriages, but one without signatures and handwritten notes secreted in grammar school, no, that I couldn't imagine, even though I was exploiting that very prospect.

I didn't get much sleep that night. My crew still hadn't appeared. The Scribe retreated to the depths of his cave and ignored my requests for an interview. I wandered through the faux medieval village handing out media packets: press statements, contact information, my bio. They were printed in script, blotches included. No one seemed to recognize what they were. They ended up serving as napkins and kindling for the bonfires. I folded some into paper airplanes and sent

them flying into the mouth of the cave but got no response. The mead went to my head which was to be expected since I went to the mead again and again.

Late that night, when things got wild and the bongos and coke lines came out, I was in pretty bad shape, seeing familiar faces everywhere and yet finding nobody I knew or wanted to know. People in the entertainment biz have a knack for making one feel like best friends and distant acquaintances at the same time. It was worse on the few occasions when I ended up in bed with one of them. I grabbed a woman by the shoulder, thinking she must be a friend from years back in my protest days, and caught a fist just above my ear. No doubt it was her husband or boyfriend. I stumbled downhill, picked my drunken way through the cars, eventually found my own, and slipped inside to fall asleep.

The news the next morning was all bad. My satellite radio picks up a thousand stations and all of them were jittery with terrorist attacks, water crises, and suburban riots, the stories delivered in that bland apocalyptic style that made even reports of mass death sound like the results of a cooking competition. The TV news was chattering in the hamburger joint when I walked in. The door was open but no one was there, not even a cook or waitress. I helped myself to a cup of coffee and a muffin, left some money on the counter and walked out.

It was still early when I got back to site, maybe half past seven. Smoke was drifting from the pit fires and plastic beer cups and trash were scattered across the hill. No one was up—except for the cameras now blinking at the Scribe's cave. It looked like the film crews vanished in the middle of what they were doing, all of them at once. I had to be dreaming this.

While I stood there waiting for the coffee to kick in and my head to clear, the Scribe brought out his desk and chair, a stack of blank pages and a pen. He looked up at the morning sun, scanned the hillside and tents and the array of cameras and the countryside beyond already sinking in a fine metallic haze. He took up his pen and began to write, intoning nonsensical sounds in time with the deliberate progress of his pen across the page. He concentrated so completely on his task that the lines in his face resolved into the mask of a much younger, more vigorous man. I called out to him to wait for the others to arrive but he continued without a pause. On the hillside above the cave the goats arranged themselves on the boulders and lowered their heads with the same look of trance-like focus. I didn't like the looks of them, or the sudden quiet within the circle of cameras, so like and unlike the Scribe in their blank focus.

I started back to the tents, hoping to rouse at least a few there with news that what they came to see had in fact begun. It was a long day and a longer night just past and I was tired. My steps slowed and the distance to the tents grew longer. The sky darkened and past the hills there was a low crumping sound and the occasional

flash of what might have been lightning except that it was too early in the day for lightning. Something was wrong. Everything was wrong. I started to run.

The village was abandoned. The empty tents pulled at the stays at the posts in the breeze as if they would follow the crowd down the hill to the main road. Wind funnels lifted piles trash to the height of a swaying man and swept the figures onto the hillside. A long line of cars swept down Route 28 traveling not towards New York but north, further into the hills.

I turned back to the cave just as the first chevron formation of jets came from the south. The cameras were working and the Scribe's voice was lighting up the soundboard. Another flash traced the ridge of mountains back towards Woodstock. I stood behind the Scribe just as the blast wave swept past, coating my face with dust. I saw the Scribe's hand clean away the grit then resume moving slowly across the page, the tip of his pen floating over the surface of the lines and images he was forming. Human and animal shapes were interspersed with equations and coordinates, place names and obscene pronouncements.

I stood over the Scribe's shoulder watching the knotted line of text stretch to the margin and pull back right to left. The characters wound around and through each other, threading the space between the lines and each other without beginning or end. While he wrote a wall of dark clouds erased one mountain after another. As they came closer I saw that this was not a storm front moving over the area, it was black dust and grit blotting out the sunlight and roiling over the forest nearby. My skin went cold and I felt utterly stupid and emptied out, realizing how foolish I had been, how completely taken in. The Catskills Aqueduct, supplying a good deal of New York City's water supply, was twenty miles away. Further south was the Croton Reservoir and beyond that the Indian Point nuclear power plant. The Scribe had conned me into assembling the media to provide live coverage of mass destruction and carnage, the beginning of the end.

If this was to be the last text, it was because there would soon be no one would be left to read or write, no structure left in the chaos to resurrect what had been lost.

I grabbed the pen from the Scribe's hand. He bent to one side and pulled at his shirt to expose his neck. His eyes remained on the page, his right hand curled for the pen I had taken. The cameras continued to record.

"Why are you doing this?!" I screamed.

"This is what you wanted," he said, not deigning to look up at me. "The end of the story, the last word. What could contain that but your pride?"

"You're making any sense?" I stood over him, my body shaking with anger and panic.

“Sense is done.”

“All those people who will suffer! Tell them those planes to turn around! Stop this, whoever the fuck you are just stop it!”

“What has happened or will happen is written already,” he said, looking up at me for the first time. “Write your own story in blood, as I have written mine.”

I pushed the tip of the pen down, piercing the carotid artery. He slumped over as if surrendering to a nap and fell to the ground. The writing table and chair were pooled with blood, but the sheet of paper had been spared. I dipped my pen and began to write. It was to be the last mark on the last page. It was to be a ritual ending, a funeral for the handwritten word.

~ Christopher Moylan



"Red Falls" ~ Nancy Anderson

AFTER ANOTHER TWO YEARS

I am getting used to a distance, finally,
expanding before me like the time
it takes to reach the water ahead,
a mirage—illusion brought on by thirst
and tricks of light in the desert.
Above, the overturned bowl of sky, a trap.

It used to be easier:
Going through the motions, acting a part.
All I had to do was nod. I would smile
in case she looked, she seemed to believe me.

To have that filament, a thread so fine
as to be visible only from a certain angle.
The dried carcass of an insect, the abandoned dusty web.
She always was fond
of making something up and pretending
it was true.

~ *Krista Lukas*

He reads her goosebumps like braille;
perhaps this is the reason
she lies like an open book.

“Are you sure?” he asks
before nuzzling between her legs
a magician of sorts.
Bodies of desert, they find oasis in each other.
Thirstily, they drink one another.

“If a heart breaks
and no one is around to hear it
does it make a sound?” she muses,
fuses their names
her first, his last
and all combinations of children's misnomers attached.

“Where have you been for the past twenty years?”
In orange county, rotting, she answers,
writing poetry and visiting beaches with no shores.
“So how do you build sand castles?” he asks,
and she just nods.

“How are you?” he asks
one year later during a chance encounter.
They had not spoken since last Christmas.
The memories have gone shallow
and she can no longer smell him on her pillow.

She answers, “Alright,”
when a cool breeze publishes goosebumps
on her bare arms
no one cares to read.

~ *Natalie Morales*

THE BRIDGE

An official sent by the Great Ancestor came to our village one day to inform us about the construction of a bridge that would connect our village to the city over Pyang Lake. It would stretch two miles in length becoming the greatest monument of the Empire, reflecting our glorious leader. This bridge he said would increase the value of our lands and create relations that had previously been impossible because of our location required half a day's worth of sailing to reach. The official shared a brief story about the lake, since my village had no knowledge of its history. He told us of important battles that had taken place here and how victory over the Hans in these sacred waters gave birth to our empire. Even though we served under the same Empire, none of us had a desire for societal relations. The distance allowed us to keep our traditions and lifestyle. Some people objected to the bridge and were taken away by soldiers accompanying the official revealing that this was not a bargain but a demand. He told us that a man would be coming for the next several months to examine the landscape and sketch the design of the bridge. We complied and offered hospitality to anyone that would be working on the project. He and his guards departed, not before punishing the objectors, and we continued on with life. The student came the following week as expected. We learned from his introduction that he was a student of cartography and that he was assumed to be an alchemist because he could shrink vast areas of land into orthographic symbols. Proof of this wasn't necessary because many of us did not have an interest in maps or magic, or even knew what it was. Initially the student had a desire to fit in, attempting to acquire our customs and lifestyle. Days would consist of fishing, nights of temple, and this cycle would repeat itself endlessly. A month had passed and he gradually began to despise us, dissatisfied with the lifestyle and nostalgic for his homeland. He no longer participated in any activities and ignored invitations that we extended to him, only shaking his head and passing by. He would spend the days on the southern shore staring at the lake, maybe trying to convince his eyes that they could see the borders of the city. Every night he would spend in his room, hardly speaking to anyone. The days that he did spend in the village consisted of walking, in circles from the shores twisting all the way to the center, as if he were tracing something. This circular winding and unwinding seemed as if he were searching for something non-existent and never finding it. This cycle continued until we began to imagine his existence, no longer certain if he was physically there anymore. Weeks passed and many of us didn't consider his existence. He joined us for breakfast one morning and we assumed he had never left, only becoming a tool of our society. The same evening I was going back to my home from temple and I heard a voice calling me. He was standing outside of his room in obvious distress and he told me that his task was impossible. He said he had nothing to show for his time being here and would only be allowed back to the city when the sketch was complete. Interestingly he told me that he had been spending his nights reading, but that it was no help because there was no reference or guide to constructing a bridge. Studying old isolated structures that had no intent on connecting, he had given up. So he decided to search for examples and metaphors of bridges that did not physically exist, only virtually or metaphysically. Since the purpose

of this bridge was to connect one land to another, one point to another, the only landscape he could think of was man. The example of a bridge between men being that of language and even that proved to be difficult, as explained this with his experiment to acquire our culture and failing. Only an image of a bridge can be created he said and this illusion of connection will do more harm than good because it can never be actualized. He pointed to the fact of us speaking in that moment and the limitations of our language to fully communicate our thoughts, and comparing this to the bridge, he feared that forcing communication between cultures would provoke a dominant and inescapable entity. I had not considered the consequences of the structure, let alone my own existence, and I advised him to do what was necessary to return home to his family. This settled his emotions, as he seemed to realize something and thanked me before closing the door. The next morning the student was not at the shore or his room, and he never returned, although I'm the only person that noticed. One morning I entered his room and found only a candle stub, a few sheets of paper, an ink pen, a blanket, and a folder of blueprints that had the Empire's seal on its cover. The final and only journal entry had the date of our meeting and I will attempt to rewrite what I still hold from my reading of it:

Today I ended my fast and routine that had nearly killed me in the minds of the natives because my existence had become another cycle. I began to fade from them during my walks around the village spiraling into the temple since this habit became another systematic repetition. Back in the city this is impossible to notice, but when you're in a foreign land you bring all of your perceptions to a new territory dragging everything inexistent into existence. Rhythms and tempos that were not similar to the natives extracted me from their group. Individuality ceased here, difference ended and I was caught spinning in this whirlwind. The initial proposal of the project seemed possible and this pushed me to accepting it to bring honor to my family in the eyes of the Great Ancestor. Unfortunately progress could never be made as the shores would change every day, from the direction of the flow to its fluctuating height like some wild beast in the forest. I observed these changes with my own eyes, knowing that nothing should traverse these waters. This project was an attempt to control nature and shape it according to the will of men. I compare it to two men speaking before language was structured, two animals trying to control the breaths emitting from their lungs and bodies. These creatures have no knowledge of the others existence, no intention to communicate their thoughts or desires. Eventually the desire to communicate becomes legitimate and they create a common system of understanding. This is the origin of all language and none of it is reliable, none of it is accurate. Language was the most archaic bridge I could imagine and it revealed the fated failure of the project, unless I was willing to sacrifice my integrity and the future of our empire. With my family in mind I had been drafting the structure on the dirt floor in my room, erasing it with every passing day, unable to accommodate the lake's protean quality. I only desired to return home but the proposal was my ticket to enter, since I created the art of cartography which had been terrorizing our people. They could not understand how great structures could be compacted to a few lines and still be given the same name. The Great Ancestor told me that my wrong could be made right if I could erect this

bridge that would carry great honor with its construction. Inspiration carried me across the lake, but no further beyond that since my people had no history of creating bridges. This art was inaccessible to even our greatest artists and therefore beyond my own ability. Even if I had been able to design this structure, none of our men desired to negotiate with these natives, which would make my own efforts useless. The empire had its own reasons for the bridge, not to create harmony among men, but to generate their own wealth. I took into consideration the raw outline and definition of the bridge, and saw the horror in it. My bridge would be a link in a series of bridges; linguistically, politically, and economically. This infinite process would be unrecognized because the natives and city people would blend like supplements until a whole culture was produced. Perhaps that is why my bridge couldn't be created, why my artistic abilities reflected the limited culture I was born into, and why my empire would not last forever. I have decided to abandon the project, no longer interested in destroying the culture of people's eternally apart. There is no particular destination for my new journey, but an exploration of lands without bridges, of life that sustains itself according to the chance aspect of nature. I beg you to not build this bridge, whoever is reading me, as it will lead to an infinite line of consequences that will go beyond our time and people. I advise you to search beneath these bridges that generate meaning, and only then will a bridge be possible. Creating a structure with improper materials and morals can only construct something unstable and susceptible to destruction. I now understand the fear generated by my cartography and this fear is what fed my art, and it forces the people to acclimate because of this emotion. I shared my observations and thoughts with a young boy this evening, though I didn't ask his name nor anyone else's, and never revealed my own. Speaking to him made me realize everything I am writing here, the simplicity of language in how much easier he understood my eyes than my words. Looking at him, we spoke in a language not connected by bridges, but by meanings constructed for our own encounter and he realized this as well. Farewell to my family, and to this empire that will learn to create according to their limit, unless eternity is not their desire. All bridges must be burnt and collapse, all meanings and language must be abandoned, all temples and sacrifice must be pillaged, if we are to meet again. I will no longer be Yuan Zhangdao, I will be the corporeal and incorporeal entity in which I entered the world.

~ Giorgio Sampilo



"Cerulean and Sand #3" ~ Rubia van Roodselaar

AGREEMENT

My timing was poor
Is what you said

I had to agree

Watching the two of you
Eating lunch
The way you stole a fry
From his tray
But held it between your lips
Like a dare
Laughing

Leaning in to him
Begging him to steal it back
In all but words

But taking hints
Were not his
Strong suit

I got my food to go
And felt your eyes on
My back
For six miles

I gave the burger to a
A homeless guy
At the freeway entrance

But I made myself
choke
down
every
fry

~ *Charles Payne*

WHAT STORY COULD YOU TELL ME

There's this feeling of space
Whenever I watch the walls
Dripping flowers and
Vacant rooms let the wind echo through them
With an eerie voice
What story could you tell me?
Who were you then?
What did you do to deserve them leaving you
To crumble?

~ Meggen Olson

UNA TURISTA EN LA CIUDAD DE LOS ÁNGELES

La mayoría de los turistas que visitan la ciudad de Los Ángeles tienen a bien pensar que la ciudad es peculiar y acogedora. Aunque es acogedora, hay mucha contaminación, delincuencia y pobreza. En el contorno de la ciudad, los trenes son el medio de transporte preferido de los angelinos. Estos tienen figura de morcillas gordas y van más rápido de la velocidad a la que se desplazan los autobuses. Esta ciudad está conectada por bestiales monumentos de autopista, que tienen figura de telarañas, que conectan cada entrada y salida de la ciudad. El ritmo de vida es agitador como las pulsaciones del corazón que va de prisa; el tiempo es un infortunio para los angelinos donde aumenta la zozobra, los invade la enfermedad del mal del tráfico, en las horas pico suceden muchas tragedias y accidentes que impiden ser puntual con las labores diarias y donde los puntos cardinales se encuentran de este a oeste y de norte a sur.

Yendo de Este a Oeste y de Sur a Norte, vive Tránsito, una mujer indigente a quien sus amigos la apodan “La Solitaria” porque es flaquísima. La Solitaria es de estatura mediana, tiene en su espalda una pequeña joroba que hace que siempre recoja las monedas del piso. Su aspecto refleja la Tenia en su cuerpo calaverado que por más que come y come, no engorda. Tiene un peinado que no tiene nada que envidiar a los peinados modernos de las estrellas de Hollywood, el de La Solitaria es uno de los más cotizados porque no gasta dinero en productos para su cabello. Debido al clima contaminado que se vive en Los Ángeles, su cabellera extravagante siempre se mantiene firme y no necesita usar ningún tipo de cosméticos. En sus cabellos tiene una multitud de huéspedes que están fascinados de alojarse en su hermosa cabellera. Tiene un aroma que despierta hasta la más lejana nariz de la ciudad. Sus aromas se confunden con los perfumes finos de París, Channel o Gucci. El olor que brota de su cuerpo es parecido al de la putrefacción de los desagües. Tiene un caminar poco balanceado por el chupe diario. Sus vestiduras no tienen nada que envidiar a las estrellas de cine porque diariamente se viste como si tuviera una boutique en su mansión debajo de las autopistas en el corazón de los Ángeles.

La solitaria tiene tres amigos. Uno se llama Daniel, pero le apodan “El Hemorroide” porque es bajito. Tiene una figura de aspecto de cholo, sus pantalones son tan grandes que parecen un globo, usa camisas muy grandes que no dejan distinguir su cuerpo. La otra amiga de La Solitaria, se llama Petraria, pero le tienen un apodo muy particular: sus amigos en la distancia le gritan “Maruja cara de bruja” Ella es muy lista, camina como hipopótamo, su

mirada de salvaje aterroriza a la gente. Su pequeña estatura la hace afortunada porque puede entrar y salir de cualquier hueco. Por otra parte, Petraria es muy sociable y tiene todo tipo de amigos, incluyendo a uno que se llama Luis. Debido a su colección de chatarra y a su enorme nariz que abarca la mitad de su cara lo apodan “Cuchillas el Tucán”. Su piel es blanca pero hace más de una década que no se puede ver su color natural porque está cubierto de suciedad. La Solitaria es muy apreciada por sus amigos.

Tener amigos es genial. Una tarde una turista, de entre aquellos turistas que visitan la ciudad en donde La Solitaria es indigente, se apareció en su carro Mercedes Benz. Estaba buscando en las afueras de Los Ángeles a un amigo pintor. Su nombre era Julio César. De muy reconocida trayectoria artística, Julio César tenía muchos amigos extranjeros que lo visitaban. La turista se llamaba Bella y hasta el nombre le hacía honor: sus facciones finas reflejaban las diferencias de su clase social, y que provenía de otro lugar. Bella se había estacionado enfrente de un edificio grande y viejo. Bajó de su auto con elegancia sin darse cuenta que había dejado la puerta abierta y se dirigió hacia la esquina donde estaba parada La Solitaria fumándose un cigarrillo:

---Disculpe señora. ¿Me podría ayudar con esta dirección? No sé si estoy en el lugar correcto.

En ese momento, La Solitaria se volteó para mirar a la turista. Con ojos de asombro al ver el carro abierto, y con una sonrisa ligeramente sarcástica y arrogante le dijo:

---Sí, ‘morrita’, estás en el lugar correcto, el edificio que buscas está en frente de ti.

Cuando la Solitaria vio que la distinguida turista se retiraba hacia el edificio, llamó a sus compinches con un chiflido. En un abrir y cerrar de ojos, los malandrines de sus amigos aparecieron como los 4 fantásticos. Rápidamente la Solitaria les dijo a sus compinches:

---Órale mis cuates, los invito a hacer este jale, ya saben cuánto me gustan los trabajos rápidos.

---Después nos vemos en mi pequeña guarida, para ponernos hasta el tope, tengo chupe, pegamento y unas pasas ‘bocas’ que me conseguí por ahí.

--- Hoy quiero borrar mis penas, mis ‘cuatachos’, así que apúrense.

Los amigos con una emoción que los hacía abrazarse con alegría y saltar de júbilo, se dieron palmaditas el uno al otro, exclamando en forma de coro:

---Órale mi Solitaria, ahí vamos estar.

La Maruja ya tenía las herramientas listas para dismantelar el carro. La Solitaria sacó las maletas que estaban en la cajuela, El Cuchillas, por otra parte, llenó los carros de supermercado con los rines, las puertas y los tapetes. La Hemorroide se llevó los asientos y el motor. El carro quedó totalmente dismantelado de adentro y de afuera. Antes de huir dejaron el carro pintado de grafiti al estilo Picasso: "Bienvenida a la ciudad de Los Ángeles". Al salir Bella se dio cuenta lo ocurrido, llevándose las manos a la cabeza no podía creer lo que estaba viendo y pegó un grito:

--- ¡Mi carro! Mi carro, mi carro, por Dios, qué le han hecho a mi carro ¡mis maletas! ¡Auxilio!

Muy angustiada, la turista llamo a la policía. Estaba llorando a moco suelto. Sus pertenencias habían desaparecido. Tres horas más tarde apareció la policía; la policía no pudo hacer nada para ayudarla.

¡Bienvenida a la ciudad de Los Ángeles!

~ Linda Salazar

"Esta aqui."

The murmurs began.

A white dove perched onto the lowest branch
of the mango tree, taking time for word
of its arrival to spread.

"Who has been sick? Where is the eldest?"

Hands clasped in prayer as the dove began its song
a prolonged coo that extended for one minute
then another, announcing the death of another.

"Santa maria que estas en el cielo..."

They asked their god to spare their life,
guessing at whose soul it might be this bird
had come to take, they could only sit
and wait for another heart
to stop beating.

~ Stephanie Gomez-Hernandez

FLAN ON A PAPER PLATE

Noses definitively went up in the air
Lips pursed, eyebrows perched and eyes rolled
As I stated that
I like flan better than crème brûlée
Revealing my lack of culture
Of feigned appreciation for the finer French cuisine.
They could see me,
plastic fork in hand with my flan on a paper plate.
'Cause flan
just goes better with a backyard birthday party
Helicopters flying over 800-square-foot bungalow homes
And tales of Uncle Chui's failed border crossing
that separated him from us ever since,
told with inferior campesino Spanish words like *haiga* or *asina*
that make it so much less important.
I like flan better than crème brûlée
'Cause *Burritos de lengua* at the taco stand
shunned by suburbanites as they drive past
Go so much better with flan.
No one brought crème brûlée
to the potluck that ended the hunger strike
And it was a failed attempt at making "*lo que en vida fuera flan*"
That was the turning point
when my co-worker finally decided to leave her abusive husband.
I'm told that flan can be made with coffee or coconut
Piña, almendras or a hint of cinnamon that is so pleasant.
The recipes are as varied as *el continente entero*.
I like flan
perhaps because the texture of a flan well made is still on my mind
Even when it comes in a plastic cup and bounces off my spoon
like a ball of gelatin.
I like flan better than crème brûlée
because it tastes like the sweetness of a friend
And poetry aside, I like flan better because it has
más huevos y menos crema

~ Madeline Rios

Space Marine Moore surveyed the looming planet below with his usual concentrated glare. He did, in fact, have an actual title, but it was easier for the others to just call him a “Space Marine.” At first, he had objected by pointing out that firstly, the word “space” was redundant when everything and everywhere occupied “space” and that while its usage may have been applicable when humans were originally confined to a small, blue pearl and needed a way to define the great reaches of the unknown, such was no longer the case. Secondly, “marine” was also adopted from a time when those serving did indeed serve from “marine” environments. And thirdly: “I do have a name, you know,” Space Marine Remy Moore would often remark, but these remarks would likewise often fall upon preoccupied ears, as did his frequent ramblings. To console himself, he would reminisce about the times during training when he would expertly use his standard utility belt to soar in incredible displays of acrobatics. He recognized that his primary responsibility on this project was to protect the others but longed for the chance to show off his skills, and therefore passed time by imagining situations in which he would be able to do just that upon the new terrain.

Further back in the room, a figure leaned against the wall, regarding the approaching magnificence with a scowl that overshadowed his amazement. Damian was the technician of the *League 215*, a vehicle roughly one mile long and one-quarter mile wide. At first, he had thought that being the sole member of a maintenance crew would be a daunting task, but he had caught on quickly enough. Most of the systems on board were automatic and self-correcting – a primitive AI of sorts – and Damian only needed to fix what the system itself could not fix or physically reach. After all, such a system was designed by people who could not have foreseen all of the damaging situations that the vehicle would encounter. Damian would bemoan the work that he had to do when the designers could have simply created a fully-sentient AI using existing technology, but even in such a technologically-advanced era humans were still humans, and there always ran a low murmur of rumors that the *Muscatel II* had disappeared within the Zafonian Nebula due to a rebellious AI. In some versions, the technician on board had simply forgotten to repair critical parts and the AI had stayed friendly till the end, but even Damian could not quite bring himself to believe that, so eventually he would just quiet down and continue his work with the same scowl while thinking about exactly how lucky he was to be able to find such a rewarding job, albeit a dull one, that allowed him to observe what hundreds of generations before him could never have fathomed.

In a smaller, adjacent room, Dr. Alexandra casually reviewed a book on treating injuries in high-gravity environments. The planet that they were approaching had a gravity about 1.03 times that of the Earth's, which was only a minor difference, but she still felt safer preparing for the worst rather than letting any of them succumb to injuries that were the result of her negligence. When she had found out that the project was being rushed and that she would be the *only* field medic to work aboard the *League 215*, she felt tempted to decline the offer, for who would take care of the others if she were not able, and who would take care of her? After much frantic musing, she reminded herself that this project was a challenge that she not only found interesting, but actually needed: technically, she was not yet a doctor. She had demonstrated during the examinations and interviews that she possessed a great knowledge of medicine, and above all, would study fiercely whatever she had yet to encounter. Once the voyage was completed (and the crew returned healthier than they had been upon departure, she silently challenged herself), then she would have completed the required experience for her to officially become a doctor. While part of her felt a little guilty to be addressed as what she was not, she assured herself that having the title would be helpful and enable her to have a bit more authority – not to abuse, of course, but to use in situations when another might accidentally brush an unknown hallucinogen, or scream at her in agony to stem the flow of blood, or debate with her about not injecting any nanobots because nanobots were what really caused the demise of the *Muscatel II*... At the same time, “Dr. Morales” sounded too pretentious a title for someone who was not yet a doctor, so she stuck with “Dr. Alexandra.”

In yet another room sat Jun. Jun was bored. She was usually bored. She wondered why she was even on the trip, but unlike the others, could not think of an answer. She had no desire to show off any skills, she was not amazed to travel to another planet (since anyone with an iWorld Mini could have an experience close enough to the real thing in the comfort of their own home), and she did not need to work on this project to become accredited. She had already become a working professional years ago because that had seemed like an okay way to spend her time. No, Jun was there because her more positive counterpart, colleague, and friend Dr. Alexandra had dragged her along, and Jun was already bored on Earth anyway, so why not? There wasn't much left to entertain a field biologist on a world that continued to lose who-knew-how-many species each day. Jun would be collecting and analyzing samples, and just in case that was too easy she had brought along a few tomes of various subjects such as physics, astronomy, and even astrology just so she could have something to laugh at. Although her specialty was biology, she did also possess what she called a “minor interest” in physics, which her superiors did not deem

minor considering that they entrusted her with collecting data and conducting some detailed experiments related to that subject. Despite voicing her lackluster expectations, she secretly hoped that what she encountered would make for interesting stories to tell her younger brother back on Earth, who was growing up to follow in her footsteps with innocent admiration. If she were to divulge that to Dr. Alexandra, then she, Dr. Jun Song, would just about die of embarrassment. No, the world was a boring place, and the universe even more boring.

.....

From far above, the planet itself was unlike any other that they had seen before. The gigantic sphere was covered in tan, rectangular protuberances of a color that reminded Damian of the vast deserts on Earth. Some parts shone with a smooth, metallic radiance; in other parts, the surface resembled coarse sandstone but somehow still seemed to shine with a dull, golden haze that was comfortably inviting. Someone uninformed might have said that surely only intelligent beings could have constructed such a marvel; to Jun, however, the planet reminded her of a very big ball of pyrite that could very well have occurred naturally. Whatever the case, preliminary probes had shown that there was no danger present and that it was clear to move ahead for humans to explore. The project itself was not groundbreaking; planetary explorations had already been conducted for decades, with each person setting foot having something about the planet being named after them. Some planets hosted life, and some didn't; some life was intelligent, and some wasn't; some had once hosted intelligent life, but no longer did; and some hosted life that had the potential to become intelligent but only needed guidance. Simply put, *what* these four were doing was long-established, but *where* they were heading was not.

.....

A few minutes later, Remy landed the vehicle. Actually, the vehicle was perfectly capable of landing itself but Remy had, over the protest of the others, switched to manual control. His main reason for enlisting had actually been to learn to pilot such vehicles even when automatic systems were quickly becoming the norm, but surely he could not let such a precious skill become obsolete with disuse. The phrase "Rules are rules" was not to his liking because that implied that orders should always be followed even when they were misguided, and he rather enjoyed being the one to always ask "why" at every opportunity, appropriate and inappropriate alike; and the phrase "Rules were meant to be broken" did not ring with him either

because the statement was paradoxical. Rather, he did as he pleased, and followed rules when they suited him, and disregarded them when he simply didn't care. Plus, the others were not foolish enough to attempt to remove him from the controls, for the scuffle could damage the equipment and prove more disastrous than conceding a frustrating defeat to Remy to act on his whims.

Dr. Alexandra had volunteered to stay behind in the vehicle, because who knew what dangers lay hidden on this unfamiliar planet? It was only sensible for her to stay safe and able-bodied to tend to those who were injured outside. Damian contested by saying that this voyage was an adventure, and no adventure was complete without venturing into the unknown. Remy and Jun joined in, with the former citing that a "field medic" was most useful on-site in the "field," even if the term was an outdated one; and the latter dryly commenting that the trip was Dr. Alexandra's idea and that if she didn't go then she, Jun, would also stay in the vehicle and hole herself up in her cave. Reluctantly, Dr. Alexandra assented, and the four of them suited up.

~ Brian Yen



“Blue Bayou” ~ Nancy Anderson

THE DREAM SLEEPS

the dream sleeps
tonight
somewhere else

the fire burns
transparent
in the compact silence of ice

the blood flows
surprised
by its own movement

help me,
resting under the shade of a tree
i have awoken with a ripe fruit in my hands
but my fingers cannot feel it

Translated from the Spanish by James J. Shay III

~ Lena Retamoso

IN INNOCENCE

in innocence,
a word is a stinger
that caresses
with no end

Translated from the Spanish by Bruno Soria

~ Lena Retamoso

I remember when Papa forgot my name.

After it happened, I ran out of the house so fast that the door's slam shook the whole house. Nana's nerves, my hands, everything seemed to tremble as I turned on the engine and drove away.

Channel Islands Boulevard had a fair amount of short buildings cramped together in plazas that provided locals with a sense of belonging. It seemed like everyone had a place they could go to. And apparently, I still knew the way to mine.

The car vroomed down the old street, while St. Anthony's school bells hummed and the clouds raked the sky with streaks of white and dark gray. But all I thought of were the vrooming of VHS tapes rewinding, the humming of out-of-tune grand pianos, and aged hair.

It felt like a long drive. But it was only ten minutes.

I remember walking into Good Ol' Times Bookstore with a bitten lip and the messiest ponytail imaginable. I sank my head into my shoulders and prayed that no one saw me.

Lady at Desk saw me. She smiled and said, "Hello. Anything I can help you find today?"

My hands held tight to my elbows. "No. Just looking," I said, and then threw in a half-assed chuckle.

But her smile was sincere. It fit her, like her John Lennon specs and her pixie cut hair. "Alright. Let me know if you need any help."

When her eyes reverted back to her computer screen, I headed straight for the fiction section. It was a small store, so a reader could easily jump into another genre with a few steps.

The fiction section was the largest and took up almost half of the store. The floors went from carpet to wooden, and the off-white walls were covered with shelves. And those shelves towered over everyone and everything. When I was little, I felt sorry for the books on the very top. They were so high up that people would never bother with them, and they'd become nothing but forgotten and dusty.

A couple of customers stood still in front of different shelves. One was a young girl whose eyes were glued to a thick book with a faded yellow cover. I could only imagine what that brick of a book was about, more so than why that little girl was interested in reading it. The big words she wouldn't understand. Or maybe she would. I didn't know.

Perhaps she chose that book because she wanted to learn the words.

Papa and I communicated in two ways; one of them was a deck of cards.

During my babysat years, Nana and Papa always sat at their small kitchen table, playing cards and cursing at each other in Tagalog.

I didn't know Tagalog, but I could tell when they cursed because of the emphasis on certain syllables and the spit that flew out their mouths.

Papa knew one English curse word, but he said it with his raspy voice and thick accent. Nana, knowing English a little better, would always defend him if he'd ever say the word in front of me.

The loudest time he said it was right after I watched my old copy of *Anastasia*. I was by the TV, rewinding the VHS.

"I win, Papa!" Nana said, taking one of his red tokens.

"Ah, *shiete!*"

I ejected the tape and stared at them. "What did Papa say?"

"Oh." Nana glanced at me. Her fingertips tapped her lips. "Papa says, ah, 'seven' in eh-Spanish! 'Siete.' Right, Papa?"

Papa looked down and gave me a dimpled smile. "Uh, yeah. Seven!"

I laughed, and afterward, Nana gave me her spot at the table, and I played cards with Papa. Crazy Eight, ten rounds of it. And even though Nana went to another room of their house, if she heard Papa's "Shiete!" she'd know that I won.

By the time I finished reading every title on the middle shelf, the girl had already taken her yellow brick book to Lady at Desk for purchase. Once the door closed, Lady at Desk glanced at me for a moment, probably wondering if I needed any help yet. In response, I gave her a second-long smile and moved to the next shelf.

Most of the titles sounded depressing, and I began to wonder how authors felt while writing them, or even thought of them for that matter. If I were to ever write a book, I'd try to stay away from depressing titles. Maybe the reader would feel more welcomed and not too scared.

The door opened again.

"Hello. Anything I can help you find today?" chirped Lady at Desk.

"My son has, um, a list..."

"I need to read all of these books and it sucks!"

I remember smiling at that. Turning around, I met the sight of a little boy with a red and white school uniform, handing Lady at Desk a piece of paper. A woman in a blazer held his hand and shook her head in response to his honesty.

Lady at Desk then led the two toward me, and I bit my lip again. I dragged my feet away from the white walls and toward the children's section.

It was right where I left it, at the back corner of the store. After years of not stepping into it, I felt a little relieved that it looked the same. The off-white walls that surrounded the other genres morphed into baby blue with faded, painted clouds. The light from the windows had dried the paint long ago, but it still looked new to me.

From where I stood, I could still hear Lady at Desk helping the busy mom and son with his summer reading list. All of the titles that I heard were classics, old and remembered stories.

With no cellphone or purse to hide behind, I turned my back on the three and pretended to read more book titles.

About five minutes later, Lady at Desk had given the son a stack of books that he frowned upon. She let them shop around some more, and that was when I heard the boy grumble about his literary troubles.

"Why are you so upset to read these books?" the mom asked.

The son replied, "Because I'm not smart enough for these books."

The mom didn't say anything after that, at least, not while they were in the store.

Nana and Papa caught me one afternoon in a tear-stained jumper. I was sitting on the bench of their old grand, dropping my fingertips on random keys.

“What’s that song?” Papa asked.

“It’s for school.”

White key. No key. Black key. No key.

“Aw, neneng, what’s the matter?” Nana said, rubbing my back.

“I didn’t get Belle. I got a spoon,” I said as I pressed the lowest key.

Nana and Papa glanced at one another.

“I don’t understand,” said Nana.

I sniffed before I spoke. “We’re doing *Beauty and the Beast*, and I auditioned for Belle, but I got a spoon.” I hid my face in my palms.

Nana sat beside me, her shoulder at the same level as my chin. She placed her hand on my head, and said, “Ah, a spoon is still good! It’s useful and people need it all the time. Aw, aw, neneng, you don’t want your mommy to see you like this, right?”

“No. But...” I met Nana’s eyes. “I get it. Belle is supposed to be pretty. I just wasn’t pretty enough.”

Before Nana could say anything, Papa stood behind me. I looked up at him, and he said to me, “You are beautiful. Beautiful grandma means beautiful granddaughter.”

He smiled. And so did I.

The store was quiet after the fiction roamers left. I was still stuck in the blue corner, wondering if I should read more titles there. If it killed time, I would do it. So I did.

Just as I was about to start on the first shelf, a telephone rang. I turned around, and noticed that Lady at Desk adjusted her specs and picked up the receiver.

“Hello, Good Ol’ Times Bookstore. How can I help you?”

I shook my head. It amazed me how one person could be that perky.

“Jack, what do you want?”

I veered back to the children’s book titles, pretending not to hear.

“I’m working.” She made her voice quieter. “Don’t tell me you’re not out yet, Jack.”

I could hear a man’s muffled voice from my blue corner. Lady at Desk still whispered.

“I told you, you can’t have...no, Jack! I got her, you didn’t, okay?”

Mumble, mumble.

“Don’t do this to me now. I...”

Mumble, mumble.

“...We talked about this so many times. You better...you better be gone by the time I finish work.”

She hung up.

My mom and I sat in my grandparents’ couch, our luggage close by us.

My mom cried. I debated on whether or not I should.

“By the time I came home from work...he’d already left. He just left us. Just like that. He’s gone.” My mom could barely speak in between her hiccups.

Nana handed her more tissues. “Caridad, is okay. It is okay. You two can stay with us for now. We’ll help, right, Papa?”

Papa stood over us all. His arms were crossed, his eyes squinted and watery.

Not being able to take the sight of my mom crying, I walked out of the room and hid in the hollowed space underneath the stairs. In the dark, I raked out the knots of my tangled hair and tried to forget about my dad. It was payback. With every pull of a strand, I made myself let go of his memories. It hurt. I didn’t care. I didn’t stop.

Then I saw Papa.

He kneeled, so we were brown eye-to-brown eye. He paused and then said with one breath, "I'm still your papa."

It was so easy to run into his arms. But that was when I noticed how white Papa's hair had become.

The first memory I have with Papa took place in the blue corner. Ever since the store had opened, I loved the blue corner. Papa took me there every morning so I could practice reading, and he could practice his English, as well as his ability to take care of a four-year-old.

When we entered the store, I darted toward the blue corner with my ponytail bouncing, my eyes transfixed on the colors, and my hands reaching out toward the books. All of the regulars who knew us called me Blue Corner Girl, but Papa always used my real name.

"Okay, okay, Diwa," Papa said as he picked me up and sat me down in a small green chair. Then he walked to the shelf, and plucked out a book with a title he understood. "*I Got Two Hands*," he read out loud. "Our favorite, huh, Diwa?"

He squeezed into the red chair across from me, and he read to me.

"I got two hands. The left and the right."

I held up my hands.

"I hold them up high. So clean and bright."

I waved them from side to side.

"Clap them softly. One, two, three."

Clap, clap, clap.

"Clean little hands are good to see."

We laughed. And then I said, "Again."

The books that covered the blue corner made childhoods seem so light hearted. Thin spines, every color invented, illustrations that attracted imagination, the innocence seemed immortal there. But with just a few steps, rainbows could fade to white.

In that moment, the blue corner I used to love felt too happy. I began to sweat. My hands shook again.

I couldn't wait to come back for summer. Nana greeted me with a hug six months in the making. She asked me about college, about my writing, about life. I gave her happy answers.

While I waited for my mom to come home, Papa played solitaire at the kitchen table. I approached him with caution. Nana had told me that it'd become harder to look out for him. He couldn't remember the simplest things, like where his keys were or taking his medicine. I knew that he'd been like this for a while.

Still, it wasn't fair.

"Papa, how are you? I'm home." I gave him a gentle hug. "I missed you!"

Papa stared at me, and then smiled, as if to just be polite.

"Papa? Hey, it's Diwa."

"Hmm?" His tan skin seemed paler, like his hair. More wrinkles had approached his eyes, threatening to cross them. Whether or not he could really see me, I wasn't sure.

"It's me—it's Diwa."

He said nothing.

"Diwa? Diwa Estrella? Remember?" I pulled my hair up in a ponytail. Like when I was four. "Caridad's daughter? Your granddaughter?"

Then, in the slowest seconds I've ever experienced, he shook his head, and bit his lip, and said, "Sorry?"

"Miss? Are you okay?"

I looked up. Lady at Desk held a pile of books that needed sorting. I didn't know how long I stood there.

I was about to say, "Yeah, I'm fine," but in this place, I couldn't lie.

Before I answered, I glanced at the shelves one more time. The happy titles and the sad titles, the popular books and the forgotten books. There was only one book that stood in the middle of all of them.

“Actually, I’m looking for a book,” I said. “I’m looking for a book called, *I Got Two Hands?*”

Lady at Desk’s smile returned. “Oh, sure! Of course! We’re already in the right place. Let me see...”

She laid the books down and walked toward the third shelf. I cupped my elbows with my palms and prayed that it was there.

She bent down and plucked a single book out of the rainbow of spines. “Is it this one?”

No matter what the actual picture was, I saw two pairs of hands on the cover. One belonged to a man with white hair. The other belonged to a little girl with a ponytail. “Yeah, that’s it. Thank you.”

Once the book was in my hands, I just stared at it. I remember it all. But Papa wouldn’t, not anymore.

I looked around the corner, at all of the new customers that had just entered. They all wanted something to read, something to start.

A new family could start something too with this book. I knew that I couldn’t start anything anymore. And that broke my heart.

But I needed to see it, to hold it. I needed to know that it still existed. That it was still there.

That had to be enough.

With one shaking breath, and Papa’s smile in my mind, I said that I didn’t want the book after all. Lady at Desk questioned me, but after she saw the look on my face, she let it go.

I walked toward the front of the store, and left the blue corner behind.

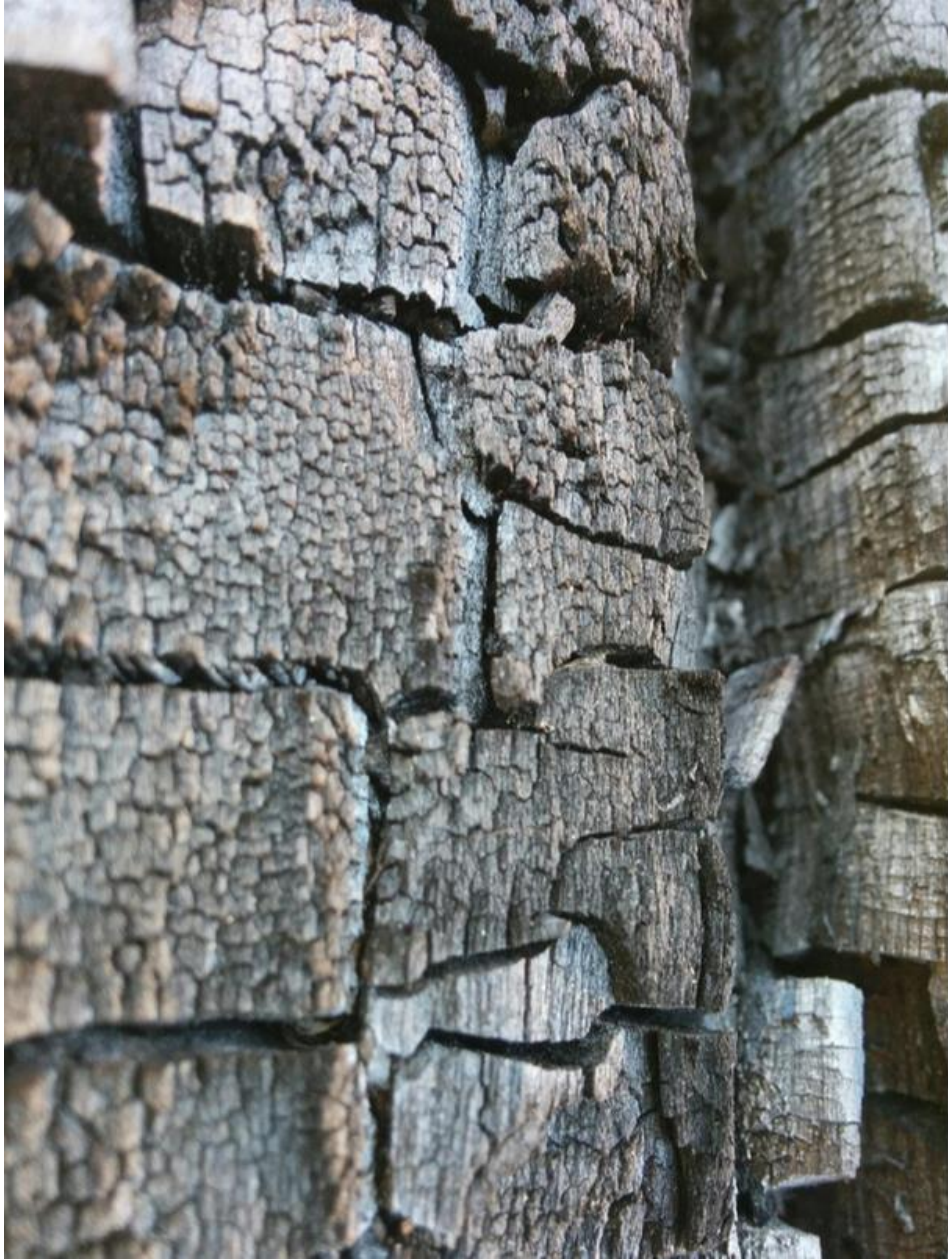
I remember driving back to Nana and Papa’s house.

I remember giving Nana a hug and saying that I was sorry for running out.

And I remember seeing Papa, and thinking, I'm still your granddaughter.

I'm still your Diwa.

~ *Genielysse Reyes*



"The Rift" ~ Katy Muniz

3 A.M. ON A WORK NIGHT

3 a.m. and here we are
Both wide awake again,
Fatigue setting in for me
But not for you. Never ever
When I need you to be.

The obnoxious screams
And tears—a cacophony
Of whiney needs.
You're always complaining,
"me, me, me!"

But when I look at your face
I see my smile.
I see the well-shaped eyebrows
Of your grandmother who's missed it all.

I see your mother's eyes
Thank god they're not mine.
You throw a toy with that temper
Of you grandfather who's missed it all.

I look at you and I see me.
I see your mommy.
I see your grandparents that nature saw fit
To make another cancer statistic.

But right now, we're all here in you.
And I think to myself at 3:01
The battle has just begun,
But it'll be worth every minute.

~ Chris Baarstad

I AM A GREAT POET

I'm not a very good poet
says every great poet (almost).
I'm not very creative
says every great artist.

Once when I was watching some bad TV
("Once," I said, hah!)
And I heard a most insightful line:
"Humility is the sin of a prideful man"
Said the actor or whoever wrote it
Surely not a screenwriter,
Since it was such a good line.

I'd have to disagree with you,
And everyone.
A great American poet who *knew* he was a great poet
(*So cocky....Could only be Walt Whitman,*
says everyone)
Was proud (*or full*) of himself.

Don't put a label on me
says every angsty teenager.
I'm not who you think I am
says every antagonist in a book or movie
with something to hide that's not unforgivable.

I'm a terrible poet, I'd never say
(but I know some people who would)
A poet I am—

A proud one at that.

~ *Chris Baarstad*

There were simple moments.
Asking me to pronounce words
with a mouthful of toothpaste.

Persepolis, that was your favorite,
small finger pointing to the book
cover, or to the I in Introduction.

So distant now, it seems,
your first crawl across the sheets,
the months that streaked by,
a cloud without a trail.

Playing with the makeup box,
painting lashes, putting things
back in their place.

What was it, your first word,
a lone leaf turning, falling,
departing—ripe, if only
for an instant.

~ *Ryan David Leack*

FOR WANG WEI, A POEM

These twelve-hundred years passed
Since you roamed shoreline depths,
How many generations,
Generations,

Warmed by the same
Cloud-swept sun,
Cooled by the same low moon
And its heavy desperation
Of desperations.

Little has changed in all that time.
I, too, wake to the sound
Of passing carts,
Waiting for something,
Dogwood dreams
Beyond city walls,
A desire to be
Empty,
Emptied.

Yet there are fewer bird calls.
Sometimes a finch
Sings alone,
Barely able to rattle
The oaks with his song.

Sometimes the
Wind helps him along.
Sometimes I think
Our souls have forgotten
Where they belong.

Du Fu said all life is
Going and returning.

I wonder if it's true.
I wonder if some things leave
And never come back to you—
Your black hair, ghost of itself
In twilight years,

Growing whiter still,
White beyond your will,
Bramble gate closed among
A lone kingfisher's trill.
I wonder.

I wonder how the surface
Where I read reflects the light,
How I too might be
Of no mind
Mirroring empty sky,
Lone witness
To the sound of yellow
Leaves falling,

Carried through the air to
Open graves on ground,
Frail spirits small—
Untethered, unbound.

As night rises,
Dust settles.
Idleness.
Somewhere East,
Bamboo rustles,
Falls back into place.
All motion temporary.

Empty mind
Empty dark

On the verge
Of vanishing

I close my iron gate,
Inhabit my absence,
Knowing empty,
Sounds of moths dancing
In false light.

~ Ryan David Leack

DREAMING OF MY DAUGHTER, NOT YET GROWN

Last night I dreamt you were all grown up,
too grown to hold any longer, taller than

the jasmine in the yard, tall enough to reach
the chimes on your own, on your own.

We stood in the lot of my old high school,
hardly recognized, its surfaces transformed,

transformed. On black tar in morning light,
you in your crib beside me, all but unborn.

So this is where we part. I turn my head to
a sky empty of reply, extending me nothing

but that lone blue expanse. Returning, I see
your eyes level with mine, and where did

your crib go, nothing but this empty lot
where I reach out for a hand no smaller than

my own, than my own. When I awake,
I do not hesitate. Though early, I take you

with one arm to see the jasmine, hold you
high to touch the chimes, to watch your smile,

glimmer of tall oak in your eyes, to do these
things while we can, while we can.

~ Ryan David Leack

BIOGRAPHIES

EGHOSA RAYMOND AKENBOR

I am a painter/fine art teacher from Nigeria who resides in a cultural and historical town, Benin City, in Edo state, Nigeria. I am an experimental artist who explores materials and mediums to paint my thought. My works are seen in the following international publications: Lunch ticket Magazine winter/spring 2015, Hidden treasure magazine Vol II, UK, International contemporary artists Vol 6, Greece/US, US. Group exhibition: Miami spectrum 2014, USA, Show de bola 2014, Brazil and USA- Altered Esthetics 2013., Spanish group exhibition 2012, Abuja, Nigeria, selection/admission into the first & second Italian Biennale of Palermo, Italy for 2013 & 2015, and many more.

SHAHD ALSHAMMARI

Shahd Alshammari is Assistant Professor of English. She writes poetry and her released her first poetry collection 'On Love and Loss.' She is interested in race and disability studies.

BRIAN ALSTON

Alex Alston is a first year graduate student doing black studies in the English Department at UCR. He was born by the river in eastern North Carolina and continues to flirt with something like an aesthetics of rural, working-class, southern life in his poetry, although the destination

of the work itself often the outside of anything he might have a say in.

NANCY ANDERSON

Painting is my passion. Perhaps what I enjoy most is transforming a blank canvas to one that, when finished, speaks differently to all who view it. I use mixed media—sometimes adding sand, glue, or tissue—to create fascinating images, and I work with various tools for the desired effect. An intriguing interplay of shadows and trails is often a part of my work. My studio is in Plano, Texas; it's a calming release from my full-time job as a salon/spa owner to work there in my free time. My paintings have been displayed in several venues in the Dallas area.

ANDREA BABSKY

I am a doctoral student of Latin American literatures. My interests are poetry, myth and semiotics. I am also interested in science and the fusion of the arts and sciences.

MATTHEW BOHLKA BOHLKA

Matt recently completed his M.A in English from Cal Poly Pomona with concentrations in Literature, as well as Rhetoric and Composition. His works exists in the intersections between the political and the personal, the spiritual and the mundane. He spends most of his time with his partner and dog in Pomona quietly awaiting the

apocalypse, though sometimes he ventures out for ice cream.

JODI BONASSI

Jodi Bonassi's work has been reviewed in the Boston Globe, The LA Times, Flavorpill, and other papers. Publications include Studio Visit Magazine, Harpers, Hair's How Magazine (Russia), Our Ever Changing World, and recently Zocalo Public Square. Jodi has exhibited locally and nationally since 1992. She has done public art. Best known for her painting and drawing, the work centers on cultural diversity in places of communal exchange. This past year she designed the invitation for Dan Tana's 50 year Gala celebrity event. She was commissioned by the Lou Adler family to paint her vision onto a 10 foot fiberglass guitar. After being displayed on the Sunset Strip for a year it was auctioned in the top 10 at Julian's auction house. Proceeds went to charity. The guitar was in a vignette for the show, "Storage Wars". Curators include: Peter Frank, Ali Subotnik and others.

STEPHANIE GOMEZ-HERNANDEZ

Stephanie Gomez-Hernandez was born in Puerto Rico and raised in California. She is a recent graduate of the University of California, Riverside, as well as an editor of the school's undergraduate literary journal, Mosaic. In her free time, Stephanie enjoys watching musicals and drinking milk tea.

KATHERINE LASHLEY

Katherine Lashley is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Morgan State University. Her dissertation analyzes gender and disability

in young adult dystopias. She teaches first year writing at Towson University. She has published two books: a memoir entitled *My Younger Older Sister: Growing Up With An Autistic Older Sister*, and a fantasy novella titled *Lamia*. www.katherinelashley.com

EVA LEWARNE

Eva Lewarne is a painter, photographer, designer, workshop leader and poet. She studied Fine Art at OCAD (Ontario College of Art) and English Literature. Her work has been shown at the Salon Grand Palais in Paris, the Chapelle de la Sorbonne, Jadite Gallery In New York, Gallery Moos and Bezpala-Brown Gallery in Canada, among others. She is represented in public and private collections in Canada, the U.S. France, and Germany. Also she teaches painting, drawing, design, Adobe Photoshop in places like Ryerson University, First Interactive College and The Board of Education. She has curated a number of group exhibitions. Her photograph, *Dreamweaver 5* was accepted into SNAP 2014 juried exhibition. Her photograph *Peek-A-Boo* won Best Portrait in SNAP 2015 juried exhibition.

KRISTA LUKAS

Krista Lukas is the author of a poetry collection, *Fans of My Unconscious*, which was a finalist for the May Swenson Award and the Pearl Poetry Prize. Her poems have appeared in *The Writer's Almanac*, *The Best American Poetry 2006*, *Creative Writer's Handbook*, and literary journals including *Rattle* and *New Millennium Writings*.

JOANNA MADLOCH

Joanna Madloch is a New Jersey based photographer and author. She currently works on a book dedicated to the picture of the photographer in fiction. She teaches at Montclair State University.

NELSON MASFERRER

I am a current Dual Major scholar, English with an emphasis in literature and Spanish, at Cal Poly University; hope to graduate by Fall Quarter 2016. I approach reading works of literature modestly –enjoying the submergence one experiences when engage with it; in other words, I participate in literature for the pure gusto and aesthetics. I am content solely by experience itself. I am currently interested in participating and becoming a professional translator and interpreter once I graduate.

ROBERT MATRANGA

Robert Matranga has worked full time at Cal Poly Pomona since 2003 after receiving a B.A. in English. In 2009, he received an M.A. in English, also from CPP. In May, he will receive his third, and perhaps final, degree from the University of La Verne College of Law.

NATALIE MORALES

Natalie Morales first began writing poetry when gifted a Scooby-Doo journal at the age of nine. Now, words are her world, and her short stories and poems have been published in almost dozens of online and print magazines such as Cornell University's Rainy Day Literary Magazine, East Jasmine

Review, Cadence Collective, and Chiron Review, among many others. She currently attends an English master's program at Cal Poly Pomona, works as a copyeditor, and continues to compile her first chapbook.

CHRISTOPHER MOYLAN

Christopher Moylan is an Associate Professor of English at NYIT where he publishes poetry, short fiction and literary criticism.

KATYE MUNIZ

Katye Muniz is an undergraduate student at Cal Poly Pomona working on a degree in Fine Arts and a minor in English. She has had a story published in the Pomona Valley Review before and she has had her artwork exhibited in a couple of group shows at Cal Poly Pomona.

MEGGEN OLSON

Meggen Olson is a California based writer and student currently studying at Cal Poly Pomona. She is emphasizing English and Language Arts as her major with the goal of publishing a book of her work. When she is not writing, Meggen can be found reading, knitting and creating digital art. You can find out more about her digital art at <http://songsforever.deviantart.com>.

GRANT PALMER

Grant Palmer received his BA in English at the University of California, Riverside in 2013. He is currently working on his MA in English at Cal Poly Pomona. Grant's influences include Dante, Milton, Wittgenstein, Ginsberg, the GZA, Borges,

and David Bowie. If Grant had to pick a shape, it would be Circle.

CHARLES PAYNE

Charles Payne is a guy who lives and programs and writes in Southern California. You can see more of his poetry and other obsessions at <http://crow.wordpress.com>.

LENA RETAMOSO

Lena Retamoso Urbano (Lima, 1978) is a PhD candidate of Hispanic and Luso-Brasilian Literatures at Graduate Center, CUNY, and is a teacher at City College in Spanish and Hispanic Literature. She obtained her BA in Hispanic Literature at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (2002) and her MA in Spanish at City College of New York (2006). She has published two poetry books: *Milagros de ausencia* (Miracle of Absence, 2002) and *Blanco es el sueño de la noche* (White Is the Dream of the Night, 2008).

GENIELYSSE REYES

Genielysse Reyes is a recent graduate of the University of California, Riverside, who now holds a BA in creative writing and a BA in psychology. She lives off of doodling, story writing, show tunes, and the occasional hot chocolate. She has been previously published in Pomona Valley Review (PVR8). She also draws/authors a web comic series, and is currently writing more short stories and a novel...and maybe a fairytale here and there. She thanks her lucky stars everyday for the inspiration given to her by her family and friends.

MADELINE RIOS

Madeline Newman Rios has devoted much of her life to immigrant rights advocacy. Having lived in the Pomona region since 1996, her poems often reflect the social realities of the Inland Empire. Her poetry has become increasingly popular at local community events, and her poem "Undocumented Dancers" was chosen by the L.A. Times in 2013 as one of the best examples of opinion poetry in Southern California. Ms. Ríos earns her living as a freelance translator certified by the American Translators Association and was recently featured in Cal Poly Pomona's Translation Slam for her literary translation of an excerpt from "The Boy who Stole Attila's Horse."

LINDA SALAZAR

My name is Linda Salazar; I was born in Bucaramanga, Colombia. I am a Cal Poly Pomona University Spanish Major with an emphasis in Spanish Literature and I hold four Associate Degrees in different studies from Mount San Antonio College. My life's passion has always been enjoying Spanish literature, poetry and Spanish cultural studies. I enjoy writing texts on how I perceive my social environment and my surroundings. I look forward to becoming a college professor in Spanish Literature.

REGINA SALCEDO

Regina Salcedo is a poet, screenwriter, teacher of creative writing workshops and director of the Poetry Collection of the publishing house Kokapeli. She is also part of the management team of the Unicelular

poetry festival which organizes meetings in Navarre (Spain). She coordinates a group of poetry sharing called La Mesa Poética. She has published several books of poetry and micro fiction: *Voces Nuevas IX Selección*, Ed. Torremozas (1992), *Relatos en Cadena*, Ed. Alfaguara (2008) and *Ultravioleta*, Uxue Juárez, Uxue Arbe (2015). *Icebergs*, Ed. Baile del Sol (2014) and *Protagonistas*, Ed. Kokapeli (2015). She has also published poems, articles and book reviews in various national magazines such as: *Quimera*, *TK*, *La Bolsa de Pipas* and *Kokoro*.

GIOGRIO SAMPILO

Giorgio Sampilo is a seeker of adventures, whether it be in literature, philosophy, or daily-life. Academia was unable to fully engulf him, which has made it possible to enjoy reading and writing with all of his strength.

BILL SCALIA

Bill Scalia holds a PhD in American Literature and Film Studies from Louisiana State University, and has published essays on literature and film in the journals *Religion and Literature*, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, and in the anthology *Faith and Spirituality in Masters of World Cinema* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008). He edited the anthology *Classic Critical Views: Ralph Waldo Emerson*, and has poems in the anthologies *Crossroads: A Southern Culture Annual* (Mercer University Press, 2005) and *Puzzles of Faith and Patterns of Doubt: Short Stories and Poems* (Editions Bibliotekos, 2013). Bill currently teaches literature and philosophical writing at St

Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, Maryland.

FRANK SCOZZARI

My fiction has previously appeared in various literary magazines, including *The Worcester Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *War Literature & the Arts*, *Tampa Review*, *Pacific Review*, *The Nassau Review*, *Berkeley Fiction Review*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *Ellipsis Magazine*, *The Emerson Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Minetta Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Reed Magazine*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, and *The MacGuffin*. Writing awards include Winner of the National Writer's Association Short Story Contest and four Pushcart Prize nominations.

MONICA SOSA

Monica Amelia Sosa is a Spanish major and program coordinator for a Latina teen group called *Girasoles En Marcha*. She has been writing periodically for fifteen years, driven by an innate passion to create art with words. Her love for poetry is foreign to most of her family and friends, she prefers to share this intimate piece of her with strangers.

LINDA TORO

Linda Toro, a Creative Writing Major attending UC Riverside, enjoys learning and writing about the personal troubles of today's society in hope to learn about life through another perspective. When she is not writing or in class, Linda is running a personal blog and playing with her three dogs.

OSCAR ULLOA

Oscar A. Ulloa is a failed soccer player, a tone deaf musician, and an exceedingly informal PhD Hispanic Studies student at UC Riverside. He calls SoCal home.

RUBIA VAN ROODSELAAR

I never passed an opportunity to learn something new in the field of the Arts. Trained in Jewelry Design at 15 in Brazil, I ventured into painting, sculpture, graphic design and ceramics, eventually graduating from UC Berkeley in Architecture. I have also studied Art at the College of Marin, the Glassell School of Art in Houston and CSU Bakersfield.

ANDREW WOODYARD

I'm originally from the small town of Running Springs in the San Bernardino Mountains. I've been writing and drawing

since I was child, and decided to pursue both professionally as an adult. I have an Associates Degree from San Bernardino Valley College, and I'm currently attending Cal State Fullerton as an Illustration student. I was published for the first time in April 2014 in Phineas Literary Magazine, and will be published again in May 2015 in Morpheus Tales out of the United Kingdom. I primarily write science fiction, high fantasy, cyberpunk stories and some oddball poetry. My drawings are done with markers and pen and range from the surreal to the abstract to hyper detailed landscapes and portraits.

BRIAN YEN

Brian Yen studies Civil Engineering under the environmental option and pursues a minor in Spanish. His hobbies include playing guitar, soccer, learning languages, and reading short stories.



Thank you for reading